

# INSPECTION REPORT

**ST MARY'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND (AIDED)  
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent

LEA area: Stoke-on-Trent

Unique reference number: 124311

Headteacher: Mr S J Griffin

Reporting inspector: Mrs Sonja Øyen  
7167

Dates of inspection: 17<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> June 2002

Inspection number: 250234

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ladywell Road Tunstall Stoke-on-Trent Staffordshire
Postcode:	ST6 5DE
Telephone number:	01782 235337
Fax number:	01782 235338
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Father Allan Buik
Date of previous inspection:	July 1998

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
7167	Mrs Sonja Øyen	Registered inspector	The Foundation Stage	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements Teaching and learning Leadership and management Key issues for action
9843	Mrs Sarah Drake	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
18370	Mr Kevin Johnson	Team inspector	English Geography History Special educational needs English as additional language	
30954	Mr Brian Ashcroft	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
4192	Mr David Hartley	Team inspector	Science Art and design Design and technology Music	

The inspection contractor was:

Primary Associates Limited  
Suite 13  
West Lancashire Technology Management Centre  
Moss Lane View  
Skelmersdale  
WN8 9TN

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Alexandra House

33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Mary's is a voluntary aided Church of England infant and junior school in Tunstall, five miles north west of Stoke. It is a partner school in a mini-Education Action Zone. With 241 pupils, the school is about the same size as most. There are more girls than boys, particularly in the junior years. Most of the pupils live close by but a small number travel from other areas. The loss of local employment and movement of families is reflected in the growing number of pupils who leave and join during the school year. As the infant year groups are above 30, there are two classes of mixed years as well as a class of Year 2 pupils and a reception year class. Twenty-five children attend the nursery on a full-time basis and ten attend either the morning or afternoon session. On starting the nursery, the children's attainment varies but is generally lower than expected for their age, especially in speech and language and in personal and social skills. Sixty-six pupils are eligible for free school meals which is slightly above the national average. Twenty-two pupils are from ethnic minorities. Nineteen pupils have English as an additional language. Punjabi is the predominant language. Eighteen pupils receive specialist support in learning to speak English. Thirty-three pupils have been identified as having special educational needs; two pupils have statements of special educational needs and 13 others receive support from external agencies, predominantly for learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties, autism and visual and physical needs.

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

St Mary's is a happy school where pupils feel valued. The parents rightly praise the good provision for pupils with special educational needs and also the way the school develops all pupils' musical and sporting skills. The headteacher sets the tone in encouraging and expecting the pupils to care for one another and to do their best. The school is successful in helping the youngest children get off to a good start and to make good progress in the infant years. It is not as effective in what it provides for the junior pupils. The teaching is good overall but is inconsistent and the challenge for pupils is often too low. Not enough has been done to analyse why standards are not higher and to ensure a common drive for improvement. Overall, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

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

- Standards are good at the end of Year 2 in mathematics and writing;
- Pupils achieve good standards in physical education and perform music to a high standard;
- The reception children do well because of good, lively teaching and interesting activities;
- The pupils enjoy school; they are interested, behave well and all show care and concern for one another, irrespective of background and age;
- The headteacher is very effective in creating a sense of family and community spirit.

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

- Standards in the junior classes in English, information and communication technology (ICT), design and technology and geography;
- Standards in science throughout the school;
- The quality of teaching, especially for the junior pupils;
- The challenge for the higher attaining pupils;
- The work of key staff in raising the quality of what the school offers.

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

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

The school has made satisfactory improvement overall since the inspection in 1998. St Mary's has sustained the strengths of being a caring school with a positive climate for learning. Much has been done to improve the accommodation and to ensure that the pupils feel safe and secure. Standards have

risen since 1998, especially for the infant pupils, but not fast enough in the junior years to keep pace with schools nationally. The quality of teaching has not improved enough in English, science and ICT to raise standards significantly at the end of Year 6. As in 1998, teachers' marking is not always helping pupils improve their work. Although ICT resources have been updated, the junior pupils do not use them enough to ensure they attain the skills and knowledge expected for their age. The school is now using effective systems to monitor and review what it does but is not yet identifying exactly what needs to be done. In design and technology, the lack of action to deal with the weakness identified in 1998 has meant standards have fallen. The well managed work this year to strengthen the teaching of reading and writing has successfully raised standards in the infant years. It has also provided a good model for others and offers much potential for improvement.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
English	E	D	E	E	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	E	E	E	E	
Science	E	D	E	E	

Standards have risen this year. The school's overall results in the 2002 national tests for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils are the highest they have been in English and mathematics. This has reversed the dip in 2001. In writing, all Year 2 pupils have reached the level expected for their age. In mathematics, just over half have done really well for their age. This is a significant rise in standards compared with last year, and a deserved achievement for the school. Much good, purposeful teaching has boosted the pupils' learning, particularly in writing. From an often low start, the children progress well in the nursery and reception year, especially in personal and social skills and in making a start in reading, writing and using number. This good progress continues in Years 1 and 2. In science, however, standards are not so good. In the junior years, the pupils' progress slows and then picks up. It is not consistent enough to lift standards significantly in all year groups. The majority of Year 6 pupils have reached the level expected for their age and higher attaining pupils have done well. However, the school has not met its targets and standards remain below average in English, mathematics and science. In physical education, standards are good. In music, pupils reach a high standard in their musical knowledge and in performance skills but not in composing music. In art and design and in history, standards are satisfactory throughout the school. In design and technology, geography and ICT, standards are satisfactory for the infant pupils but unsatisfactory for the junior pupils.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good; the pupils are enthusiastic and keen to learn, especially when engaged in practical activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good; the pupils show good self-control and behave very well in and around school.
Personal development and relationships	Very good; pupils from differing backgrounds get on very well together and show consideration and kindness to others.

Attendance	Good; pupils are rarely late for school.
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## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	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.*

The overall quality of teaching is good as judged in 1998. In nearly every lesson, the teaching is at least satisfactory. It is frequently good, and occasionally very good for the children in the reception and infant classes. The vitality of the teaching here fosters the pupils' eagerness to learn and they are doing well across the curriculum. Similarly, good focussed teaching for groups of pupils with special educational needs helps them to achieve their individual targets in reading and writing. Some very good teaching in music, dance and personal and social education, lifts the pupils' performance. The teaching of English and mathematics is good for the infant pupils and satisfactory for the junior pupils. Teachers' good expertise ensures the infant pupils read, write and have a good understanding of number. In the junior classes, the teaching is not always structured enough to ensure that pupils, especially in Years 3 and 4, realise what they need to do to improve. In the better lessons, more often in Years 5 and 6, the teachers' good use of resources and clear explanations help the pupils achieve well. A common weakness is the failure to review what the pupils have learnt and to identify effective strategies to help them learn. In science, the pupils often complete worksheets that do not give them, especially the higher attaining pupils, the chance to show what they know and think. In other subjects too, the teachers do not always expect enough of the higher attainers. In ICT, the junior pupils' learning is slow as they have too few chances to practise and use their knowledge.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall; the nursery and reception year children experience a good range of activities. Visits to places of interest, especially to the theatre, extend pupils' knowledge and experience.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good; the support teachers plan and prepare work to help the pupils reach their individual targets during group sessions. In class, the work is usually but not always so closely related to the pupils' needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory; specialist support helps the pupils acquire skills in learning to speak English. Class teachers do not consistently provide enough visual support to help pupils to learn and use new vocabulary.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good; the headteacher and staff place high emphasis on pupils mixing with others, appreciating what they and others can do and knowing how to behave. Older juniors are expected to play their part in making decisions about the school. Much is done to celebrate local heritage and culture but less to develop the pupils' awareness of other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory; strengths in procedures for the care and welfare of pupils are offset by gaps in the systems to track the pupils' progress and to decide what they should learn next.

The pupils experience a wide programme in physical education, in and out of lessons. The work in personal, social and health education is a developing strength especially in promoting racial harmony. The school has a satisfactory partnership with the parents. The staff know many of the families well and informal links are good. Many parents help their children at home, especially in reading, but the school gives them little information on what the pupils are learning. Similarly, the annual progress reports give little indication of how well the pupils are doing for their age.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory; the good leadership of the headteacher sets a clear direction for the school. He fosters good team and school spirit. Gaps in management expertise mean subject leaders are not doing enough to drive up standards or improve the quality of what the school offers.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good; committee members take their roles seriously and meet their responsibilities well. In some key aspects they do not hold the school to account well enough.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory; the school compares itself with others, tracks the pupils' progress and sets targets for improvement. It is less effective in analysing available information and pinpointing exactly where improvements need to be made, especially in teaching and learning.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory; the school budget and grants are used well to support the pupils' learning and the costs of changes to the buildings. Classroom computers are used infrequently. Some lessons are too long. The use of the library as a teaching room for groups limits other pupils' access.

The school's spacious grounds, including a running track, are used well. The new classroom gives added space for junior pupils. Given its size, the school has a good number of teachers and support staff, including two teachers who give good support to pupils with special educational needs. Two qualified and experienced nursery nurses run the nursery overseen by the reception class teacher. The caretaker, catering and support staff take pride in ensuring the pupils are well cared for. The school actively seeks best value in its purchases and services. It consults pupils and parents regularly and sets realistic challenges.

## 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>• Their children are expected to work hard;</li> <li>• They feel comfortable approaching the school with questions and concerns;</li> <li>• The teaching is good and their children make good progress;</li> <li>• Their children like school and behave well;</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<p>There was no aspect of significant concern but a small percentage of parents raised the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The inconsistency in the amount and frequency of homework;</li> <li>• Ways to work with parents and to keep them even more informed about their children's progress.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agree on many aspects. The headteacher knows the pupils well and has high expectations of them. He takes the lead in welcoming parents into school and, in response to parents' comments, is now looking at ways to ensure parents are kept up-to-date on how their children are doing. Homework is an area for improvement. Not all the teachers adhere to agreed schedules and ensure that pupils are clear about what is expected of them.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Standards have risen this year in English and mathematics. The school's unvalidated overall test results are the highest they have been for pupils in Years 2 and 6. Compared with national figures from 2001, the results in reading, writing and mathematics indicate the school has come close to the national average and also to the average of similar schools. The school has reversed the dip seen at the end of Year 6 in 2001 and shown what can be achieved by a concerted effort to improve the quality of the provision, especially in writing, and enable more pupils to achieve their potential.
2. The highest rise in standards is in writing. For the first time, all the Year 2 pupils have reached the level expected for their age in writing and a small percentage have done even better. Standards have also risen in writing at the end of Year 6 and brought the school in line with most schools. The impressive test results in mathematics for the seven-year-olds, where more than half have done better than expected for their age, sustain the high standard last year when all pupils reached the level expected for their age and placed the school in the top five per cent of all schools nationally. The results set a good precedent as the pupils move into the junior years and the school is aware of the need not only to set higher targets for these pupils but also to monitor their progress closely and ensure their progress is maintained.
3. Since the last inspection in 1998, standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 have been below, and often well below, average. Standards have seesawed a little in Year 2 and only in mathematics have the pupils done better than average in three of the last four years. The school kept close pace with the national upward trend for Year 6 pupils and standards rose year on year from 1998 although the gap between school and national standards remained much the same.
4. In 2001, results dipped significantly in English, slightly less so in mathematics and science. Standards at the end of Year 6 were well below the average of all and similar schools in English, mathematics and science. The year group had a much higher than average percentage of pupils with special educational needs who did not all reach the level expected for their age. Many came close and did well personally given their learning needs and their average attainment in the tests at the end of Year 2. The school met its target in English but just missed the target in mathematics by one per cent. Teacher assessment grossly over-estimated the girls' skills and knowledge in mathematics and their poor performance lowered the overall standard.
5. Despite the good improvement this year, the school has not met its Level 4 targets in English, mathematics or science. The majority of pupils have reached Level 4 in all three subjects and roughly one in four has reached Level 5. Pupils' stronger performance in writing has lifted standards substantially. This is also apparent at the end of Year 2.
6. The work done this year to raise standards in writing for the younger pupils has been very successful. The school identified the pupils' difficulty in expressing their ideas in writing, especially in compiling imaginative stories. Interesting themes, the use of other subject content, visits to the theatre and to places of interest have all prompted talk and in turn given good reasons and purposes for writing. Running alongside has

been structured, systematic teaching in how to organise stories, letters and reports. Such effective work has paved the way for similar programmes in other subjects, especially science where standards remain low.

