

INSPECTION REPORT

THE RICHARD CLARKE FIRST SCHOOL

Abbots Bromley

RUGELEY

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124052

Headteacher: Mrs Pam Potter

Reporting inspector: David Figures
10269

Dates of inspection: 30th September – 2nd October 2002

Inspection number: 250929

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Schoolhouse Lane Abbots Bromley RUGELEY
Postcode:	WS15 3BT
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Hough
Date of previous inspection:	5 May 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
10269	David Figures	Registered inspector	English Art Music	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
19720	Deborah Granville Hastings	Lay inspector	Equal opportunities	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for it's pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents and carers?
25431	Lesley Clark	Team inspector	Science; Geography; History; Physical Education; The Foundation Stage; English as a Second Language	
22778	Ann Shannon	Team inspector	Mathematics; Information and Communication Technology; Design and Technology; Religious Education; Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is a community first school below average in size, catering for 114 boys and girls between four and nine years of age. It serves a rural area which includes the village of Abbots Bromley, in Staffordshire, with about a quarter of pupils coming from neighbouring villages. About four per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, a very low proportion compared with other schools. All pupils are of white European heritage. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language. Eighteen per cent of pupils have special educational needs; this is about average. The needs include moderate learning difficulties, dyslexia, severe learning difficulty and physical disability. Fewer than one per cent of pupils have statements of special educational need, a proportion which is well below average. The attainment of children on entry is generally average, although it varies from year to year. Pupils now in Years 3 and 4 experienced several changes of school organisation and teacher during their time in Years 1 and 2 because of circumstances beyond the school's control, which are now resolved.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Richard Clarke First School is very effective. Academic standards are good, with very powerful contributions from science, geography and history, because very good teaching engenders a strong spirit of enquiry in the pupils. Excellent relationships are at the heart of the pupils' very good personal development. Very good leadership, underpinned by equally good management practice is supported by an outstanding governing body. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve above-average standards, notably in mathematics, science, geography and history, as a result of very good teaching.
- Pupils become mature, capable and independent learners in a school environment which fosters excellent relationships and supports their personal development very well.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- Very strong leadership is supported by an outstanding governing body.

What could be improved

- Standards in English by the end of Year 2.
- The assessment of pupils' work in subjects other than English, mathematics and science.

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 good progress since it was last inspected in 1998. Standards have improved, notably in science, geography and history. The quality of teaching has improved, under the influence of much better monitoring and performance management practice and the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. Educational leadership and the management of the school is now very strong, and the support given by the governing body outstanding. The issues raised at the time of the last inspection have been tackled well, particularly in the light of the staffing and organisational difficulties which have preoccupied the school in the interim.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
reading	C	B	C	E
writing	B	C	C	D
mathematics	D	D	A	C

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The National Curriculum test results for seven-year-olds in 2001 (the latest year for which full comparative data is available) continued a rising trend in mathematics, but a declining trend in reading and writing. They compare closely with the standards of work seen during the inspection. Standards achieved at the end of Year 2 are average in English, above average in mathematics and well above average in science. At the end of Year 4, standards in English and mathematics are above average. In science, standards are well above average. Both boys and girls, including those pupils who have special educational needs, are achieving well during their time in the school, in response to well-judged targets.

Standards in geography and history are well above average and standards in physical education above average at the end of both Year 2 and Year 4, representing good achievement in these subjects. Standards are average and achievement satisfactory in all the other subjects.

Pupils' standards when they leave Reception and start Year 1 are average. Standards are above average in personal, social and emotional development, in their knowledge and understanding of the world, and in their physical development. However, in communication, language and literacy and in their mathematical and creative development, standards are those expected of pupils this age. In relation to their overall attainment when they start school, their achievement is good.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils' enthusiasm for school creates an atmosphere in which they want to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils' self discipline enables them to become independent and mature learners.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent relationships at all points in the school enables the pupils to feel secure and flourish.
Attendance	Very good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Very good	Good	Very good

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 quality of teaching is particularly strong in the Reception class and in Years 3 and 4 and contributes well to pupils' progress in many subjects. Teachers set and expect high standards. The quality of teaching in English, including literacy, is good and in mathematics, including numeracy, it is very good. Teaching is very good in science, geography, history and physical education. As a result, pupils learn at a very fast rate, covering a great deal of work and achieving standards which in some cases are well above average. Teaching in information and communication technology and music is good. In design and technology, art and religious education it is satisfactory.

The strengths of the teaching include the extremely good management of time which ensures lessons proceed briskly. Pupils are made aware of the teacher's expectations and because teachers set very clear outlines of what the lesson is going to be about, pupils can judge for themselves how well they have learned. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject matter, so are able to challenge the higher-attaining pupils effectively. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support, which is carefully managed so that they can take a full part in the lessons. The teachers' very good planning ensures that they meet the needs of all pupils well: material is presented in a logical sequence firmly based on what pupils know and what they need to learn next. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are not so consistently well taught. While some lessons display all the challenge of those in Years 3 and 4, others, although satisfactory, are less well focused, and time is not used as effectively as it should be, with a corresponding effect on the quality of pupils' learning.

In Reception, time is particularly well used and pupils are very well managed. Activities, including those to develop basic skills in literacy and numeracy, are very well planned and teaching encourages pupils' personal, social and emotional development well. However, because creative activities are often planned in support of other areas of learning, instead of in their own right, opportunities to extend this aspect of pupils' development systematically are sometimes missed

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. It meets statutory requirements, with particularly strong contributions from mathematics, science, history and geography. The community at large makes an excellent contribution.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils are well supported.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. All staff work together well to create an atmosphere in which pupils' personal development is genuinely valued and promoted.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Well. The school provides a high level of care for pupils based on excellent relationships so that pupils can flourish. Arrangements for assessing pupils' work are very good in English, mathematics and science, but are not formal enough in the other subjects.
How well the school works in partnership with parents;	Very well. The school's effective partnership with parents contributes very well to the pupils' attitudes and progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher give an excellent lead; the management of some subject areas is not strong enough, however.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. The governors collectively put much relevant experience and skill at the service of the school. Their strategic sense and financial management are particularly strong.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. It is well developed for English, and mathematics. Pupils' own views of their experience in school are taken into account.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent. Expenditure is painstakingly matched to educational priorities with a view to achieving best value, and the impact of financial decisions is carefully reviewed.
The adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources;	Good. Teaching and learning are well supported.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school helps children become independent, poised and confident.• Children like school, behave well and make good progress.• The teaching is good and challenges the children well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some parents think the school does not work closely enough with them.• There are not enough extra curricular activities

The inspection team endorses the parents' positive comments. As regards the other comments, the inspection team is satisfied that the school makes very strenuous efforts to be available to parents, and notes that, for many parents, school staff are very approachable and quick to respond to concerns and suggestions. Extra-curricular activity is good for a first school of this size.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The above-average standards and good achievement overall by pupils at the end of Year 2 and Year 4 maintain the findings of the last inspection; the average standards of pupils as they leave Reception, while not as high as those reported last time, represent good achievement on the part of these pupils, and reflect changes in the attainment of pupils when they join the school at the age of four.

2. Boys and girls of all levels of ability achieve well in the Reception class because of the carefully planned curriculum and the very good quality of the teaching. Numbers are small and so teachers and classroom assistants can give pupils much individual attention. As a result pupils quickly gain confidence and learn at a good rate. For example, after only a week or two in school they felt able to answer the register in French.

3. With extensive practice in reading words and listening to stories, the older pupils are set to become good readers. Higher-attaining pupils are beginning to write: in the role-play area they take orders from customers in the 'café' with great aplomb. Pupils achieve above-average standards in knowledge and understanding of the world, helped by the careful planning of the topics; and the teachers' constant encouragement to talk and discuss what they are learning contributes to good language development. The good standards of pupils' physical development arise because they can choose from a very good range of planned indoor and outdoor activities. Activities to encourage pupils' creative development, however, are often planned as part of another activity rather than considered important in their own right. For this reason, progress - although satisfactorily leading to satisfactory standards - is not as marked as in some other areas of learning.

