

INSPECTION REPORT

BLACKWELL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Alfreton, Derbyshire

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112506

Headteacher: Mrs D Girdler

Reporting inspector: Ian Knight
23031

Dates of inspection: 13th - 16th January 2003

Inspection number: 252794

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	5 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Primrose Hill Blackwell Alfreton
Postcode:	DE55 5JG
Telephone number:	(01773) 811281
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Brian George
Date of previous inspection:	January 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
23031	Ian Knight	Registered inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Design and technology	The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9399	Roger Watts	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
30724	Delia Hiscock	Team inspector	Special educational needs Equal opportunities English Geography History Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
29261	Penelope Ward	Team inspector	Provision for the Foundation Stage Science Art and design Music Religious education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Blackwell Primary School is a small primary school serving the village of Blackwell in Derbyshire, a former mining community. Currently, 184 pupils are on roll, including 47 who attend the nursery part-time. All of the pupils for whom data is available are of white British descent. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is about average. Thirteen pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs, a proportion which is a little below average. The range of needs includes moderate learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties and two autistic pupils. No pupils speak English as an additional language. The full range of ability is present in the school, but the overall distribution is one of well below average attainment on entry to the nursery, compared with the national picture.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. Pupils achieve well from a low starting point because of good teaching. They receive a flying start in the nursery and reception classes, where teaching is very good. The headteacher provides strong personal leadership and all staff are committed to improvement: indeed, the school's test results at the end of Year 6 were the most improved of all schools nationally over the three years 2000 - 2002. The school rightly prioritised standards in English and mathematics over this period. Pupils show positive attitudes to learning and behave very well in school. Although this good achievement has been gained at a unit cost that is a little above the average range, the school offers good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school achieved high standards in the National Curriculum tests for eleven year olds in 2002.
- Standards in reading are good throughout the school.
- Children receive a flying start to their education in the nursery and reception classes.
- The school's ethos successfully promotes positive attitudes and very good behaviour.
- Teaching is good throughout the school, and very good in the nursery and reception classes.
- The headteacher offers strong personal leadership, has identified priorities for improvement and raised standards.

What could be improved

- Standards in writing throughout the school.
- The challenge for pupils with the potential for higher attainment.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in January 1998. Since then, standards in National Curriculum tests have been low until 2002, when standards in Year 6 rose markedly. The school had put many strategies in place to raise standards, but problems in staffing negated much of this effort. Pupils are now achieving well, especially in reading and mathematics, although standards in writing are still too low. The proportion of teaching that is good or better has increased and unsatisfactory teaching eliminated. The key issues from the previous inspection have been largely addressed: planning for pupils in mixed age classes has improved and expectations are higher. However, pupils with the potential for higher attainment are still not challenged consistently enough, especially in Years 1 and 2. The co-ordination of the core subjects of English and mathematics is much better, but scope still exists to further develop the roles of co-ordinators of other subjects. Long term planning takes more account of progression, but more work needs to be done to ensure all pupils meet progressively more difficult work in some subjects as they move through the school. Resources for multi-cultural education and information and

communication technology have been improved, although the school accepts that more programs are needed in order to be able to use technology to support learning in other subjects. Overall, the school has made good progress since its last inspection.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	E	E*	C	B
mathematics	E	E	A*	A*
science	E	E*	B	B

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

A grade of A* indicates the school's results were in the top five per cent of schools nationally; a grade of E* indicates the bottom five per cent. There was no secure trend of improvement in results in Year 6 prior to 2002, when there was a dramatic improvement. With the exception of writing, standards in tests at the age of seven have been improving steadily. In 2002, standards in national tests at the age of seven were average in reading, below average in writing and above average in mathematics. Teachers' assessments in science showed that standards for seven year olds were below average nationally. The school exceeded its targets for performance in the tests for pupils in Year 6 in 2002 by a large margin: it has set challenging targets for its performance in 2003 and is making good progress towards meeting them. Inspection evidence indicates that children in reception are on course to achieve the recommended Early Learning Goals in all areas and are on target to exceed them in physical development. These children entered the nursery with attainment well below that found nationally so they are achieving very well. Standards in reading are above expectations at the end of Year 2, but standards in writing are below. In all other subjects, standards are in line with expectations except for design and technology and music, in which insufficient evidence was available on which to make a judgement. This represents good achievement. In the current Year 6, standards in writing are still too low. Standards in other subjects are in line with expectations except for design and technology, which is below expectations. These standards are lower than those indicated in the table above. However, as this group of pupils entered the juniors with lower attainment, they are also achieving well.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are very enthusiastic and show good levels of interest and involvement in their activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good in lessons and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils have a clear understanding of the impact of their actions on others and relationships are very good. However, they do not have enough opportunities to demonstrate initiative and personal responsibility.
Attendance	Satisfactory: in line with the national average. Unauthorised absence is

	below average.
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TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Good	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 teaching of English and mathematics is good. Similarly, the basic skills of reading, numeracy and information and communication technology are taught well. Although strategies have been put in place to improve teaching and standards in writing, further work needs to be done. Pupils with a special need are supported well and make the same good progress as their peers. However, pupils who could attain highly are not consistently challenged enough, especially in Years 1 and 2. Teaching in the nursery and reception is very well planned and moves at a brisk pace. Adults use questioning well to reinforce understanding so that children's knowledge is extended and their understanding challenged. In the rest of the school, this is also true of the best teaching. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen, but some lessons are overlong so that pupils became restless. Pupils make good progress but they do not have many opportunities for independent learning. Overall, however, the good teaching engenders good learning and promotes good standards.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall, although very good in the nursery and reception classes. The strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy skills are good. However, long term planning does not ensure that pupils receive progressively more challenging work consistently in all subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good provision leads to good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. Provision for their social development is good. The school makes satisfactory provision for spiritual and cultural development overall, but does not consistently prepare pupils for life in a multi-cultural society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good procedures are in place to secure pupils' welfare. Good assessment procedures, especially in the core subjects, are used soundly in future planning.

The school maintains an effective partnership with parents, but it acknowledges that there is work still to be done in that area.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The headteacher provides very good personal leadership and ensures that all staff share her vision of excellence for the school. However, the roles of the deputy headteacher and some curricular co-ordinators are underdeveloped.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governing body is improving its role in shaping the direction of the school. It understands the school's strengths and weaknesses well.
The school's evaluation of	Good. The headteacher has taken the lead in monitoring teaching and

its performance	analysing results of tests and other assessments. The information gained has been used effectively to raise standards.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Finances are used effectively to support the school's priorities. New technology is used effectively.

There is a good match of teachers and support staff to the needs of the curriculum. The accommodation and levels of resourcing are satisfactory. The principles of best value are applied soundly.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Teaching is good, so that their children make good progress and become more mature and responsible. • Pupils behave well. • They are comfortable in their dealings with the school. • The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of extra-curricular activities. • The strength of the home school partnership. • The amount of homework their child is given.

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views. They found the range of extra-curricular activities and the use of homework to be satisfactory. The home-school partnership is satisfactory; nevertheless the school is aware of the need to involve parents more.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils throughout the school are achieving well because of good teaching.
2. In the 2002 National Curriculum tests for pupils in Year 2, standards were about average in reading and below average in writing. In mathematics, standards were above average. This picture is the same when the school is compared only with schools with a similar intake. A glance at the distribution of the levels gained shows that few pupils gained the higher Level 3 in writing compared to the national picture, but that above average numbers gained it in reading. This reflects the school's current priorities to improve the standard of writing, so that it becomes as good as reading. There are no tests in the other core subject of science, but teachers' own assessments show standards to be below average. Standards in reading and mathematics have improved steadily since 1999, when standards were at their lowest. Although standards in writing have improved since then, the trend is not as secure.
3. By contrast, standards at the end of Year 6 improved markedly in 2002. Indeed, the school was named as the most improved over the three years from 2000 to 2002 by the government, with most of that improvement taking place in 2002. Up to 2001, standards were low across the board with no secure trend of improvement. However, in 2002, overall standards in English were about average, in mathematics standards were very high – in the top five per cent of schools nationally – and in science standards were above average. An even better picture is painted when the comparison is restricted only to schools with a similar intake – standards in mathematics were still very high, with standards in English and science being above average. The school did particularly well when these standards are compared with the same pupils' earlier attainment in national tests at the end of Year 2. Their progress was very good in English and science and outstanding in mathematics. Girls did better in all areas than boys.
4. The school set targets for its performance in the National Curriculum tests for 2002 that were quite modest, though later upgraded. This was because of the uncertainty over the staffing situation and the school easily exceeded those targets. The targets for 2003 are similar, but, given the capabilities of the pupils currently in Year 6, are challenging. The school is making good progress towards meeting these targets.
5. However, test results can tell only part of the story. They refer to tests taken last year with some pupils who have now left the school. They cannot give any clues about standards in the school now, about standards in other subjects that are not tested this way, or about pupils' *achievement*, that is, how well they are doing when their prior attainment and other circumstances are taken into account. Inspection evidence can fill some of these gaps.
6. Children enter the nursery with attainment that is well below that typically seen. Not all continue into reception, but those that do make very good progress because of the very good teaching. This very good teaching continues, so that, by the end of reception, most children are attaining the Early Learning Goals, exceeding them in physical development. This flying start prepares pupils well for the rigours of the National Curriculum.
7. Good teaching continues in Years 1 and 2, so that pupils' standards are in line with expectations in speaking and listening, mathematics, science, art and design, geography, history, physical education and religious education. Standards are above expectations in reading. There was insufficient evidence to form a view in the other subjects. The school quickly recognised that standards were not high enough in the core subjects and set about putting strategies in place to improve matters. These have been successful in reading and mathematics, but too little attention has, as yet, been paid to writing. Opportunities are missed to reinforce writing across the curriculum and those with the potential for higher attainment tend to receive the same tasks as

everyone else, stifling their ability to shine. The curriculum in the foundation subjects does not always ensure that pupils meet progressively harder tasks and this affects the progress they can make. In addition, not all pupils with the potential for higher attainment are challenged consistently, so that they do not always make the progress of which they are capable. Nevertheless, when their standards are considered in the light of the pupils' attainment on entry, the progress they have made and the levels of challenge they have met, they show that pupils' achievement is good overall.