7. Standards in science are higher than they were in 1998 but not by much at the end of Year 2, and only slightly more so at the end of Year 6. It is the lower performance of the higher attaining pupils that has an adverse impact on overall standards. This also explains the school's poor performance at the end of Year 2. In 2001, although teacher assessment indicated significant high attainment in Year 2 pupils' knowledge of physical processes, the absence of high attainment in experimental and investigative science lowered the overall results. Inspection evidence indicates a similar picture in pupils' current attainment.
8. By the end of Year 6, pupils have only a superficial awareness of a fair test in science, and little experience of carrying out their own scientific explorations and investigations. Pupils' difficulties in understanding and responding to questions that ask them infer, deduce and generalise are part of the problem and justify the school's focus on raising standards in reading and writing. Pupils also find it hard to apply what they know, as their knowledge of scientific concepts and principles remains insecure. Good teaching for the younger infant pupils is beginning to redress the balance in favour of pupils making connections in their learning from what they see and experience. A good example was when Year 1 pupils generated their own questions and predictions about the growth of seeds. Such work has yet to show in standards in Year 2 and in the junior years.
9. The weakness in the development of pupils' skills also explains why standards are unsatisfactory at the end of Year 6 in design and technology, geography, ICT and an aspect of music. The focus given to developing pupils' knowledge is often at the expense of the development of their skills.
10. As in 1998, standards are very good in performing music throughout the school. Pupils benefit from specialist music teaching and make good progress in playing instruments and reading music. They perform songs and musical pieces to a high standard for their age and show a good understanding of musical elements. Nevertheless, they are less skilled in creating and developing their own musical ideas because the teaching places more emphasis on the pupils performing others' work. In design and technology, the pupils develop good skills in making and finishing products to a given design as in Year 4 pupils' land yachts. However, they do not acquire the skills of developing, planning and communicating their own ideas in response to a particular problem. This element of design was also identified as a weakness in the 1998 inspection.
11. Compared with 1998, standards have also fallen in geography in the junior years because pupils' skills in conducting geographical enquiries are not as good as expected for their age. Pupils remember facts about places and geographical processes but are less skilled in using fieldwork techniques, maps and different sources of information. As in many subjects, pupils have had little experience of using ICT to help in their work.
12. Standards in ICT are satisfactory at the end of Year 2 but unsatisfactory at the end of Year 6. The school has increased the number of computers, and its range of ICT equipment, so that cumulatively the school is adequately resourced. However, the placement of computers in classrooms minimises access time for pupils. The system of teacher demonstration followed by pupil practice at different times over the

following week is not ensuring that pupils receive immediate hands-on experience or the help they need to make best progress. In addition, a significant number of pupils are underachieving because they already know what they are asked to do.

13. In art and design and history, standards are satisfactory. In physical education, they are good throughout the infant and junior years. Pupils do well because the school provides a wide range of activities, and makes effective use of specialist expertise to coach and develop pupils' skills.
14. Taking the curriculum as a whole, most pupils make at least satisfactory progress over time, often from a low start. On starting the nursery, the children's attainment varies but is generally lower than expected for their age. A recent local Sure Start survey indicated that the majority of the nursery children have some form of language delay. A small number of children in the nursery and other year groups have English as an additional language and are at differing stages of fluency in speaking English. The children get off to a good start in the nursery. The wide range of activities and caring support of the nursery nurses fosters the children's self-confidence, interest in learning and willingness to talk to others.
15. The work of a bilingual assistant ensures that Punjabi speaking nursery children acquire increasing confidence in speaking English and talking about what they have learnt. The special needs coordinator and bilingual learning support assistant also work with pupils in other classes who have arrived recently from other countries and help them gain good communication skills. The pupils are well integrated in lessons and all speak English as their preferred language in school. They develop their speaking and reading skills at a good pace and make steady progress in writing.
16. Good, focussed teaching, especially in English and mathematics, accelerates the pupils' progress in the reception and infant years so that nearly all the pupils do as well as expected for their age across the curriculum. For many pupils this is good achievement. Most Year 2 pupils read independently and fluently, and the higher attaining pupils cope well with non-fiction books as well as stories and simple poems. The school has recently identified a small number of boys and girls who show particular talents and high attainment at the end of Year 2. As yet, the teachers are not providing individual programmes to stretch these pupils.
17. Inconsistencies in the teaching in the junior years, particularly in Years 3 and 4, mean that pupils do not always build sufficiently well on what they have already learnt or make up gaps in previous learning, especially in English and science. In mathematics, however, external evaluations of pupils' performance in Years 3 to 5 indicate pupils are making good progress and this places the school in a good position to look to higher standards in the coming years. Systematic teaching in Years 5 and 6 boosts the pupils' learning although not all pupils do as well as they might. A common problem is the teachers' low expectations of what the pupils can achieve. Higher attaining pupils are not being challenged enough as the teachers do not consistently use what they know about pupils to plan what they should learn next.
18. Pupils who are on the school's register for special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall in working to achieve their individual targets. This is due to good quality support teaching and to extra help in class and especially in group sessions.

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

19. The school is to be commended for sustaining pupils' very good behaviour and relationships that were identified at the time of the last inspection. As then, pupils' very positive attitudes to learning contributes greatly to the positive atmosphere in classes and the school overall, and also to their progress and attainment. All the parents who returned the questionnaire agreed that their children enjoy school. This enjoyment was very evident. In all lessons seen, the pupils were keen to learn, and willing to talk about what they had done.
20. The pupils' confidence and their keenness to learn start in the nursery. The nursery children show no reluctance to leave their parents and carers. They know the routines and often pre-empt the nursery nurses in organising themselves. For example, two girls very ably set out the chairs in a circle ready for a singing session. Nursery evidence shows that many of the children found it hard in the autumn term to sit still and concentrate for any length of time. Their good attitudes and willingness to listen to others reflect the patience of the nursery nurses in developing routines and expectations. The part time children take their lead from the full time children in tidying things away and choosing what they want to do. The reception year children working with Year 1 pupils show a good level of maturity in their attitude to work. They try hard and show confidence in their own abilities. All find learning fun as there is something new each day and the focus on practical experience often means there is something exciting to do. A group of children were totally absorbed in using magnifying glasses to look at the scales, fins and gills of a fish.
21. The infant and junior pupils arrive at school with a smile on their face, organise themselves quickly and show interest in what their teachers have prepared for them to do. When the teaching is strong, pupils sustain their interest and enthusiasm, as in looking closely at snails or improving their dance technique. However, when the teaching lacks vitality or they are not exactly sure what they are to do, they tend to lose concentration, chat, fiddle and fidget.
22. The pupils really apply themselves and work hard when they are involved in practical tasks. Year 6 pupils collaborated and shared ideas enthusiastically when they used local maps and Year 1 pupils were highly engrossed in writing about favourite holiday times. The older pupils' enthusiasm for music and physical education is evident in their good attendance at extra-curricular sports activities and their willingness to take part in music competitions and festivals. Pupils with special educational needs respond particularly well when working in small groups. They see these times as being special and as a result they work hard and are keen to do well.
23. The school is a happy and harmonious community in which pupils behave very well throughout the day. From an early age they can be trusted to behave sensibly as they take the register and dinner money to the office or, as they grow older, to work outside the classroom without direct supervision. Their behaviour in assemblies is very good and many show deep concentration and earnestness at times of reflection and prayer. Pupils are polite to visitors, to other adults and also to each other. They treat resources and the environment with respect. For example, they are careful to dispose of litter in the bins and they look after the new playground equipment carefully. They listen carefully to others and are generally prompt to respond to adults' instructions. However, some pupils, more usually boys, are quick to lose their concentration and find it hard to show good self-control. For the first time in many years, a pupil has been excluded for a very brief period because of poor behaviour. It is clear that

exclusion was necessary in order to ensure the safety of other pupils. It has proved effective in helping all pupils to understand what is, and is not, acceptable behaviour.

24. One of the school's real strengths is the very good quality of relationships among pupils and between pupils and adults. Pupils of different ages, gender, ability and ethnicity work together well in pairs and small groups, whether self-chosen or arranged by the teacher, and they also eat and play together amicably. The school is a harmonious community. Although pupils commented on falling out with friends, they did not consider that any real bullying takes place. Two pupils in different year groups, who joined the school midway through their primary education, volunteered independently that they prefer St Mary's to others 'because the pupils here are kinder.' The pupils feel confident to offer ideas and to read out their work as they know the others will not laugh at them. In both the lessons seen on personal, social and health education, pupils were prepared to talk about their emotions and about others' feelings and needs. They also showed patience and acceptance of some classmates who had difficulty expressing what they wanted to say.
25. When given the opportunity, pupils are happy to take on responsibility and to use their initiative. The pupils are good at organising themselves at fruit time or when getting ready to go out. Many pupils in Years 5 and 6 recently applied to become playground buddies and gave some good explanations as to why they felt they had the right skills for the job. '*I am good at sorting out arguments*' and '*I am good at cheering someone up*' were two reasons put forward. Those who were successful carry out their tasks reliably and responsibly. They have shown a ready ability to deal with problems such as allocating boxes of playground equipment to stop pupils helping themselves.
26. Levels of attendance in the year prior to inspection were broadly in line with the national average and this year they have improved to over 95 per cent, which is good. Pupils' punctuality has also improved. Lessons start promptly and without interruption. One in four pupils go on holiday in term time but overall, pupils attend very regularly and this has a positive effect on the quality of their learning.

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

27. As in the last inspection, the overall quality of teaching is good. In all but one lesson, the teaching was at least satisfactory. It was good in 42 per cent, very good in a further 13 per cent and excellent in two per cent. This is not as good a profile as in the last inspection but there are continuing strengths and some areas of improvement. However, a key issue about marking from 1998 has not been fully resolved and the quality of teachers' marking remains an area for development.
28. There are significant differences in the quality of teaching and learning between and within the three key stages. On the whole, the younger pupils receive more consistently good teaching. As in the last inspection, the teaching for children in the Foundation Stage is good. It is strongest for the children in the reception class. The teacher, who is also the Foundation Stage coordinator, is a good model of teaching. She is very well organised and very clear in what she wants the children to learn. She sustains their attention with songs such as '*Are you ready?*' and keeps up a fast pace. As a result, the children have made marked progress over the year. Similarly, the small group of reception year children in a class with Year 1 pupils have benefited from much good teaching and kept pace in many aspects with the Year 1 pupils.
29. The two nursery nurses who run the nursery are experienced and work together very effectively so that sessions are well organised. They are very caring and their calm,

warm and encouraging approach ensures the children feel secure and at ease. They follow detailed plans agreed with the coordinator and carefully prepare their own group activities so that they focus on the set learning intentions. In one session, the nursery nurse made effective use of finger puppets representing adults and children from a range of ethnic groups to prompt the children into selecting relevant puppets and talking about their families. Her repeated '*Who lives in your house? There's ... and ...*' helped children with English as an additional language, and those children with limited speech, to frame their answers and to play a full part in the session.

30. At other times, the nursery nurses are often more concerned with the practicalities of the activities, such as finding resources or cleaning sticky hands, than in developing the children's responses or extending their learning. Their actions foster the children's personal, social and emotional development and confidence in talking very well, and is a strength of the teaching, but chances are missed to set new challenges and a definite purpose for the activities. The children are too often allowed free rein when they choose what to do. The nursery also lacks many of the touches that make the reception classroom stimulating and exciting for the children. The reading corner in the nursery with its post van is a good example of what can be done to entice the children and encourage their involvement, but elsewhere, items are more usually put away after each session.
31. Common strengths in the teaching in the Foundation Stage are the detailed weekly and daily plans and the emphasis on the children learning through direct experience. The staff make good use of their observations of children to amend their plans and to pick up on what the children have done and said. Six reception children made very good progress when the teacher helped them to make a wormery. Her questions and remarks led the children to look carefully, describe and identify parts of roots and plants in a tray of soil. All the staff make good use of a ranges of resources and show considerable flair in catching the children's interest. A good example is the use of an actual dog lead, basket and food bowls to give realism to the toy dog Max as a class pet.
32. The vitality, structure and sense of purpose in this teaching are also evident in much of the good teaching for the infant pupils. They are also good features of the support teaching for pupils with special educational needs. These pupils are taught mostly in their classes with extra support whenever possible, but some are withdrawn in small groups for more specific teaching in reading or spelling skills. Special literacy group sessions are also set up for a few pupils who find it difficult to keep pace with their own class during the full literacy hour. As the support staff know the children well and what they have already learnt, they also know how far they can challenge them. For example, in one reading session, the teacher skilfully pushed the pupils into breaking unfamiliar words into syllables and using their knowledge of sounds and other words to work them out for themselves. The staff remind pupils of useful strategies and prompt them to check and correct their work as they go. This helps the pupils to develop good learning strategies as well as fostering improvement in their reading and writing performance.
33. Similar strengths typify much of the good teaching in English and mathematics for the infant pupils but only some of the lessons for junior pupils. All the teachers follow the recommended structure of the literacy hour and daily mathematics lesson. Lessons are generally well planned, prepared and organised so that there is a real sense of purpose. This was highly evident in three good lessons:
  - Year 2 pupils made good progress in learning how to deduce and infer when the teacher's excellent reading of the story 'Dogger' prompted their ready suggestions