4. The good standards achieved overall by pupils at the end of years 2 and 4 contain within them variations between subjects, and for some pupils the profile of their achievement is uneven. This is more marked in Years 1 and 2 than in Years 3 and 4.

5. At the end of Year 2, pupils' standards have been consistently very high in science; they are well above average at the end of Year 4 also, in both cases an improvement since the last inspection. This is in part because, under a wise arrangement which exploits teachers' strengths, all the science in Years 1 and 2 is taught by one enthusiastic teacher who is also the energetic subject coordinator. In Years 3 and 4, very good teaching helps pupils build on this foundation and they continue to make good progress. Much curriculum enrichment in terms of visits and visitors gives added momentum to learning science and encourages, in different ways, both higher- and lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs to do well. Teachers engender in pupils a spirit of enquiry which means their experimental science is strong.

6. The upward trend in mathematics standards has been influenced by the National Numeracy Strategy and expert coordination. The result was an above-average performance in the national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2001. Very good teaching in Years 3 and 4, driven by the same spirit of enquiry that characterises science, has enabled these pupils (whose results two years previously were adversely affected by the school's staffing difficulties) also to achieve above-average standards.

7. However, after apparently declining for several years, the average English standards at the end of Year 2 are now lower than at the time of the last inspection, and the comparison with other schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school

meals is unfavourable, especially for reading. (Early indications are that the 2002 National Curriculum assessment results will show the trend to have been at least halted if not reversed.) Standards are set to be above average by the end of Year 4, maintaining the position reported last time, because of the high quality of the teaching in this part of the school.

8. This change in English standards is not attributable to variations in the composition of successive year-groups: the same groups of pupils did well in science and mathematics. It is rather due, in part, to the uncertain co-ordination of the subject during a period of extended but unpredictable staff absence. It is also the case that the teachers in Years 1 and 2 do not fully exploit the support available to them through the National Literacy Strategy: English lessons are not always well focused or well-paced.

9. Pupils' uneven attainment is seen in other subjects of the curriculum, too, standards in history and geography being well above average at the end of both Year 2 and Year 4. This follows the pattern of science: enthusiastic coordination and a curriculum enriched by well-managed visits and well-informed visitors lead to eager and enquiring pupils achieving high standards. Where standards are average, subject coordination is - or has been until recently - uncertain and the curriculum insufficiently developed. Assessment, very well organised for English, mathematics and science, has not recorded formally enough what pupils know, understand and can do in the other subjects and so has not contributed information to planning future work of a suitable standard.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Pupils' good attitudes, values and personal development were a strength at the last inspection and they have continued to improve since then.

11. Pupils show interest in their work, sustain concentration and are willing to apply themselves to tasks. They ask and answer questions readily, join in discussions and contribute enthusiastically to lessons. Most pupils are confident, good humoured and relaxed. They listen carefully and follow instructions promptly. They are often inventive and creative. For example, in a physical education lesson, Year 3 and 4 pupils were creating and performing complex dance phrases to communicate both character and narrative based around the stories of the Viking God Thor. They did this with tremendous enthusiasm and imagination. They manifestly enjoy being at school and respond positively to the range of challenges presented to them. They greatly appreciate the educational visits and trips that support their lessons. Pupils' attitudes towards school are very good.

12. Behaviour of pupils around school and in lessons is very good overall and often excellent. Breaks and lunchtimes are relaxed and comfortable with pupils playing easily together. Older pupils often play with and look after younger pupils, without being asked, in a natural and caring way. Pupils have a clear understanding of the high standards of behaviour expected of them and respond accordingly. In lessons, pupils' very good behaviour ensures that learning takes place at a good rate which produces good results.

13. The very good relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils themselves, creates a most supportive and caring atmosphere in which pupils flourish. Pupils are valued as individuals and for their contribution to the daily life of school and there is a feeling of harmony throughout the school. These excellent relationships ensure pupils' responses and attitudes in lessons are very positive and conducive to good learning.

14. Pupils of all ages and levels of ability come eagerly to school and go through the school day happily. They enjoy having visitors to talk to. They are friendly and polite and very keen to talk about themselves, their work and their school. They respect other people's

feelings, values and beliefs, show enthusiastic support for each other and are accepting of personal weaknesses in others. In one instance, Reception class pupils invited a group of pupils from a school in Derby to spend the day with them. Throughout the day, they learned and played together, sharing and talking about the very different backgrounds from which they all came. More generally, pupils work well together in groups, discussing problems and arriving at joint decisions. Pupils also work very well independently which gives them confidence to try and not to be afraid to get things wrong. In a science lesson, Year 1 pupils were learning about their senses through investigation. They were fascinated by the fact that their eyes send messages to the brain and eagerly conducted investigations to test how 'clever' the various senses were. Pupils show a desire to improve their work by asking questions and checking their own work and take great pride in finishing a task to the best of their ability.

15. Attendance at the school is very good. It is consistently well above the national average with virtually no unauthorised absence.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16. The quality of teaching is very good in Years 3 and 4 because lessons are very well planned to provide tasks at different levels which pupils recognise as challenging but manageable. Teachers know the subject matter well and it is always clear what the lesson is going to be about. Very good explanations coupled with well-focused questions enable pupils to adopt their own strategies for solving problems. For example in an excellent mathematics lesson, the teacher's insistence on pupils explaining their working helped them to be better aware of the underlying processes, as well as providing the teacher with good feedback about what was being learned. Constant support, encouragement and praise ensures pupils are confident enough to say if they do not understand, or, as in one notable instance, to stand by a correct answer in the face of the majority, who were wrong.

17. An excellent pace and wide range of resources ensure pupils use time well and have the maximum possible opportunity for learning at their own level. Pupils who finish the main task have well-conceived problems to go on to, which use and extend the principles learned. There is good support for lower attainers. For example, in a Year 3/4 English lesson, the teacher's intensive work with a lower-attaining group enabled the pupils to have lots of ideas; she modelled for them the process of composition, relieving them of the need to record, so that they were free to develop their own story imaginatively.

18. Pupils respond eagerly to the teachers' warmth, encouragement and skilled management by behaving very well and maintaining concentration for long periods: they want to do well. At the end of the lessons, encouraged by the teachers' very good summing up, they articulate both what they have learned and what they need to consolidate. This leads to a good degree of self awareness, and for many pupils a heightened sense of personal responsibility for learning.

19. Teaching is very strong in Reception because work is well planned and well thought out to provide interesting activities both for groups and individuals, so meeting different needs well. Relationships are warm and supportive and the well-prepared teaching assistants are skilled at helping unsettled pupils join in and encouraging the younger pupils to choose an activity. The adults constantly talk with the pupils, prompting, explaining, encouraging and extending. They are very good at adapting the lesson to accommodate pupils' suggestions. In a successful shared mathematics session, for instance, this approach helped pupils learn to recognise different shapes quickly. Very occasionally, teaching is insufficiently focused for best effect, and timing - for example in literacy activities - is not sharp enough.

20. Some of the teaching in Years 1 and 2 shares many of the qualities of that in Years 3 and 4. For example, a Year 1 mathematics lesson was very thoughtfully planned to take pupils on from their previous lesson and extend their vocabulary of shapes. In a science lesson, also in Year 1, planning and preparation were very good. Pupils knew they were expected to become scientists, finding out. Because they were given responsibility for their learning, pupils discovered and recorded their discoveries with much enthusiasm. The skills of the classroom assistants are well used to support pupils who need it because of their special educational needs, so that they can take a full part in the lessons.

21. In some instances, however, including some English lessons where teachers do not take full advantage of the support available to them through from the National Literacy Strategy, the quality of teaching, though satisfactory overall, displays weaknesses. Time is not used to the best advantage or the pace of lessons is too slow. This affects the progress of higher attainers in particular. The teacher's introductions are too long: pupils spend too much time on the carpet and do not have enough for the activities. Sometimes questioning, instead of helping pupils find their own answers, imposes the teacher's expectation on them.