8. Current standards in Year 6 appear lower than those in the 2002 tests. This is because this group is generally weaker – for example, their test results in Year 2 were low. When individual pupils' progress is tracked over their time in the juniors, then it is clear that they are achieving well. Standards in writing and design and technology are below expectations; all other subjects are in line with expectations. Standards across the board were depressed prior to 2002. The school implemented a number of strategies, for example, dedicated lessons in extended writing, but the positive effect of these was diluted by problems with staff turnover and absence until 2002, when stable staffing was finally achieved. The consistently good teaching now shows that the lower attainment of the older pupils is largely the legacy of past problems, but that they are catching up swiftly. Nevertheless, they are unlikely to reach the standards achieved last year because of that learning deficit, despite their good progress in Years 5 and 6. It is still the case that girls are doing better than boys in most subjects.
9. Pupils with a special need are effectively supported in lessons and as a result make the same good progress as their peers. The school does not yet maintain a formal register of pupils who are gifted or talented, but some pupils are identified for their aesthetic prowess. They receive appropriate extension work and also make the same good progress as their peers. Pupils with the potential for high attainment are not challenged consistently enough in a number of subjects, especially in Years 1 and 2, adversely affecting their progress and achievement. This is partly a consequence of the construction of some schemes of work, which the school is now working to address.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Pupils have good attitudes towards the school and their education. Parents say their children enjoy school and this is borne out by conversations with pupils. Lessons start promptly, and pupils move quickly to the tasks they are set. Children in the nursery and reception classes have become accustomed to moving eagerly to their activities and soak up the rewarding experiences they are offered, thanks largely to the calming and orderly influence of the highly-skilled staff. Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes within lessons are very dependent on the skill of the teacher in making the subject come alive and in a few cases teachers have to work hard to motivate all of the class to respond. In the many good or better lessons, however, almost all of the pupils are attentive and keen to answer questions, some contributing perceptive comments. In these lessons, the tasks are challenging and appropriate to what they already know, so that pupils concentrate well and work hard. In some lessons it is evident that pupils are not used to taking initiative or working independently, tending to rely too heavily on adult support. Pupils are very enthusiastic about doing things outside the classroom, such as participating in the range of lunchtime and after-school activities.
11. Pupils behave very well, bearing out, again, the opinions of parents. In lessons, the few pupils who require it respond well to a combination of a quiet reminder to pay attention, and encouragement and praise when they do so. Very little unsatisfactory behaviour was seen in lessons. Pupils' behaviour, as they move around the school, in assemblies and in the playground, is also very good. At lunchtimes, the atmosphere is calm and there is a pleasant social atmosphere. Pupils accept the validity of the school rules; they have the opportunity to discuss the reasons behind these and they agree that they are fair. They recognise the difference between right and wrong, and older pupils are starting to develop a sense of moral judgement and are becoming self-disciplined.
12. The personal development of pupils is good and relationships within the school are very good.

Pupils understand the impact of their actions on others and are very sympathetic and considerate. In most lessons, there is very positive rapport between adults and pupils. Pupils respond well to the efforts of staff to build this rapport and to the positive role models staff provide. Pupils are learning to work collaboratively, but in some lessons they do not display sufficient individual initiative, preferring to rely on the adult supervising them, or copying from others on their table. In some cases, the structure of the lesson does not encourage personal research, which would allow them to develop further as independent learners. However, pupils willingly accept responsibilities that they are offered: for example, older pupils help supervise and play with the younger ones.

13. Pupils play well together in the playgrounds and there are few incidents of conflict, either deliberate or accidental. No incidents of bullying, racism or social exclusion were observed during the inspection and pupils said that these were very rare. There have been no exclusions recently. Although all pupils here are of white British background, they are sure that they would be tolerant, and even supportive, of those with other beliefs or from other cultures. Pupils have learned about religions in lessons and older pupils are prepared to stand up for their personal beliefs, although they are not given sufficient opportunity in school to discuss their spiritual feelings. They have a reasonable knowledge of European culture, but their understanding of the range of ethnic minority cultures that they will encounter in other parts of Britain is weak.
14. Overall, attendance is satisfactory. Last year attendance was in line with the national average for primary schools, with unauthorised absence being low. Almost all pupils are punctual – another sign of their positive attitudes towards school - and this contributes to their good standards of learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

15. Teaching is good in the school and is the single most influential factor in the improving standards.
16. In the Foundation Stage, that is, the nursery and reception classes, teaching is very good and this leads to very good learning by the children there. They are introduced to good learning habits and their low attainment when they join the school is largely overcome by the time they enter Year 1 and start the National Curriculum. Lessons are very well planned with the nationally recognised Early Learning Goals in mind. Within this structure, teachers and other adults seize opportunities to extend learning and understanding through carefully phrased questions. Teachers maintain a careful balance between the activities that the children can choose for themselves, thus encouraging independence, and those led by an adult that more directly address the knowledge and skills children acquire. Children are discreetly, but highly effectively, managed so that they work solidly, making very good progress. This is enhanced by lessons with a brisk pace in which a high degree of teamwork between the adults is clearly evident. As a result, children make great strides, showing good levels of interest and concentration. Children with a special need are well catered for in planning and through support so that they also learn well. Children's work is effectively assessed and this information is used very well to plan the next steps in learning.
17. Teaching in Years 1 to 6 is good. This consolidates the flying start in the Foundation Stage. The best teaching is in Years 5 and 6, where pupils are making particularly good progress to overcome the patchy progress they made in the past when the school's staffing difficulties had an adverse effect on the continuity of their learning. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach and of the needs of young learners. The strategies for improving reading have borne fruit so that the teaching of the basic skills of reading, as well as those of numeracy and information and communication technology, is good. However, writing is not emphasised enough, especially in Years 1 and 2, despite time being given on the timetable specifically for the teaching of extended writing. Writing is not encouraged enough in other subjects. As a result, pupils do not progress enough. In most classes, tasks are carefully matched to pupils' needs to maximise their progress. However, this is not consistent and some pupils in the infants who could attain highly are not being challenged consistently.
18. Short term planning is generally good throughout the school, addressing a weakness at the last inspection. Good teaching methods and discipline are evident in Years 3 to 6. Support staff are

used well throughout the school to ensure that all pupils, including those with a special need, get a fair deal, particularly in Years 1 and 2. As a result, pupils learn well with their progress accelerating in Years 5 and 6. They make good levels of effort, working at a good pace. Teachers share what they intend pupils to learn at the beginnings of lessons so that pupils have a sound understanding of their own learning, but this could be further enhanced if more pupils negotiated their targets for learning with staff. Homework is used satisfactorily to extend learning in the classroom. A relative weakness in teaching concerns the paucity of opportunities for pupils to work independently or to carry out research. The library is not being used effectively as a resource for learning while it is being relocated. The skills of information and communication technology are taught well in the computer suite, but they are not being consistently used to support learning in other subjects.

19. Pupils with a special need are well provided for by carefully matched work and the support of other adults in the classroom. Teaching assistants quietly paraphrase teachers' words and act as an audience for the more diffident pupils. They also keep jottings of individuals' contributions in class that assist the teacher in future planning. As a result of this teamwork, these pupils make good progress.
20. The best teaching is extremely well planned so that the needs of all pupils in the class, including classes where there are two age groups, are met. This happened in an excellent numeracy lesson for pupils in the mixed reception and Year 1 class. Each age group had work carefully tailored to its needs led by an adult. Pupils were active throughout the lesson as they reinforced their understanding of small numbers and older ones began addition. Both teachers used the resources very well: for reception children, this involved the use of a number line and the constant asking of focused questions; for pupils in Year 1, this included the whiteboard and deliberate mistakes as well as the use of dice to generate problems to solve. The result of this was a pacy lesson in which all made great gains in their learning. Similarly, in a very good religious education lesson, questions were used very skilfully to help pupils in Years 5 and 6 to consider the importance of Sunday worship to Christians and to test their existing knowledge. The very good relationships in this class had a significant impact on the pupils' progress: they were able to respond maturely as they considered the elements of a service.
21. However, some lessons, though still satisfactory overall, were less effective. Some morning lessons went on for too long, affecting the pace of learning and allowing the class to go off the boil in the final sections where they should reflect on their learning so far. Also, the levels of challenge for individuals were not always well judged. For example, in a science lesson for the infant department, all of the class completed exactly the same task so that those with the potential for higher attainment were not challenged enough.

