

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ENGLISH MARTYRS' CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Biddulph, Stoke-on-Trent

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124368

Acting Headteacher: Mrs P McCarron

Reporting inspector: Mr O L Thomas  
16041

Dates of inspection: 24 - 26 March 2003

Inspection number: 248595

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Woodland Street  
Biddulph  
Stoke-on-Trent

Postcode: ST8 6LW

Telephone number: 01782 512644

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Rev J Booth

Date of previous inspection: 16/02/98

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
16041	Mr O L Thomas	Registered inspector	English, Art and design Foundation Stage Special Educational Needs	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements. How well the school is led and managed? How well are pupils taught? What the school should do to improve further?
19344	Mr D Jones	Lay inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22578	Mr G Jones	Team inspector	Mathematics ICT Design and technology Music Educational Inclusion	How well the school cares for its pupils?
27676	Mr M Thorn	Team inspector	Science Geography History PE	How good are the curricular and other opportunities provided for pupils?

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

English Martyr's Catholic Primary School is much smaller than other primary schools, with 98 boys and girls on roll. There is no nursery provision. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is also below average. The school draws pupils from a wider catchment area than the immediate locality. The number of pupils from families in minority ethnic groups is very low; most pupils are of white UK heritage. There are no children from refugee, traveller or asylum seeker families or whose mother tongue is not English. At the time of the last inspection the attainment of most pupils on entry to the school was broadly average; the balance has shifted to more than half, but by no means all, being below average. The socio economic circumstances of the school are comprehensive but mainly well below average. The school has not suffered from significant staffing difficulties since the last inspection but it is without a permanent headteacher since January 2003 and recruitment for this position is proving difficult.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

The school provides an overall acceptable standard of education for its pupils with good levels of care but there are weaknesses and inconsistencies in its provision; a number of which prevail from the previous inspection and restrict inclusion for all.

Standards are broadly satisfactory by the age of 11 except in information and communication technology (ICT), which is below expectations. Children benefit from a good start in the reception class enabling most to attain as expected in the areas of learning by the age of five. Literacy and numeracy skills are soundly taught in the infants and juniors. Teaching is satisfactory overall with examples of good teaching, which speeds up progress for the very youngest and the older pupils. Pupils' progress is not well supported by the effective use of assessment information or consistent behaviour management. The curriculum does not yet enable all pupils to achieve their potential or become effective learners and use their acquired basic skills to investigate, research and explore in the other subjects. The acting headteacher is providing good leadership and management to safeguard the pupils' education and in planning to address whole-school needs. Given the pupils' below average attainment on entry the school gives satisfactory value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- The educational leadership of the acting headteacher.
- The test results in English, mathematics and science achieved by the age of 11.
- Ensures a solid grounding in acquiring the basic skills of literacy and numeracy.
- The teaching and learning in the class for children who are under five.
- Provides good levels of care.

#### **What could be improved**

- The policy & practice on educational inclusion, to ensure the curriculum meets *all* pupils' needs so that they achieve to their potential.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning to iron out inconsistencies.
- Standards in ICT.
- The process of self-evaluation and school improvement through delegation and accountability.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

## **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in February 1998. Since that time the issues for action have not all been met sufficiently well. The school has made improvements in its assessment procedures but the use of test and assessment information available to teachers to raise pupils' progress is still unsatisfactory overall, although good in Years 5 and 6. Planning in mathematics to establish key skills and use and apply them is not firmly established. The process of self-review and evaluation is not embedded in school life and the quality of the school development plan has only very recently been improved. Personal, social and health education judged as unsatisfactory previously remains so although recent plans set the right course of action. Parents have noted recently improvements to communications with them. Job descriptions do not have targets for development, linked with priorities noted in the school development plan (SDP). There is no clear management structure to share responsibilities of leadership and management for aspects of the curriculum and the subjects. Professional development of staff has proceeded adequately in spite of the limited budget.

The interim SDP, drawn up by the acting headteacher gives a clear picture of priorities for improvement. The acting headteacher offers confidence to a fragile situation but the school's long-term capacity to improve is hard to measure until the substantive leadership and management of the school is confirmed.

## **STANDARDS**

The table which shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests is omitted because less than ten pupils were involved.

The school won an achievement award for improvements to test performance for 11 year old pupils in the Year 2001. The school trend is above the national trend and the school achieved its targets for test performance for 11 year olds in English and mathematics.

More pupils attained at the expected Level 4 in English, mathematics and science than found nationally. Good proportions of pupils attained at the higher Level 5 in all three subjects; this matches the inspection findings that pupils in Year 5 and 6 are making good progress.

The results for seven year olds are adequate but somewhat less encouraging. Although those attaining at the higher Level 3 were above other schools in reading and writing but not in mathematics, a high proportion of pupils attained at the lower Level 2c in reading (33%) and writing (40%) and this usually indicates these pupils are not on target to attain the expected Level 4 at age 11.

This raises a question about progress in the infants because although a good proportion of children's attainment is below average on entry to the reception class, by the time they enter Year 1 they have made such good progress that they are achieving broadly as expected nationally and are ready for the challenges of the National Curriculum.

The inspection finds that standards of day-to-day work are broadly in line with national expectations for seven and 11 year olds in English, mathematics and science and the other non-core subjects in terms of pupils' knowledge but their skills and the use and application of them are less secure. In ICT pupils attain as expected by the age of seven but not by 11. Pupils' progress as they move through the school is uneven and this lessens their chances to fulfil their potential. Pupils with special educational needs make overall satisfactory progress and receive good support from non-teaching staff. The more able pupils in the infants and juniors achieve higher levels in the national tests but scrutiny of their day-to-day



work reveals little difference in the work offered to them in terms of challenge except in Years 5 and 6.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils enjoy their learning and have a positive work ethic however, a number of pupils lack commitment to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall but the poor behaviour of some individuals slows the progress they make and has a negative effect on the learning of others.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Most pupils show respect for the feelings of others and value each other's company.
Attendance	Good. Lessons start on time. Pupils arrive punctually.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

- Teaching is satisfactory overall as was so at the last inspection.
- Teaching in the Foundation Stage is consistently good and on occasion very good.
- Scrutiny of the previous work of the oldest pupils shows examples of effective teaching, depth to pupils' work and valuable marking over time.
- The instances of good teaching during the inspection, in the infants and juniors, are not regular enough to ensure pupils make even progress as they move through the school.
- The teaching of basic skills in literacy and numeracy is sound.
- The use of support staff, resources and time is good.
- The use the teachers make of assessment information about pupils is unsatisfactory, including some marking of work. It is not used sufficiently well to adjust planning to take into account the needs of all pupils and provide them with suitably challenging activities or to point out to pupils how they can improve and involve them in target setting.
- Inconsistent management of behaviour has a negative effect on the progress some pupils make.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The Foundation Stage curriculum gives children a good start to their education although outside activities are restricted. The content of the National Curriculum is covered in planning. However, the delivery of the curriculum in the infants and juniors is narrow, is not fully inclusive and does not offer sufficient opportunities for pupils to use and apply what they know to research and investigate. ICT does not fully meet requirements. The PHSE curriculum is underdeveloped. Extra-curricular provision is good as are links with the church and the community.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall. Good quality non-teaching support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. Provision for social and moral are good. Spiritual and cultural development are broadly satisfactory with scope for improvement. Pupils' insight into living and growing up in a multi-cultural society is limited.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has sustained a good level of care for the pupils including the after school care club. The most recent changes suggested for behaviour management, have not yet been put into effect to provide the school with a consistent approach. The use of assessment information is unsatisfactory to ensure a fair deal for all.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Educational leadership and management by the acting Headteacher, in the short time she has been in post, are good and have secured the immediate future of the school. Her insight and understanding of the school's strengths and the challenges it faces, have enabled her to set the right priorities for development and improvement, albeit in the short term. There is no established cohesive management structure for other staff. The management of special educational needs is adequate because it focuses generally on pupils with learning difficulties rather than an inclusive role.

How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory overall. Statutory requirements are broadly met for the curriculum; aspects of ICT are an obvious weakness. The principles of best value are adequately applied. Governors are more recently gaining a stronger view of the school's work and are keen to be actively involved in shaping its direction for improvement. Governors are hard pressed to meet their requirements under the Disabilities Act because of the restrictions in the accommodation; improvements are not planned for and financial restraints make matters worse.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory overall although the interim development plan is on the right track. Acting headteacher recognises that school self-review needs to be improved, particularly in relation to educational inclusion. Monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching and learning have not been rigorous to improve teaching from the satisfactory levels found at the last inspection and address successfully all of the issues for action identified then.
The strategic use of resources	Use is satisfactory given the unsatisfactory accommodation, resources and current staffing difficulties. There is no safe, secure outside area for the youngest pupils.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The very recent changes in policies and practice across a number of areas of school life.</li> <li>• Pupils' enthusiasm for school.</li> <li>• The quality of teaching.</li> <li>• The personal support given to pupils.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviour.</li> <li>• Homework.</li> <li>• Information given to parents about the progress their children are making.</li> <li>• The working relationship with parents.</li> <li>• The management of the school.</li> <li>• The range of extra-curricular activities.</li> </ul>

There was a good response by parents to pre-inspection enquiry.