- about what the characters might have done to cope with the disappearance of the well-loved toy.
- When the teacher worked with Year 1 pupils to compose a story about 'The Gruffalo', her questions about how to spell words, punctuate sentences and add interesting words, ensured the pupils drew on what they knew and felt confident to write their own versions.
  - Year 6 pupils also made good strides in their understanding of symmetry when they were encouraged to work together and explain how they arrived at their answers. The teacher's confident use of relevant technical terms lifted the quality of the pupils' explanations.
34. Such good, structured teaching is a prime factor in the good rise in standards in English and mathematics this year.
35. The one unsatisfactory lesson seen was in English. Year 4 pupils' learning was minimal as they were not sure what to do to write a persuasive argument. Not enough was done to structure the task for them and to highlight how to organise their work and words and phrases they might use. This lack of explicit teaching also characterised several other lessons for junior pupils that were only just satisfactory.
36. Several other weak strands help to explain why pupils are not learning as fast in the junior years as in the infant years:
- The teachers' expectations are not always high enough, especially of the higher attaining pupils. This is because the teachers do not all have a secure knowledge of the National Curriculum levels of attainment and how to use them to guide their teaching. Some of the teachers seem to be relying on the target setting process itself to raise standards without gearing their teaching to the content of the targets.
  - Not all the teachers share the purpose of the lesson with the pupils or phrase it in a way that is meaningful for them. In several lessons seen, the vagueness of the target was echoed in the vagueness of the teaching and learning. Similarly, too many end sessions lack a review of what the pupils have learnt in relation to the purpose of the lesson.
  - Few classrooms support the pupils' learning. While pupils' completed work is often well displayed, there is little to remind pupils about key technical terms, reading, writing and mathematical strategies and processes, features of different types of writing or spelling rules. This means that the pupils often have to rely on memory or ask when they are not sure of what to do.
  - The teachers are not all using their marking as a teaching and learning tool. They reinforce pupils' learning with comments such as '*Good effort. Target – handwriting*' but do not make explicit what the pupils have done well or what they need to do next time to improve and raise the level of their attainment.
  - The frequent use of worksheets, especially in science, but also in English and mathematics, often constrains the learning of the higher attaining pupils as the sheets determine and guide the pupils' responses. Too often, the sheets appear to have been used in preference to practical activities.
  - Homework is not being used consistently to extend and support learning in lessons. Some parents' concerns about the low amount and infrequency of homework in the junior classes seemed justified as little reference was made to homework during lessons seen.

37. An area for further improvement is the observation of teaching and learning to identify good practice and areas for improvement. Much effective practice goes uncelebrated. All the very good and excellent lessons had common features. The most noticeable was the enthusiasm of the teachers and their good, warm relationship with the pupils. They had high expectations of the pupils' behaviour but their lively, purposeful approach motivated the pupils and sustained their concentration. The teachers knew exactly what they wanted the pupils to achieve and the steps that would help them. They posed challenging questions and gave the pupils time to come up with a response, often asking several pupils for their opinions before discussing them. They also often used resources, such as number cards or small whiteboards that allowed all the pupils to take part and simultaneously show their answers. This kept the pace brisk and pupils on their toes. Year 6 pupils made very visible improvement in their dance skills and performance when the deputy headteacher used demonstration, critical evaluation, praise and encouragement to portray the jerky movements of a puppet. In the same way, Year 5 and 6 pupils lifted their musical performance when the specialist teachers identified aspects to improve and explained clearly how this could be achieved.

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

38. The quality and range of learning opportunities are satisfactory overall, but good in the Foundation Stage, especially in the reception class.
39. The curriculum is generally broad, balanced and relevant to the pupils' needs. It is effective in developing the pupils' skills in reading, writing and number and in helping pupils with special educational needs to work towards the targets in their individual plans. A particular strength, sustained since the last inspection, is the focus on developing pupils' skills in sport and in performing music. The high amount of time allocated, together with the involvement of specialists and a wide range of experiences, all contribute to the pupils' good attainment in music and physical education. However, there are some limitations in the curriculum particularly in developing pupils' skills. For example, pupils have few opportunities to compose their own music or to design their own solutions to problems in design and technology. The inconsistencies in the teaching time given to science in the junior years, together with a highly directed approach, account in large part for the gaps in pupils' skills as scientists. In all subjects, the curriculum is not always challenging enough to get the best out of the higher attaining pupils.
40. One of the reasons why the curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is good is because the teachers and nursery nurses have improved the quality of plans. There is now a clear focus on what the children will learn and how this is best achieved through play and direct experience. The need to give more priority to writing and mathematics in the nursery curriculum is no longer a weak aspect but the nursery environment does not promote and foster well enough the children's learning in these aspects. Over the year, the nursery and reception year children experience a well-structured programme of activities. As the reception class teacher oversees curriculum planning for the nursery and reception year children, she ensures continuity of learning and a gradual change in focus. For example, in the reception class, the children are gradually introduced to the literacy hour and daily mathematics lesson in the summer term in preparation for work in Year 1. In the nursery, there is a shift to more emphasis on literacy and mathematics in the spring and summer terms but the curriculum strengths lie primarily in the provision for personal, social and emotional development and also creative development.

41. Some continuity is lost as the nursery, reception class and class of mixed reception and Year 1 pupils follow different themes and timetables. While the reception children go out to play and eat with the infant and junior pupils, the nursery children have periods of play in their own outdoor area and have lunch early in their own room. Similarly, there are very few times when all the reception children come together or when they can use the equipment set up in the outdoor area. The use of the outdoors is an acknowledged area for development.
42. The nursery staff make good use of themes such as '*People who help us*' to provide a range of experiences in different areas of learning. For example, the children play in 'St Mary's hospital', hear about the work of fire fighters when they visit school and pretend to be police officers in their play outdoors. In the reception class, the room is well organised to reflect different aspects of the curriculum and to encourage the children to use different resources, such as a magnet table.
43. The school meets the requirements of the National Curriculum for infant and junior pupils although some aspects are covered superficially. A good example is the limited coverage of the programmes of study for listening and speaking. The pupils have few chances to develop their skills in hearing and using language in different situations, such as debates and presentations. Pupils' recent visits to see plays being performed are a good initiative to improve this aspect of the English curriculum.
44. The school uses nationally recommended schemes of work in most subjects but they have not all been adapted to meet the needs of the pupils. In ICT, the focus is on the development of pupils' skills in using different programs and equipment, but the pupils have too few opportunities, particularly in the junior years, for them to practise and perfect them. The spread of computers around the school allows their use by all classes, but means the pupils have very restricted access, especially in ICT lessons and have to rely on memory to know what to do. The use of ICT across the curriculum is limited. Teachers' curriculum planning rarely refers to the use of ICT or to the application of skills taught in ICT lessons.
45. In design and technology, geography and music, not enough attention is given in the curriculum to developing pupils' skills in all aspects of the subject. Curriculum changes, due to come into effect in the new school year, show the potential to redress the balance in geography and music. The weakness in developing pupils' designing skills was also identified in the last inspection.
46. The National Literacy and Early Literacy Support programme is the basis of the English curriculum. This is effective in ensuring the pupils acquire the basic skills of reading and writing. Pupils who do not make the progress expected receive additional support in reading. An emphasis this year on more structured teaching in reading and writing has led to an improvement in standards most noticeably at the end of Year 2. The use of recommended content from the National Numeracy Strategy has contributed to the raising of standards in mathematics, particularly in the infant years. Basic number skills are covered well and reflected in pupils' good understanding of number in the mental arithmetic part of the daily mathematics lesson.
47. Pupils who have special educational needs take full part in the curriculum. Their learning needs are clearly identified and, in literacy and numeracy, the curriculum content is adapted so that they work at the right level of challenge to help them meet the targets in their individual learning programs. This is seen at its best in the sessions when the pupils work with the support teachers. Pupils' achievement and

their progress is reviewed regularly by the class teacher and the special needs coordinator and older pupils are asked for their views before new targets are set.

48. In the questionnaire returns from parents, an area of low agreement was that the school offers an interesting range of activities outside lessons. This is not totally fair. Over the year, the school offers a good range of additional learning opportunities. Many pupils attend a variety of music and sports clubs, and the chess club is also popular with boys and girls. A recent initiative, following the school's success in gaining grant monies, is the programme of theatre visits so that pupils might see live performances such as 'The Borrowers'. This is helping to stimulate pupils' expressive writing. Good use is made of local community resources to add to the pupils' learning. Contact with local businesses brings sponsorship and donations such as the sweet packets and prizes given when the school raised money for a local charity. Pupils enjoy joining with other local schools for sports competitions and are often very successful. They also entertain and send parcels to the elderly and visit the church for some services. Other organisations, such as the Salvation Army and Pentecostal Church, regularly visit the school and participate in assemblies.
49. The school maintains good relationships with partner institutions. Parents praised the effective arrangements to ease the Year 6 pupils' transfer to the secondary school. The two schools liaise well to discuss pupils' needs and days at the high school ensure that pupils have a good understanding of what to expect. St Mary's offers placements to trainee teachers from Manchester University as well as work experience placements to students from colleges and local secondary schools.
50. As in the last inspection, the provision for pupils' personal development is good. A new key strength is the very good provision for pupils' social development. Parents value the way the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. The school is very effective in fostering good relationships between pupils from different social and ethnic backgrounds. However, it provides few opportunities for pupils in mixed age classes to come together with their own age group. The staff expect the pupils to consider one another and they generally set good role models in the way they treat the pupils. The pupils are also encouraged to work together to improve their performance, such as in the choir and recorder groups. The school makes good use of projects to take the pupils into the community. For instance, the Year 4 pupils distributed thermometers to the elderly as part of their involvement in a Zodiac Zone 'Beat the Cold' initiative.
51. A developing strength is the good provision for personal, social and health education. The school, working towards the accreditation of a 'Healthy School', sets aside time for pupils to discuss social issues and concerns. The pupils are becoming familiar with the conventions and benefits of these 'circle times', and the opportunities for pupils to speak and listen to each other make a positive contribution to their learning and personal development. A learning mentor, funded by the Education Action Zone, is working with a few junior pupils to raise their self-esteem. The school makes good use of visits from the Life Education Centre mobile classroom to help pupils learn how to make informed choices about life issues such as what it means to have a healthy diet.
52. Strong aspects of the good provision for pupils' spiritual development lie in the way the adults celebrate the pupils' achievements. Along with the recognition of the success of winners, such as at sporting events, the efforts of all participants are also applauded and pupils are encouraged to value each other for individual talents and abilities. Pupils' work and achievements are attractively displayed in public areas but

the same high standards of display are not evident in all classrooms. School assemblies help pupils to reflect on and think about issues and their meaning for them. During the inspection, the pupils were asked to consider how best to deal with problems. In some lessons, the pupils were encouraged to reflect on their own learning but this is not consistent. The teachers use some occasions to foster the pupils' appreciation of the natural world. The reception children were amazed to find spiders' webs between railings and pupils in Years 1 and 2 were fascinated by the way different seeds grew.

53. As in the last inspection, the provision for moral development is good. The school has a strong Christian ethos and the headteacher sets the tone by expecting pupils to act in the way they expect others to act. He takes an honest, open approach with the pupils and is a good model of the school rule, 'We treat everyone with respect.' For example, at the end of a dance lesson, he thanked the Year 6 pupils for their hard work and sense of fair play. Such touches help to develop the pupils' appreciation of right and wrong. The school is increasing the ways to provide them with opportunities to develop their sense of justice and responsibility. Two good strategies are the expectation that pupils will take the minutes of meetings held with the coordinator for personal and social education, and the encouragement of pupils to review their playground rules and rewrite them in a more positive way. The staff also help the pupils in considering others worse off than themselves, such as support for 'Helping Hand for Romania' and a 'Jeans for Genes Day'.
54. The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Although the school ensures that the pupils learn about local culture, history and heritage, the limited provision to develop pupils' awareness of other cultures lowers the overall quality. The school has sustained its strong links with a local company and pupils have been observing the change in the landscape following the demolition of the tile factory. Walks in the area and organised trips to places of interest, such as the visit to Ford Green Hall to extend pupils' awareness of Tudor life, extend the pupils' understanding of local culture and historical periods. Pupils look at the work of local artists, including Clarice Cliffe and Sarah Kimberly, as well as other artists and craftspeople, as part of the art and design curriculum, but there is little to introduce pupils to non-western cultures. The recent work by Year 5 pupils in looking at carnival traditions and mask making, is a good step in extending what the school offers.