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

22. The school has a broad curriculum designed to include all pupils and meet their needs. Planning generally reflects the school aims and in the nursery and reception classes there is added breadth, richness and variety. There is no special provision for gifted and talented pupils, but teachers recognise and promote singing, dramatic and sporting talent. Planning for pupils with a statement of special educational need is particularly good and the school fulfils its overarching commitment to the care and support for pupils with a sense of dedication.
23. The curriculum for children in nursery and reception follows national guidance and creates very successful links across the six areas of learning. These curricular building blocks assure children's steps towards the start of the National Curriculum in Year 1. Their learning is carefully nurtured through practical experiences, investigation and play, all of which foster very good learning across both the age groups. As a result of this planning, and the increasingly modified sessions to prepare children for the literacy and numeracy lessons, children get off to a flying start to their education.

24. The school has moved some way to improve the curriculum since the previous inspection by planning topics to develop knowledge so that the needs of the different age groups are met. This has been effective. However, there is still some way to go to make sure that pupils meet gradually harder and more challenging work, building on their previous knowledge and skills in information and communication technology, history, geography, design and technology and physical education. The school has rightly focused curricular time on raising standards in English and mathematics, with solid success in reading and the early skills of literacy and numeracy as a result. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are catered for well in the school's planning. It is now timely to take stock of achievements in the light of the school's aims and refine the curriculum so that it is more balanced and more closely meets the needs of pupils now. At the moment, key features from the school's aims such as 'skills of enquiry' and fostering the 'imagination' are not to the fore enough. In addition, those pupils with the potential to achieve more are not consistently challenged. Nevertheless, the school's planning documents show that statutory requirements for the curriculum are intended to be met.
25. The provision for pupils with a special educational need ensures that these pupils are well supported and that they have access to all aspects of the curriculum. Teachers plan effective individual learning programmes for pupils that have learning steps that are small enough to ensure that pupils can be seen to have made progress every half term. The school is beginning to address the needs of higher attaining pupils. The role of a part-time teacher goes some way towards addressing some of their needs, but provision is not consistent. In some subjects and aspects, notably science, history and writing, the level of challenge for these pupils is too low and adversely affects their progress.
26. The school's provision for pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education is satisfactory. Although the level of care is high for the pupils on a day-to-day basis, the provision for developing pupils' personal skills through a planned sequence of activities is at an early stage. The school has acquired resources to develop citizenship and has introduced sessions planned to build pupils' skills. Legal requirements to teach sex education are fulfilled, but are subject to a new sequence of activities based on relationships. Provision for drugs education is satisfactory; teaching is incidental rather than part of a coherent plan to ensure pupils' understanding of what affects their choices in life. In all of these areas, the school's sound practices are in advance of the policies and paperwork supporting them: nevertheless, this provision is satisfactory.
27. The school provides a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities. These include sport, music, drama and, sometimes, visiting theatre groups, all of which help to foster pupils' social skills. The school maintains good links with the local high school, the local community and with initial teacher training partners. It has regularly made good use of the local environment close to a national park.
28. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. The school has developed a climate where pupils can grow, flourish, respect others and be respected. Satisfactory opportunities are provided during religious education lessons, to encourage pupils to consider other people's beliefs and feelings. Pupils' spiritual awareness is also raised in some other lessons, where teachers pay attention to the difference in pupils' learning needs, valuing their questions and allowing them to share their thoughts, concerns and questions. The close links which have been forged with local churches further enhance pupils' spiritual development. However, provision is not rigorously planned for through the policies and schemes of work for subjects.
29. The school's provision for pupils' moral development is very good. There is a strong moral framework where high expectations of behaviour, self-discipline and excellent relationships are fostered. All staff set very good examples for pupils through the high quality of their relationships with one another and with the pupils. Teachers take the time to explain the impact of their behaviour on others. The school rules, which are displayed in classrooms, and the school's reward systems are implemented very well.
30. Provision for pupils' social development is good. Pupils are encouraged to relate positively to each

other and to be considerate, courteous and to develop personal qualities of respect, thoughtfulness and honesty. Pupils are given responsibilities and tasks within classes and the school that contribute well to their social development. The 'buddy system', where older pupils look after younger pupils in the playground, is successful in improving behaviour and relationships. The recent decision to introduce a school council to give pupils the opportunity to make their voices heard is a good initiative. Within classrooms, pupils are encouraged to work together co-operatively. Fund raising for charities is a strong feature of school life, the most recent cause supported being the pupils' own idea. The use of community links extends pupils' social skills well. Each year the school has a residential visit attended by pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6. This provides good opportunities for pupils to develop confidence, independence and personal skills through a range of challenging and exciting activities.

31. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. In art, pupils are introduced to the work of famous artists. In history lessons, pupils' knowledge and understanding of other times is satisfactorily extended and the opportunities to see dramatic productions, like the annual visit to the pantomime, enrich pupils' cultural experiences. However the range of visitors and opportunities to visit museums, libraries, art galleries and places of scientific interest, to extend pupils' cultural knowledge further, are few in number. Their awareness of the multicultural nature of society is raised in some stories and poems pupils hear and read, and also through discussing similarities and differences in faiths during religious education. There are examples to reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity of British society today, for instance in a samba workshop, celebration of the Hindu festival of Divali and the Chinese New Year, but there are too few opportunities to prepare pupils for life in today's multicultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

32. The school is a caring, harmonious community where pupils are valued and feel secure, exemplified by the very high proportion of pupils who are very happy to come to school. Procedures for child protection and health and safety are good but there are areas that are not rigorous enough. Staff trained in first aid give good care to pupils who are ill or have accidents at school. Health and safety risk assessments of the premises and equipment are carried out thoroughly. However, the school has not yet made a start on systematically assessing the risks associated with activities within lessons. The required assessment and recording of actions necessary to minimise any risks have been completed for major off-site residential activities, but this has not yet been extended to cover local day-trips. Appropriate child protection procedures are in place and staff have been trained in their use.
33. The school has adopted very effective procedures for improving behaviour. These emphasise praise and pupils value the system of rewards. A successful emphasis on improving behaviour at break times means that there are fewer conflicts to be resolved when the class re-assembles. Good examples of this include the 'buddy' system, where older pupils have been trained to act as conciliators and the provision of good quality playground games. Another is the 'golden table' at lunchtime for pupils whose consistent good behaviour has been noted by the midday supervisors. Pupils are able to discuss personal concerns in structured discussion sessions for the whole class and this has helped to almost eliminate bullying and conflict.
34. Overall, the school makes good efforts to improve attendance. Staff check for patterns of absence and parents are asked to provide reasons for all occurrences. As a last resort the local Education Welfare Officer contacts parents. Pupils who have consistently good attendance are rewarded. The school complies with the recommendation to contact parents on the same day if pupils are absent with no reason given.
35. There are good procedures in place for assessing and recording the progress of pupils. The use of the information gained from assessment to plan for pupils' future learning and set pupils targets for improvement is satisfactory.
36. In the nursery and reception classes, the quality of assessment is high and the use of this assessment to ensure individual learning needs are met is good. Detailed records are maintained and used well in future planning. This information is transferred with the pupils when they enter the

infant department at the age of five to enable teachers to plan work to extend pupils' particular knowledge skills and understanding.

37. In the infant and junior departments, teachers regularly assess pupils' progress. An improvement since the last inspection is the way pupils' progress is tracked throughout the year. Assessment results are used to set each pupil in the school a target for achievement in English, mathematics and science for the following year. Teachers track pupils' progress towards their targets effectively. However, pupils are not yet consistently involved in setting their own targets. The process of analysing and forecasting pupil performance, together with the setting of targets for achievement, has a positive impact on pupils' learning and the standards they achieve. Procedures to track and record pupils' personal development are less formal, but effective nonetheless.
38. The use of the information gained from assessment is satisfactory. Teachers identify any areas for improvement for the whole class, and for individual pupils, from assessment data. Trends in National Curriculum test results are analysed to help the school to set targets linked to national requirements. This process is also used well to identify areas for improvement, for example, when the school identified the need to improve standards in writing and the performance of boys. However, assessment records for the other subjects are not in a format that makes their use in forward planning easy, although they do show how well pupils have done.
39. The school has good procedures in place for identifying pupils who have a special educational need. Teachers assess pupils' progress and, if there is a need for intervention from an outside agency, the co-ordinator contacts it for specialist support. The co-operative approach to meeting pupils' special needs, including those identified in a statement of special educational need, is a positive feature of the school provision contributing well to pupils' academic and personal development. The school identifies its higher attaining pupils effectively, but they do not consistently receive work that is challenging enough. The procedures for identifying pupils who are gifted and talented are in the early stages of development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

40. Parents are very satisfied with what the school provides and feel that the school has radically improved over the past few years. The parents who attended the meeting before the inspection were very supportive of the school and had virtually no concerns. They were particularly impressed with improvements in pupils' behaviour because of such initiatives as the 'buddy' system - where older pupils take responsibility for sorting out minor playground problems and make sure that no-one is left out - and in the provision of games equipment at lunchtime. They also spoke highly of the support given to pupils with a special educational need. Around a third of parents returned the pre-inspection questionnaire and the views they expressed were also very positive, with no areas of significant concern. Parents are most impressed by the good teaching, which they believe leads to good progress by their children. All say their child enjoys school and they feel confident about approaching the school with problems.
41. The school has worked hard to instil confidence in the parents, after a period of concerns about behaviour, poor academic results and the instability of staffing. Parental views demonstrate the success of this effort and the school is now ready to build on this to raise the effectiveness of links above their current satisfactory level. The school provides parents with sound information about the life of the school, but the school prospectus and nursery brochures do not yet reflect the quality of education provided. Plans are in hand to improve these documents. The school has plans to extend parents' knowledge of teaching methods and the curriculum, as well as extending the loan of resources such as 'story sacks' for parents to use at home.
42. The school keeps parents informed about what is happening in school through regular letters, which also contain details of what will be taught each term. Thus, parents are able to give what support they can with learning. Pupils' annual reports give brief information about the progress in all the subjects taught and meet statutory requirements. However, there is not always a clear statement about the pupils' attainment compared with national expectations, which some parents

said they would like, and targets for improvement tend not to be specific enough. The comments on the pupils' personal development are good and reflect the detailed knowledge that teachers have of them. Parents are given the opportunity to discuss their child's progress at formal meetings with the class teacher. The school consults parents informally about their concerns by meeting them as they collect their children and also formally – for example the homework policy and home-school agreement were issued after appropriate formal consultation.