22. The quality of teaching has nevertheless improved since the last inspection when it was good, and the criticisms made at that time have been largely met.

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

23. The strengths of the good range of learning opportunities provided for pupils include the excellent contribution made by the many well-managed visits and relevant visitors which support and extend what pupils learn in the classroom. The visits provide rich opportunities for practical, investigative field work, and the visitors, including parents with particular knowledge or skill, bring much relevant experience into the classroom. These arrangements make a particularly strong contribution to science (life processes and living things) but also to history, where, for example, nearby Bagot Hall provides much first-hand material. As well as history and science, geography and mathematics make a particularly strong contribution to pupils' learning in Years 1 and 2 and Years 3 and 4 and contribute to the very high standards the pupils achieve. Furthermore, by organising visits to Reception by pupils from schools in multi-cultural areas of Derby and Birmingham, the teachers enhance both pupils' social and cultural development and contribute well to their understanding of racial equality.

24. The curriculum is fully inclusive. This is true particularly for children with special educational needs, all of whom have full access to the curriculum and achieve well. This is because procedures are well managed: the coordinator works very effectively with all members of staff. Individual targets are reviewed regularly to monitor each pupil's progress and to set new objectives. The good range of extra-curricular activities is available to all and enriches the pupils' experience of school. Boys and girls join in equally with activities, which include clubs for dance, computer studies, football, and music.

25. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is well organised and helps pupils attain or exceed the early learning goals by the end of the Reception year, so that they are well placed to begin working on the National Curriculum in Year 1. This owes much to the strong contribution made by the provision for pupils' personal, social and emotional development, and their physical development.

26. There are also strengths in the provision for pupils' personal, social and health education, including sex education and drug awareness, through the appropriate programme of study. A focus on citizenship starts in the Foundation Stage with role-play and continues with visits to such places as East Midlands Airport and the post office. Parents successfully

contribute to a topic on 'people who help us'. Older pupils study environmental issues and present their findings to the governors.

27. The provision made to encourage pupils' personal development is very good, and is a very significant factor in the confidence, poise and maturity pupils display. This is because all staff work together to create a warm and accepting atmosphere in which pupils can flourish. Pupils' views of school are regularly sought through regular interviews and carefully evaluated. The very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a powerful component. The daily acts of collective worship make a very good contribution. Very good opportunities arise from geography and science for pupils to experience awe and wonder. In one particularly striking instance, Year 1 pupils were amazed at what they discovered about the working of the eye. From a very early age pupils are helped to understand the difference between right and wrong, with an emphasis on considering the well being of others. The very good provision for pupils' social development is reflected in the excellent quality of the relationships that exist in the school. Strengths of the provision include a demanding expectation that pupils will co-operate in all activities of the life of the school. Teachers are very good role models for the pupils. Regular times for class discussions provide an opportunity to talk about issues which include relationships, so that pupils recognise the correct way to behave.

28. The visits and visitors are central to the school's strategy for encouraging pupils' social and cultural development. The school organises visits from poets and authors and - for the older pupils - drama workshops. Pupils worked with an artist-in-residence to make a unique and attractive ceramic installation for the hall. The school has forged a link with a school in Tanzania with whom they share everyday experiences. Other multi-cultural links are the result of the relationships with schools in Derby and Birmingham. When the pupils from Derby visited, for instance, they demonstrated how Indian dances are performed and the pupils from each school shared their respective foods.

29. The curriculum has improved since the last inspection when it was regarded as satisfactory. Provision for information and communication technology is better, although the practice of integrating the subject with others makes planning the development of pupils' skills difficult. Pupils now have a good range of opportunities in English and mathematics. Teachers plan for the mixed age groups well and the result is a broader range of opportunities well directed at providing extra challenge or more support according to individual need. Where weaknesses remain, they are acknowledged by the school and have a place on the school development plan for early attention. The programmes for art and design and design and technology are not yet developed sufficiently within the topic framework, particularly in Years 1 and 2. Teachers have not fully exploited the help available in the National Literacy Strategy for planning a coherent progression of learning for younger pupils. The additional time given to the subject is not always justified in terms of the learning achieved.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

30. The school continues to provide the good level of support and guidance, appreciated by parents, for its pupils which was reported by the last inspection.

31. The school gives high priority to the physical care and well-being of its pupils. The child protection policy is effective. The headteacher, the designated officer, ensures that proper procedures are followed. Clear and helpful guidance is provided for all staff on how to deal with such matters. Good use is made of outside agencies, and lines of communication are clear. There are effective arrangements for dealing with first aid and sickness, and regular fire drills and safety checks on equipment are carried out. Due regard

is given to health and safety matters around the school and in lessons, including internet safety. Full audits and risk assessments are undertaken twice each year.

32. The school is a very caring place where pupils feel safe and confident. Staff work very closely as a team, know all the pupils very well and have a genuine concern and interest for their welfare and progress. The very good relationships are the basis upon which much of the personal support is built and this contributes to pupils' ability to get the most out of every day. The school is a very happy place and pupils, staff and visitors enjoy being there.

33. As a result of developing a climate of high expectations, honesty and trust the school has very good procedures for promoting and monitoring good behaviour. All staff act as excellent role models for children, treating everyone with respect and friendliness. Reward stamps, 'Person of the Week' awards and Friday assemblies are highly motivating and thoroughly enjoyed by pupils. Issues such as bullying are discussed through assemblies and in class in 'circle time', and pupils have a caring approach towards helping each other. The excellent relationships between pupils and teachers also contribute to a calm atmosphere, and one in which pupils readily and naturally talk to teachers.

34. The procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good. The very good relationship with parents ensures that parents understand the importance of good attendance, and of keeping the school informed. The school keeps a close eye on identified pupils and will telephone home immediately if the pupil does not arrive at school on time. Because of this, the attendance of most of the pupils is very good, and they are punctual, which accurately reflects their attitude towards school and enjoyment of their learning.

35. Overall, the school has good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress and these have improved since the last inspection. There is now a structured and very effective approach towards the assessment of pupils' performance in English, mathematics and, to a lesser extent, science. Using a mixture of standard tests (such as baseline assessments, reading tests and the national tests) and school-based methods, the school has detailed and accurate information on pupils' attainment and progress in these subjects. Assessment procedures in other subjects are not sufficiently formal and the very good practice established for English, mathematics and science has not yet been extended to all curriculum areas.

36. Targets based on the assessment information are set each term and are shared with parents and pupils together during the parents' evenings. The school has developed its own helpful system for tracking and recording the personal and social development of pupils. It combines with the formal subject assessments to give an all-round picture of pupils and their progress through the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

37. The very good relationships with parents, which the school regards as essential for its work, represent an improvement since the last inspection.

38. Parents in their turn have very positive views about the school. The vast majority feel that their children like school and enjoy being there. Parents think that the climate of high expectations and good behaviour is helping their children to make good progress. They consider the school to be well managed and they feel comfortable in approaching the school if they have concerns or problems. This confidence in the school is conveyed to pupils and contributes strongly to their positive attitudes to both school life and to their learning.

39. Parents and carers receive very good quality information about the school, its philosophy and approach. The prospectus and annual report from governors are thorough, detailed and interesting: they provide good detail on how the school works and what parents can expect. Regular newsletters keep parents up to date with events and activities, and are used to send messages relating to specific aspects of school life. There is a notice board for parents with plenty of information, and photographs, newspaper cuttings and displays of work all around the school give parents a good insight into what their children are involved in.

40. Parents are kept well informed about their child's progress through the very good continuous communication between home and school, three parent consultation evenings each year and a full written report. This is particularly true for pupils who have special educational needs. Parents are genuinely welcomed by staff and encouraged to raise problems or queries whenever they wish: parents feel comfortable in and around school and talking to teachers. Parents and pupils attend the parents' meetings together so that the targets set are meaningful for everyone. Because staff know individual pupils very well, they are well prepared to give detailed feedback to parents at the consultation meetings and throughout the year. The written reports give a formal record of what pupils have achieved over the year and indicate how they are performing in relation to national standards and to their own ability.