Parents' overall responses to the school, as noted in the questionnaire are luke-warm, with clear strong support for a limited number of aspects. Several areas of the school's provision recorded significant negative responses.

The inspection finds that most pupils like school and feel safe and secure there. Personal support and relationships are good. The range of extra-curricular activities is varied and of good quality.

There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and behaviour of pupils. The acting headteacher has already begun to address the working relationship with parents and aspects of the school's management.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. The school won an achievement award in 2001 for improvements to its test results for 11 year old pupils. Whilst caution needs to be exercised in interpreting and comparing the school's test results with national figures and those of similar schools because the cohort size is less than ten pupils, the school's results nevertheless show that pupils are achieving well by the age of 11 in English, mathematics and science. The school targets for 2002 were well matched to actual performance although teacher assessments underestimated attainment significantly. The trend of the school's performance in tests for 11 year olds is above the national trend. A steady picture of improvement is evident from 2000 onwards. More pupils attained at the expected Level 4 in English, mathematics and science than found nationally. Good proportions of pupils attained at the higher Level 5 in all three subjects; this matches the inspection findings that pupils in Year 5 and 6 are making good progress.
2. On face value, the results look to be adequate for seven year olds with close to the national percentage attaining at Level 2 or above in reading but slightly below in writing and mathematics. Further analysis reveals that too many attain at the lower end of Level 2, (33 per cent of pupils to attain low levels in reading and 40 per cent in writing) indicates that these pupils are at risk of not attaining the expected Level 4 by the age of 11. The low level of special educational needs in the infants suggests that attainment should be higher. A positive feature is that the proportion attaining at the higher Level 3 was above other schools in reading and writing but this is not so in mathematics.
3. So the picture is one of more than half of pupils coming into school with below average attainment but making such good progress during their reception year that by the age of five most pupils are close to if not already achieving the Early Learning Goals and are suitably prepared for the challenges of the National Curriculum. A pattern is beginning to emerge. The trend of attainment is downward at the end of the infant stage and this is disappointing especially when the good progress that children have made in the reception class is considered. During Year 1 and 2 progress is adequate but no better and the test results bear testimony to this. This leveling out of pupils' progress continues in Years 3 and 4. It is not until pupils enter Years 5 and 6 that improvements are evident and progress is pulled back. However, this firefighting approach is not good enough and suggests that pupils could attain even better if achievement was consistently built on from the reception class. The reasons for the weaknesses in pupils' progress relate directly to teaching which sets expectations which are no better than mediocre and most notably a failure to use test and assessment data to plan suitably challenging for the range of needs. In this respect the school neglects to offer an inclusive education for all of its pupils, ensuring each child reaches its full potential.
4. Although standards of day-to-day work are broadly in line with national expectations for seven and 11 year olds in English, mathematics and science and the other non-core subjects in terms of pupils' knowledge, their skills and the use and application of them, are less secure. Again, the causes lie in the style and methods for teaching which, although not less than satisfactory, rarely require pupils to act as effective learners but rather receivers of information.

5. In English, pupils acquire sound reading and writing skills through the school but too much work is on work sheets and has prescribed outcomes, which puts a ceiling on pupils' attainment in Years 1 to 4. In some lessons, pupils spend too long listening to the teacher rather than engaging in activities to put to the test what they have been taught. Work that is different but not matched to pupils' individual needs does not effectively help pupils of different abilities to make suitable progress.
6. In mathematics and science a similar picture is evident. In the investigative elements of mathematics pupils have too few opportunities to explore numbers in real situations, investigate patterns and relationships or apply mathematics linked to work in other subjects. In science, pupils cannot make progress as scientists because they spend too much time watching rather than experimenting and listening rather than hypothesising.
7. In ICT pupils attain as expected by the age of seven but not by 11. Skills are not systematically well taught and where they are there is a lack of use in day-to-day to work. Resources and a lack of confidence and competence by teachers to deliver the full Programmes of Study hinder progress and have not been a high enough priority to keep pace with national initiatives.
8. Pupils with special educational needs make overall satisfactory progress and receive good support from non-teaching staff. The work programmes are heavily focused on literacy and numeracy and their work in other subjects is not always well adapted or monitored.
9. The added value to pupils' education is diminished because of broadly adequate but uneven progress as they move from and between the key stages. School leadership has not analysed well enough the journey of pupils' progress or identified the key strengths and weaknesses in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding to set targets for improvements. The school plan has yet to set quantifiable targets for improvements to pupils' achievements such as, raise boys' attainment by 10 per cent in writing. The exceptions to these weaknesses are seen in the reception class where progress is good. In Years 5 and 6 when pupils' previous work is scrutinised very good progress is seen in using and applying literacy and numeracy skills. This stands them in good stead in the National Curriculum tests.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

10. The pupils' attitude to school and their behaviour are satisfactory. Their personal development, relationships and levels of attendance are good. The progress of pupils' learning is improved when supported by positive behaviour management strategies; this is not always the case.
11. Good attitudes were seen during a lesson for pupils in the Foundation Stage. They were learning about shapes and appropriate language to describe them. The teacher set clear expectations for behaviour and lesson pace, making the lesson interesting and exciting. These young children responded eagerly to questions with appropriate behaviour and showed a good knowledge of the concepts of two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes and how to describe them. The lesson made very good progress and supported children's understanding very well. Conversely, pupils in a mixed class for Years 3 and 4 were making Easter Cards during an art lesson. No expectation was made for age or ability and pupils easily lapsed into distracted behaviour that was not effectively controlled. Some pupils failed to persevere to improve their cards and showed little pride in what they produced. The quality of their

learning was adversely affected and progress was slow. These inconsistencies need to be ironed out so that all pupils receive a fairer deal.

12. The pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. Most are courteous and sociable, and are eager to engage visitors in conversation. Whilst many pupils display good behaviour, a significant minority has poor behaviour that is not always effectively managed.
13. Pupils mainly display positive relationships towards each other. Most older pupils show care for younger ones during play. The pupils enjoy the range of activities, linked to the community and the church calendar and they can recall what they did on various occasions with enthusiasm. The school's extra-curricular provision significantly contributes to pupils' personal development. As yet, their knowledge of the wider world, how they can contribute to their own well being through a systematic health education programme and the responsibilities of citizenship are not strong enough to ensure their personal development is complete.
14. The pupils' levels of attendance are good and they attend promptly at the start of the school day.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

15. Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good in the reception class. Whilst during the inspection teaching was satisfactory for Years 5 and 6 it is evident from scrutiny of pupils' work, teacher's planning and assessments that they have received some very effective teaching over time. Teaching elsewhere is also satisfactory unless subject specialisms are taught for example, art, where teaching then rises to good quality. This situation is little changed from the previous inspection and represents insufficient progress to sustain and raise the standards of attainment identified then. Teaching has an inconsistent impact on pupils' achievements and their opportunities.
16. In the Foundation Stage, (reception class) teaching is consistently good and on occasion very good, supporting children's learning well, notably in personal and social education and setting these young children on a positive start to their school careers. Early routines are well established. Early literacy and numeracy skills are very effectively taught and the children become keen to share books and attempt to read and write. The teacher has a secure knowledge of how young children learn and has set up an appropriate organisation and range of experiences to enable them to feel safe and secure. Teaching encourages skills of independence well and recognises that many children need extra support to improve their speaking skills. Lessons have good pace and allow children opportunity to explore and investigate. For example, in a typically good lesson designed to broaden the children's knowledge of the world around them they were encouraged to feel, look and predict when exploring materials which would be suitable to build the 'Three little pigs' house'. Every opportunity was used to build on children's vocabulary by reinforcing words and phrases such as hard, impossible to break, and very strong. The children were well behaved and concentrated well and applied their skills when counting the bricks they used in their patterns and identified shapes using mathematical language such as 'cuboid' to describe them. Teaching in the Foundation Stage has a beneficial impact on raising pupils' attainment.
17. In the infants and juniors, teaching seen is satisfactory overall but has areas requiring improvement. Resources are well-planned and non-teaching assistant support used to beneficial effect. Overall, knowledge of teaching literacy and numeracy is secure and subject skills are soundly taught but not always used to best effect. The work

does not build well enough on pupils' prior knowledge and skills. The good progress seen in the reception class has shifted to broadly sound with scope for improvement in the infants and the lower juniors where pupils mark time, not moving forward in their learning at a fast enough pace. The main reason for this is that data from tests and ongoing teacher assessment is not used to analyse pupils' needs, build on pupils' strengths and address weaknesses in their knowledge and skills. An example, of this is in much of the planning where lessons are planned with learning objectives stated clearly and work for two-year groups is planned at three broad levels. This does not cater for the needs of individual pupils well enough. Too often the work is different but not well matched to the pupils' needs and does not support or challenge the full spectrum of ability in the classes. Satisfactory teaching does not always plan to use pupils' acquired skills in their day-to-day work in literacy or the other subjects. An over emphasis on worksheets suggests to pupils that once they have completed their one word/phrase or sentence answers then the job is complete. This approach to recording does little to develop pupils' learning skills of transferring what they know, into research, exploration, investigation, recording or organising their own work. Neither does it enable the teachers to assess how well pupils have understood anything other than content. Another factor that slows progress is the inconsistent management of pupils' behaviour through the school; this slows the progress of the perpetrators as well as their classmates. Teaching for the older junior pupils shows some good strengths when scrutiny of work covered and assessments are considered. For example, it utilises pupils' basic skills more regularly and sets higher expectations for response, output and independence in learning.