43. Parents are supportive and have an effective impact on the life of the school and their child's learning. Most parents help their child by hearing them read regularly at home, particularly those children in the reception and infant classes, and encourage them to do homework. Many make comments on their child's progress in reading in the book provided. Several provide valuable support to teachers in lessons, often supporting small groups or, for example, helping younger children to bake their gingerbread man. The 'Friends of Blackwell School' organise many social and fundraising events that are popular social events as well as providing resources such as the lunchtime games and outdoor activity equipment. These activities are well supported by parents.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

44. The team consisting of the governing body, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the curricular co-ordinators provides good leadership and management for the school. The governing body is effective in fulfilling its responsibilities. The school checks its own performance well and has put effective measures in place to improve standards. It makes good use of the resources available and applies the principles of best value soundly. The school is well staffed and has adequate accommodation and learning resources. The quality of leadership and management reported at the last inspection has been maintained.
45. The headteacher provides very good personal leadership to the school. She has a clear vision of excellence that is shared by staff and governors alike. Standards were low in 1999 and the headteacher, in partnership with other members of staff, set strategies in place to improve matters. They were clearly outlined in the school's improvement plan. This was a good document, although it lacked clear criteria to judge just how successful its strategies were. It was clearly focused on improving achievement in the core subjects and especially in writing. These priorities were highly appropriate as the core skills of literacy impinge on every other subject that is taught. The lack of a clear trend of improvement seems to suggest that the action taken to achieve these priorities was not effective; however, the school suffered considerable staffing problems outside of its control. These adversely affected the continuity of pupils' learning as some had a succession of temporary teachers over a year. It is not a coincidence that in the first year that staffing remained unchanged throughout the year standards rose markedly. Inspection evidence in this, the second year of stable staffing, confirms that teaching is good and that pupils continue to achieve well, although test standards are likely to be lower than in 2002. The current school improvement plan is still a good document, containing exactly the right priorities for development and sensible actions to achieve them. It still lacks, however, clear criteria by which to measure its success.
46. The headteacher has been the main driving force behind this improvement and, whilst the commitment to improvement is clearly shared by staff, the deputy headteacher and curricular co-ordinators are not all operating as effectively as they might. For example, the deputy headteacher is also a class teacher most of the week and co-ordinates mathematics. She does not have enough of a whole school role to support the headteacher effectively. The co-ordinators of English and mathematics have taken major roles in the improvement seen. In other subjects, which were rightly not prioritised, co-ordinators are not all operating as effective subject leaders by monitoring and evaluating the provision as effectively. The headteacher and the co-ordinators of the core subjects have taken the lead in systematically checking the school's work, evaluating planning, observing lessons and examining completed work. These activities result in rigorous written and verbal reports to staff on areas of particular strength, or those which need some improvement. This good level of monitoring has been a major factor in improving standards, as good practice is shared and weaker practice eliminated. In addition, areas of weakness have been clearly identified and strategies implemented successfully to deal with them. The instability of staffing slowed this down, but now staffing is more stable, improvements are clear in the outcomes seen in the

inspection – that is, the good teaching and learning observed.

47. The governing body is improving apace and enthusiastically supports the school. It conducts its business appropriately and the new committee structure is beginning to prove effective in making the governing body more efficient. A number of governors with specific areas of interest visit the school to obtain information first hand; others have discussions with their partners on the staff. As a result, the governing body is well informed about the school and understands its strengths and weaknesses well. This knowledge has enabled them to take an effective part in shaping the school's longer term development in partnership with the staff.
48. Staffing is adequate now. The past few years have seen a number of unavoidable, unforeseeable changes in staff, making it difficult to move the school forward as consistently as planned. The appointment of a part-time teacher has added much value and stability to the teaching team. She is deployed, for example, to allow staff to carry out action planning for their subjects and to monitor the work. In addition, the good number of quality classroom assistants makes a very positive contribution to pupils' achievement. The good support of initial teacher training activities within the school, along with good quality guidance for new teachers and assistants, has also added momentum to the school's development and priorities. On-going checks and discussions with teaching staff assure the steadily good quality teaching that exists now.
49. Accommodation is sound. Most of the classrooms are attractive and welcoming. The school buildings are old but maintained to a decent standard. New window frames allow a good amount of natural light into learning areas, making them pleasant and airy and conducive to work. The school hall remains to be upgraded to match the standard of other shared areas, such as the computer suite, corridors and library. In addition, the storage of general equipment in the hall has some negative effect on pupils' movement in physical education lessons despite the best efforts of staff and pupils. Cleaning staff maintain the school's good standards of cleanliness. The recent development of outside play furniture and seating arrangements benefits pupils and helps to encourage chatter and play. The very small library, recently relocated to accommodate the computer suite, is too small to allow class browsing, although the surrounding room is larger. The school plans to develop these facilities as funds allow. In keeping with the school's vigilance in providing well for pupils' needs, a new area has been designed to meet sensory learning needs. This provision augurs well for pupils with a special educational need. Computer resources have improved substantially and, as a result, pupils have greater access to learning in information and communication technology. As the next stage, the school has planned to improve software to enhance other subjects. The school has made some good use of the local area, particularly for geography. However, this use has drifted a little as the school has prioritised other aspects of learning to raise standards in English and mathematics. Resources for learning are adequate including the quality and number of books. However, there are few books that help to prepare pupils for living in multi-ethnic Britain.
50. The school has a good understanding of budgeting and planning for the future, linked well to audits of the school's needs and actions required. Day-to-day financial control is rigorous. The most recent financial audit found that financial procedures are generally sound and the few actions required have been completed. All designated funds are used for their stated purpose. The school makes good use of modern technology in the office, uses overhead projectors for teaching and is starting to introduce more recent developments, such as an interactive whiteboard within the computer suite. The principles of best value have been put into practice and the school evaluates the effectiveness of financial decisions well. There is a good awareness of comparison with academic standards in other schools but alternative arrangements for the supply of services need to be evaluated and costed more thoroughly before decisions are made.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to improve the school further, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (i) improve standards in writing throughout the school by:

- improving the quality of handwriting from Year 1 to Year 3 and making an earlier start in the teaching of joined-up writing;
- expecting higher standards in writing and a faster rate of progress in Years 1, 2 and 3;
- enriching the opportunities for pupils with the potential to write for themselves in other subjects rather than rely on worksheets;
- developing writing activities supported by adults with small groups of pupils;

(paragraphs 7, 8, 17, 75, 80, 81, 82, 91, 93, 96, 115, 138)

- (ii) ensure that pupils with the potential for higher attainment are identified and have consistently challenging work

(paragraphs 7, 9, 17, 21, 25, 39, 82, 86, 94, 96, 102, 105, 114)

In addition to the areas above, the governing body should consider including the following, more minor, issues in its action plan:

- increase opportunities for independent learning, especially the skills of enquiry (*paragraphs 10, 12, 18, 24, 96, 130*);
- strengthen the whole school role of the deputy headteacher and the monitoring and evaluation role of curricular co-ordinators (*paragraphs 46, 107, 112, 122, 139*);
- prepare pupils more fully for a life in a multi-cultural society (*paragraphs 13, 31*).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Number of lessons observed

39

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

32

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	3	10	14	12	0	0	0
Percentage	8	26	36	31	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 two percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	24	129
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	21

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	12

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	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1

National comparative data	5.4
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	13	14	27

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	10	11	13
	Girls	13	13	13
	Total	23	24	26
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	85 (78)	89 (78)	96 (83)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	10	13	10
	Girls	12	12	13
	Total	22	25	23
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	81 (72)	93 (83)	85 (83)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	10	12	22

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	6	10	10
	Girls	12	12	12
	Total	18	22	22
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	82 (38)	100 (44)	100 (56)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	6	9	8
	Girls	12	11	12
	Total	18	20	20
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	82 (44)	91 (44)	91 (50)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
112	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17
Average class size	26

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	92

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Total number of education support staff	1

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2
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£

Total income	441404
Total expenditure	413339
Expenditure per pupil	3003
Balance brought forward from previous year	3222
Balance carried forward to next year	31287

Total aggregate hours worked per week	32.5
Number of pupils per FTE adult	12

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
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	153
Number of questionnaires returned	57

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	82	18	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	89	9	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	65	32	2	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	56	32	0	2	11
The teaching is good.	86	14	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	67	25	7	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	88	9	0	0	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	88	11	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	68	23	5	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	81	14	0	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	82	12	0	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	44	35	9	0	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

51. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very good and is a strength of the school. Children now make faster progress in their learning than at the time of the previous report.
52. The Foundation Stage consists of children in the nursery and those of reception age in the combined reception/Year 1 class. Nearly all of the children in the nursery continue into reception.
53. All staff have very good, caring relationships with the children. They have established a secure and safe environment. The planning of work is very good and covers all the recommended areas of learning. Children with a special educational need are well provided for, and are fully included in every aspect of learning.
54. A carefully planned programme helps children to settle into school with ease. Staff visit parents of nursery children in their homes and in both classes parents are also invited into school to learn about how children are taught. Parents and teachers share information to ensure that children's individual needs are met. Parents are always welcome and staff willingly discuss any concerns as well as the progress that children make.
55. Children's attainment when they start in the nursery and in the reception classes varies from year to year. This year, children entering the nursery show the full range of attainment, but it is skewed so that overall it is well below what is usually expected of children of their age, particularly in their listening and speaking skills. Children make very good progress whilst in the nursery. However, even this very good progress is insufficient to overcome their low standards on entry, so children are still below average in their speaking skills when they enter the reception class. The very detailed records that are maintained, as well as analyses of children's earlier work and lesson observations show that children have made very good progress in each of the areas of learning by the end of the Foundation Stage and are well prepared to begin work on the National Curriculum in Year 1.
56. The school does not have a designated co-ordinator for the Foundation Stage. However, the two teachers involved work closely together in planning the provision. All of the adults work together well as a team in ensuring the children receive the best possible start to their school careers.

Personal, social and emotional development

57. Very good provision is made in this area of learning. Over the year, children make very good progress and are on track to achieve the recommended Early Learning Goals.
58. At the time of the inspection, some children had been in the nursery class for only a short time. Nevertheless, they have settled quickly into school routines and are already eager to learn. They are making good relationships with other children, learning to share and to await their turn. They play and work together well and show pleasure when given praise for collecting and returning toys successfully or for tidying up after themselves. When greeted, they respond politely and they do as they are told. Reception children show increasing independence in selecting resources. When working in small groups, they show consideration for each other and work well co-operatively. The majority of children change quickly when preparing for physical education. A small number require some adult assistance to ensure clothes are the correct way out. Children are very well behaved, show respect for each other and adults, and have a growing understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Those children with a special educational need are growing in confidence. This all comes about because the quality of teaching in this area is of a high standard.
59. Relationships between adults and children are friendly. Staff clearly expect children to grow in

independence, to behave well, await their turn and not interrupt. They provide well-planned times to encourage children to discuss a wide range of feelings. There are very good opportunities for children to work alone, or in small or large groups. They are taught to tidy up after themselves and to look after their own belongings. All these activities promote self-esteem and encourage children to form good relationships.

Communication, language and literacy

60. The children make very good progress in the development of their communication, language and literacy skills. At the time of the inspection, many had already achieved the Early Learning Goals in listening and reading and the majority is on course to do so in speaking and writing by the end of reception.
61. In the nursery, a small number of higher attaining children are beginning to initiate conversation and are able to express their needs well. Some very young children are more hesitant to express their thoughts and to talk about what they are doing. They speak in single words and short sentences. Their listening skills, however, are better developed. Nearly all sustain concentration, enjoying listening to stories and instructions. Higher attaining children are beginning to read. They also attempt to write their names. All are introduced to letter sounds, for example, through the iced letters on their biscuits. They are able to share stories and join in refrains of rhymes. Reception children are more confident when speaking. Higher and average attaining children are able to identify the main characters in a story. They hold their books correctly, are able to read simple text and take good notice of the pictures and of their knowledge of letters to assist them in working out words and answering questions about the story. When in a large group, they read expressively, discuss the text and initiate conversation. Lower attaining children join in the refrains. For example, all remembered the sequence of the story of the 'Gingerbread Boy' and dramatised it well using puppets and dance. Children also make very good progress in their writing skills. The higher-attaining children, who were copying the teacher's writing in September, are now able to write sentences unaided using capital letters and full stops. They make good use of their knowledge of letter sounds to help them with their spelling. Average and lower attaining children still require more adult help in sentence structure and in the formation of letters.
62. Teaching in this area is excellent. Teachers seize every opportunity to extend children's listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. They also take care, when directing their questions, to ensure that all children, including those with a special educational need, are fully involved. During reading time, teachers' questioning greatly increases children's vocabulary, their knowledge of letter sounds and simple rhyming words. Team work is excellent. The nursery nurses and classroom assistants provide high quality support. The varied and very well prepared activities encourage children to communicate their thoughts and feelings. Carefully planned opportunities to investigate, share books and develop their writing skills enable children to achieve very well. Staff are continually assessing areas for development and setting targets with children so as to better meet their needs.

Mathematical development

63. Children make very good progress in their mathematical development. Most children are on course to achieve the Early Learning Goals in this area by the end of the reception year.
64. When children enter the nursery, most are in the early stages of developing a mathematical vocabulary. Children show interest in numbers, play games and are beginning to use number names correctly in play. In reception, most children can count from one to ten and the higher attaining children beyond that. They can count forwards and backwards to twenty, in tens to one hundred, and are able to work out simple addition sums. This is because of the excellent teaching which provides high challenge. Children, therefore, work hard and achieve very well.
65. Children are encouraged to learn about mathematics through a very good range of activities. The standard of planning is high, taking account of individual children's learning needs. There is constant assessment and tracking of progress in order to further extend mathematical knowledge,

understanding and skills. There are very good opportunities for children to count, sort, match and sequence, for example, in the comparison of weights in the nursery. In both classes, learning is fun. Mathematical understanding is developed through very well-chosen stories, songs, games and imaginative play, such as shopping, as well as during activities such as cooking. In all these activities, staff intervene to develop children's thinking through appropriate questions, such as 'How many?', 'What do we do first?', 'Who used the most?', 'How did you work out that missing number?'. Teachers make excellent use of the whiteboard to demonstrate how to set out work. They use computers very well to reinforce children's skills of counting and number recognition.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

66. Children make very good progress in this area of learning and are on course to achieve this Early Learning Goal by the end of reception.
67. In the nursery, the more competent children are able to follow the verbal instructions to complete a simple computer program where they use the mouse to dress a teddy bear. In both classes, when baking their biscuits and gingerbread men, children are eager to discuss what happens when mixing the ingredients and the changes that take place. Reception children have investigated sound. They show growing knowledge about plant growth and take good care of their beautiful hyacinths. Their work includes writing about the Christmas story. Photographic evidence shows children investigating the use of hoops and sticks, toys from another generation. Children make very good progress in programming the floor robots.
68. Teaching is very good. Teachers provide interesting and attractive resources to stimulate children's curiosity. Children are encouraged to talk about their work, investigate, ask questions, and find out information. Both the nursery and reception classes offer exciting and interesting experiences to extend children's knowledge, for example, a family outing to a farm. Very well planned activities, such as a 'sound walk', raise children's scientific knowledge. The use of visitors to the school including a school governor, policeman and nurse, extends pupils' knowledge and understanding further.

Physical development

69. Children make very good progress in their physical development; many had already achieved the Early Learning Goals at the time of the inspection and are on target to exceed them by the end of reception.
70. In the nursery, children's skills in building with construction toys and modelling materials are developing well. In both nursery and reception, children use a good range of small apparatus and are growing in confidence in handling tools and objects. Nursery children move with increasing agility when playing 'the farmer's in his den'. Reception children move with good levels of confidence. They are beginning to understand why they need to change for physical activities. They dance with good agility, use space sensibly and are aware of others. They confidently climb and balance using the larger gymnastic equipment.
71. The teaching in this area is very good. All adults encourage children to try new experiences. Children are taught to move and play safely. Staff teach skills, such as throwing and catching, and how to use equipment, such as scissors, safely. They provide well planned opportunities for children to work individually, in pairs, small groups, or teams and to learn to have consideration for others. Skilful questioning challenges and extends children's knowledge of what is required. Children, including those with a special educational need, are encouraged to be independent in changing. Very good attention is given to safety in all these activities. Because the management of children is excellent, they behave very well and know and follow the rules for activities.

Creative development

72. Children make very good progress in their creative skills and are on track to achieve the Early Learning Goals in this area by the end of reception.

73. Children join in singing traditional rhymes and songs from memory and also move with a growing sense of rhythm. They are encouraged to listen to a very good range of music. In the nursery, the detailed planning shows that children listen to a good range of music including 'The Humming Chorus' from 'Madame Butterfly'. They use their imagination well in their drawings and paintings, exploring the use of paint, pencils, crayons and collage. Older and higher-attaining children apply paint with care and cut and stick with good control.
74. The teaching is very good. A wide variety of activities are provided for children to develop their imaginative skills, including art, music, dance and imaginative role play in the home corners. The displays of work and teachers' planning, as well as earlier work, show that there are carefully planned opportunities for children to explore, experience and respond through their senses, feeling textures, mixing paints and listening to sounds. Cheery songs create a sense of happiness, so children are eager to join in. Time is used well to enable children to explore, develop and finish their work and constant praise makes children aware that their efforts are valued. As in all areas of development, the excellent interaction by adults involved increases pupils' listening and communication skills.