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

55. The overall quality of care for pupils is satisfactory. As in the last inspection, there are strengths in the way the school promotes pupils' personal development. However, there are weaker strands, especially in the teachers' use of information about pupils' academic progress to decide what pupils should learn next. This is part of the reason why the higher attaining pupils are not always achieving their best.
56. Parents consider that one of the school's strengths is its 'friendly and caring' atmosphere. This is highly evident in the nursery where the nursery nurses show a high level of responsibility and care for the children. They 'mother' the children but also have high expectations of them to become as independent as possible. Their encouragement and support ensures the nursery children are well adjusted and feel secure.
57. The parents are particularly appreciative of the caring, good support offered to pupils who have special educational needs. This allows pupils to move on to secondary school successfully or, in some cases, to overcome their difficulty and be taken off

the special needs register. Staff value and care for the pupils as individuals. They help them to grow in self-esteem and confidence, all of which helps them to develop good attitudes towards their learning. The personal, social and health education programme makes a good contribution to enhancing pupils' maturity.

58. The systems to ensure health, safety and welfare are satisfactory with clear guidance about individual responsibilities, regular checks of equipment and comprehensive risk assessments. During the inspection there were good precautions and effective measures in place to ensure the safety of all on the school site as extensive building work took place. However, at classroom level staff do not always follow agreed procedures consistently. Relevant matters have been drawn to the attention of the governors.
59. There are good arrangements to care for those pupils who have accidents or feel unwell, and all personnel who need to know are informed about pupils' specific medical needs. The procedures relating to child protection are satisfactory in that staff know the pupils well and are observant of any changes in behaviour, mood and attitude. The school follows the local area guidelines appropriately but not all staff have had recent updates on the procedures to follow when they identify concerns.
60. The school has good procedures to monitor and promote attendance. It has been successful in raising the overall attendance rate over the past year, because members of staff are highly vigilant in tracking absence and late arrivals. Potential problems are highlighted early and action is taken before attendance becomes a concern.
61. The procedures to promote good behaviour are also effective. Good discipline and class management are strengths of the teaching throughout the school and the headteacher takes a highly visible role in setting the tone and praising pupils when they do well. Pupils, parents and staff all know the behaviour expected in school, and also the consequence of any failures to abide by the simple, positively stated rules. One recent success is the appointment of playground buddies and their role in helping to iron out minor difficulties and tussles. The midday assistants also play a major role in maintaining the pupils' good behaviour. They know the pupils and interact well with them to develop their play.
62. The teachers make good use of opportunities to discuss sensitive issues. For instance, a reading session for several Year 6 pupils raised questions about bullying, while a Year 2 personal and social education lesson centred on how to help those who are feeling upset. Many teachers have their own systems to recognise the pupils' good behaviour and positive attitude, such as putting marbles in a jar which when full entitles the reception and Year 1 pupils to choose a reward. The result of all these good arrangements is that pupils behave well throughout the school day and this allows learning to proceed without interruptions.
63. Since the last inspection, the school has developed systems to track and analyse the pupils' academic progress. The school now has good information on each pupil's attainment in relation to what has been taught in most subjects, as well as composite details of their performances in tests. As noted in the last inspection, this process starts in the nursery where the nursery nurses keep observational notes, photographs and detailed records on each child. This gives them a good overview of each child's progress in the six areas of learning. This good quality also typifies the assessment records in the reception class, where comments from the teacher indicate her awareness of links between learning and other factors, such as absence.

64. All the teachers are assessing how well each pupil has done in relation to key learning intentions each term. The use of colours to record pupils' progress each term gives a good visual check of the rate of progress. It also helps to identify areas of difficulty in learning. The school has also analysed some test results, particularly in mathematics. Less has been done in English and science. As a result, the school has missed chances to identify where common problems lie in pupils' learning and to draw out the implications for the programme of school improvement. The overall use of information to inform planning is unsatisfactory. It is not always clear in teachers' marking and their planning how they have used what they know about pupils' progress to set new targets or to move pupils on in their learning. This particularly affects the higher attaining pupils. In some cases, where the learning is assessed again after a set time, there is no evidence of progress for those pupils who had already achieved the target.
65. Target setting remains a relatively new process for the school. The teachers are still tentative in referring to targets and telling the pupils how they have done and what they need to do to improve. Another area of some inconsistency is the use of the 'Best work' books. Very few of these books have pieces of work with comments that explain why the work has been chosen or why it represents good work.
66. The school's register of gifted and talented pupils does not give any details of provision for individuals or specific targets for achievement. The use of attainment at the end of Year 2 is a helpful criterion. However, it does not help the school identify younger pupils who may show all round or specific prowess. The school may also have missed some pupils who have gifts and talents but did not shine in the national tests.
67. The school makes good use of teachers' knowledge of the pupils as well as progress records to identify pupils who give rise to concern. It also makes effective use of staff who are bilingual to help identify whether pupils need support in their learning as well as help in learning to speak English. The register of special educational needs is regularly updated and the special needs coordinator works closely with classroom staff to decide how pupils' needs may be met best. As the staff are aware that many of the pupils have low self-esteem, they ensure frequent opportunities for the pupils to gain success in work in small groups with close support from an adult. This reflects the content of pupils' individual plans, which have realistic targets for personal development as well as academic work. Those pupils who have written statements of special needs receive relevant support from external agencies.

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

68. The school has sustained its good partnership with parents since the last inspection. Those parents and carers who spoke with inspectors during the inspection, and those who volunteered their opinions in their responses to the questionnaire and at the meeting, view the school in a positive light. As in the last inspection, parents find staff to be very approachable and consider that their concerns will be listened to and, generally, acted on.
69. Although positive overall, some parents voiced concerns about the amount of homework that pupils receive, how closely the school works with parents and how well teachers help their children, particularly those who are higher attaining, to achieve their potential. A significant percentage of parents also indicated that they did not know whether the school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

The inspectors endorse the parents' positive views and find some merit in their concerns. Although the pupils take home reading and spelling, other homework is less frequent. The school's own survey of parents' views highlighted their wish for more information on the content of homework. The level of challenge is occasionally too low for some pupils, most often the higher attaining. While the school offers a limited programme of sporting activities after school, it has widened the range of out-of-class activities to include visits to the theatre.

70. The parents' comments partly reflect ineffective strands of communication between school and parents. St Mary's expends much effort on trying to develop a strong partnership with parents and carers but the parents do not always meet the school half way. For example, parents are informed when the teachers have real concerns about the progress of pupils and when they are identified as having special educational needs. They are invited to the review meetings to discuss their children's progress in meeting the targets in their individual plans but not all attend. Similarly, while a strong core of parents readily supports school events and their children's learning, there are many parents who do not respond to the school's invitations to become more involved.
71. The prospectus with its photographs of school life, and the governors' annual report, comply with statutory requirements and give a good overall view of the school. However, there is very little to inform parents about the Foundation Stage and the curriculum for the nursery and reception year children. Pupils' written progress reports include the necessary information. However, parents' concern that they are not being fully informed may reflect the fact that the teachers do not make it sufficiently clear whether pupil are working at an above average, average, or below average level for their age. In addition, the suggested targets for improvement are often too broad. For example, the comment that *'Much more practice of fundamental techniques is vital for improvement'* could apply to any pupil in any subject, rather than to the above average pupil in mathematics to whom the statement was directed.
72. The headteacher issues frequent letters to update parents on events and also a half-termly newsletter that gives good notice of important dates and news of pupils' activities and successes. However, as noted in the previous inspection, most teachers do not issue parents with information about the curriculum or identify what their class will be studying in the next few weeks. The school regularly seeks parents' views about the quality of what it provides and acts on the findings. Parents much appreciated the change in timing of the meetings to discuss pupils' progress. These evenings, when translation facilities are available for those who have English as an additional language, are well attended. In contrast, when the teachers hold workshops to help parents understand how numeracy is taught or what the annual national tests involve, often few parents come.
73. A small number of parents regularly help in school and others volunteer to help on specific occasions. Although the parents of younger pupils are mostly good at hearing them read, the teachers miss chances to exploit the diary as a way of conversing with parents. The active Parent, Teacher and Friends Association raises considerable funds for the school, which have recently been spent on basket ball rings, books and programmable toys. Parents are also very generous in their support for the pupils' charitable fund-raising activities. A good example was the recent event when parents sponsored their children to fit as many items as possible into a sweet tube and over £1700 was raised for a local charity.

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



74. The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. There are significant strengths in the good leadership of the headteacher and in the work of the governing body and some coordinators. However, the quality and impact are weakened by gaps in management skills of all, especially in strategic planning and monitoring and evaluating performance.
75. The headteacher provides good, effective leadership. As noted in the last inspection, he is highly committed to the school and its community. His care and concern for the pupils and staff are well seen in the happy family atmosphere in the school, which is no mean feat given the 24 members of teaching and classroom support staff. He is well organised. The documents and information submitted to the inspection team were carefully prepared and arrangements for the inspection were well thought out. This conscientious, positive and responsible approach also typifies the action taken in response to issues raised during and after the inspection. The headteacher was prompt to discuss matters with the senior management team, to incorporate issues within development plans for the next school year, and to look for support from external agencies where the school is unable to meet its own needs. Such willingness and impetus to initiate change, and to motivate others, offers good potential for further improvement.
76. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The school has not been complacent but has successfully worked to sustain the strengths identified in 1998, especially that of being a caring school. As then, it continues to meet its aims. Much has been done to improve the environment and to widen the curriculum. As identified in three key issues, the roles of the governors, senior managers and subject coordinators have been more clearly defined. However, changes in staffing, a period of absence of the deputy headteacher, and the need to implement national initiatives, have slowed the programme of improvement. This is most evident in the action still needed to identify where improvements in teaching and learning are needed. Although the headteacher and deputy headteacher have monitored some classroom practice, this has not yet become an integral part of how the school collects information on what it does well and where it needs to improve. The school has developed effective systems to monitor curriculum coverage and to assess and track pupils' progress. It is also meeting national requirements in developing teachers' performance through setting school and personal targets. The start made in analysing test results is a useful step towards the identification of where the problems lie and what needs to be done.
77. A valuable model has been set in the good leadership and well-managed work of the deputy headteacher this year to develop the quality of provision in writing and raise standards. As literacy coordinator she has used information from her regular audits and monitoring to identify areas for improvement. She has led by example in teaching, and initiated changes in others' practice. The evaluation of this work offers the chance to identify the most effective management strategies and practices that could be applied by other coordinators, and also to pinpoint where further development is needed. One likely aspect is the quality of teachers' marking. The school has not resolved the key issue to improve the style and consistency of marking. While some teachers use marking very effectively to encourage pupils and tell them how to improve, others do not. This inconsistency reflects a lack of commitment by all the staff to school improvement.
78. The quality of leadership and management of the other subject coordinators varies. In most cases, the quality of leadership is satisfactory but there are weaker aspects in

subject management. Many coordinators deal efficiently with routine aspects, such as improving resources and checking curriculum coverage. Few coordinators have had the chance to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, they have only partial information to help them identify what needs to be done to raise standards. In design and technology, the lack of action to deal with the weakness identified in the last inspection in pupils' design skills has compounded the problem. In comparison, the coordinator for art and design has a clear view of standards and of the need to improve ICT within the subject. As Foundation Stage coordinator, she also shows good leadership and management skills. She leads the team in planning the curriculum and sets a good example in her own practice.

79. One area of good improvement is school governance. In response to a key issue, the governors have adopted a more pro-active role in dealing with the work of the school and ensuring that statutory requirements are met. Every governor has a curriculum or aspect responsibility and all take their roles seriously even though some are relatively inexperienced. Good use is made of personal and professional expertise in the work of committees, especially in monitoring the school's finances, conducting health and safety audits and dealing with matters of buildings' maintenance. Reports from the various committees add to the quality of the annual report to parents.
80. The headteacher keeps the governing body well informed about the work of the school and the minutes of meetings show clearly what action the governors intend to take. The governors set realistic targets and compare the school's results with local and national data but they do not always hold the headteacher and key staff to full account in explaining why standards are not better. Reports from subject coordinators give details of what has been done but do not always evaluate its impact. When done well, as in the report on art and design, governors are given a good overview of how effective the action has been done and what needs to be done next. Governors also seek the views of pupils and parents in deciding the direction for the school. As a result of the last parental consultation, when 180 questionnaires were returned, the school has changed the timings of open evenings for parents and also looked at plans to offer a homework club for the older junior pupils.
81. The rolling programme of subject and school review gives governors and staff a clear overview of school priorities in the long and short term and what is expected of them. The absence of clear, measurable targets limits the governors' ability to determine whether the action has been effective or not. For example, the target *'to raise the attainment of children's writing'* does not indicate the hoped for improvement which would count as success.
82. Financial management is good. The school makes good use of the expertise of a finance officer from the local education authority and the school secretary and headteacher monitor carefully school spending and the use of the budget. Governors have been prudent in recent years and built up funds to cover the costs of furnishing new classrooms and dealing with school maintenance. However, the school's success in gaining grants has meant these funds have not all been needed. The governors intend to use the considerable reserves to sustain the good level of teaching and support staff over the next few years when there is a projected fall in the number of pupils on roll with a subsequent reduction in school budget. The school continues to spend more than most primaries to provide specialist teaching in music. Governors judge this to give good value in the standards attained and in pupils' personal development. This was also a key reason why they sought grants to take pupils on visits to the theatre. The school's successful bid has covered the costs in taking pupils to see several plays.

83. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis because administrative systems are efficient and well established. The office staff have agreed areas of responsibility and work well together. Their friendly, positive approach adds to the ease parents feel in coming into school or making contact on the telephone. The staff make good use of ICT systems to store key data and to produce letters and information for parents. The deputy headteacher plays a key role in the daily management of the school and in organising and monitoring the professional development of all staff. This is tightly linked to school development priorities. Over the year, she has mentored a newly qualified teacher and ensured that the school has more than met statutory requirements in providing support, advice and professional development opportunities.
84. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is well led and managed. Although only a part-time appointment, the special educational needs coordinator organises her time efficiently to liaise with colleagues in school and with external agencies to secure and plan the best provision possible for pupils on the school's register of special educational need. The register is regularly updated and staffing arrangements amended to meet pupils' needs. A good recent initiative is the short daily session for dyslexic pupils taken by a learning support assistant who has had specialist training. The nominated governor for special educational needs visits the school regularly and gains a good oversight of what is provided and how it meets pupils' needs, especially for those pupils with a statement of special educational need. This information is reflected in the governors' annual report to parents.
85. The school is using relevant grants to extend the accommodation, refurbish toilets and maintain the school in good decorative order. The caretaker and cleaning staff take much pride in their work and keep the school immaculately clean. This contributes significantly to the positive family atmosphere. The present accommodation is only just adequate for the number of pupils but the completion of a new classroom offers the potential for more flexible working arrangements for the junior pupils next year. Pupils and staff are well used to the awkward layout, with most of the main classrooms opening off central walkways, and the new classrooms in an added wing. The classrooms vary slightly in size but the older juniors have ample room. The nursery is spacious and has direct access to a small, secure outdoor area that includes flower borders. At present, the indoor and outdoor nursery space is not being used to best effect to provide different areas of provision but plans to refurbish the nursery provide an opportunity to reorganise resources and to reappraise how the space is used.
86. The school's large hall and spacious grounds, which include grassed areas and an all weather surface, are used well throughout the year to give all pupils a wide range of sporting and outdoor experiences. Good use is made of the bays in the main corridor of the school as dining areas and places for small groups to work. A very cosy library has been formed in an upstairs entrance room but its use as a teaching area for small groups limits other pupils' access to the books.
87. In most subjects, there is a satisfactory range and number of resources. However, they are not always being put to best use. For example, the school has an adequate number of computers spread around the school in the classrooms, but they stand idle too often. This is largely due to the need for rotas to ensure that all pupils have their turn. Similarly, other ICT equipment, such as tape recorders, is used infrequently. The good resources for reading, mathematics, music and physical education contribute significantly to the standards achieved.

88. The school receives an average amount per pupil and gives satisfactory value for money.

### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

89. To raise standards further and build on the programme of school development, the governors, headteacher and staff should:
- raise standards in the junior years, especially in English, ICT, design and technology and geography, by placing more emphasis on the development of pupils' skills and the application of their knowledge, and by using assessment information more critically to identify where pupils need to consolidate their learning and what they need to learn next;  
(paragraphs 5, 9 - 12, 43, 44, 120 - 122, 128, 155 - 159, 160, 162, 169 - 174)
  - raise standards in science throughout the school by setting clear learning targets based on an assessment of what pupils already know and by ensuring that pupils learn to pose their own questions and carry out and record their own investigations;  
(paragraphs 7, 8, 109, 141 - 148)
  - improve the quality and consistency of teaching, especially in the junior years, by sharing existing good practice in how to teach strategies and skills and by ensuring that agreed policies and practices, such as the use of marking to improve pupils' work, are followed by all;  
(paragraphs 27, 35, 63, 76, 125, 129, 138, 147)
  - raise the teachers expectations of what the pupils can achieve and provide work across the curriculum to challenge the higher attaining pupils;  
(paragraphs 17, 54, 63, 91, 124, 138, 143, 145, 170)
  - analyse more rigorously and critically performance data and school information, including the monitoring of teaching and learning, to identify exactly where improvements need to be made, how they will be achieved and the evidence needed to evaluate the school's success in achieving them.  
(paragraphs 63, 73, 75, 77, 79, 80, 132, 148, 159, 163, 174)

The governors may also wish to include in their action plan the following minor issues:

- the information to parents on current class topics and how they may help their children;  
(paragraph 71)
- the use of the outdoors as part of the curriculum for nursery and reception year children;  
(paragraphs 40, 84, 111)
- the need for training to update all staff in the school's child protection procedures;  
(paragraph 58)
- the development of pupils' composing skills in music.  
(paragraphs 10, 38, 175)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	53
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	32

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	7	22	22	1	0	0
Percentage	2	13	42	42	2	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 almost two 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)	29	241
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	66

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	33

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	19

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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*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)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	10	21	31

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	7	10
	Girls	18	15	21
	Total	28	22	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90(85)	71(79)	100(94)
	National	84(83)	86(84)	91(90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	8	8	6
	Girls	16	19	17
	Total	24	27	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	77(74)	87(88)	74(56)
	National	85(84)	89(88)	89(88)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	17	16	33

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	7	10	14
	Girls	9	5	10
	Total	16	15	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	48(73)	45(73)	73(88)
	National	75(75)	71(72)	87(85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	12	14
	Girls	8	10	9
	Total	14	22	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	41(58)	65(55)	68(64)
	National	72(70)	74(72)	82(79)

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



### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	22
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	177
Any other minority ethnic group	0

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### **Teachers and classes**

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.77
Average class size	30.13

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

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	163

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	0
Total number of education support staff	2.7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	74
Number of pupils per FTE adult	10.7

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1.4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.4
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

*This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	572583
Total expenditure	554153
Expenditure per pupil	2030
Balance brought forward from previous year	58102
Balance carried forward to next year	76532

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	274
Number of questionnaires returned	75

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	35	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	59	36	4	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	63	35	0	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	40	47	11	0	2
The teaching is good.	67	33	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	52	36	9	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	73	25	0	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	21	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	49	39	12	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	64	28	0	3	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	59	40	1	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	45	3	3	16

## **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**

90. Improvements in the quality of teaching since the last inspection have raised the overall quality of the provision to good. However, the quality is strongest in the reception class. Here the room is well organised to support the children's learning and to provide different active experiences including painting, water and sand as well as areas to attract the children and prompt their observation and exploration skills. This is less evident in the nursery and the class of mixed reception and Year 1 children, although much thought has gone into the setting up and use of 'The Garden Centre' role-play area. Photographic evidence indicates there were also more practical activities in the autumn and spring terms.
91. Twenty-five children attend the nursery full-time and an additional five children attend the morning or the afternoon session. These ten children started in January whereas the others have been at school since September. All join the reception year in September. As there are 38 children in the reception year, 10 children are in a class with Year 1 pupils, and 28 in the reception class. The layout of the school means that the nursery and the other two classes are some distance apart making the sharing of facilities difficult, especially the use of the secure outdoor area. This is further accentuated by the fact that all follow different themes and timetables. The Foundation Stage coordinator oversees the work of the team, and monitors the overall planning. Two senior nursery nurses run the nursery and are assisted part of the time by a bilingual teaching assistant as well as the nursery nurse who works most of her time in the reception class. A fourth nursery nurse works in the class of mixed reception and Year 1 children, and often supervises and works with the reception year children.
92. From a low start, the children make at least satisfactory progress in the nursery year and good progress in creative and physical development. This reflects the expertise of the nursery nurses in these areas and the wide range of experiences across the year. Best progress for all children is in personal, social and emotional development. The lower attaining children do well across the curriculum as they develop in maturity, skills and knowledge. The higher attaining children do not make such good progress especially in communication, language and literacy and in number.
93. When the children enter the reception year, they are interested in learning. They make good progress and achieve well because of good, purposeful, lively teaching. Most children are on track to reach the standard expected by the end of the reception year in all six areas of learning. The higher attaining children are already working towards Level 1 of the National Curriculum in reading, writing and number. However, a significant number, more often the younger children in the year group, are only just starting to read and write independently.

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

94. Good, consistent teaching ensures that all the children achieve well. The staff, especially the nursery nurses in the nursery, care about the children and their warm, supportive manner fosters the children's sense of security and confidence to try new things and to become increasingly less dependent on others.

95. School records show when the children start in the nursery many find it hard to sit still, to listen and to get on with others. During the inspection, the nursery children behaved very well. They welcomed visitors, followed routines, sat quietly listening to stories, confidently chose what they wanted to do and played happily and comfortably with others. This good progress, and very good progress for some, reflects the skills of the nursery nurses in developing 'good manners' and in ensuring the children know what is expected of them. They show the children what to do, talk about what is happening and divert children when they become fractious or when things go wrong. A nursery nurse was quick to intervene when two boys tussled over a lump of dough. Her suggestion that they used the cutters helped to refocus their attention and defuse the situation.
96. The children follow the nursery routines, such as finding their name card when they arrive, feeding the birds and sitting quietly to eat snack. They get on well with each other and take care of their own needs. When getting ready to go on a walk, boys and girls from different ethnic minorities happily partnered each other and chatted about where they were going. The children enjoy the activities. There were squeals of laughter as four children delved under a blanket to see torchlight and much delight when the trolley of musical instruments was wheeled in. However, when choosing activities, some children, more usually boys, wander and flit. This is largely because the nursery nurses do not always make clear the purpose of the activity and what they would like the children to do.
97. The children's good level of self-confidence and interest in learning is also typical of the reception year children. They are keen to get started and the teachers' enthusiasm fires the children's involvement and interest in what is happening. The children develop a strong sense of community and concern for one another because the teachers take an interest in them and encourage them to take responsibility for things. For example, the reception children act as milk monitors, water plants and, in the mixed age class, have had the opportunity to take home Max, the class toy pet. They write in Max's diary about how they cared for him. The children show little shyness and several were very willing to offer their own prayer at the end of school.

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

98. The children's good learning reflects the overall good quality of teaching and provision. In the nursery, the children learn to recognise and write their name and build up a good repertoire of songs, rhymes and favourite stories. There are many good features in the provision, such as the inclusion of information books as part of a display, notepads in the role play area, and ribbons on sticks to develop the children's awareness of letter patterns. However, the nursery itself lacks sparkle. The room has not been organised well enough to provide areas for particular activities, such as listening to taped stories. There is very little print to interest the children in what things say and little to prompt their involvement in using language, reading and writing. This slows the progress for the higher attaining children especially. The post van and display of children's work based on the book 'The Jolly Postman' provided an attractive backdrop to the reading corner but the need to reorganise this area several times a day to provide space for group sessions took the gloss away. In the other classrooms, there is much more to catch the eye and to interest the children in reading notices, labels and signs.
99. A significant number of nursery children have limited speech. Their diction is unclear and they lack the fluency of the average four-year-old. The nursery nurses are adept in engaging the children in conversation and often introduce new words and phrases.

For example, when discussing which outfits a doll should wear, the nursery nurse chatted about the names and functions of different garments but missed chances to encourage the children to explain and justify their choices. The reception year children are generally willing speakers. They listen carefully to their teachers and are quick to fill in gaps deliberately left by the adults, such as '*We smell with our ..... and feel with our .....*'. They chat easily about what they have done and often point out things that interest them such as, in a story, the size of the Gruffalo's teeth when he stuck out his tongue.