18. Marking of work is regular and often done with the pupils. This is positive. As yet, there is no consensus as to how work should be marked for the various age groups in order to involve pupils in understanding how they can improve and set a course for success.
19. Classrooms are mainly well organised and show interesting displays of pupils' work. More could be made of these to link learning and teaching points.
20. Although some monitoring of teaching and its impact on learning has taken place, evidence shows this has lacked the rigour necessary to improve performance from the last inspection. To ensure consistency in pupils' progress, the time is right to agree as a team what constitutes effective teaching and learning, how it can best be achieved and then to regularly and systematically check that the agreed school view is adhered to and achieves the desired aim of raising pupils' achievements year on year.

## **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?**

21. The school's curriculum includes all the National Curriculum requirements for the Foundation Stage and Key Stage's 1 and 2, and religious education. Overall the school's planning provides for the delivery of all subjects but there are weaknesses in the curriculum in the infants and juniors that require swift improvement if all pupils are to achieve their potential in all aspects of the required curriculum.
22. The school's procedures for the Foundation Stage aim to ensure that children receive a safe and secure start to their schooling, motivating them to see school as a positive experience. The school is wholly successful in its aim for these young children. Induction procedures are designed to support the transition from home to school and are effective in their impact. Many children have experienced some form of pre-school

provision prior to joining the reception class. The aims for the Foundation Stage are spelt out in a comprehensive policy, which covers all of the areas of learning. It identifies what is considered to be good practice and the importance of flexibility in teaching and learning styles. Particular emphasis is placed on the vital role of play in children's development. There is a good Early Years curriculum for the Foundation Stage that closely follows the national Early Learning Goals, and Stepping Stones, guidance for pupils under the age of five.

23. The time the school has allocated to each of the National Curriculum subjects and the Foundation Stage areas of learning is generally appropriate and satisfactory, with the main priority being given to literacy and numeracy. The effectiveness with which plans are implemented varies between subjects and sometimes between classes. Not enough consideration is given within subjects to ensuring that there is a balance between the various strands such as skills, knowledge, investigation, and exploration. Overall there is a tendency to emphasise knowledge acquisition and basic skills and to allow less time for pupils to think and work independently on investigations and to develop their skills in unfamiliar situations. There are many examples in history, geography and science where learning is too teacher-directed with the result that there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to decide upon, and to carry out, their own ways of recording or to conduct their own enquiry, research or investigation.
24. The school uses the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, with some modification, to guide planning and teaching in both key stages. Some modifications such as the decision to take guided reading out of the literacy lesson has had a satisfactory impact; others such as not directly sharing learning objectives undermines the pupils' understanding of their own learning. In the other subjects, national guidance materials form the basis for long and medium-term planning. The school's own schemes of work indicate the sequence and timing of topics within each subject. In the foundation subjects and science the school operates a two-year cycle to ensure that the mixed-age classes in both key stages do not repeat topics unnecessarily. This complication has led to some inconsistencies in teacher expectations of the achievements of different year groups. A more rigorous method of monitoring planning, teaching and learning would support teachers to fine-tune their plans and to focus on teaching and learning objectives.
25. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) was judged as unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection and the judgement of this inspection is that it remains unsatisfactory. According to the school's self-evaluation statement, and its interim improvement plan, the school judges that it still has a considerable way to go before this important area of the curriculum can be considered as reaching a satisfactory standard of provision. The governors and school have begun the process of including PSHE, with specific drug awareness and Citizenship, within the curriculum across the whole school. The governors have exercised their right not to provide sex and relationships education. The school now has a PSHE policy that includes drug awareness and citizenship strands. The policy clearly states that it is the intention of the school to deliver PSHE in a variety of ways: as a discrete topic; such as drug awareness through a visit to the Life Education Caravan; as part of other subject topics; such as environmental issues within geography; and as whole-school events; such as charity fund-raising activities. The interim improvement plan also refers to setting up a school council. Each class has a skeletal scheme of work setting out where PSHE topics, including drug awareness and citizenship, link with other subjects such as religious education, English, science, physical education and art. For example, in Year 1/2 keeping clean and healthy are covered as part of a science. The St. John's Ambulance First Aid course is run for Year 5/6. As yet the school has



not implemented the policy and scheme of work fully into the curriculum, or established a system that enables the governors and the senior management team to monitor and evaluate the new policy and scheme of work. The improvements are noted but it is too soon to measure their impact.

26. The school's adaptation of the curriculum to accommodate the varying needs of pupils is limited to providing additional support from teachers and learning assistants and by the use of additional programmes such as Early Literacy Support (ELS) and Additional Literacy Support, (ALS) and the Springboard materials in numeracy. The Year 6 pupils benefit from Booster classes to support their preparation for the national tests at age 11. Pupils through the school have had opportunities to participate in enrichment and extension activities arranged in conjunction with several other small, local schools. These arrangements work for many pupils but are not sufficient to ensure all pupils, especially the more able, get the most out of the curriculum offered because teacher assessment is inconsistent and not specific enough. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory but no better.
27. Assessment information is not being well used to match the learning objectives, tasks and activities to the child so that progress and attainment are maximised for all children.
28. There are examples of good opportunities for learning being provided in lessons, and through other provision, such as visits and workshops across the whole school. The number and range of extracurricular activities have increased since the last inspection and the school offers good provision. The school regularly participates in area sporting events such soccer and 'kwik cricket' tournaments organised by Port Vale F.C. and Staffordshire Moorlands. There is an active 'Good Food' Club and an art/craft club. Until this term there was a 'Wildlife Watch' group. The martial arts club is well supported by children who enjoy the challenge of its grading system. The setting up of the after-school club, known as the Moose Club, has improved after-school childcare for many parents and is well supported. This club is managed by a committee of parents and teaching staff; the headteacher takes the role of chairman. The school also joins with other local schools in concerts and other aspects of the performing arts. Trips, visits and a residential stay are important features of the school's curriculum providing first hand experiences that support learning in art, geography, history, science and religious education. A whole-school theatre trip was particularly popular with the pupils.
29. Links with other schools are good. The local primary cluster headteachers meet regularly and there are close links with the local Roman Catholic secondary school, to which most children transfer, and the local high school that has special sports status. Students from the two high schools run sports and arts activities for the primary school pupils. The cluster group of schools has organised workshops in dance and art for pupils, and staff training in drama.
30. There are good, strong links with both the church and the local community. Pupils took part in turning on the Biddulph Christmas lights by singing in the town hall and regularly take part in ecumenical services at the Biddulph Day Care Centre. Volunteers from the church help in school by listening to reading and helping with clubs and trips. The school nurse helps with the first aid course. When appropriate to the curriculum a local firefighter, paramedic and policeman visit the school to talk to the children about their jobs. The school has strong links with a village in Haiti and supports the school there. It also supports other charitable causes such as CAFOD

and National Children's Homes, Action for Children. It has formed a link with Port Vale F.C. who send instructors to work with pupils in the school.