41. The school works hard to involve parents in its life and offers them numerous opportunities to be part of their child's learning. Parents are genuinely welcome in school from the very beginning. Parents of Reception class children are invited to stay with their children for the first twenty minutes or so of the day to 'play' with their child using the varied range of activities prepared. Parent helpers are appreciated for whatever they can do and many 'friends' from the village drop in regularly. Special evenings and workshops are held to introduce parents to new topics and issues, such as the national strategies for literacy and numeracy, and the development of spelling. Pupils are often involved in demonstrating the work so parents can see at first hand what their children are doing. Each term, topic posters are displayed by classrooms showing how parents can help with what their children are learning in school and provide support for the topic at home. The school actively seeks parents' opinions and views on how the school works through questionnaires and meetings, and responds directly to their concerns. For example, the head teacher held an 'open' meeting last year for parents to express their strong concern over the size of classes and the mixed year group teaching.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

42. The very good quality of the leadership provided by the headteacher and key staff has improved since the last report, and leads to effective team-work. All concerned share a very clear vision of the school's educational direction and a commitment to helping the pupils achieve high standards. The leadership creates an accepting, supportive and purposeful ethos, based on clear values, which contributes significantly to the pupils' positive experience of school and so to the good progress they make. This is particularly marked in their personal development: pupils become poised, mature and confident, independent learners ready to make the most of the next stage in their education.

43. The extremely well-informed governing body, which brings a very wide range of valuable skills and experience to the service of the school, is very supportive and fulfils its statutory duties well. Governors know the school's strengths and have a very well-developed strategic sense of the direction it should take. Well organised, working through well-focused sub-committees, and deployed individually to different areas of the school's work, they are holding it increasingly to account. For instance, governors and staff working together have established a system to track the progress of pupils individually, which is

providing valuable data about pupils' performance in English and mathematics. However, governors have yet to make a similarly searching review of standards in other subjects.

44. The management of work in the Foundation Stage, and that for mathematics, and science, is very good. The curriculum is well organised, and effective arrangements are in place to support lesson planning and to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. The coordination of English, now in transition, has been less secure in recent years with a consequential effect on standards. Humanities subjects are now well managed; the co-ordination of music is now strong, although it is too soon to see the effects of this in pupils' standards. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very effectively led and managed. It is carefully thought out and sensitively implemented. The coordination of art and design and design and technology remains weak, however, with the result that development of these subjects is inhibited.

45. This apart, the school manages its programme and evaluates its performance very well, consulting parents and pupils carefully as it does so. Careful account is taken of all relevant data. A parents' questionnaire is circulated in July. Information from regular structured interviews with pupils also contributes well to the school's self review. Systems for monitoring assessment results at key points in the school, identifying trends and using the information are good. They would be even better if national assessment results were analysed question by question and skill by skill and the detailed information thus obtained also used in planning the pupils' future programme and setting targets.

46. The school's progress has been facilitated by the well-considered professional development of the teachers and other staff. Regular lesson observation leading to detailed and practical points for improvement, and regular courses, all ensure the teachers receive the best possible support.

47. The detailed and effective school development plan sets out a good hierarchy of priorities for the current and - in outline - for the succeeding years. This enables the school to be systematic about planning. A suitable action plan is in place to deal with issues relating to access to the building, for example, to be phased over the next two years. Expenditure is painstakingly matched to educational need, and later reviewed to ascertain if the intention of the spending has been achieved. In this way school keeps faith with best value principles and ensures the money is spent to the best advantage. All this is achieved at a cost per pupil which is, nevertheless, comparatively high, even when compared with that of first schools of a similar size. For this reason, despite the high standards being achieved, the value for money afforded by the school is good.

48. Teachers are well qualified and well deployed to draw on their strengths: some of the best lessons observed were taught by the respective subject leader, the teaching of all the science and all the music in Years 1 and 2 is in the hands of teachers particularly well qualified in these subjects. Teachers' confidence with information and communication technology has improved since last inspection and standards are rising in the subject. Good use is made of the resources available to the school which are generally adequate for teaching the National Curriculum, although the library stock is insufficient in depth and scope to support the kind of independent learning expected from these pupils. The attractive and well-adapted building encourages the pupils' pride in their work and their very good behaviour. Outside facilities for the pupils in Reception, criticised in the last report, now support pupils' learning well. The community's ceramic millennium panel is a further enhancement which underlines the regard the village has for the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

49. In order to improve the school's standards and provision, the headteacher, the staff and governors should:

Improve pupils' standards in English by the end of Year 2. In order to do this it will be necessary to:

ensure that all lessons move at as brisk a pace as the best do now, so that better use is made of time;

make better use of the National Literacy strategy so as to develop pupils' skills in reading and writing more systematically. (Paragraphs 21, 29; 59 - 70)

Extend the very good assessment practice in English, mathematics and science to all the other subjects of the curriculum. (Paragraph 35)

In the context of its many strengths, the following minor point for improvement should be considered as the basis for an action plan.

Ensure the planning of topics gives appropriate attention to the systematic development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in all subjects. (Paragraph 29)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	27
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	24

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	11	4	7	0	0	0
Percentage	18	41	15	26	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	114
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	21

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.9
National comparative data	5.04

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	nil
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	10	10	20

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	15	15	18
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	75 (90)	75 (90)	90 (90)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	*	*	*
	Girls	*	*	*
	Total	15	18	18
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	75 (90)	90 (86)	90 (90)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

* Details are not published if the number of boys or girls is ten or fewer

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	114	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y1

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	5.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20
Average class size	23

Education support staff: YR – Y1

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	67

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	0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	0
Number of pupils per FTE adult	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	281095
Total expenditure	283915
Expenditure per pupil	2513
Balance brought forward from previous year	16180
Balance carried forward to next year	13360

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	8

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

114

Number of questionnaires returned

49

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	67	31	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	47	41	0	0	12
Behaviour in the school is good.	49	41	0	0	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	43	43	2	0	12
The teaching is good.	41	43	0	0	14
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	45	37	6	2	10
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	31	6	0	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	33	2	0	10
The school works closely with parents.	41	39	16	0	4
The school is well led and managed.	55	33	2	0	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	53	37	0	0	10
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	18	43	24	2	12

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

50. Children enter the reception class with broadly average levels of attainment in all areas of learning. There is some variation between the overall attainment of different groups of children from year to year because of the small numbers involved. Attainment on entry is lower than that reported at the last inspection, particularly in aspects of personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy and mathematics. Although the school has no nursery, it makes very good provision for children who are aged four to attend the reception class part-time initially. The curriculum is well planned to meet the needs of children in the different age groups, and the teacher and very capable nursery nurses give very good support to enable them to settle down well.

51. The quality of teaching is very good overall and as a result children learn very well. By the time they leave the reception class their attainment is generally above average in personal, social, emotional and physical development and they have above-average levels of knowledge and understanding of the world. They achieve well. Their attainment in the areas of communication, language, literacy, mathematics and creative development is broadly average. They achieve particularly well, however in speaking, listening, communicating verbally and on paper, and in reading and mathematics; their achievement in creative development is broadly as expected.

Personal, social and emotional development.

52. When children first enter school many are unused to doing things for themselves. Simple tasks such as putting on their coats or removing their socks and shoes for physical education initially present them with difficulties. Under the very good direction of the teacher and nursery nurses, children learn to become increasingly independent. After a short time they confidently ask questions and can often be found imitating what their teachers do, for example taking the register for a group of dolls. Parents are encouraged to join in activities with their children at the start of each day. This enables staff to form close links with parents and enables parents to help their children to make progress by undertaking similar activities at home. Children are encouraged to bring in articles from home. On one occasion, children brought in conkers and exclaimed in wonder at the velvety pocket inside, saying 'it's like a fairy's drinking cup'. The teaching encourages children to speak up and to talk to others. More reticent children or those who find joining in difficult are noticed and subtly engaged in absorbing activities. As a measure of how their confidence grows, just a few weeks into term older children answer the register in French. The deliberate way in which all adults make this activity a special one by genuinely wishing each child in turn a very good morning helps each individual to feel valued. So, children, who start by playing alone, quickly learn to play well together and show above-average skills of co-operation and responsibility for their actions.