100. Over the year, the nursery children experience a wide range of activities that help to develop their early reading and writing skills. Curriculum planning shows how the focus has rightly changed since September from sharing stories to more focussed work on the content of stories, letters and their sounds. The children develop an interest in books and many take home library books each week. When they enter the reception year, the higher attaining children recognise some letters such as 'p', copy letters and words and have a go at writing some on their own.
101. In the reception year, the children make good progress because there is a strong emphasis on the children learning how to read and write through good quality sessions when the adults show the children what to do and also explain why. The teachers make effective use of stories to provide meaningful tasks. For example, the children have written their own versions of their favourite Mick Inkpen story and sent cards to Kipper, a character in the school reading scheme.
102. The reception year children recognise many common words, know the letters of the alphabet and also some of the devices used by authors and illustrators, including speech bubbles. Although some children, often the younger ones, are only just starting to write and to recognise words, others are reading and writing independently and using their knowledge of letters to spell words. Their attempts, such as 'smact' (smacked), show a good awareness of sounds and knowledge of letter patterns. When a nursery nurse made deliberate errors in writing a sentence, the children were quick to point out the need for spaces between words and how writing starts at the left side of the page. Chances are missed to draw on the skills and expertise of the staff to hold even more group sessions across the reception and nursery years and to boost the children's progress by gearing the task closely to the children's stage of development.

### **Mathematical development**

103. The good teaching and strong emphasis on practical experience, counting and number is reflected in the children's good number knowledge at the end of the reception year. Most are confident in number to 10, count accurately one to one, and higher attaining children are already familiar with number signs and how to record their work.
104. In the nursery, clear targets such as 'To know some three-dimensional shapes' give the focus for adult led activities for the week. However, the nursery environment is poorly organised to support this. The children work at tables well away from the current display and few go to the display to look at or use the items. As the games and puzzles are put away at the end of planned activities, the potential is lost for the children to come back to the same activity later in the same day.
105. As part of daily activities, the nursery children count and look at numbers. The nursery nurses often make good, spontaneous use of events to talk about amounts and

numbers. The children develop an understanding of the concepts, 'more than' and 'half' as they see what they refer to. Similarly, they come to know 'o'clock' because of the references to time on relation to school events. The children enjoy using the computer mouse to place the right number of animals in the picture on screen. They often count as they place the animals but few manage successfully above five although they count to higher numbers.

106. In daily mathematics lessons, the reception children show a good knowledge of number to 100. The teacher's comment '*Stay with the count*', as she pointed to the numbers, kept all together and helped the lower attaining children to succeed. All really enjoyed turning their backs to the number chart and showing that they knew how to count in tens and twos without it. The reception teachers make good use of games to keep the children's interest high. The children showed a developing awareness of the relationship between numbers that make six when they placed frogs onto lily pads. They have applied this knowledge in looking at how they come to school. By threading beads onto strings to mark the children who walked or came in cars, the children created a frequency chart.

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

107. The children make good progress over time. The teachers carefully plan this area of learning. The staff make good use of visitors as well as local visits to provide the children with first hand experiences and to encourage their questioning and observation skills. The nursery children have tasted different foods, grown plants and washed 'babies'. They were mesmerised when a balloon got bigger when the nursery nurse pumped in air, and keen to repeat the process when it blew off. However, they were not given a chance to use the pump themselves.
108. The children have been gaining a sense of change in watching the stages in the demolition of a nearby factory and also the building of the new classroom. Occasionally, good use has been made of ICT to record these events and to prompt the children to talk about them, but there are few class books, tapes or photograph collections to remind the children of what they have seen and where it happened.
109. When the reception children went on a mini-beast hunt in the outdoor area, the teacher made good use of a reference book to show the children how they could find out the names and details of what they saw. The children were also intrigued to look at a dead fish and to compare it with a goldfish in a bowl. In these sessions, the good questioning of the adults extended the children's thinking and use of relevant vocabulary such as 'gills' and 'fins'.
110. The children are well prepared for National Curriculum work in science, geography, history, design and technology and ICT. The nursery children have many opportunities to build and construct with different materials, including pipes and blocks outside. Several boys were quick to move the blocks into place to form a bus. One area of weakness is the absence of planned problem-solving situations. The children work with the adults to produce particular items, such as model vehicles and clock towers. However, the adults often determine what the children will do, the resources to be used and the steps in the process. As many of the resources are not on open access, the children have only limited opportunities to try different ways of assembling, fixing and joining materials.
111. The children show in their play a developing knowledge of people's jobs and household practices. Nursery children used the instruments in the doctor's bag to

give injections and to look in ears as they played in 'St Mary's Hospital'. The inclusion of authentic props in 'The Garden Centre', such as compost, plant pots and trowels has enhanced the quality of the reception children's awareness of the links between visiting a garden centre and growing plants.

### **Physical development**

112. The children achieve well in the skills of coordination, control and movement because of the good programme of activities over the year indoors and out. The nursery has easy access to a small, secure outdoor area and the children have periods of outdoor play when the weather is fine. Although the reception children have very limited use of the outdoor play equipment, including the wheeled toys, it does not affect the development of their skills unduly. It does, however, narrow the range and frequency of their experiences. By the end of the reception year, most of the children have attained the expected standard. They move confidently, show a good awareness of space and use tools and different equipment safely and competently.
113. The nursery children showed developing dexterity in peeling tangerines and in using a range of tools, such as brushes, chinks and rolling pins. One child, anxious for the dough to be really thin, balanced on one leg as she used her knee to press on the rolling pin as she also pushed it with both hands.
114. The reception year children much enjoyed darting about in different directions as part of the warm-up session to a lesson outdoors. Although several children kept their eye on the ball and were able to throw it in the air and catch it again, many found this hard. One boy was also able to follow the teacher's lead and throw with one hand and catch with two. All tried their best to send the ball to a partner and were delighted when they were successful.

### **Creative development**

115. The quality of the provision is good in both the nursery and reception years and most children are on track to attain the standard expected at the end of the reception year. The nursery children get off to a good start because the nursery nurses use their knowledge and expertise well to provide a good range of activities indoors and out. They introduce the children to different materials, textures and resources and teach them skills, such as printing with leaves and drawing daffodils from observation. Higher attaining nursery children are already including details of faces and hair in their drawings of people.
116. As well as allowing the children to decide how they wish to use different media, the adults work with them to encourage their ideas. A good example was when a nursery nurse chatted to children who were exploring the feeling of cornflour paste on their hands. She was able to suggest words to describe how it felt and looked. They also encourage the children to use their own imagination and to create their own scenarios.
117. Photographic evidence shows the children have created movements to music to represent snowflakes and recreated stories about Postman Pat. During the inspection, several children frequently chose to play in 'St Mary's Hospital' but as the children often played alongside one another, the quality of the play remained low. Chances are missed for an adult to develop and extend the children's ideas. This weaker strand in developing creativity is also reflected in the limited chances for the



children to play, perform and listen to music other than in specific weekly music sessions when all the nursery children come together.

118. The reception year children build soundly on these skills. Teachers' planning shows how over the year, the timetable shifts from integrated activities to more formal subjects. The work is more teacher directed so that the children learn how to mix different colours and how to combine different materials to make collage pictures and scenes, such as the recreation of 'The Greedy Grey Octopus' and seaside pictures using sand. The children have fewer opportunities to develop their own ideas. Nevertheless, a strength is the way the teachers value the children's work and talk to them about what they have achieved.

## ENGLISH

119. Standards are average at the end of Year 2 but below average at the end of Year 6. The school's unvalidated results in this year's national tests show that standards have risen compared with 2001. Since 1998 there has been good improvement in writing across the school but less improvement in reading.
120. This year, high priority has been given to raising standards in reading and writing. Good leadership by the deputy headteacher, as subject coordinator, has brought about a commendable improvement. She has led several initiatives that have had a positive impact on standards, especially for the infant pupils. The school has satisfactorily adapted the national framework for literacy to guide the systematic teaching of reading, punctuation, spelling and grammar. The use of national support programmes, such as Early Literacy Support and Additional Literacy Support, for those pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 who have not made the progress expected, has begun to bring about improvements in pupils' reading, spelling and speaking and listening skills. The deputy headteacher has taught alongside class teachers in Years 1 and 2. This has raised the quality of teaching and learning, especially in writing, which has accelerated the pupils' progress and raised standards. This effective work along with target setting provides a sound basis for further improvement.
121. Speaking and listening skills are satisfactory throughout the school. In all classes, pupils are attentive and listen well to teachers and to each other. Younger pupils, for example, listen attentively to stories and are confident in sharing their views or asking questions about what they have heard. In the junior years, most pupils willingly contribute to class discussion, and are confident and self-assured when reading aloud. Pupils are polite and articulate when talking informally about things that interest them. However, the school does not plan enough opportunities for pupils to develop and extend their speaking skills. Strategies to encourage speaking through role play, drama and debate do not feature in teachers' planning and good opportunities to promote partner and group work which could generate dialogue, negotiation and use of subject specific language are missed in many lessons not only in English but other subjects.
122. Standards in reading are average. Most pupils reach Level 2, the level expected for their age, and the higher attaining pupils reach the higher Level 3. The good teaching for infant pupils, and for those pupils with special educational needs, ensures all make good progress in reading. The teachers use big books effectively to show pupils how authors organise their work and use language for a purpose. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 read a non-fiction book very carefully to find the answers to their questions about sunflowers, and Year 5 pupils with special educational needs were very intent on finding clues in the text in response to the teacher's comment *'Let's all read page 16*

*and find out where it tells us ...*'. Although the class teachers share texts with the junior pupils, the teaching often lacks the explicitness needed to ensure pupils realise and remember the strategies and information.

123. All teachers are making good use of the recently introduced system to record pupils' reading achievement to identify the skills they need to teach pupils next. The infant pupils make good progress in learning letters and their sounds and in recognising common words. By the end of Year 2, pupils read with fluency, confidence and often, good expression. This reflects good teaching strategies. For example, when the teacher asked Year 2 pupils '*How do you think the character would have said those words*', a pupil re-read the lines with much more positive expression and emphasis, showing a good understanding of the passage, as well as how to read for effect to an audience. A similar emphasis on planned reading sessions in Years 3 to 6 ensures pupils make steady progress. Many Year 4 pupils show an enthusiasm for books and authors, including Blyton, and comment that they sometimes borrow books from the library. By Year 6, pupils are generally competent, accurate readers. However, even the more fluent readers gloss over words and phrases which they do not understand and show poorly developed skills in gaining meaning by 'reading between the lines'. This lack of skill to infer and deduce limits their skills in using reference material and affects the quality of their work across the curriculum.
124. Since the last inspection, the school has improved the range and number of reading resources for classrooms and the library which has been well organised. However, pupils' access to reference books and the non-fiction collection is limited because the library is used as a teaching base.
125. Standards in writing have risen significantly this year in Years 2 and 6. For the infant pupils, good teaching, especially in showing pupils how to relate what they read to what they write, ensures that most make good progress in writing, often from a low start in the reception year. All the Year 2 pupils have reached the level expected for their age and a higher percentage than in previous years has done even better. Similarly, in Year 6, two thirds of pupils have reached the level expected for their age although few have done better than this. Higher attaining pupils do much better in reading than in writing. Too little is expected of higher attaining pupils in the junior years. Although the teachers mark the pupils' work, they do not always comment on how well pupils are doing in meeting their targets and what to do to get even better.
126. Most Year 2 pupils' writing generally conveys clear meaning in correctly punctuated sentences. The pupils sequence their ideas logically in stories and know how to express themselves in simple poetry and letters. They generally spell simple words accurately and their handwriting is legible. This is because the teachers are consistent in how they teach letter formation and spelling. Higher attaining pupils sustain ideas well by using extended sentences and by including interesting words and phrases. However, the teachers' marking does not always help them to develop their ideas.
127. The infant pupils learn word processing skills in writing their own stories. For instance, a Year 1 pupil concentrated really hard to find the letters on the keyboard to write about 'The Gruffalo'. A particularly good feature of some lessons is the way the teachers ask the pupils for their opinions about their progress and what they can do to improve. For example, one Year 1 pupil commented that another had improved in her writing even though there were some incorrect spellings. The pupils are learning what they need to do and are gaining a good awareness of their own achievements.

128. Satisfactory teaching overall in the junior years ensures that by the end of Year 6, pupils generally show a sound knowledge of how to structure their writing for different purposes and how to sustain ideas in a satisfactory range of styles. They know how to plan, draft and revise their work but have had little experience of doing this on the computer. There is some lively and thoughtful writing, for example, in Year 6 pupils' biographies, discursive pieces about school uniform and accounts of theatre visits and reviews of plays. Pupils usually present their work neatly and spell familiar words correctly but show a reluctance to explore more interesting vocabulary to gain better effect and pupils' use of grammar is sometimes inaccurate.
129. In many junior classes, pupils' writing is not given a sufficiently high profile. Because the teachers do not always specify what they expect from the pupils, they are not sure of what to comment on or the level at which the work is set. Strategies to stimulate pupils' writing are limited. The teachers set the scene for writing but do not give pupils enough opportunities to explore language, generate their own ideas and improve their vocabulary. Year 4 pupils struggled to write a persuasive argument because too little was done to help them build up an appropriate vocabulary prior to drafting their writing. Classrooms have few displays to remind pupils of key features of effective writing or strategies to help them improve their work.
130. The quality of teaching and learning in English is satisfactory overall. It is stronger for pupils in Years 1 and 2 where almost all of the lessons seen were good. The infant teachers have high expectations of all the pupils. Their enthusiasm and sense of purpose sets a lively tone in lessons. The teaching for the junior pupils often lacks a sense of urgency. In too many lessons, the teachers spend too long on the initial session and do not leave enough time to review what pupils have learnt at the end. Teachers often encourage pupils to share their work but they do not use these times well enough to highlight the most successful elements or to help pupils decide for themselves whether they have met the learning objectives.
131. The school recognises that there is still work to be done to refine the assessment and target setting systems and to ensure that the teachers use them to inform their teaching.