ENGLISH

75. Overall, standards of attainment in the Year 6 work observed are just within the average range and are firmly average for pupils in Year 2. The 2002 Year 6 test results proved to be significantly higher than those of similar schools and reflect the considerable effort the school has made to lift pupils' achievement across the school. In Years 5 and 6, progress is fast and includes a significant amount of 'catch-up' work to counter the adverse effects of previous staffing difficulties. Standards in reading were about average in 2002; in writing they were below average. An analysis of these results shows that boys achieved similarly in both reading and writing; girls fared rather better in reading than writing. The school has taken action that is steadily narrowing this difference in performance as pupils get older, but it acknowledges that there is some way to go. There has been good improvement in provision for the subject overall since the last inspection.
76. Standards in speaking are below national expectations throughout the school, but pupils are making good progress now and are achieving soundly. Opportunities for debate, to talk in pairs and groups are planned into work and where teachers promote lively exchange of ideas and dialogue greater progress occurs. Since the last inspection, pupils have won a debating award on the subject of the environment. Pupils are particularly good listeners, show great interest in literacy activities and are very well behaved – all of which form a strong platform for learning. In the urge to move pupils on in their work, infant pupils sometimes have fewer chances than those in the juniors to rehearse their thoughts through speaking; as a result, their progress is less consistent than in Years 5 and 6.
77. The school has been particularly successful in improving standards of reading and has addressed the shortcomings identified in the previous report. The subject leader has led training and discussion with teachers, helpers from the community and classroom assistants, with the result that pupils use a variety of clues to understand as much as possible. Parents and carers are encouraged to share books with their children, and many do so. Pupils make consistently good progress across the school, have a very good early grasp of letter sounds and thoroughly enjoy reading. However, one or two anomalies slow down this effective work in Years 1 and 2. Some of the reading materials that pupils read on a day-to-day basis do not provide pupils with enough chances to use the breadth of skills and knowledge taught in lessons. Given the flying start in pupils' first year in school, the very good support from helpers and strong teaching of reading, pupils could be making even better progress. Nevertheless, standards in reading in Year 2 are above those expected nationally. The improvement in test results in 2002 had a good proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 at the end of Year 2. Conversely, this year's individual targets for Year 2 pupils are based on a lower rate of progress and suggest a less challenging expectation for these pupils in both reading and writing. These pupils are not underachieving as a result, but their progress could be even further improved by the school setting its sights even higher.

78. Year 5 and 6 boys and girls are effective readers and their attainment in Year 6 is in line with national expectations. A developing strength of the school is the sustained way that all pupils are absorbed in high quality literature such as 'Tom's Midnight Garden'. As they read together, pupils show great involvement with the characters, events and features of the story. The school continues to tackle boys' underachievement (which is mainly historic) and has been very successful in engendering their interest, enjoyment and response to literature. Boys' and girls' work reflects this delight, but the lower quality of boys' writing still affects their written responses to literature. In discussions, pupils give lively and well justified contributions that are rooted in the story. Higher achieving pupils weigh up the nuances of language and, in discussion, show a good understanding of the author's intentions and of narrative devices. For example, most can describe how the author has written a 'time slip' in the story. In Years 3 and 4, both boys and girls demonstrate fluent reading skills, often with good expression. Most are eager to talk about their favourite book, particularly enjoying the humour and excitement of known and loved authors such as Dick King-Smith.
79. Pupils are aware of the potential of the new technology in the school and most of them talk about the Internet as a source of information. Two-thirds of pupils know how to use gain information from books and use reference books such as dictionaries and thesauri. However, these skills are used minimally in subjects such as history and geography. Despite the use of book loans, opportunities to research are hampered by the small selection of books in the library and limited personal research planned in other subjects.
80. Writing standards are below average overall. None of the more capable readers achieves as well in their writing as in their reading at the end of Year 2. In Years 1 and 2, there is good teaching of spelling including letter patterns and sounds. Pupils use these skills well when writing words and sentences. However, most of their writing does not show rising confidence or skill beyond simple sentences, nor do pupils use quality features of language that they encounter when reading together. Too much time is spent ensuring accuracy of sentences at the expense of galvanising imaginative reasons for writing or retelling well-loved tales. Teachers provide purposeful occasions to write. For example, in one history lesson, a Year 2 child put herself in the landscape of 'Poppy Day': 'I went to no man's land and saw lots of poppies...In the trenches, it was dark and really deep and wet.' In exploring her thoughts, she developed her language skills well.
81. Although Year 6 pupils reached average standards in writing in the 2002 tests, the attainment of the current group in Year 6 is below the expected standards. However, they are still achieving well given their earlier attainment when they were in Year 2. Some effort has been made to provide opportunities for pupils to write poetry as they move through the school with some success. Greater emphasis on the qualities of words, rhymes and the use of language is lifting pupils' achievement in Years 3 to 6. In an instance of this, a Year 6 pupil pictured frost as a 'spider web of wintry lace'. Pupils enjoy composing limericks and verses for themselves. There are some opportunities to write for other reasons in different subjects, but there are not enough to provide pupils with the wealth of writing experiences that other subjects like history, geography and religious education can elicit.
82. Teaching and learning are good across the school now, and robustly so. One of the strengths of the teaching is the warm relationships that help to beckon young learners towards literature. There were no instances of outstanding or unsatisfactory teaching seen. Teaching assistants provide invaluable support for pupils and make a substantial positive contribution to their achievements. Pupils with a special educational need make good progress throughout the school, because adults are particularly sensitive and very well-briefed before lessons. The model of the literacy hour is adhered to well, is well planned and, in the main, provides a carefully matched level of activities, except for those pupils with the potential to go further, who are not always challenged enough. Teachers have good subject knowledge and apart from handwriting, early skills are generally taught well. Most teachers plan interesting shared literacy sessions with a strong sharing of the learning at the end. However, at times, worksheets reduce the chances pupils have to organise and write for themselves in Years 2 to 4.
83. Leadership in the subject is strong and provides a robust start for pupils early in the school. The

co-ordinator's experience and commitment to the subject have helped to raise the qualities and standards of reading in the school. These are now focusing even more on standards of writing throughout the school. The co-ordinator has worked alongside the headteacher to check planning and lessons. Verbal and written reports help to spread the best practice found throughout the school and this is proving effective, for example, in the raising of standards in reading. Resources are adequate to allow the subject to be well taught overall.

MATHEMATICS

84. Achievement is improving in mathematics as the result of good teaching from a stable staff. Standards now are similar to those reported at the time of the last inspection. Teaching, learning and achievement have all improved since then. Standards did fluctuate in the intervening period; the subject has made sound improvement overall.
85. In the 2002 National Curriculum tests in mathematics, standards were above average at the end of Year 2 when compared both to all schools nationally and to schools with a similar intake. Boys and girls did equally well. Average numbers of pupils gained the higher Level 3, but a higher number than average gained the 'near miss' Level 2A. This suggests that pupils with the potential for higher attainment may not have been challenged enough. At the end of Year 6, however, standards were very high, placing the school in the top five per cent of all schools nationally, both when compared with all schools and with similar schools. Boys and girls did equally well in the tests. This was a massive improvement over the picture in 2001 when the school's results put it in the bottom quarter of all schools. In 2002, a very high proportion of pupils attained the higher Level 5. This group of pupils attained results in the average range four years ago in Year 2: they have made outstanding progress during Years 3 to 6. This achievement is all the more impressive when the staffing difficulties that the school experienced and the very low standards in 2001 are considered.
86. Current standards at the end of Year 2 are about average, with the main strength being in the understanding and use of number. These pupils arrived at the school with standards somewhat below those typically seen nationally, so they have made good progress from the nursery to Year 2. Pupils with a special educational need have made the same good progress because of the good support they receive. However, an analysis of pupils' work shows that almost no work at the higher Level 3 is present and there is a heavy use of worksheets. Although planning clearly shows that the higher attaining pupils should be receiving more challenging work, it is not so evident in the work seen. This confirms the picture in the 2002 national tests that suggested that the most capable pupils were not challenged consistently. Nevertheless, the progress made, and the challenge seen, by most pupils in lessons indicates that they are achieving well.
87. The current Year 6 group are attaining standards in line with those expected. This is a decline over last year. However, their standards in the tests when they were in Year 2 were in the bottom five per cent of schools nationally. They also made at best patchy progress in Years 3 and 4 because of staffing difficulties. Now they are all making very good progress in their learning as the result of high quality teaching, including those with a special need and those with the capacity for higher attainment. This shows that, considering all factors, they are achieving well.
88. This good achievement comes about as the result of good teaching and learning. In all lessons seen the teaching and learning were at least satisfactory and in half they were very good. The analysis of work confirms the good quality of teaching and learning. Teachers throughout the school have a firm grasp of the principles of the National Numeracy Strategy, which they have implemented well. This leads to brisk-paced lessons in the main, with pupils keen and eager to learn. This happened in a very good lesson in Year 3. The teacher's extrovert manner captured pupils' attention as they romped through mental methods of addition of small numbers. All groups were very well challenged and they learned very effectively. These pupils were on the edge of their seats, behaving very well, as they enjoyed the lesson. Their positive attitudes and very good relationships with the teacher ensured they all progressed very well. A very good lesson for pupils in Years 5 and 6 was enhanced by the teacher's evaluation of previous lessons. She had amended her planning as she realised pupils had not made the progress she had hoped for in

earlier lessons. The newly-minted lesson allowed pupils to consolidate their understanding of multiplication at their own pace and proved very effective. A good lesson for pupils in Year 2 suffered slightly by being overlong so that, by the end, pupils became restless after having made significant strides in their understanding of addition and routes through a grid.