31. The pupils' personal development is satisfactory overall with some weaknesses. Pupils' moral and social development are good. Provision for development of their spiritual and cultural values is satisfactory.
32. The school enjoys close links with the church and pupils benefit in their personal development from the support of a strong Christian ethos and Catholic foundation. In their celebration of worship and in the daily life of the school the values and traditions of the church are used as a reference to guide and inform their conduct and relationships. Their sense of awe and wonder is not as well developed within the curriculum through opportunities to reflect on the excitement of science, the mysteries of nature or the wonder of human achievement. Collective worship meets statutory requirements.
33. The school makes good provision for the development of pupils' moral values and the children understand right from wrong and what is acceptable conduct. Some have contributed to classroom rules for behaviour. Nevertheless, a number of them do not benefit from a natural inclination to self-discipline and responsible behaviour and in a number of lessons, learning and progress were affected. This lack of self-discipline is compounded by inconsistent behaviour management strategies.
34. The children are friendly and sociable with visitors and many older pupils show concern for the younger pupils during play breaks and act as escorts on church visits. In addition to writing stories for the young children, the senior pupils produce a school magazine. The pupils are actively involved in their own community, notably through the church as well as visits to elderly residents and interaction with other schools through sport and competition. They have raised funds for charity within their own community and in addition, they have corresponded with pupils from a school in Haiti for whom they are collecting pencils and spectacles.
35. The provision for pupils' cultural development is broadly satisfactory but less well developed. They have studied elements of their own culture such as the Edwardian era and how the lives of children were affected by evacuation during World War 2. One class has corresponded with pupils from a Caribbean culture. However, their knowledge of the faiths, customs and beliefs of the wide range of world cultures is not sufficiently developed and they are not well equipped for life in a multicultural society.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

36. Overall the procedures for child protection and for ensuring the welfare of the pupils are good.
37. The quality of relationships between teachers and pupils ensures an environment in which the pupils are safe, secure and confident. A behaviour management policy and anti-bullying policy have recently been introduced but these are not yet supported by consistent behaviour management strategies throughout the school. Monitoring of attendance is good. There is no provision for separate play for those pupils who are under five years of age.
38. The school has made significant recent improvements to its assessment procedures, which were unsatisfactory at the last inspection. Procedures are now satisfactory but the impact of the procedures and their use remains unsatisfactory.

39. Early tests are given to children when they enter the school, in order to note their standards and prescribe a course of study for them. These assessments are also used to set general targets for them to reach by the end of their time in Year 2. From Year 2 to Year 6, a range of test material is used and some useful information is gathered. Unfortunately not all of this material relates to the levels of the National Curriculum. As a result, a very mixed set of data is produced, making it less easy for teachers to track, target or predict pupils' progress. As a result, these findings are inconsistently used by teachers and fail to give them easy access to information they need, in order to provide pupils with work, which challenges their known abilities.
40. In classes, pupils are often grouped into three broad bands and given work which is generally appropriate to their needs. Further sophistication of this approach is needed if pupils are to be more directly challenged and encouraged to make better progress. Better and more specific marking would also support this quest for higher standards. Currently all work is marked, but teachers do not give pupils enough advice on how they might improve their work on a day-to-day basis. Whilst this might happen in conversation, there is still a place for noting down the key features of what needs to be done, so that both teacher and pupils can refer to it at a later date.
41. The school has written individual literacy targets for pupils in Years 5 and 6. These targets are discussed with pupils and often show them what they must do to make progress. This involvement of pupils in their own improvement is a good move forward and could now be copied in other subjects and in other year groups.
42. The local authority produces an analysis of National Curriculum test results, which the school is given. Currently, not enough use is made of this type of information in order to make adjustments to both teaching and learning, based on the strengths and weaknesses shown in these results. The role of coordinators is not extended sufficiently to give them a clear role to play in checking planning and the outcomes and successes of learning, in order to see if assessment is playing an active role in improving standards.
43. The targets set for the school by the local authority, for both Year 2 and Year 6, show some differences with the school's own predictions. Whilst it is often difficult to make exact predictions of the outcomes of National Curriculum tests, as they are to be taken quite soon, it appears that the school's own predictions would see pupils fall short of the targets in English at Year 2 and mathematics in Year 6.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

44. The school makes satisfactory provision for this aspect. Weaknesses were noted in this aspect at the time of the last inspection. Improvements have been very recent as noted by parents. Parents' responses indicate only satisfactory approval for the school's relationship with them and they record a number of concerns for aspects of its provision. Namely, in the school's approachability; the quality of some pupils' behaviour and the way the school deals with this; the amount and consistency of homework; the information given to parents about the progress their children are making; the working relationship with parents; the management of the school and the range of extra-curricular activities. The inspection finds the need for some improvement in all of these aspects with the exception of the latter, which is good.
45. The annual reports of pupils' progress is currently under review by the school in order to improve the quality of information provided. Parents are involved in supporting their

children's learning through helping in the classroom and through the homework programme. There is an active parent, teachers' and friends' association which provides a wide range of events and activities to support the school and raise funds. These functions are well attended by parents.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

46. Since taking on responsibility for the running of the school in January 2003, the acting headteacher has instilled confidence into a fragile situation. Her confidence and competence in preparing the school in the run up to the inspection were beneficial to the school and inspection team. A positive attitude towards the inspection as a tool for improvement was evident.
47. The process of self-evaluation and school review is not embedded in the school's work. The acting headteacher has recognised this gap and has already planned to rectify it. The compilation of an interim school improvement plan by the acting headteacher has proved to be effective, in setting out clear objectives and how best they may be achieved, albeit in the short term. Her insight and understanding of the school's strengths and the challenges it faces, enabled her to set the right priorities for development and improvement. Her educational leadership and management strategies have secured the immediate future of the school. Under the over riding banner of "raising standards" long standing issues such as assessment, monitoring and evaluation have been highlighted as needing urgent attention, as well as emerging issues such as; behavioural management, which needs to be more consistent. Her actions have been recognised and appreciated by a good number of parents.
48. There is no clear cohesive management structure within the school. The lack of any senior management team and limited delegated management responsibilities restricts the ability of individuals to take responsibility for the standards attained in the subjects and ensure that action is planned to raise pupils' attainment and set further targets for success. This weakness also means that individuals have little input into the overall direction of the school. Only the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) carries any formalised responsibility. The management of special educational needs is adequate. A policy exists which clearly states that all pupils should be offered access to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum with the maximum of social and educational inclusion; this is not happening. Practice and policy need bringing much closer together. The special educational needs coordinator is the only member of staff given time to fulfil her role. Other coordinators are not sufficiently accountable for fulfilling their responsibilities. There is far too much responsibility on the acting headteacher for improvements to be sustained over the long term.
49. Job descriptions are out of date, targets linked to school priorities are missing and governors therefore cannot hold individuals to account and check whether training and time are being used effectively to impact on standards. Lines of accountability are not drawn up so that all know who is accountable for what and by when. An example, of this is that the SENCO has attended training on assertive discipline; this has not been effectively disseminated through the school to impact on improving consistency of behaviour management. In this way, training is not being monitored for value for money and impact.
50. Day to day school finances are managed effectively but there is a significant deficit in resource provision, furniture and the state of the accommodation which is longstanding. In addition, the physical environment and space for the Foundation

Stage has been neglected and the school has no plans to support disabled pupils through improvements to the accommodation. The matter is raised with the local authority.

51. Governors substantially fulfil their responsibilities in relation to the curriculum although there are weaknesses in ICT and in that there is an over emphasis on knowledge at the expense of skills. The governors are anxious to be involved and gain a further insight into the running of the school and support its future development. Current strategies for holding the school to account lack rigour and have not resulted in improving standards or the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection, particularly in the infant and lower junior classes.
52. Given the pupils' below average attainment on entry, the uneven but at times good progress they make and the improvements to test results by the age of 11 the school gives satisfactory value for money. Its capacity to improve is hard to judge because the substantive leadership is not resolved. The leadership and management of the acting headteacher are positive steps in the right direction of securing the school's future and are much appreciated by many parents.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

### 53. The governors, headteacher and staff now need to:

#### **Improve the policy & practice on educational inclusion, so the curriculum meets *all* pupils' needs, particularly raising their achievements, by ensuring:**

- a comprehensive policy is devised, agreed and backed by whole-school training on understanding the principles of educational inclusion;
- the curriculum is planned to give access to improving pupils' skills and their use and application in all subjects;
- the special educational needs policy is put into practice more fully;
- policies to improve PSHE and pupils' understanding of growing in a culturally diverse society are given higher profile;
- provision to accommodate and support disabled pupils is planned for;
- governors monitor the policy for success.

*Main reference to these issues can be found in paragraphs: 21, 23-26 and 35*

#### **Improve the monitoring of teaching and learning to iron out inconsistencies to ensure:**

- test and assessment information are used to give maximum benefit to pupils' achievements and ensure their early good progress is built upon consistently;
- a clear policy for behaviour management is known, understood and applied consistently by pupils, staff and parents;
- expectations are raised for pace, response and work output;
- marking of work shows pupils how they can improve and involves them in the process;
- outcomes of monitoring are evaluated, checked for success and clear actions set for further improvement.

*Main reference to these issues can be found in paragraphs: 17, 18, 20, 24 and 37 - 40*

#### **Raise standards in ICT by ensuring:**

- teaching builds systematically on what pupils know, can do and understand;
- teaching skills and giving pupils a wider range of opportunities to practise those skills in a range of subjects is planned for;
- assessment procedures are put in place to check learning and pin point standards;
- training for teachers is extended;
- resources are improved as funding allows.