Communication, language and literacy

53. Standards are broadly average. Children nonetheless achieve well and they learn quickly in response to lively and stimulating teaching which is very good in quality. Because of the small numbers, teachers and other adults can give much individual attention. The teaching of reading is very well planned so that when children first take home books they read stories with familiar words. A lot of practice in reading words and telling the story from pictures helps children of all abilities to respond well to books and inspires them to want to learn to read. This benefits children who enter school with below-average attainment in literacy as well as higher attainers. As a result, half the current older group of reception

children is well on the way to becoming good readers. Similarly, children become enthusiastic writers. Role-play activities in the 'café' encourage children to write down orders for food and adults are there to develop communication skills to the full. Activities for children to select are enticing and stimulate children's curiosity. Higher attainers have opportunities to begin to write words on their own and average and lower attainers are aware of initial sounds in relation to written script. Adults take great pains to engage children in conversation, giving many opportunities for pupils to speak to others to develop their confidence. For example, children were encouraged to introduce themselves to visiting children from a nursery school. Higher attainers volunteered additional information such as: 'My mum has made hundreds of cakes'; even the less forthcoming were prepared to stand up to say their names.

Mathematical development

54. Standards in mathematics, although broadly average, show the very good progress children make in response to very good teaching, for few children understand shape and number when they begin school. Through regular counting games, interspersed with other activities in the most delightfully natural way, pupils begin to appreciate the relation of number to quantity. They enjoy 'playing shops' and patiently queue to make their 'purchases', clutching coins in their hand. They particularly enjoy a favourite game, that of the number box, for they know that there is going to be something wrong and that they will have to find out what it is and put it right. The very good teaching challenges pupils to work things out for themselves. For example, out of the box the teacher drew six bananas. The children had already worked out that most objects were in groups of eight. When, however, the teacher drew out two apples, higher attainers were quick to say that if they called the objects 'fruit' then 'that made eight'. The adults are very good at seeming to accommodate children's helpful suggestions when really these have been very well thought out in advance. The result is very good learning.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

55. Much of the planning for activities in the reception class is based on developing children's knowledge and understanding of the world. They attain above-average standards as a result by the time they leave the reception class. Work is well planned to encourage children to speak and teachers and other adults constantly talk to the children, prompting and explaining. The topic based on 'Ourselves' is planned so that pupils consider a different sense each week. Through tasting different food, children learn to distinguish 'sweet' from 'sour'. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world was considerably broadened when nursery-aged children from ethnic minority groups came to spend the day. The children loved the different clothes for role-play and while girls wore bangles and covered their hair with sparkling shawls, nursery boys donned chef's outfits and ballet costumes. They shared different food at lunchtime; reception children explained how they had made jam tarts specially. Outside, the activities which encourage children to plant seeds and bulbs and care for the classroom pets helps them understand what is needed in order to live and grow. The curriculum is further enriched by educational visits to an airport or through having visitors such as a mother and baby in class.

Physical development

56. Standards are above average by the end of the reception year. The very good quality of teaching ensures that children have the freedom to choose activities outside, as well as a range of interesting activities inside including those the large school hall which leads off their classroom. Children particularly enjoyed pushing prams up and down the grassy slope outside or taking the farm animals outside to create a farm. On one occasion, children were pretending to be toddlers, crawling along on all fours at speed to keep up with

the pushchair. Children co-operated well to build a tall tower from bricks and then, with adult encouragement, began to construct a house. In one lesson, a group of lower-attaining children were given the challenge to construct a railway track in a figure of eight, which they did successfully; average attainers concentrated very well, tearing paper into small pieces which they then accurately stuck on to a large number eight. Parental support is used very well to give children additional help. When using the computer, most pupils control the mouse very well for their age. Because the teaching expects children to be independent, skills in cutting are well developed because children have a lot of practice.

Creative development

57. Standards are broadly average and children learn skills at an appropriate rate. Often, planning activities for creative development is secondary to the other areas of learning. While children encounter a range of materials and have frequent opportunities to draw and to paint, these are often integrated into another activity rather than being considered important in their own right. Children have opportunities to sing and to perform actions to songs and are encouraged to play percussion instruments. The teaching sometimes shows imaginative flair, as when the children joined those from the visiting nursery and learnt how to move to Indian music. Lower attainers and younger children found it quite hard to move their hands and fingers and to take small steps for they instinctively wanted to race round in response to the unusual rhythms. By allowing children to select an instrument to play at the same time, the teaching skilfully redirected the children's energies and made their responses more constructive.

ENGLISH

58. Pupils' standards of attainment in English at the end of Year 2 are average. This represents satisfactory achievement. By the end of Year 4 pupils' standards are above average and they have achieved well.

59. Small numbers make the analysis of national test results difficult to interpret and detailed assessment results are not published when there are ten or fewer boys or girls in an age group. Nevertheless, in the national tests taken by Year 2 pupils in 2001, (the most recent for which full comparative data are available) boys' and girls' results together – having declined for several years - were average. Measured against the results of schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals the test scores were well below average. Early indications are, however, that the results in 2002 halted the downward trend.

60. The work seen of the present generation of pupils in Year 2 was consistent with average results in the national tests. This represents a decline in standards since the last inspection reflected in the national assessment results over the same period. The reason for this, at least in part, is that the subject was without consistent coordination for most of the time, during which the pupils experienced many changes of school organisation and teacher. But it is also because teachers have not taken full advantage of the support available from the National Literacy Strategy to help them establish the early stages of literacy. Because of the high quality of teaching from a stable team in Years 3 and 4, older pupils make good progress (from a lower base) in these classes and achieve standards comparable with those reported last time.

61. The average standards in reading at the end of Year 2 take account of the higher-attaining pupils who read accurately and with reasonable confidence and can discuss what they have read. However, others make mistakes and the lower attainers are not always aware of the mistakes they make. This is because pupils have too few strategies for tackling new words: in particular they have not learned to use the sounds of letters and of groups of letters to help them. Pupils in Year 1 tend to confuse words which look similar or which start

with the same letter because they have not learned to look carefully at the whole word, or take into account its context.

62. The writing of higher-attaining pupils develops interesting ideas, and words are well chosen to create the desired effect. Spelling is correct or plausible and, for the most part handwriting is well controlled. The overall standard is average because the writing of others, though based on good ideas, is not well constructed and handwriting, though legible, displays immature letter formation. The spelling errors of some lower-attaining pupils suggest they do not hear words accurately. This reflects some of the weaknesses in pupils' reading. Their handwriting is immature and punctuation is not well developed. Nevertheless, most pupils, taking into account their individual starting points, make satisfactory progress over time.

63. Reading standards in Year 4 are set to be above the average for the age group because the pupils are taught very well. The higher and average attainers are confident and fluent readers and the most able can discuss what they read. Others are hesitant and not always accurate.

64. Both Year 2 pupils and those in Year 4 have adequate reference skills for their age: they know how to use an index or a contents page to help them find information. Their knowledge of how books are classified or arranged in a library is, however, not good enough.