89. The school rightly prioritised mathematics alongside English in its strategy to raise standards, and this has been effective. Whilst standards in national tests are likely to be lower in 2003 than in 2002, this reflects the differences in the groups rather than the school's provision so that achievement has been maintained at a good level. Close monitoring of planning and pupils' work by the headteacher and co-ordinator has enabled the school to target areas of weakness and this has been very effective. Other subjects make a good contribution to numeracy, for example, in science and geography. The co-ordinator is offering good leadership through her knowledge of the subject and the strategy. Assessment data is used effectively to target future teaching. Provision for the subject has progressed satisfactorily since the last inspection.

SCIENCE

90. On the basis of teachers' assessments, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 in 2002 were below the national average. Standards at the end of Year 6 in the 2002 national tests were above the national average, all pupils reached at least the expected Level 4 and over a third attained the higher Level 5. In comparison with results of similar schools, standards were also above average. There was no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Between 1999 and 2001, performance in the National Curriculum tests for science fluctuated considerably being at best well below average until 2002.
91. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in the infant stage are beginning to rise. Based on a scrutiny of pupils' work and discussion with their teacher, a higher proportion of pupils in the present Year 2 are on track to attain the expected level and standards are now in line with national expectations. Pupils carry out their experiments independently and are able to explain why, for example, some materials are more absorbent than others. A group of average attaining pupils completed this task quickly, but a smaller number of lower attaining pupils required adult assistance in carrying out their investigation. All pupils are able to discuss their findings using appropriate scientific terms. However, most pupils have difficulty in recording their predictions and findings, because of the low level of their writing skills.
92. The attainment of the pupils in the present Year 6 cohort is not as high as the class taking the tests in 2002. Most pupils are on track to attain the expected levels for their age and a small minority should attain the higher level. However, there is a significant minority of lower attaining pupils who have achieved well when they were in the infant department. There is still a difference in the attainment of boys and girls in the present Year 6, with girls doing better.
93. Pupils in Year 6 achieve well in lessons due to the good quality teaching and a high emphasis on experimentation, where pupils learn well through finding things out for themselves. This was seen in a Year 5/6 lesson, when they were challenged to identify different light sources and investigate reflection. Lower attaining pupils achieve well. They are, however, hindered in their discussion by their limited vocabulary and in their recording of findings by their restricted writing skills. Pupils with a special educational need are fully included in lessons and, where necessary, receive additional support, which enables them to achieve well. Although there is some use of information and communication technology, this is in an early stage of development and is not yet used enough.
94. Despite the low level speaking and writing skills of a significant number of pupils in each class, the vast majority of pupils in the infant and junior stages achieve well in lessons. This is because of the increased emphasis on an investigative approach to learning. Higher attaining pupils are achieving well. They speak about their work and record at greater length; however, they are not always challenged enough to attain the highest levels.
95. Teaching and learning throughout the school are satisfactory – teaching and learning were

satisfactory in all but one of the lessons observed, being good in a lesson for Years 5 and 6. Teachers have secure subject knowledge which enables them to plan their lessons well. A key strength is the way in which pupils are made aware of the purpose of the lesson: this brings understanding of what they are doing and why. In the good Year 6 lesson, probing and persistent questioning was cleverly directed to above average, average and lower attaining pupils, to ensure that they all participated. Their responses were used well to assess their understanding and plan the next learning step. In all lessons, pupils are encouraged to explain what they think might happen and teachers intervene to help them to consider the evidence and reach conclusions. Pupils with a special educational need are fully included. The positive comments from teachers maintain their self esteem and promote confidence. The good support from all adults enables pupils to achieve well. In all lessons, the teachers' enthusiasm for scientific enquiry is transferred to the pupils. The very good relationships have a significant impact on the quality of teaching and learning as they release the teachers from concentrating on behaviour to concentrating on the subject.

96. Too often, the work in books shows that pupils are restricted in the amount they are expected to record and there is little evidence of them researching information from a range of sources for themselves. Pupils of all levels of attainment are provided with similar work too often. There is little evidence of higher challenge in the work seen for the higher attaining pupils so they are prevented from achieving their full potential.
97. The science co-ordinator provides satisfactory leadership. The co-ordinator checks medium term plans so that colleagues are supported and an overview of the subject. The co-ordinator's role is not yet sufficiently developed to include observation of teaching and learning within classes. The sound action plan for the subject, developed by the co-ordinator, appropriately includes the need to develop a whole school approach to the teaching of investigational science and to increase the use of educational visits and visitors connected with science.

ART AND DESIGN

98. During the inspection it was possible only to observe two lessons in art, one in the infants and one in the juniors. Evidence from these lessons, together with an analysis of pupils' previous work and discussions with pupils and the co-ordinator, shows that standards have been maintained since the last inspection. By the ages of seven and eleven, standards in art and design are in line with national expectations.
99. In the infants, pupils gain experience using a satisfactory range of materials including paint, crayon, pastels and collage materials. Year 2 pupils successfully use a variety of fabrics, which they weave into hessian. They are able to manipulate the fabric with their fingers. Higher attaining pupils do this independently. Average and lower attaining pupils required some adult guidance but they persevered and soon got into the rhythm. These activities are also used well to consolidate pupils' knowledge of materials in science and to increase pupils' range of vocabulary and communication skills.
100. By the age of eleven, pupils are attaining in line with the national expectations. An improvement since the last inspection is the use of more collaborative work, for example, the mural painted on the corridor wall. Another satisfactory improvement is the increased use of information and communication technology in the subject. This was seen when Year 6 pupils effectively explored the use of computer tools to recreate images, the girls in this instance being more successful than the boys. There are, however, too few examples of work resulting from pupils using their own imagination, researching information independently and writing about their work.
101. Because pupils have the opportunity to use a range of materials, pupils achieve well in directed activities such as collage, patterns and their development of skills in mixing shades of paint. However, work in the pupils' sketch books and displays indicates that pupils are not achieving so well in the use of skills and techniques learned earlier. For example, there is insufficient attention to the skills of recording finer detail and use of their knowledge of shading in the observational drawings of fruit in Years 5 and 6.

102. The standard of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Some good teaching was observed in the infants, where pupils were introduced to weaving. The teacher discussed the activity well and provided a good demonstration so that pupils had the knowledge and confidence to approach the task. There is also good non-teaching support for the younger pupils and those with a special need, who, because they receive constant encouragement, achieve well. In a Year 3 lesson, pupils knew what they were about to learn because the teacher shared the objectives with them. However, the lesson was too long for the activities, and some pupils became restless. Although the teacher moved around the class, motivating and offering support, opportunities were missed to extend average and lower attaining pupils' skills, for example, holding tools correctly. Work in sketchbooks belonging to Year 5 and Year 6 pupils show little difference between the challenge provided for the higher, average and lower attaining pupils. Throughout the junior stage, there are few examples of marking by teachers to promote improvement. Because of these shortcomings, pupils' progress is hindered, though not unsatisfactory.
103. The co-ordinator provides good leadership. A rolling programme of work has been developed to meet the needs of the mixed-aged classes effectively. Currently there are too few visits and visitors. These are needed in order to make sure pupils know about, explore and use the ideas of artists and crafts people from their own and different cultures and times.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

104. It was only possible to observe one lesson, in the Year 1 and 2 class, so secure judgements about teaching cannot be made. There was little work to analyse because the subject does not have much time in the curriculum. The subject has not been a high priority while the school has concentrated on improving standards in the core. This is the main reason why standards are below average and the pupils underachieve. Now that achievement in English and mathematics is improving, it is appropriate to consider how to raise the profile of the other subjects, including design and technology.
105. Pupils' folders and work on display show that little design and technology has taken place, and the co-ordinator agrees that, whilst work is aimed at the expected levels, there is little work at the higher levels – Level 3 for pupils in Year 2 and Level 5 for pupils in Year 6. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 had designed a simple Christmas card with a sliding mechanism. They were also seen describing and designing fabrics preparatory to making their own version of Joseph's coat. Pupils in Year 4 showed good joining skills as they made a pyramid with a secret chamber. However, their only input to the *design* was the decoration. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 designed Christmas cards with moving mechanisms operated by a lever. All of this work was at about the expected levels for their ages; however, in all years the higher level skills were not apparent. Not enough work was available to form a view on pupils' progress as most had completed only one task.
106. In the lesson seen, teaching and learning were satisfactory. The teacher led useful discussions about fabrics and how a coat might be made, but opportunities were lost for pupils to write about fabric designs or to take a coat apart to see its components. Nevertheless, pupils enjoyed the lesson and worked with a will. All adults present extended pupils' understanding of the fabrics and structure of coats effectively through their questioning and pupils learned satisfactorily overall.
107. The co-ordinator is relatively new to the post and is aware that elements need improvement. She is aware that the subject does not have enough time. This was the result of the entirely appropriate prioritisation of English and mathematics. Schemes of work do, however, cover all of the required elements. The co-ordinator recognises the need for more rigorous monitoring of teaching. Assessment of tasks completed is satisfactory in that it records the levels attained by pupils, but it is not in a format that will assist future planning. The co-ordinator has devised an action plan to improve provision, which addresses the important issues appropriately.