## **MATHEMATICS**

132. Standards are above average at the end of Year 2 but below at the end of Year 6. Nearly all Year 2 pupils have attained the level expected for their age but the fact that just over half have done better raises the overall standard. This is a significant improvement on last year's overall results. Standards have also risen for the oldest pupils. Two thirds of Year 6 pupils are working at the level expected for their age and a small percentage have attained a higher level. This has brought the school closer to the national picture.
133. The coordinator has successfully initiated steps to improve the quality of provision and raise standards, especially in the infant years. Her work with the Local Education Authority numeracy consultant has brought a good degree of consistency in lesson format and in the common use of records to track pupils' progress. The teachers are drawing well on good practice seen in other schools. A key factor has been the emphasis on revisiting those aspects where pupils have problems. The analysis of pupils' work to see where achievement is low is still an area that needs developing, particularly in the junior years.

134. The quality of teaching is consistently good for the infant pupils and for pupils in the upper junior classes, although the overall quality is satisfactory in the junior classes. The guidelines of the National Numeracy Strategy have been implemented fully throughout the school. Many teachers show good expertise and confidence, especially in helping pupils to discuss the different strategies that they use. A good feature of most lessons is the way the teachers identify and share with the pupils what they are to learn.
135. Sharp, focused mental arithmetic sessions at the beginning of lessons consolidate the pupils' knowledge and skills. At such times, the teachers use a good variety of resources to involve all the pupils. The teachers follow recommended good practice in using number cards, number lines and games to pose number problems and encourage the development of pupils' mental number skills. In a very good lesson, the teacher pitted the pupils' skills against the computer to generate higher and lower numbers. The pupils then went on to use cards to split numbers into tens and units. Good pace and the involvement of all pupils also typified a lesson for Year 6 pupils when they used number cards to show their answers to mental number problems.
136. The teachers often give the pupils an opportunity to explain how they arrived at an answer. A good example was seen in Year 2, when some pupils explained how, when adding nine, they added ten first and then took away one. This led to a lively discussion that showed pupils had a good range of strategies when adding numbers, such as rounding up, adding numbers to ten and doubling numbers. As many lessons are lively and run at a quick pace, the pupils remain interested and there is often a pleasant classroom atmosphere that is conducive to good learning. For example, Year 6 pupils were highly absorbed in carrying out investigations into the reflection of shapes on a mirror line.
137. Pupils with special educational needs, and those pupils with English as an additional language, make good progress in developing their basic number skills in relation to their abilities. This is because teachers plan work at the right level for them and learning support assistants give good support. For example, in one lesson, the classroom assistant followed the teacher's lead in using arrow cards to help Year 2 pupils split numbers into tens and units. Her support enabled the pupils with special educational needs to play an active part in the lesson and to do as well as the others.
138. Infant pupils achieve well and make good progress because the teachers set them interesting, challenging and enjoyable tasks. For example, Year 1 pupils have looked at the most common shoe size in their class and pupils' pizza preferences. Year 2 pupils enthusiastically added a short series of two-digit numbers and were disappointed when a number game was cut short. The teachers know the pupils well and motivate them through asides and individual comments such as "*This is brilliant. Last time you couldn't do this!*". As a result, the pupils show confidence in using number and by the age of seven, most pupils add and subtract accurately to 50. They also have a sound understanding of common two and three-dimensional shapes.
139. Pupils' progress dips a little in Years 3 and 4. Stronger teaching enables pupils in Years 5 and 6 to make up some ground and progress overall in the junior years is satisfactory. As the teachers do not always match the tasks to the differing abilities of the pupils, the higher attaining pupils often work within their capability. They are not being challenged enough to boost their achievement. For example, in a lesson for Year 4 pupils, when all pupils completed the same worksheet on dividing numbers, the higher attainers had little difficulty in coping with remainders. They completed the work quickly while other pupils struggled as they had not grasped the process.

Chances were also missed to develop the pupils' accuracy in setting out their work. This was also evident in teachers' marking in many classes.

140. By the end of Year 6, pupils add and subtract large numbers accurately. Most present their work neatly but not all align numbers properly to show a true understanding of the procedures they follow. They have some knowledge of the relationship between decimals, fractions and percentages and name and measure angles correctly.
141. Subject leadership and management are satisfactory. The coordinator has had little opportunity to monitor the quality of teaching and learning this year. However, her scrutiny of pupils' progress and work in books has highlighted the need to strengthen teaching in the junior years. She is also aware of the need to reduce the incidence of worksheets and to make even better use of ICT as a teaching and learning tool.

## SCIENCE

142. As in the last inspection, standards are below average at the end of Years 2 and 6. The majority of pupils attain the level expected for their age but few do better. Standards are not rising markedly because the quality of teaching, although satisfactory overall, is not strong enough to accelerate the pupils' learning. The quality of teaching varies. Infant and junior pupils occasionally benefit from lively, good and very good teaching. The teachers are confident in the subject matter and use questioning well to prompt the pupils to observe, predict, explore and evaluate what they notice. At such times, pupils with special educational needs also achieve well because of the amount and quality of support from adults and other pupils.
143. In the junior classes, the teachers often put over well key information but the focus on teacher led work minimises the potential for the pupils to develop their understanding through their own enquiry. Pupils generally enjoy science as they are often involved in finding things out. Year 5 pupils were fascinated by the movement of snails and excitedly discussed what they saw. In a very good lesson, Year 1 pupils showed total concentration, excitement and obvious enjoyment in looking closely at seeds from a range of plants. There was a true sense of wonder as the teacher encouraged them to ask their own questions while her questions prompted them to think for themselves and to draw on work they had done previously. Pupils were quick to suggest how they might keep track of the growth of their sunflowers and to consider possible outcomes, such as one boy's query *'I wonder if the seed we plant first will grow the fastest?'*
144. Year 2 pupils showed a developing understanding of a fair test when they talked about the need to water both plants, even though one was to be hidden from light. Through a good range of practical investigations, the infant pupils learn to use simple equipment, such as hand lenses, and to record their work in diagrams, charts and tables. By the end of Year 2, pupils know about the dangers associated with electrical appliances and how to make simple electrical circuits using bulbs, batteries and wires. They make simple predictions based on their knowledge. However, the higher attaining pupils are not challenged enough to develop and extend their ideas.
145. A scrutiny of pupils' work since September shows that pupils have completed a high number of worksheets. As they are often undated it makes it hard to track and evaluate pupils' progress. Frequently, the sheets have the same questions for all pupils and too many can be completed merely by the addition of single words or short phrases. This prescriptive approach in the infant and junior classes does not allow the higher attaining pupils sufficient opportunity to show what they know and what they think. The opportunity for pupils to pose their own questions is also often severely

restricted because the questions are already covered on the worksheet. This helps to account for the low percentage of high attainment in each year group, especially in Years 2 and 6.

146. Higher attaining Year 6 pupils lack sufficient confidence in planning and carrying out their investigations. They show a limited understanding of what is meant by fair testing and also have difficulty in generalising their learning. For example, a group of Year 6 pupils talked confidently about their investigation of water evaporation but found it difficult, particularly the girls, to identify other situations when this change of state occurs such as when they leave their paintings to dry. The pupils' tentative knowledge of scientific processes and concepts reflects weaknesses in prior learning and in turn, in the teaching.
147. The junior pupils make satisfactory progress in acquiring scientific knowledge and in learning how to record their findings from simple investigations although there is little use of ICT equipment to do this. The teachers tend to direct the pupils' investigations too much and miss chances to develop the pupils' awareness of key factors. The pupils' limited language skills are very evident in how they stumble over the use of scientific terms. A collection of defined key terms such as 'controlling variables' is prominently displayed in the Year 6 classroom, but most classrooms have little to reinforce pupils' knowledge and use of scientific vocabulary. The teachers often condone this by not asking for clearer scientific explanations, especially when the pupils merely recount what they have found out or done. Only in the better lessons, do the teachers use the time at the end of lessons to discuss and summarise what the pupils have learnt and how they will build on this learning in the next lesson.
148. By the end of Year 6, pupils have satisfactory knowledge of life processes, living things, materials and their properties and physical processes. Although their work is neatly recorded and pupils have taken care with diagrams, tables and graphs, it lacks the development of ideas and application and extension of pupils' knowledge. For example, pupils have looked at electrical circuits and how to alter the brightness of a bulb but there is little to indicate that pupils can explain the process and why it happens. In some work seen, the teachers had not challenged incorrect answers and ways of expressing findings, for example pupils' comments that *'roots suck up water'*.
149. The quality of subject leadership is satisfactory but there are weaknesses in the management. The coordinator is enthusiastic, advises others and provides a very good model of teaching but she has not been able to share her practice with others. The length of time and number of lessons given to science differs in some junior classes. When there is only one long lesson each week, the pupils have less opportunity to revisit, review and consolidate their learning. An area of improvement is the procedures now used by all staff to assess the pupils' attainment. However, not enough is done to use the information to set challenging targets and to track actual progress throughout the year. This is a continuing area of weakness as over the last few years there has been a consistent discrepancy, sometimes considerable, between teacher's lower assessment and actual test results.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

150. Satisfactory standards have been sustained since the last inspection. Most pupils in Years 2 and 6 attain the level expected for their age and all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. The concern voiced by a few parents that the increased time given to the teaching of literacy and mathematics had

lowered standards in art and design, is not evident in pupils' work. It was not possible to judge the quality of teaching as no lessons were seen.

151. Through work linked to other subjects, pupils are taught different techniques and given opportunities to use a range of media, although ICT is little used. The absence of three-dimensional work, as highlighted in the last inspection, is no longer a major concern. The vibrant lion masks on display in the school hall are a good example of what pupils can achieve. The high quality of the work by Year 5 pupils, completed at a workshop, stems from the pupils' appreciation of the roles and purposes of artists, craftspeople and designers working in different cultures. Such work contributes well to pupils' personal development. Over time, pupils study the work of other artists but see few examples from non-western cultures. A recently collected sample of masks from around the world, to be used in Year 6, is a good example of how this can be extended.
152. The infant pupils extend their painting and collage skills acquired in the Foundation Stage. For instance, pupils in Year 1 have worked together to produce an attractive, three-dimensional display, using different types of paper and materials, to recreate the characters in the 'Greedy Grey Octopus' story. The display has been used well to highlight the use of speech bubbles. Pupils learn to draw and paint from observation. Their sketches of flowers showed a growing eye for detail. By the end of Year 2, pupils have looked at the work of some well-known artists, such as Monet, and tried to work in a similar style, using colour wash and tissue paper.
153. Over time, pupils learn how to handle a wide variety of tools, materials and techniques such as print rolling. Year 3 pupils' realistic portraits of prominent Tudors, including Lady Jane Grey, show developing skills in combining textiles and paint and an awareness of the style of portraits of the time. Year 4 pupils' designs for World Cup football strips are of a lower quality. The pupils show little sense of fashion design sketches. Other work indicates a developing awareness of colour, texture, line and tone, shape and form. Year 5 pupils have used the work of Clarice Cliffe as a stimulus for their own 'Bizarre ware' pottery designs, while Year 6 pupils have designed celebratory plates in recognition of the Queen's Golden Jubilee. Their detailed paintings entitled 'Townscape' reflect well the style of L S Lowry and the photographs of Sarah Kimberly.
154. Pupils comment that they enjoy art and design and they are proud of their work on display. However, as none of the displayed pieces has any comment indicating what the pupils think and feel about their work, or information about the techniques and style emulated, chances are missed to develop their aesthetic awareness.
155. The coordinator provides good leadership and subject management. She has a clear view of standards throughout the school and of aspects for improvement, such as the use of ICT. She has adapted national guidance to ensure a balanced programme for the infant and junior pupils and has produced guidance for staff. Since the last inspection, she has extended the range of painting media to include materials such as acrylics. The teachers track pupils' progress and attainment each term against identified objectives and one or two are beginning to identify the elements of art and design in a growing collection of pupils' work. However, the links with the school's provision for spiritual and cultural development are not appreciated fully. Plans are in place to use the facilities of the City Art Gallery to give pupils the chance to see other artists' work.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