65. The best writing in Year 4 is very good, encouraged by very helpful teachers' comments, which combine suitable praise with ideas for improvement. As a result, their writing improves well over time. Vocabulary choice becomes more sophisticated; there is more variation in sentence structure. Their work is varied in style and usually technically accurate. Pupils create atmosphere well. For example, in a story: 'He crept through the dark and gloomy shadows of the alleyway.' In a poem on winter beautifully presented with the help of information and communication technology: 'Winter moon with frosted wings'. Average-attaining pupils write shorter compositions but in a good range of styles, often satisfactorily constructed, but with more mistakes in spelling. The spelling of lower attaining pupils is uncertain, often because they do not hear words well. A significant proportion of pupils do not hold their pencils or pens properly and their handwriting is adversely affected. Nevertheless, pupils of all levels of ability, including those with special educational needs, are achieving well in years 3 and 4.

66. Pupils at all points in the school are confident and purposeful speakers and learn to listen well over time. For example in a Year 3/4 discussion session, pupils explained their work using good sentences, standing up and speaking confidently. The others listened with attention, genuinely interested, encouraged by the teacher's stance which unambiguously valued each pupil's contribution. Other subjects, notably science and history, support the development of pupils' English well. With information and communication technology the subject has a mutually beneficial link through word-processing and desk-top publishing which works particularly well for pupils in Years 3 and 4.

67. Other strengths in the very good teaching in Years 3 and 4 include the quality of the organisation and planning, which ensures that all pupils are well supported at their own level and that everybody is presented with suitable and relevant tasks. Excellent management of the pupils and well-established classroom routines see to it that time is well used. Lessons therefore proceed briskly, carrying the pupils along productively so that they work at the best pace possible for them. Questioning is good and ensures pupils are developing ideas and expressing them clearly, and teachers' explanations and instructions are clear, so that pupils know what is expected of them and work well. As a result pupils respond very well: they are

keen, attentive, eager to offer their own ideas, and genuinely appreciative of the contribution of other pupils.

68. The quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory. Sometimes the teacher's own use of language is a barrier to learning: in the oral passages of some lessons, pupils are presented with too many words and their listening skills are unequal to what is being said. The generous time available is not always used to the best advantage: pupils lose a sense of urgency and the work rate – particularly that of the higher attainers – is not good enough. Occasionally, explanations and instructions are not clear and pupils are confused about what they should be doing.

69. Resources for English support pupils well except for the library. Here the range of books is not wide enough to foster the kind of independent learning of which the pupils are capable. The management of the subject, which has been inconsistent in recent years, is now better and the subject is in a position to improve.

MATHEMATICS

70. Pupils' standards in mathematics are rising throughout the school. By the end of Year 2 and Year 4, standards are above average in all areas of mathematics and pupils achieve well. This shows an improvement since the last inspection when attainment was reported to be average.

71. Different groups of pupils progress equally well, including those who have special educational needs, and here is no significant difference between the attainment of girls and boys. Pupils apply their knowledge and understanding of number well to solve problems in mathematics and to handle data related to other subjects. They are encouraged to discuss their work in mathematical language and to give reasoned answers. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a good understanding of how to double and halve numbers. They can round numbers to the nearest ten. They recognise numbers that make twenty, and they add and subtract simple numbers in their heads, although a number of them still use their fingers or other apparatus to help them. Most pupils understand that subtraction is the inverse of addition and demonstrate this by giving the subtraction corresponding to the addition and vice versa. Pupils have a good knowledge of three-dimensional shapes and they make good progress in estimating and measuring using centimetres. They successfully conduct surveys within the class and plot the results in the form of simple charts and graphs. By the end of Year 4 pupils recognise simple fractions such as $\frac{2}{5}$ or $\frac{7}{8}$ and also recognise simple equivalents such as $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{2}{4}$. They can read standard metric units and use correctly the vocabulary of time.

72. The National Numeracy Strategy is very effectively incorporated into the teaching of the subject. Very good procedures are used to track pupils' progress and effective use is made of the information gained to ensure that in all lessons work is matched to pupils' level of attainment. The setting of pupils in Years 3 and 4 for mathematics has a beneficial effect on pupils' progress. The classroom assistants give pupils with special educational needs very good support, which ensures they also make good progress. Teaching is very good overall. Throughout the school pupils are encouraged to develop their own methods for solving problems. They are asked to explain the method they have used to arrive at their answer. Good use is made of working in pairs: it encourages pupils to discuss their work and they respond by doing so sensibly.

73. All teachers have good subject knowledge and expectations are high. Lessons are well prepared and organised. Very good account is taken of the needs of all ability groups. Pupils are continuously being assessed so that work is well matched to the range of attainment within each teaching group. As a result, pupils enjoy mathematics. They behave

very well and most work at a good pace, completing the set tasks in the given time. The very good attitudes to work contribute to the standards pupils achieve. Homework tasks support class work appropriately.

74. Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for. The classroom assistants make a valuable contribution to the progress made. There are some good examples of effective marking of pupils' work but written comments do not always provide pupils with ideas for improving their work.

75. Standards are high also because the coordinator has good subject knowledge and leads the subject very well. Very good systems are used to track pupils' progress. Results from statutory and non-statutory tests are very carefully analysed and the appropriate action is taken. Resources of good quality support the subject well.

SCIENCE

76. Standards are well above average by the end of Year 2 and Year 4. In many respects, science is central to the education provided in this school and permeates many other subjects. For this reason attainment is well above average and most pupils show a high degree of interest in environmental issues. The subject is extremely well led by a knowledgeable co-ordinator who conveys an infectious passion for the subject to teachers and pupils alike. As a result, standards have improved since the last inspection. Further, the subject is very well supported by a wide range of educational visits which make full use of all the local environment has to offer from a nearby privately owned nature reserve to a local power station. A strong feature of the teaching throughout the school is the emphasis on practical activities and investigations to find the answers to questions to which pupils really want to know the answers.

77. By the end of Year 2, pupils attain well above average standards because they confidently plan an investigation, test their predictions, observe what happens and can explain what they have learnt. They use a variety of means to record their results. They cover a wide range of work and much of the teaching requires them to think for themselves. For example, when working out how to make a ball of malleable material flat, pupils decided it could be squashed with the hand; when asked how to make it flatter still some thought a steam roller would be the most effective means. Higher attainers learn to check through and correct their work and although average and lower attainers write less accurately, they record their results equally confidently and show a very good understanding of scientific processes. In an excellent lesson, pupils were held spellbound by the teacher's explanation of how the eye works and touched their eyebrows and eyelids with fascination as they began to understand their protective role. Resources for learning are used very well to enable pupils to learn in groups. As a result of the very good organisation, planning and excellent rapport and relationships with pupils, pupils learn very well, for the teaching generates much interest and enthusiasm as well as well above-average attainment.

78. By the end of Year 4, pupils have built on this very good foundation, continuing their very good rate of learning. They achieve very well in relation to the level at which they started school. Many pupils say that science is one of their favourite subjects and in discussion gave the example of walking through woods to look for herons and coming across a herd of deer. Others explained it was interesting studying electricity and how it was 'very noisy in the generating room' in the local power station. The standard of pupils' labelled diagrams is excellent. When they mark pupils' work, teachers challenge them to be accurate and clear and pupils are very well aware of their own learning because of this. Pupils study a wide range of topics and are encouraged to think for themselves. For example, after giving a clear explanation of an electrical circuit and what is needed to fill any gaps in the circuit, an average attainer wrote: 'I have found out that most metals conduct

electricity apart from lead...water also conducts electricity.' Higher attainers show a good understanding of voltage in relation to power. Pupils of all abilities are encouraged to find out why things happen or why something does not work. Classroom support assistants work very well indeed with lower-attaining pupils and with those with special educational needs to enable them to understand. As a result, the work of lower attainers is of a similarly high standard.

79. Environmental science is a particular strength and pupils' work on plants and living processes is of a very high standard. Educational visits are very well planned to take account of particular aspects of science and so pupils benefit from workshops in museums and other educational centres. Pupils' work is assessed at the end of each unit and their individual progress tracked to give a clear picture of their attainment and progress at each stage. While this is good, a point for development would be to consider a way of recording attainment to give a picture of progress across year groups and stages so the attainment of different groups of pupils could be tracked more efficiently.