*Main reference to these issues can be found in paragraphs: 99 - 107*

#### **Improve the process of self-evaluation and school improvement through delegation and accountability by ensuring:**

- the school plan incorporates a cycle of self evaluation and detail of how success will be measured specifically;
- a coherent management structure is established so all understand their responsibilities and accountabilities;
- coordinators devise detailed action plans aimed at improvements to standards;
- clear job descriptions with targets are drawn up and revaluated for success;
- coordinators report to governors on a regular basis;
- governors ask pertinent questions to check on progress and success.

*Main reference to these issues can be found in paragraphs: 42, 47 and 48*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	26
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	12

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	1	10	15	0	0	0
Percentage	0	4	38	58	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than three percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	n/a	98
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	n/a	14

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	n/a	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	n/a	20

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.4
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	0.5

*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*



### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2002	--	--	15

\*\*\*Where there are less than 10 pupils by gender or in total, numbers are not reported.

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	--	--	--
	Girls	--	--	--
	Total	13	12	13
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	87(92)	80(85)	87(92)
	National	84(84)	86(86)	90(91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	--	--	--
	Girls	--	--	--
	Total	12	13	13
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	80(82)	87(92)	87(92)
	National	85(85)	89(89)	89(89)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

\*\*Numbers not reportable with less than ten pupils in year group

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2002	--	--	--

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	--	--	--
	Girls	--	--	--
	Total	--	--	--
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	89(91)	78(91)	100(82)
	National	75(75)	73(71)	86(87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	--	--	--
	Girls	--	--	--
	Total	--	--	--
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	67(91)	67(91)	78(82)
	National	73(72)	74(74)	82(82)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

***Ethnic background of pupils***

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

***Exclusions in the last school year***

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
74	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0

*The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25
Average class size	24

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	39

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	n/a
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	n/a
Total number of education support staff	n/a
Total aggregate hours worked per week	n/a
Number of pupils per FTE adult	n/a

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2001/2
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	£
Total income	£250110
Total expenditure	£232821
Expenditure per pupil	£2526
Balance brought forward from previous year	£9683
Balance carried forward to next year	£17288

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1.5

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	98
Number of questionnaires returned	43

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	47	9	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	49	40	12	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	40	7	7	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	37	49	12	2	0
The teaching is good.	44	47	5	5	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	40	16	5	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	33	7	5	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	35	12	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	30	40	23	5	2
The school is well led and managed.	37	44	14	5	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	51	7	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	47	16	0	2

## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

54. The quality of teaching in all of the areas of learning is at least good and in language and literacy very effective teaching was seen. Given that a good proportion of children start school with below average levels of achievement their progress is good towards the Early Learning Goals and by the end of the reception class most children are ready for the challenges of the National Curriculum.

#### **Personal, social and emotional development**

55. The reception class provides a warm, welcoming environment for children, which enhances their feeling of safety and security. Children have learned the routines and take great delight in sharing how things are organised and what you have to do and cannot do. During the inspection, the early training children received on entry to the class was seen in all of the activities they enjoyed. They know how many children are allowed at certain tasks, what the expectations are for clearing away equipment and they have a good grasp of the need to share and take turns. A small number of children have not yet understood that they are one of many. Teaching of this aspect is very good and enables learning to move forward, increasing concentration and motivation. In a session on helping children express their feelings the teacher introduced the notion of fear. She creatively used a puppet of 'The big bad wolf' and passed it round for the children to handle. As it was passed on the children were encouraged to reveal their fears to the group. The children gained in confidence as the activity progressed. They learned about what comforts each other when they are frightened and again all had a chance to share their feelings. Good relationships between the teacher and amongst the children supported the activity and supported the very good behaviour of the group. The children are well on target to attain as expected in this area of learning by the age of five.

#### **Communication, language and literacy**

56. The teaching of this aspect is good and on occasion very good. Children are given ample opportunities to speak aloud and share what they know and have learned. Effective interaction between adults and children during small group activities to introduces new words and reinforces learned vocabulary. Listening skills are becoming better developed although some children still need to wait for others to finish talking. This happens most often when they are bursting with something to say. The children join in eagerly with repeating lines from The Three Little Pigs to encourage them to read from a big book. The teacher had skilfully inserted her own words in large, easy to read print and had a lively, dramatic approach to reading aloud which the children delighted in. Effective questioning about what happened, and in what order kept them all on task and involved. Follow up activities further reinforced the learning as some went to role play the story in the 'Three Little Pigs' House' and others drew pictures of the characters. The work was linked well to writing as some attempted to scribe their own version of events and label the characters. Almost all the children recognise their names and scribe them, can say and recognise the initial letters of the alphabet and the sounds they make and have a good knowledge of the sequence of a story. A few more able children can recognise punctuation marks, including an exclamation mark and know that it affects how something is said. The adults regularly assess whether the children have learned new words through conversation or in books. Most children are on target to attain as expected in all

aspects of language and literacy with the exception of a few who are likely to require special educational needs support.

### **Mathematical development**

57. The teaching of this aspect is good and enables firm progress to be made towards the Early Learning Goals. Children know and can recognise numbers zero to ten. They can count aloud in order and some show great pride in knowing numbers more than ten. Some more able children can add and count on to five. The children learn to recognise shape and pattern and are encouraged to see relationships. The teacher was again creative in prompting the children to listen to her descriptions of shapes and challenging them to guess what she was holding. The teacher constantly reinforces the terms, rectangle, sphere and two and three-dimensional. The children like these words and repeat them over and over again. They move onto sorting the shapes into boxes and have to explain their reasons why. A good, relevant range of tasks including building a picture with the shapes, drawing around them, playing a shape game with a die and making shapes with dough, reinforces the teaching points well. The good lesson pace was typical of those seen and showed a strong knowledge of how children learn and how best to convey the subject matter. Pupils as usual were well behaved, concentrated keenly and showed an improved knowledge of shape words by the end of the session.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

58. One session was seen where children were exploring the most suitable materials with which to build the 'Three Little Pigs' House'. The emphasis was on improving skills of manipulation and control. The children made houses, made a pig and completed sponge printed pictures of the wall of the house; drawing on their mathematical skills to create a pattern. The children knew all about routines of stop, look and listen at different junctures of the lesson. Children learned new words to describe the straw, such as 'bendy', 'squashy', 'rough bits' and 'breakable'. The children improve their skills using a mouse and keyboard to manipulate shapes and letters on a screen. Photographic evidence and discussions reveal they have found out about their own bodies, weighing themselves, taking temperatures and learned about looking after their teeth following a visit from the school dentist. They have studied minibeasts, been pond dipping and had fun in the snow looking at how it changes when it is warmed and been to the zoo. All of this evidence indicates that children are gaining a broad knowledge of the world around them and are at least soundly prepared for the challenges of the National Curriculum in science, geography, history and design and technology and ICT.

### **Physical and creative development**

59. No lessons were seen in physical and creative development but evidence from around the classroom, observing children at play and moving around the room suggests that they are making good progress towards the Early Learning Goals with the exception of outdoor play. There is a weakness in physical provision for these young children because there is no safe, secure outside area which has various surfaces, high and low equipment with sufficient push and pull toys to enable children to explore their physical capabilities as expected. In music, children sing with enjoyment high on the agenda. They accompany each other on untuned percussion instruments.

## ENGLISH

60. Test results for 11 year olds are above those found nationally although the size of the cohort is too small to make comparisons nationally or with similar schools. The percentage of pupils who attained at the higher Level 5 was also higher than usually found. The school is using booster support to assist the current Year 6 in maintaining the trend of improvement, which has emerged since 2000. The good quality of teaching impacts positively on pupils' progress as they enter Year 5 and 6.
61. The test results for seven year olds are on the surface quite positive in the proportion attaining at the expected Level 2 or above. More pupils than expected nationally attained at the higher Level 3 however, but the trend of performance is downward. The disappointment arises when the fact that 33 per cent of pupils attained at the lower Level 2c in reading and 40 per cent attained at this lower level in writing. This does not augur well for these pupils' performance when they reach Year 6. Also when the pupils' good progress in the reception class is taken into account along with the low levels of pupils identified with special educational needs it might be expected that more pupils would attain at least at Level 2b or 2a. Pupils' progress is broadly sound but it could be better in the infants and levels out too much in the lower juniors. Pupils' progress is also delayed when the management of individual pupil's behaviour is inconsistent in the lower juniors.
62. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with good features in the upper school. This good teaching contributes significantly to the standards attained by the age of 11. Pupils are not well challenged and in many respects mark time until they reach Year 5 where their learning takes on a spurt and their skills are more quickly developed and used in the other subjects. Scrutiny of pupils' work reinforces that expectation, pace and level of challenge are too often low. Work is not suitably matched to the wide range of age and ability in the infant class because there is a key weakness in assessment and this affects the type of tasks pupils are asked to complete. Teachers' planning does not show how there will be opportunities to use and extend taught skills in day-to-day work. This is a key weakness. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is sound and shows more suitably planned work than for the rest of the class. Too little cognisance is taken of the need to challenge the more able in day-to-day work from Years 1 to 4.
63. Pupils attain sound standards in speaking and listening by the ages of seven and 11 although there is a wide range of ability, articulation and confidence amongst pupils. In Years 1 and 2, most but not all pupils offer what they can deduce from the cover of book when asked by the teacher. They are encouraged to share their ideas and the teacher has to do a good deal of prompting to elicit quite simple responses such as 'the wolf likes pancakes. In Year 3 and 4 pupils require a lot of motivation from the teacher before they begin to ask questions. By Year 5 and 6 pupils are required to listen carefully to teacher's questioning and then articulate their own perceptions of the text being read. Some boys fail to pay enough attention and so miss what is required of them when asked to scan text. This is fairly typical of their response. Overall there is a reticence on the part of many pupils not to be the first to offer answers and frequently it is the same groups of pupils who either join in readily or who need maximum input from the teachers. Other than these similar examples listening is satisfactory. Standards could be raised further but are restricted by pupils' attitudes and at times they have too few opportunities to enter into discussions during lessons. All pupils join in with the cluster group for drama, and Year 5 and 6 pupils take part in expressive and creative arts, public speaking competitions and poetry recitation. Discussions with pupils reveal they enjoy this work very much and it is not