156. At the time of the last inspection, standards overall were judged to be satisfactory but pupils' design skills were judged to be 'less well developed'. Little improvement is evident and while standards are satisfactory at the end of Year 2, they are unsatisfactory at the end of Year 6. Although no lessons were seen and it is not possible to judge the quality of teaching, a scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work indicates weaknesses in some aspects and in turn, weaknesses in subject leadership and management.
157. The good quality of pupils' making skills remains strong as highlighted in the last inspection. Year 4 pupils' land yachts have been finished to a high standard and pupils in Years 1 and 2 have made good quality sunglasses using coloured acetate for the lenses. However, it is only in the work of Year 6 pupils, done in cooperation with the Road Safety Education Office, that there is evidence of design skills being developed and recorded systematically. Pupils have constructed vehicles from a cardboard template, crashed them down a ramp, discussed the damage and then explored ways to strengthen the vehicles and make modifications. Good use of ICT enhanced the presentation of their findings and evaluations.
158. Gaps in teachers' subject knowledge lie at the heart of the problem. Discussions with staff indicate they have insufficient understanding of the progression of skills in the design aspect of the subject and in how pupils' designs may be recorded. A forthcoming training day provides a useful chance to heighten the teachers' appreciation of the limits they currently place on pupils' creativity. None of the Year 4 pupils' land yachts reflects their own ideas. Teachers' records of the pupils' attainment and progress reflect their selection of learning intentions and progress in design is often overlooked.
159. Pupils are keen to talk about their work but their comments show that more attention is given to design and technology in some classes than others and teachers' planning confirms this. A continuing weakness in the provision is the use of food as a material. Although pupils design a pizza and packaging for it, they do not make and evaluate the actual pizza.
160. Subject leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The coordinator ensures that resources are available but has done little to raise standards and deal with the issues raised in the last inspection. The weakness in design has not been recognised and a review of the curriculum, in the light of revised national requirements in 2000, has yet to be completed. Although some monitoring of teaching and learning has taken place, the outcomes have not been used to make improvements, especially in the allocation of time to the subject and its links with literacy, numeracy and ICT.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

161. Standards in geography at the end of Year 2 are satisfactory. By the end of Year 6, pupils' geographical knowledge is generally as expected for their age, but their enquiry skills are not and this makes overall standards unsatisfactory. Standards have fallen since the last inspection. The school acknowledges that pupils have little experience of fieldwork in the junior years. Not enough use is made of the school grounds and location to develop pupils' mapping and enquiry skills. This is a weakness in the curriculum and teaching. As only one lesson was seen, it is not possible to judge the overall quality of teaching but other evidence indicates it is satisfactory.



162. A scrutiny of pupils' work shows that, by the age of seven, most pupils have a sound understanding of features in their local environment and are able to compare it with other places. They have learnt how to draw a simple map of their route to school from home showing such features as the church, factory and Clock Tower. They have an awareness of places around the world through hearing about the travels of Barnaby Bear, and have some knowledge of the differences between their town locality with and the island of Struay through the 'Katie Morag' stories.
163. In Years 3 to 6, pupils acquire knowledge about places, processes and environmental change. Year 4 pupils have found out information about the different countries competing for the football World Cup. Year 5 pupils have looked at contrasting life styles in India and studied the importance of the presence of world water sources. Year 6 pupils recalled basic geographical knowledge about places and features in the United Kingdom, but found it harder to comment on geographical processes such as river erosion. The gaps are even more evident in enquiry skills. Although Year 3 pupils carried out a survey of how people spend their leisure time, and used local maps to help their study, the work was not clearly recorded and pupils' conclusions were unclear. Year 6 pupils enthusiastically pored over street plans to study and code the changes in retail outlets in Tunstall between 1995 and 2002, but chances were missed to link this work even more closely to first hand enquiry and thus lift the level of challenge.
164. The quality of subject coordination is satisfactory. Although teachers' plans for each term are monitored, but not enough attention is given to the outcomes to ensure that gaps in standards are identified and dealt with. The coordinator has successfully reviewed the content of the curriculum to ensure that all National Curriculum requirements are met, including the use of ICT and the development of mapping skills, and also introduced a new assessment system. This gives consistency to the curriculum in each year group and a good basis to develop the quality of teaching and learning.

## **HISTORY**

165. Standards in history are satisfactory and remain broadly similar to those judged in the last inspection. Pupils' skills and knowledge are equally sound as the school has used national subject guidance to plan a balanced approach to the teaching of historical knowledge and enquiry skills. Pupils' learning is enhanced by visits to museums and places of interest. For example, Year 6 pupils' visit to Cannock Chase prompted some interesting written work about life during World War II.
166. Pupils in the infant classes gain an appropriate sense of the past by learning about significant events and people in history. For example, they study the causes and consequences of The Great Fire of London by referring to Pepys' diaries to get a first hand account of what happened and how people were affected. Pupils also learn how the work of Florence Nightingale influenced medical practice, and of the courage of Grace Darling in rescuing shipwrecked sailors. They gain some insight into social customs and culture by looking at how seaside holidays have changed since Victorian times.
167. By the end of Year 6, pupils have an awareness of the sequence of historical events and a sound knowledge of the life and impact of people in past civilisations, including the Ancient Greeks and Egyptians. Good use is made of local history and heritage to help pupils appreciate why the pottery industry developed in the area and how life has changed in Britain since the 1930s.

168. In the few lessons seen, the quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory overall. The teachers had planned their lessons thoughtfully to allow pupils time to use the resources. A well-chosen story, 'The Long Weekend', helped Year 1 pupils to appreciate the concept of passing time and to draw out their recollections of past holidays. In a good lesson, the teacher captivated Year 2 pupils by producing a beach bag to generate discussion about seaside holidays. The pupils were keen to carry out their homework of asking grandparents about their holidays when they were children.
169. The coordinator leads and manages the subject satisfactorily. Information gained from monitoring the teachers' planning and pupils' work has led to more links between history, literacy and art and design than at the time of the last inspection. A new assessment system is being tried to match pupils' work to National Curriculum levels of attainment. While the school has enough reference books and information on CD-ROM, it has few artefacts to help develop pupils' awareness of primary and secondary source material.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

170. As in the last inspection, standards are satisfactory at the end of Year 2 and the infant pupils make satisfactory progress. However, pupils' progress is more variable in the junior years. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is lower than expected for their age.
171. Although the quality and range of ICT hardware and software have been improved, the junior pupils have few opportunities to use the computers to develop and refine their skills to result in any significant improvement in standards. Teachers generally take about 15 minutes to demonstrate a new program or skill and then allocate time during the week for pupils to practise, either individually or in pairs. Inevitably there is very little time to do this and little teacher interaction with pupils as they practise so pupils' skills do not develop as well as they could and there is some underachievement. In all year groups, a significant number of pupils have access to computers at home and a good knowledge of programs and their functions. They sometimes are already proficient in the skills being taught. For example, many Year 2 pupils, who already knew how to use the keyboard, had to sit and watch as individuals came out to practise using specific keys. The current system does not make best use of what the teachers know about pupils' attainment to plan what they should learn next and ensure that pupils have opportunities to move on at a faster pace.
172. In the infant and junior classes, the pupils behave sensibly and responsibly and show enjoyment when they are using the computers. Year 3 pupils were excited by the thought of sending e-mails. Their enthusiasm is heightened when the task is related to other subjects. Year 1 pupils liked the software that animated the growth of a seed and were also keen to use the mouse to click on words and drag and drop them to give them a record of what they had been doing in science.
173. By the end of Year 2, many pupils confidently use computers and know how to use a range of programs. They handle the computer mouse competently, know the purpose of different keys such as 'caps lock' and readily change letter font, size and colour. They also know how to enter instructions to program a floor robot to move. As they progress through the junior years, pupils develop competency in accessing information. Their word processing skills improve and pupils understand and use correct terminology, such as 'changing fonts' to suit 'the style of text'.

174. In the lessons seen, the teaching was satisfactory. Teachers are using recent training and personal expertise to plan their lessons and to explain to pupils what they have to do. When the teacher and classroom assistant each use a computer to demonstrate, the pupils find it easier to see and time is used more effectively to give pupils 'hands-on' experience with immediate feedback and support.
175. The coordinator leads the subject satisfactorily but there are some weaknesses in the management, especially in monitoring the quality of what is provided in classes not only in specific lessons but also across the curriculum. A good start has been made in working with a consultant from the local education authority to plan the curriculum and to ensure that national guidelines are amended to suit the needs of the pupils.

## **MUSIC**

176. Standards in performing music are very good and continue to be a strength of the school. Pupils' attainment is well above the national expectation at the end of Years 2 and 6 in this element, but their attainment is lower in composing music.
177. As at the last inspection, the quality of singing is very good. The pupils sing with clear diction, good control of pitch, a sense of phrase and a good deal of musical expression that comes from being taught good breathing techniques. The infant and junior pupils learn a wide range of songs and sing from memory with evident enjoyment. Boys and girls sing with expression and a good measure of confidence.
178. Pupils are taught to listen to music and to perform it but are not as skilled in composing their own. Year 3 pupils are adept at performing. They combine singing with the playing of drums, xylophones, recorders and dulcimers. A feature of the good, strong teaching is the teacher's expectation that the pupils will take turns to organise where the various instruments should be placed and where the singers should stand for best effect. The pupils do this with little or no fuss or support from the teacher. They understand and often use musical terms such as 'intro', 'interlude' and 'coda', and know how to play the many different tuned and untuned instruments. A part-time specialist music teacher teaches the junior pupils and takes one lesson with infant pupils. These lessons are well planned but show few links with other subjects. While some attention is paid to appraising the work of others, the pupils are given few chances to evaluate their own performance.
179. The Year 6 pupils have written lyrics and composed accompaniments to celebrate the Queen's Golden Jubilee. In the lesson seen, every pupil was actively involved in singing, playing the recorder and drums. Pupils kept an eye on those next to them in order to keep in time. Their performance was of a high standard and shows what the pupils can do given the opportunity and good guidance in how to improve their performance. The oldest junior pupils sing rounds and occasionally sing solos. They understand terms such as 'tempo' and 'ostinato'. Many show a good degree of confidence when challenged to combine and organise musical ideas. Some are particularly adept at listening to a musical phrase and then playing it back immediately.
180. A small number of pupils learn to play the clarinet and are making rapid progress because of excellent teaching from the peripatetic music teacher. They are already playing with control and rhythmic accuracy. This is due to clear explanation of basic skills and timely encouragement.

181. The coordinator is a music specialist. She manages the subject satisfactorily and is aware of the gaps in current provision. Agreed changes in the next school year are designed to provide a better balance between performing and composing music.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

182. As in the last inspection, standards are good and pupils make good progress throughout the school. Pupils take part in a good range of physical activities, including gymnastics, dance, games and swimming. By the time they leave the school, the vast majority swim at least 25 metres.
183. Pupils enjoy physical education and achieve well. There is much good teaching for the infant and junior pupils, including coaching by external specialists in basketball and gymnastics. As a result, the pupils reach a good standard for their age and show a mature understanding of the effects of exercise on their bodies. In all year groups, pupils know they need to warm up before vigorous activity.
184. Pupils find the activities challenging and try their best to do well. For example in a gymnastics lesson, Year 3 pupils concentrated hard and showed imagination and good control to hold different balanced shapes on the floor. When playing games, pupils follow the rules and show good team spirit. In all lessons, pupils with special educational needs and pupils with English as an additional language played a full part in the activities.
185. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It is often good, and in one lesson for Year 6 pupils it was very good. In this lesson, the deputy headteacher kept up a brisk pace and structured her comments to develop the pupils' dance response. The boys and girls worked equally well following her lead and advice and produced movements of high quality portraying a puppet that was coming to life. The teachers manage the pupils well and pupils respond by taking part enthusiastically and behaving well. The pupils have the opportunity to see others demonstrate but occasionally not enough attention is given to making pupils aware of how they can improve. Year 5 pupils gave some sensible suggestions when the headteacher asked them what they could have done better in their movements to music.
186. The coordinator manages the subject effectively. He uses his expertise well to provide a good range of extra-curricular activities attended by junior boys and girls. The quality of the curriculum has been enhanced through the school's links with a sports partnership and the school is seeking accredited status to become a centre for athletics. This would make even better use of the school's grounds including the all weather surface. The detailed scheme of work guides the teachers in planning lessons that progressively develop the pupils' skills. Resources are of good quality, well stored and easily accessible.