ART AND DESIGN

80. Standards of attainment accord with those expected of pupils the same age in art and design at the end of Year 2 and Year 4, maintaining overall the position reported at the time of the last inspection. Pupils at all levels of ability achieve satisfactorily in relation to their starting points. Pupils experience working a suitable range of materials in art, although printing and three-dimensional work are under-represented. They work confidently with paint. Most pupils in Year 2 demonstrate assured technique - seen for example in their self portraits. They mix paint accurately, the more able using a 'practice sheet' to test colours, try out ideas or practise brush strokes. The quality of teaching for pupils in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory and provides opportunities for pupils of all levels of ability, including those with special educational needs, to succeed. As a result, they all work with enjoyment and concentration and are manifestly pleased with what they have achieved.

81. When they draw self portraits, many pupils in Years 3 and 4 control their pencils satisfactorily, though not all can place their pencil strokes accurately. Art and design provides strong support for history, pupils making colourful drawings for the Viking project, including attractive roundels for Viking shields.

82. The management of the subject is underdeveloped. The curriculum is incompletely planned, with the result that pupils undertake similar work in successive years. There is no formal assessment of pupils' work and so no basis for monitoring the standards being attained or for planning future improvements.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

83. Standards in design and technology are average at the end of Year 2 and Year 4 and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. This maintains the position reported last time.

84. Pupils in Year 2 have studied puppets and then designed and made their own glove puppets. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have designed and made an electric toy. Photographs show some imaginative ideas. For example, one was a well-constructed aeroplane with a whirring propeller and a witch on a broomstick. After a visit to a power station, pupils designed a building which could light up. This provided a good cross-curricular link with the science topic. They also designed a chair for an Italian restaurant and some pupils came up with the idea of shaping the legs of the chair to look like wine bottles. All the pupils in the school designed and made their own Easter bonnets for an Easter Parade. It is evident that pupils enjoy their work in design and technology. They are proud of what they do.

85. The curriculum provided is satisfactory in practice. Pupils are given a suitable range of activities which develop their knowledge and skills so that they make satisfactory progress in designing artefacts for a set purpose and learn to use a variety of materials and processes. However, the range of materials offered is insufficiently wide and the tools available for making objects are barely satisfactory. The pupils are taught to use a design sheet and after they have finished making an artefact they are encouraged to evaluate their work. Usually, this goes no further than deciding if they like it or are pleased with it or they would change the colour. There is little evaluation in terms of design principles: whether the object meets the purpose for which it was designed.

86. One reason for this is that the policy and scheme of work for the subject are out-of-date, and do not take account of the changes made to the curriculum in 2000. The practice of planning for the subject as a means of supporting other subjects makes it difficult to ensure a proper progressive development of design and technology skills and understanding. There are no formal arrangements to assess and record the development of these subject skills as pupils move through the school. However, because the development of the subject features in the school improvement plan for the coming year, it is in a position to improve.

GEOGRAPHY

87. Standards are well above those expected at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. Pupils achieve very well, acquiring detailed knowledge and skills of enquiry that are well above average for their age. This is largely because of a well-planned curriculum in which geography is often taught in the context of other subjects, such as science and history, as well as in its own right. Although no teaching in geography was seen, it is clear both from pupils' work and from talking to pupils of different ages that they are very well taught and that teachers expect high standards. Pupils talk with great enthusiasm about geography and describe vividly educational visits to geographically diverse areas such as a wood or a reservoir. The subject is very well led and as a result standards have risen since the last inspection.

88. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a very good understanding of why different types of dwellings are built in different places. They know, for example, that castles need to be on hills but also near to trees 'to provide good firewood'. They consider differences and similarities between modern urban and rural environments. They learn how to read plans, understanding that 'they show things as they look when seen from above'. When studying a map of the local area, pupils of all abilities interpret 12 different types of symbols and then highlight similar places so as to plot their distribution. Higher-attaining pupils determine accurately local settlements to the north-east or south-west, for instance, of their village. Lower attainers show a less clear understanding of points of the compass but complete as accurately as average attaining pupils questions about routes around school which involve close observation and working out directions.

89. By the end of Year 4, pupils' attainment shows continued very good progress in recognising and drawing conclusions about physical and human features of different places. Their knowledge extends to include other countries outside Europe. Teachers clearly understand how to make difficult concepts accessible to pupils of different abilities, through using artefacts, for example. By looking at African carvings, pupils deduced that 'it is hand carved' and formulated questions they wished to be answered. From this, they began to consider the differences between African children's lives in a village and in a capital city such as Nairobi. Work of lower-attaining pupils is accurate, as demonstrated in their clearly drawn and labelled maps to show the different landscapes of Kenya; higher attainers looked at different landscapes and worked out appropriate symbols to identify them. Much of the work is imaginatively taught in a way that enables pupils of all abilities to develop the required

geographical skills, giving pupils different means of recording information. This results in standards which are well above average in terms of range and depth and gives many opportunities for pupils to research information independently.

HISTORY

90. Standards are well above those expected for pupils at the end of Years 2 and 4. This is a marked improvement since the last inspection and reflects the interest of the co-ordinator in this subject as well as the expertise of the staff. It is very clear from pupils' work and from talking to pupils that the quality of teaching is very good and that teachers expect and skilfully obtain high standards from their pupils. History is often the main subject in the school's topic-based approach to the humanities; it is extremely well supported by educational visits and occasional days when the whole school takes part in role-play, pretending to be Ancient Greeks, for example. The local community also supports the school's work in history very well and pupils are given access to some unique historical resources.

91. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a very well-developed sense of chronology. They observe and handle historical sources in order to answer questions about the past based on their observations. From an early age, therefore, pupils are taught to think and to draw conclusions based on evidence. When looking at toys, for example, young pupils determine which are old and which are new; higher attainers worked out that 'the rocking horse on the stand is the most modern toy'. Through simple questionnaires, the teaching involves parents as well as their children and so pupils learn to compare answers by adults and children. The teaching ensures that pupils learn correct terminology. For instance, higher attainers writing about castles, said 'people who live in the bailey were not as important as the people in the castle.' Sources such as the school's log book are used very well to give a vivid insight into the past. Higher attaining pupils examined the original cursive script while lower attainers read the same entries type-written so all could use the information to work out when specific incidents occurred and what 'scholars' had done to merit punishment.

92. The quality of teaching is very good. By the end of Year 4, pupils competently research information about different periods of history using a range of sources including books and CD-Roms. Using role-play, such as pretending to be archaeologists, they deduce information as to what fragments of pottery might be. When learning about Ancient Greece, they examined the good and bad points of the Spartans and Athenians and then debated their merits. The marking is stringent: for example, when a higher attainer concluded that Athens was better because 'you can stand up and have your say' the pupil was directed to find the word which means this. Pupils have detailed knowledge of several periods of history. Pupils in Year 4 explained that they were learning about the Vikings, but that they had to find out about the Angles, Saxons and Romans first. They speak very enthusiastically about the subject and are quite skilled in extended conversations, explaining Romans 'built very straight roads' and that they were finding out why longboats were very useful to the Vikings. In a very good lesson, pupils of all abilities worked extremely well in groups, finding the answers to questions to which they wanted to know the answers, such as where did the Vikings go in their longboats, how were the boats made and why were they sometimes called 'the serpent of the sea'? Pupils used a variety of sources and presented their findings to the rest of the class using large sheets of paper on which they had pasted explanations and diagrams as prompts. Lower-attaining pupils demonstrated similar skills to higher attainers in communicating what they had discovered. Pupils' attitudes and attainment are well above average as a result of such very good teaching.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

93. Standards of pupils' attainment in information and communication technology at the end of Year 2 and Year 4 are similar to those expected of pupils the same age. This maintains the satisfactory standards reported at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory; the achievement of pupils with special educational needs is similar to that of the other pupils.