coincidental that where this happens then writing is better quality. This type of valuable activity is not replicated through the school. There is a need for pupils to read and speak out loud to audiences more often. Older and younger pupils do not read their reading books or stories they have composed to each other and discuss them.

64. Reading standards are broadly satisfactory by the ages of seven and 11 but could be better. Pupils acquire reading skills of word and sound recognition regularly and effectively by the age of seven. When hearing them read they have moderate fluency and the average and most able show the confidence to break down new and unknown words. What is missing in the reading of too many pupils is fluency and understanding. When questioned about character names, plot and prediction too few are ready with ideas and answers without referring back to the text, using picture cues or prompting. The least able pupils struggle and search the pictures rather than attempting new words. This shows a lack of independence in reading. In Years 3 and 4 all pupils have a good working knowledge of phonics, which they use effectively to decode words. Reading materials in this class are in particularly poor condition, out of date and do little to inspire pupils to want to read. Most books are from reading schemes and they are short, have few colours and limited vocabulary. Pupils know the difference between fiction and non-fiction text but are less competent with using correct terminology. Again, only the better readers read with fluency but still little expression. Comprehension skills are still at a literal level. Inference and deduction are a mystery to them. By Year 6, pupils are reading a broader range of texts. The more able read with style, fluency and expression but they too have limited understanding of deduction and inference, which are key Year 6 skills. They could not be classed as above average readers in a national perspective. Most know some of the contemporary authors and can express preferences for their work. Pupils in the Year 5 and 6 class have a better knowledge of vocabulary such as index, glossary and contents page and use the library more frequently to support their topic work. There is a higher expectation in the Year 5 and 6 class for pupils to read at home and in school. However, overall pupils are not required to research and use texts to support their work in the other subjects often and consistently enough, from the infants to the upper juniors, for them to have well developed reading and research skills. This is one of the key weakness of the school's work. Structured teaching of reading for the pupils with special educational needs is thorough and well supported by non-teaching staff where progress is regularly checked against targets.
65. Standards of writing are satisfactory but could be better. Most pupils' handwriting is fluent and a legible joined script is used by the age of 11. Pupils' spelling skills are adequate as they progress through school and improved by the age of 11. Pupils make good gains in their understanding and use of grammar from the infants through to the upper juniors and have little difficulty identifying the correct way to start and complete sentences, use punctuation and spelling rules. Potentially good links with literacy were noted when pupils wrote instructional texts about making pancakes. However, this is spoiled when the task extends over two days with little sign of moving forward or real progress in improving the work and other subject links are missed such as notes on how the ingredients change when cooked. In geography, in the lower junior class the children were learning about Haiti. The pupils had written emails to a former teacher who had been working in Haiti and who had set up a link with English Martyrs. These examples do not go far enough in demanding of pupils to research, find out, organise and record for themselves. In all subjects, over reliance upon teacher produced and commercial worksheets prevent pupils from using good basic skills to present their work in creative and imaginative ways. In science, pupils are not even required to take notes during the teacher demonstrations. The recording of practical activities is too often teacher directed and this tends to obscure the pupils'



own thinking and observations. The exception is in the upper juniors. This could quickly be improved if pupils were required to organise their own writing more often and not asked to complete mundane worksheets that require little effort or skill to complete. This is most notable in the independent tasks in the literacy lessons where the expectations are low and on occasion pupils just copy text from one place to another. There is very little imaginative writing of any quality and where it is recorded pupils' work is very similar because the introduction by the teacher has been overly directive and pupils become reliant on the words and ideas generated in the shared activity rather than being spontaneous and having a go themselves. The exception was some good quality poetry written by pupils in Years 5 and 6, which had been entered into a competition and published into an authority poetry book. Overall pupils are not systematically encouraged as they move through the school to transfer what they have learned in English to their work in other subjects. This is an area for improvement.

66. The management of English needs improvement with far greater rigour in assessing what teachers teach and measuring its impact on pupils' learning and progress. Not enough analysis has been undertaken by the school of test and assessment data in order to set suitable targets for improvements and check that they are being achieved consistently through the school. Reading material is unsatisfactory in quality and range. The use of English within the curriculum is unsatisfactory; lost opportunities for developing precise vocabulary and enthusing pupils to read and write prevail. This provision of English is less positive than at the time of the last inspection.

## **MATHEMATICS**

67. Caution must be exercised when analysing the tests results because the number of pupils involved was less than ten. The results of the 2002 National Curriculum tests for 11 year olds showed pupils to be above the national average, with the percentage of pupils achieving above the nationally expected level to be above average. In comparison with those of similar schools, the results were above average. Evidence gathered during the inspection suggests that the school's results might not be as positive in the next round of tests, although the school is currently carrying out revision and "booster" work in order to raise standards prior to the tests being taken.
68. Pupils in Year 2 last year achieved the weakest results in tests over the last four years, with results being below national averages. Bearing in mind that pupils enter the school with below average standards, this might suggest that the school does not provide pupils with a good start. However, the inspection shows that pupils receive a good start in the Foundation Stage of learning, but sometimes this progress is not maintained in Years 1 and 2. Currently, standards in mathematics are broadly average in Year 2, giving rise to the expectation that the results of the next round of National Curriculum tests could be more positive. By the time pupils leave Year 6, their standards, which are in line with expectations this year and were slightly above expectations last year, suggests they are making good progress over that period of time. Pupils with special educational needs sometimes receive extra help during lessons, when this happens, their progress is good, however, this does not always happen, thus hindering their progress.
69. From their early days in school, pupils are encouraged to use mathematical terms to describe what they are doing. Pupils in Years 2 and 3 are able to write in mathematical language when noting what they see in different shapes. However, whilst the oldest pupils have experiences of changing word problems into calculations, they do not have enough opportunities to make use of their mathematical

skills in open-ended investigations. They do not have enough experience of hypothesising, analysing data and making decisions on how to investigate.

70. Numeracy skills, on the other hand, are much more secure. Pupils in Year 2 can add and subtract numbers to 100 and carry out simple shopping games with money up to a pound. By Year 6, they can multiply and divide by ten, 100 and 1000 and understand the links between multiplication and division. They have good knowledge of fractions and can see the links between fractions, decimals and percentages. The progress made in numeracy skills is largely due to the satisfactory use the school makes of the National Numeracy Strategy, in which the progression of skills, knowledge and understanding is clearly mapped out for teachers to see and follow.
71. Many pupils show a good understanding of shape, space and measures. In Year 2 they have good opportunities to measure lengths to a metre and are able to use the vocabulary of length successfully. They have a growing understanding of time and many can be accurate when telling the time. They can classify shapes by the number of sides and corners and recognise shapes such as pentagons, hexagons and octagons. By Year 6, pupils use more sophisticated vocabulary and talk about vertices, angles and faces. They are beginning to understand aspects of symmetry and are beginning to understand how to calculate the perimeter and area of particular shapes.
72. The amount of data handling seen in work books was limited and suggests that this is not an area in which pupils have good knowledge and understanding. Year 6 pupils have constructed both block and line graphs, but their work in aspects of probability is limited. Pupils have little knowledge and understanding of how computers can help in making graphical displays of mathematical work.
73. Pupils apply their speaking and listening skills well in mathematics. Lessons show a good mix of discussion, written work and direct teaching of skills. Pupils are often keen to contribute.
74. Teaching was never less than satisfactory during the inspection. It was good in one lesson and satisfactory in three others. During the time of the inspection, the regular Year 5 and 6 teacher was acting headteacher, therefore, her good teaching, noted in the work books, was not able to be observed. Where teaching was good, the teacher had secure knowledge of the subject matter and was able to teach skills and understanding well. Good relationships were evident and class control was good. Although even then, there were one or two pupils who were quite disruptive. Work in all lessons was directed to two or three ability groups, but assessment has not been used well enough to ensure that all pupils were being challenged appropriately. This could still be improved.
75. The satisfactory nature of the teaching is met by similar satisfactory responses from the pupils. When they are actively engaged in learning at their own level, they can respond well. However, when some pupils do not feel challenged or choose not to respond well, the teachers do not always have sufficient strategies for dealing with this. The work in mathematics shows limited improvement since the last inspection.

## **SCIENCE**

76. Caution must be exercised when analysing the tests results because the number of pupils involved was less than ten. In the national tests for the Year 2002 the pupils' attainment at the end of the juniors was above the national average, and also above

the average for similar schools. When compared with the school's past performance, the results for 2002 are good. However, in previous years the scores have been below national and similar school averages. Standards of day-to-day work are in line with expectations for seven and 11 year olds in terms of pupils' knowledge of scientific phenomena, however they are lower than expected in investigational science. There has been little improvement since the previous inspection.

77. In the school's own science assessments at the end of the infants, pupils' attainment was below national and similar school averages. For pupils achieving Level 3, results are better than national expectations, attainment was above national and similar school benchmarks. Similar mixed results can be found from an analysis of the school's past performance. Teachers explain the variability in attainment by differences between cohorts. In the previous report pupils were judged to be broadly in line with national averages. This would indicate that the school needs to use its assessment system to better inform its planning in science in the infants. This would ensure that teaching and the levels of support given is better focused on the individual needs of the pupils to enable them to achieve higher standards.
78. No lessons were observed during the inspection. Although other evidence suggests it is broadly satisfactory with scope for improvement especially in investigational science. The evidence available from teachers' planning and pupils' work confirms that the pupils' knowledge of: materials and their properties, and life processes and living things; is in line with national expectations. From discussion with older pupils it is clear that they have a good knowledge of light and sound but they are much less secure when talking about forces and electricity. Pupils' work shows that pupils with special educational needs or with lower ability receive additional support to enable them to carry out the same tasks as others in the class. Older pupils talked with enthusiasm about the subject and could recount the details of several practical investigations they had carried out.
79. There was very little evidence that pupils have carried out individual practical activities. Discussions with them reveal that they usually listen and watch; this is because the practical element takes the form of a teacher demonstration and sometimes because the recording of practical activities is usually teacher directed and this tends to obscure the pupils' own thinking and observations. Similarly there is very little evidence showing that pupils regularly devise and carry out their own investigations and enquiries. Teachers' planning shows that pupils' planning, investigating and evaluating skills are not being systematically developed. This has the effect of discouraging pupils' own thinking about science. The over-use of teacher determined recording inhibits the pupils from choosing their own ways of presenting evidence. Underpinning these weaknesses is a clear lack of teacher knowledge and understanding of Scientific Enquiry (AT1).
80. The previous report states that "progress in the development of investigative science throughout the school is slow, resulting in lower than expected attainment in this area when pupils leave the school." This aspect of science was, and remains, unsatisfactory. This issue will be crucial to raising standards because from summer 2003 the end of the juniors, assessment tests will change from being mainly knowledge based to being process based. In future, questions will test pupils' understanding of scientific enquiry especially their planning, fair testing, interpreting data and evaluating skills.
81. The management of the subject is not strong. The coordinator has recently revised the science policy and has carried out some monitoring of planning. She has begun to

feed back her comments and observations. There has been no recent staff training in the subject and none is presently planned. The resources available are adequate for the teacher determined and teacher demonstration approach to practical science are inadequate for meeting the practical requirements of the National Curriculum.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

82. In both key stages pupils' attainment in art is in line with national expectations with some good quality work being achieved across the school. By the end of Year 2, most pupils have developed the ability to represent their ideas using a range of techniques. They are able to produce fine line drawings; select, blend and explore the use of colours in printing and pattern making; and produce imaginative collages. Displays exhibiting sculptures, observational drawings, sponge printing and crayoning record their ability to use these and other skills, as found at the time of the last inspection. By the end of the juniors, pupils' skills in observation and in their ability to record what they see and feel, reveal a keener sense of awareness and perception of form, as observed in their work on rotational symmetry and their representational drawings of Greek pottery.
83. Teaching must be satisfactory overall given the quality of work around the school produced by pupils and when the overall planning is considered. It is strongest when taught by the subject specialist. In the lessons observed Years 1 and 2 pupils worked hard in producing their sculptures using a range of materials including plasticine, wire and paper. Good quality teaching enabled them to gain an understanding of shape, form and texture and to develop their manipulative skills. They enjoyed the tasks and cooperated well, sharing equipment as they persevered to complete their work. Years 3 and 4 pupils were less enthusiastic in their making of an Easter card. Although the lesson was well planned and the task well demonstrated by the teacher, overall progress was unsatisfactory. Equipment was slow in being handed out, pupils were noisy and their poor behaviour which was not adequately checked had an adverse effect on the quality of learning. Years 5 and 6 pupils concentrated on the task of measuring and cutting out card to produce viewfinders as their initial step to producing their landscape pictures. What was a successful and interesting session was marred by the persistent poor behaviour of a small group of boys, which was allowed to have an adverse effect on their own work and the progress made by other pupils in the class.
84. Generally pupils respond willingly and with good concentration in lessons. They were eager to share how they had produced pieces of work and had a sound understanding of a number of well-known artists, describing the style and work of Piet Mondrian accurately when talking about his rectilinear period.
85. Skills are systematically taught throughout the school in line with school policy. The subject makes a valuable contribution to the pupils' personal development.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

86. At the last inspection, standards were noted as above expectations at the end of Year 2 and in line with expectations at the end of Year 6. Currently standards across the school are in line with national expectations. The vast majority of pupils makes satisfactory progress in their learning, as do pupils who have special educational needs. Since the last inspection, the school's emphases on making improvements in literacy and numeracy have meant that other areas of the curriculum have not been in such high focus.

87. Although only one lesson was observed, in Year 2, the work on display and scrutiny of planning shows that teaching is satisfactory and pupils have had reasonable opportunities to generate ideas, select tools and materials for the things they make and assemble materials in a variety of ways. In Years 1 and 2, good links with literacy were noted when pupils wrote instructional texts about making pancakes. They then were able to turn this into a practical food technology lesson in order to make their pancakes. In an observed lesson, pupils in this class continued with their vehicle project. They had previously made a structure for their vehicle using wood measured and accurately cut. They had added reinforced corners to the structure and had glued on brackets to hold the wheels and axles. They required very little help to complete the tasks, which were well taught and resourced. The pupils tested their vehicles but when some noticed that the wheels came off the axles, the class teacher did not use this as a further test of their ingenuity. Too quickly the teacher herself showed pupils how to overcome the problem.
88. Planning and photographic evidence showed pupils in Year 6 making a car and testing its strength on impact. Following the construction of the car, pupils carried out a test using a sloping ramp and a heavy wooden car as the crashing vehicle. They then evaluated their designs, trying to make alterations in order to strengthen their vehicle. Having carried this out a number of times, they then watched a video, which gave them further clues as to how to build a safety frame inside the vehicle.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

89. One lesson in the infants and two lessons in the juniors were observed during the inspection. No teaching of geography was observed during the last inspection. Samples of work throughout the school were available, together with teachers' planning and a range of displays from various geography projects.
90. During this inspection, standards were judged to be in line with national expectations. This was also the judgement made at the last inspection. Pupils are able to make simple maps and plans; they can use geographical vocabulary to ask questions and to describe differences in location. They are learning to use fieldwork skills and to use maps and globes to locate other countries. They are beginning to understand the effect that humans have on their environment and able to talk and write about this and issues such as pollution and road congestion in thoughtful and knowledgeable ways.
91. In all lessons teaching was judged satisfactory. Planning was drawn from national guidance. In the infants, as part of a joint history and geography topic, the teacher took the class out of school to observe neighbouring houses. They were asked to decide what materials were used to build the houses. They also had to try to decide why some houses had windows frames made of plastic and others made from wood. Chimneys were another feature that the children were asked to identify and to count. The children were very interested and well behaved. They were able to identify different materials and explain how double-glazing kept houses warmer than single ones. They also understood that chimneys were required to take away unwanted gases and smoke when the house was being heated. In the lower junior class, the children were learning about Haiti. The pupils had written emails to a former teacher who had been working in Haiti and who had set up a link between a Haitian school and English Martyrs. The pupils were very knowledgeable about the differences between their lives and the lives of the Haitian children. The teacher had arranged for the children to gain first hand experience of the toys and games Haitian children played. They made rag balls and simple kites from plastic bags. This caught the pupils'

imagination and started off a whole series of questions that they wanted to send off in their next email.