94. At the same time, standards of pupils in Year 1 are moving ahead, and the school is therefore well placed to see standards rise significantly as these pupils mature and move through the school. For example, Year 1 pupils use different fonts to write their names, they use the roamer and are able to draw squares and rectangles. They successfully use word processing programs to record information they have learned in other lessons. Year 2 pupils are enthusiastic about using computers. They have a sound knowledge of the main keys and confidently use the mouse to move the cursor. They enjoy the mathematics programs they use, because they feel that they help with their learning. They know how to click on an icon and how to drag a picture onto the text. Pupils in both Year 1 and Year 2 use the equipment with increasing confidence as they get older.

95. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 successfully use desktop publishing to create posters and futuristic diaries. They use the copy tool and select an area of text or graphic and copy and resize it. In one example, they created a pleasing repeated print background, simulating an animal skin. The older pupils make progress because they respond well to the work set. They listen carefully to instructions and concentrate well when working at the computers. They work well together and offer each other advice.

96. Information and communication technology supports other subjects, notably science, mathematics and English, well. For example, pupils presented, in an imaginative combination of graphics and text, their futuristic diary entries: what they did at 'virtual school'. The digital camera records much environmental studies work.

97. The quality of teaching in the single session seen, which involved directly teaching skills, was good. In all classes the skills to be taught in each lesson are clearly focused. Activities are well organised, with programs prepared beforehand so that pupils can make the best use of the time available. Support assistants are well briefed so that satisfactory learning takes place.

98. The coordinators are fully aware of what needs to be done to improve the provision for the subject and this forms the basis of the well-judged improvement plan for the subject. Assessment arrangements are not formal enough, however. The resources are of good quality. Although each classroom has two computers, which are well used during lessons by individuals and small groups of pupils, the arrangement inhibits whole class teaching and the speed at which some pupils can learn is consequently reduced.

MUSIC

99. Pupils' standards and their achievement at all levels of ability are satisfactory, maintaining the position reported last time. The quality of pupils' singing in Year 2 and Year 4 is on course to reach the expected standard by the end of the year. Pupils sing with energy and enjoyment, with an acceptable rhythm and mostly in tune. The quality of the sound tends to be harsh because in their enthusiasm pupils are inclined to shout.

100. Pupils in Year 2 repeat simple rhythms and understand related dynamics. They know the names of many percussion instruments. The teacher's very good subject knowledge enables her to plan a sequence of well chosen activities which retain the pupils' interest

throughout a well-paced lesson and help them learn well. Suitable opportunities are taken to introduce musical terms, such as high/low and loud/soft. As a result, pupils are interested and attentive, concentrating hard, trying to respond to the teacher's leadership and they clearly enjoy music.

101. Pupils in Year 4 recognise different rhythmic patterns. They compose their own and, after careful rehearsal, confidently perform them to the others who listen with attention. This is the result of good teaching in which the teacher's own knowledge of the subject and enthusiasm for it encourages the pupils to try hard and succeed. Good management of both the pupils and the pace of the lesson means that there are extra opportunities for practical work. The group of Year 4 pupils who formed an ensemble of percussion instruments to accompany singing in assembly, played confidently and accurately, concentrating hard. They clearly appreciated the responsibility and responded to it well.

102. The good quality of teaching in music owes much to the knowledge and skills of the newly appointed coordinator, but there has not yet been time for it to result in improved standards. However, the coordinator is an accomplished musician with a good knowledge of the subject and a good understanding of its potential for promoting pupils' general and cultural development. She has a very clear and accurate view of what needs to be done, including, rightly, the importance of introducing properly formal assessment arrangements, and so the subject is very well placed to improve.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

103. Standards overall are above those expected of pupils at the end of Year 2 and Year 4, although not all aspects of physical education were seen during this inspection. Pupils with special educational needs are very well integrated. Standards in dance and in swimming are well above average. All pupils learn to swim by the end of Year 4 and most can swim at least twenty-five metres. The quality of teaching is very good overall, for very good teaching was seen in Years 3 and 4 and a very good lesson observed in Year 1. Pupils respond very well and boys and girls are equally enthusiastic about all aspects of physical education. When asked by a pupil in Year 2 why it was important to swim, older pupils gave thoughtful and competent answers. Standards have improved since the last inspection, largely as a result of well-organised co-ordination of the subject and a particular expertise in dance shown by several teachers.

104. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 know that in an effective 'warm-up' 'your breathing goes faster' and 'the heart beats stronger'. Teachers have high expectations of pupils: in Year 1, for example, pupils were learning different ways of passing the ball using a 'chest pass' or rolling the ball to each other along the ground or throwing underarm. Higher attainers succeeded in throwing a ball over their head to bounce and then be caught by their partner and returned, showing a great deal of accuracy in the manoeuvre. Lessons move at a pace and learning is fun. A very good feature of the lessons is the amount of time spent in physical activity: demonstrations by pupils and teachers are so well managed that the flow of the lesson is rarely interrupted. Pupils are well organised to work in pairs or in groups and they have a great deal of fun in competitive games. In Years 3 and 4, pupils learn to outwit their opponents and to score. The higher attainers are able to kick and pass a ball with control, keeping possession of it before scoring. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and individual and paired work is well thought out to enable pupils of different levels of attainment and physical development to learn new skills.

105. The quality of teaching in dance is excellent and is reflected in the standards attained by most pupils which are well above average. In an excellent lesson, pupils in Years 3 and 4 developed an imaginative dance sequence based on a Viking invasion using a mixture of dance steps in unison and their own choreographed dance in pairs. Boys as well as girls

produced vigorous yet complex and balletic sequences, perfectly in time with the music, using space and different parts of the body imaginatively to convey the fury of the sea, the savagery of the invaders and the demise of the monks. Pupils learnt at a rapid rate and much was accomplished to a high standard in a very short time.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

106. Satisfactory standards of attainment in religious education have been maintained since the previous inspection and pupils' standards in Years 2 and 4 are in line with those set out in the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated and make similar progress to others in the same age group.

107. By the end of Year 2, pupils' knowledge and understanding of religious education is that expected of pupils this age. They visit the local church and experience role-play of baptism with the vicar as minister and pupils as parents and Godparents. They understand that baptism makes a person belong to the Christian community. They also study the church building and identify Christian symbols, the Stations of the Cross and other features of the church building. They learn that all religions have festivals, which the believers celebrate and that Easter and Christmas are the important festivals of the Christian religion. They can recall the main events surrounding the birth of Jesus and also what happened at Easter. Some of them talk about why it is called Good Friday when something 'bad' happened.

108. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 understand why people of different faiths pray and know that people who follow Islam or Judaism believe in only one God. They have knowledge of how Muslim women dress and of the beliefs and practices of Muslims. They know that Muslims pray in mosques and that they face Mecca when they pray five times a day. There are good links with their environmental studies when they learn that Muslims have a special duty to care for the planet and not to waste, damage, pollute or destroy it.

109. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. As a result, pupils are motivated to learn and satisfactory progress is made. The content of lessons builds well on previous learning and tasks are well chosen to match the pupils' understanding and ability. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on what they learn and they respond maturely to this. In one lesson, which made a good contribution to pupils' spiritual awareness, they thoughtfully examined what the Gospel story of Zacchaeus conveys about God's relationship with people.

110. Pupils' understanding of religious education is enhanced by visits to local churches and Lichfield Cathedral, although there are no visits to places of worship associated with religions other than Christianity. However, the school's link with a school in Tanzania and to a nursery in Derby and a school in Birmingham contribute to pupils' understanding of the diversity of peoples' beliefs. Displays of work in religious education around the school help to raise awareness of the importance of the subject and enhance pupils' knowledge. The Vicar, who visits regularly and takes assemblies with the whole school, provides a valued contribution from the community at large.

111. The coordinator who is new to the position, is well qualified, enthusiastic and clear about how to move the subject forward. Resources for the subject, now carefully audited and supplemented by new purchases, are satisfactory: they include suitable artefacts, books, photographs and other reference material. The library contains suitable books for the subject. There are no formal arrangements to assess pupils' work and so the school has no overall view of the standards being achieved in the subject.