92. The provision for geography broadly meets National Curriculum requirements and pupils across both key stages generally make satisfactory progress and reach national expectations. Teachers make good use of visits, photographs and displays to create interest and to motivate pupils to think in geographical ways. There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their own ideas and carry out research and enquiries independently. Over reliance upon teacher produced and commercial worksheets prevent pupils from using good basic skills to present their work in creative and imaginative ways.
93. The school has a geography policy that has been recently revised, and a simple scheme of work that sets out the timing and order of work over the two-year cycle of work and suggests links with science and history.

## **HISTORY**

94. Two history lessons were observed during the inspection. No history lessons were observed during the last inspection. Pupils' work in books, photographs and on display, together with teachers' planning and records were available. Teachers' planning is closely based on national guidance.
95. Standards were considered to be satisfactory at the time of the last inspection. Standards are again judged to be in line with national expectations. Pupils have an understanding of chronological order and can use dates to help place events and periods into order. They have knowledge of change and can offer simple cause and effect explanations.
96. Teaching was judged satisfactory in both lessons observed. At Key Stage 1 pupils were asked to observe local houses and to decide which were new and which were old. The children were asked to suggest clues to look for. Pupils suggested peeling paint, old fashioned windows and lack of garages or parking spaces. An upper Key Stage 2 class were learning about ancient Greeks. They had several information sheets about the early Olympic Games. The children were asked to compare the ancient games with the modern equivalent and give instances of difference and of similarity. A weakness in teachers' planning is that they do not plan for the progression inherent in the attainment target levels and so do not adequately differentiate work. This prevents more able pupils being able to fulfil their potential and help to raise standards across the whole school.
97. History provision broadly meets National Curriculum requirements and pupils at both key stages generally make satisfactory progress. Teachers make good use of artefacts, photographs, books and visits to stimulate their pupils' interest. Good use is also made of video and audio materials and CD-ROM's to enhance pupils' knowledge. A particularly good example of helping pupils to be able empathise with people who lived at an earlier age was seen in the lower junior class when they were studying World War II. The windows had been taped and blacked out to help the class gain experience of a common feature of wartime life.
98. Management of the subject is underdeveloped. The coordinator oversees the two year planning cycle but has had limited opportunities to monitor teaching and learning in history. The element of accountability is missing and so there is nothing to drive up standards by sharing good practice within the school. Many of the book resources

available for pupils to use are outdated and in poor condition. This is unsatisfactory and does not help the school's efforts to raise standards.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

99. By the end of Year 2 the majority of pupils is broadly in line with nationally expected standards. By the age of 11 standards are below nationally expected levels by the end of Year 6. Pupils' progress is inconsistent across the school, with better progress made in Years 5 and 6 by all pupils, including those with special educational needs.
100. Although standards were noted as satisfactory at the last inspection, the world of technology has moved forward considerably since that time, leaving the school a little in its wake. This is due to a lack of focus on building systematically on what pupils know, can do and understand, a lack of assessment procedures in place to check learning and pin point standards, incomplete training for teachers, who lacked confidence and expertise and a lack of the use of ICT to support other areas of the curriculum.
101. The school is gradually recovering the ground previously lost following the staff training. However, there is still some way to go before the gaps in pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are closed and they can build on their prior knowledge. The school is beginning to link ICT with both literacy and numeracy, but progress here is slow.
102. In the "communication" strand of the subject, most pupils in Year 6 can change fonts, move text about the screen and use a spellchecker facility. They can add graphics to their texts, for example in the magazines they produce, but have little understanding of the use of multi-media presentations. They have had some limited opportunities of writing poems using word processing skills and for example, have written stories about "The Wreckers".
103. Their data-handling skills are adequate by Year 6. In discussion, a small group of pupils shows they have little recollection of using computers to create graphs, but are well informed about how to create databases. They have had little opportunity to use a spreadsheet and therefore lack higher order skills in using on screen tool bars and menus.
104. Pupils in Year 2 have had opportunities to use a floor robot, so that they might input directions so that it follows their instructions. Year 6 pupils, on the other hand, have not built on these skills in order to use similar control techniques to give instructions to the computer to draw shapes, trace patterns and follow a planned route on screen. They know very little about the ways in which technology can be used to control processes neither have they had opportunities to use the computer to log data such as heat or light.
105. Within the area of computer modelling, younger pupils have had opportunities to "dress Teddy" in a program where they have to choose clothes and move them across the screen to Teddy using click, drag and drop skills. Older pupils have used CD-ROM programs to support their work in history. They have been able to look back at life in ancient Greece in order to find information about the original Olympic Games. Overall they have made satisfactory progress in this area of their work.
106. Pupils are more skilled at using the Internet as a research tool. All of the pupils in Year 6 have been able to carry out research in chosen areas of interest. They have

researched endangered species, looked at information about other countries and have carried out some revision work in preparation for their National Curriculum tests. However, the current links with the Internet are not good enough, as the school finds itself unable to make connections for far too much of the time. Pupils have used e-mail in order to contact people in the Falkland Islands and to obtain information about Haiti, as part of their geography work.

107. No direct teaching of ICT was seen at this inspection or the last. As a result, no comment on the quality of teaching can be made. In spite of this, it is possible to say that ICT lessons were not noted on class timetables, giving rise to the fear that the direct teaching of the subject was in danger of being marginalized. With two or three computers in the classrooms, class teaching may well be problematic, but the school needs to focus far more on teaching skills and giving pupils a wider range of opportunities to practise those skills in a range of subjects.

## **MUSIC**

108. Although only singing was directly observed during the inspection, evidence from planning, school year books and a discussion with pupils in Year 6, suggest that standards in music are satisfactory, as they were at the last inspection.
109. In assemblies and in a hymn practice, pupils from all classes sang well and clearly enjoyed their singing. They sang such hymns as "Bind us together" and "A new commandment I give to you", with clear diction, in tune and with enthusiasm. The singing practice itself was well managed by the acting headteacher, who accompanied the pupils and supported them well with her own singing.
110. Missed opportunities were noted in assemblies for pupils to listen to a range of music. No music was played on entry or exit from assemblies. At this time, it might have been possible to play a range of music from different countries in order to support pupils' cultural development.
111. A scrutiny of previously completed work shows that pupils in Years 3 and 4 know that music is written on a staff. They have had good opportunities to listen to and appraise such music as "The carnival of the animals" when they recognised various instruments and noted how these imitated chosen animals.
112. In Years 5 and 6 the following of the guidance is satisfactory and in appraising music pupils are being guided to write about the composer, to describe clearly what they hear and how the music made them feel. They benefited from a visit to the theatre and the visit of professional musicians to the school, teaching them new songs to perform for the rest of the school and parents.
113. The school concerts give pupils a sense of performance, as do the occasions when older pupils sing carols for people at the local day centre and at the local supermarket.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

114. Only two lessons were observed during the inspection. At the last inspection standards were judged to be in line with national expectations in the juniors and above national expectations in the infants. Changes in teaching personnel have resulted in changes in the provision and teaching of physical education. The most significant change is that teachers now take many of their own gymnastics, dance and games



lessons. Suitable time is spent on swimming and specialist sports instructors have been employed to teach soccer skills. Standards are now judged to be in line with national expectations across both key stages, except for in progress in swimming in which most pupils exceed national expectations by the end of the juniors.

115. The whole of the National Curriculum requirements are covered including adventurous and outdoor activities during the Year 6 residential at Alton Castle. Pupils have opportunities to learn skills in soccer, tennis, cricket, High Fives and rounders as well as to participate in tournaments and inter-school competition. Help with a variety of games is given by students from the local sports specialist high school.
116. Teaching is satisfactory overall when planning is taken into account. A dance lesson in the infants was observed in which children were taught a traditional circle Indian dance. The teacher made good use of a taped lesson to provide the basic structure of the lesson; when pupils were unable to follow the taped instructions or needed something repeated or explained the teacher stopped the tape to intervene. The children made sound progress and by the end of the lesson had learned the dance and were able to perform it without prompting. The children were well behaved and showed great enthusiasm for the activity. Good coordination and collaboration skills were required to achieve such a good standard of performance in such a short period. A soccer skills lesson, led by instructors from Port Vale FC, with lower junior pupils was observed. The pupils responded well to the structure of the lesson. They were able to explain the importance and function of the warm up section and responded well to the small incremental skills progression they were asked to attempt. Teaching in this lesson was good. The instructors' subject knowledge and planning were good. The structure of warm up, skill development, application of skills in a small team context followed by a cool down and plenary enabled all pupils, even those with learning difficulties, to make good progress. The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils were good.
117. Currently there is no subject coordinator. As reported by the previous inspection team there is still no standardised record system in physical education except for in swimming. The hall, playground and playing field provide good accommodation for this subject. As was stated in the last inspection some of the resources for physical education are old and need replacement. No record of safety checks was available at the time of the inspection.
118. The provision of extracurricular sports activities is a strength. The Martial Arts club is particularly popular with older pupils as are the inter-school competitions.