GEOGRAPHY

108. Scrutiny of pupils' work on display and discussions with pupils and staff indicate that standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are average. No geography lessons were seen during the inspection but it is evident from pupils' work that both teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. A small number of geography topics are planned which cater for the mixed-aged classes and meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
109. The pupils' achievement in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory. Pupils gain an understanding of geographical ideas and vocabulary from their study of the island of St Lucia. They make comparisons and note the similarities between countries, people and features of the land. For example, they noted the 'banana sellers in the market' of St Lucia, clearly comparing that with places where the fruit is sold in the British Isles. With the help of classroom assistants, pupils with special needs make similar progress to others and this is evident in the work they produce. The changeover of computer systems in the school has meant that programs for the subject are limited to those on older computers, but pupils are beginning to use the Internet for research.
110. The pupils in Year 6 also achieve satisfactorily, though they have slightly better level of knowledge about the environment than is usual. Pupils in Year 6 have debated outside the school on such issues. The school successfully involves pupils in decision-making about their environment. Pupils have generated ideas to improve their playground and then decided if the plans turned out as they expected. This level of involvement contributes to the quality of provision for the subject and to the sound progress they make. Evidence in pupils' books indicates that pupils with a special educational need make a similar rate of progress as other pupils.
111. Planning shows sufficient coverage of topics, but there are no plans that ensure that geographical skills are developed as pupils' progress from topic to topic across their classes. Where pupils show some perception and interest in the subject, the lapse in time between geographical topics dampens their enjoyment and limits the chance for pupils to be drawn into the fascinating features of the subject. Resources are adequate, but pupils do not always have enough access to them to, for example, browse maps and globes.
112. Leadership in the subject is sound and, although geography has not been on the agenda for significant development, there has been improved planning for it despite other priorities. The co-ordinator checks planning to ensure it is in line with the schemes of work. Completed tasks are assessed by a simple tick-list that records how well pupils have done, but is not in a format to assist in future planning. The school rightly considers that the time is ripe for developments in the subject, including the step-by-step promotion geographical skills now that the standards of literacy have improved.

HISTORY

113. Only one history lesson could be observed during the inspection. On the basis of this evidence, and that from displays and a scrutiny of pupils' work, the pupils are working to national expectations in the historical topics covered throughout the school.
114. Planning ensures that pupils receive just enough time to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum, including appropriate study units for the pupils in mixed-age classes. The time allocated to the subject is minimal and is used to convey interesting *knowledge*, but not to develop pupils' enquiry skills enough. Although pupils use information books and historical objects, how their skills will progress is not mapped out step-by-step as they move through the school. This reduces the amount of progress made overall.
115. Pupils in Year 2 have a growing sense of the passage of time, making satisfactory progress. They learn about some historical figures and key events in time and chronological order. Pupils' writing about the trenches of the First World War shows an appreciation of the events in the past. They understand the symbol of the 'Poppy' in memories and the significance of remembrance for succeeding decades. Literacy skills are promoted in Years 1 and 2 and pupils are stirred to write but are inhibited by their less than fluent writing skills. Similarly, pupils in Years 3 to 6 make satisfactory progress. However, the overuse of published worksheets for each topic limits the

already made herself aware of where the subject needs to go next. This shows that she is leading satisfactorily. It is to be prioritised in the school improvement plan, which should enable direct monitoring of teaching alongside the current system of checking plans and pupils' saved work. The new scheme of work, introduced last September, ensures that all of the requirements of the National Curriculum are delivered, but some areas are more problematic. The school is aware of the need to purchase more programs for the computers because there are not enough to support learning in other subjects.

MUSIC

123. It was only possible to observe one lesson during the inspection, in the junior department. Therefore, no secure judgements about teaching and learning can be made, nor about standards in Year 2.
124. Standards in Year 6 match levels expected nationally. During assemblies, pupils sing a good range of songs and hymns to a good standard. They keep good time and are developing a good awareness of patterns in music. They sing expressively and in tune. Most pupils remember that the chorus is repeated after each verse and demonstrate enjoyment in their performance. Pupils with a special educational need successfully participate alongside their friends and achieve very well. There is no obvious difference between the performance of boys and girls.
125. In a Year 5/6 lesson pupils listened to a recording of bagpipe music. They analysed what they heard and discussed the differences between the sounds made by Chinese, Irish and Scottish bagpipes. Higher attaining pupils recognise the difference in pitch and when another instrument joins in. All pupils shared their preferences and commented on the effectiveness of the drones. They also used vocabulary associated with music, for example, 'melodic'. This lesson also supported pupils' cultural development.
126. The opportunities for some pupils to participate in concerts and, occasionally, in competitions contribute well to their self-esteem, enjoyment and social development. The school choir has been involved in producing two compact discs in which their performances show expressive control of the musical elements.
127. The quality of teaching and learning in the one lesson observed was satisfactory. The teacher's planning and choice of resources enabled pupils to grow in their musical understanding. She used questioning effectively to motivate all pupils to take part in the analysis of the music. The good relationships between the teacher and the pupils enable pupils to develop their musical knowledge and enjoy music.
128. The co-ordinator provides satisfactory leadership. She monitors teachers' planning, but there is no formal monitoring of teaching and learning within classes. Many classes teach music alternately with personal, social and health education and this interrupts the development of pupils' musical skills. End-of-unit assessments have improved since the last inspection. A satisfactory range of visiting musicians including a brass band and a samba workshop broaden pupils' musical knowledge and experiences. However there is insufficient involvement of music and musicians representing a wider range of cultures. The quality, quantity and the range of instruments is satisfactory, but as yet insufficient use has been made of information and communication technology to support learning. At the time of the last inspection, standards, teaching and learning were all good. Provision has declined as the result of staff turnover and the school's placing of priorities elsewhere.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

129. In Years 2 and 6 standards are in line with national expectations. Records indicate that most pupils reach national expectations for swimming and a few exceed them.
130. Pupils are especially creative in generating and using ideas about movement given ordinary stimuli. This is a strength they bring to the school. In dance, as in gymnastics, pupils move with ease, use different levels, momentum and direction to join up phrases of movement to make free-flowing sequences. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress and have a natural spirit and enterprise for activities that are otherwise ordinary. They respond with delight and spontaneity to contrasts in music and, even when overly cautioned, they bounce back with good quality responses.
131. Pupils achieve well in Years 4 to 6 but even better in Year 3, where pupils demonstrate increasing

control in response to the very good teaching of the subject co-ordinator. Year 6 pupils are much less confident and competent in their skills than these younger pupils. This is partly due to the effect of staffing difficulties in the past. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 work well together but have difficulty refining their dance movements. For example, when taking on the role of a mannequin coming to life in a shop window, they raced around rather than compose their movements into a specific sequence. Pupils with a special need are drawn into activities sensitively and with decreasing adult support in accordance with their skill levels. Progress is similar to that of other pupils.

132. Teaching and learning are good, an improvement over the picture at the last inspection.. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and learning intentions are discussed with pupils, making learning clear and precise. Lessons include a good balance of activities to develop pupils' skills, and opportunities to use these skills are set out well, remedying the shortcomings identified in the last report. As a result, pupils make good progress in their skills and understanding. Games skills are also extended by the lunchtime supervisors who organise rounders matches. Pupils consider that this is the secret of their success in a local tournament.
133. Leadership is sound. The co-ordinator puts much effort into sports, including extra-curricular activities. Planning is checked regularly. Simple assessment sheets record what pupils have achieved. Resources for the subject remain adequate and, even though supplemented by good quality 'Top Sports' equipment, organisational problems beyond the school's control are hindering use of these additional resources. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the coaching facilities provided by visiting specialists in football and cricket, as well as other sports. This adds much to pupils' personal achievements and in their competitions with other schools.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

134. Only two lessons were observed, one in Years 1 and 2, the other in Years 5 and 6. This evidence, considered alongside work in pupils' books and discussions with teachers and pupils, shows that pupils are attaining the standards expected in the local agreed syllabus by the ages of seven and eleven.
135. By the age of seven, pupils reach the expected levels in knowledge and understanding and appreciation of their own and others' beliefs. They reach satisfactory levels in their knowledge and understanding about Christian festivals and listen to stories from the Bible and also from other faiths that have stories based on beliefs.
136. Junior pupils demonstrate a growing knowledge of Christian festivals and about Christian worship. Through their visit to a local church, they gained an understanding of the significance of dress and artefacts in worship. During a lesson for pupils in Years 5 and 6, there was a good discussion relating to why believers worship, meditate and celebrate their faith. Pupils showed good progress in their understanding of Sunday worship to Christians, the significance of the chalice and the paten and what represents Christ's body and blood. The higher attaining pupils maturely questioned whether or not christenings should take place when a person is old enough to decide for themselves, rather than when they are babies. Earlier work of Years 5 and 6 pupils demonstrates a growing appreciation of the similarities in the rules and laws of Muslims and Christians.
137. Pupils in both the infant and junior stages achieve well, suitably increasing their knowledge in the ways different religions celebrate festivals and significant events. Because of the positive attitudes and the good standard of teaching, all pupils, including those with a special educational need, also achieve well during lessons, particularly in their understanding and use of appropriate language. The higher attaining pupils are given the opportunity to share their thoughts and provide reasons for their views.
138. The quality of teaching and learning are good with some very good team teaching in the Year 5/6 class where pupils were able to discuss their work on worship and celebration in small teaching groups. The work in the infant and junior stages is appropriately and thoroughly planned on the

basis of the agreed syllabus. Teachers use questioning well to encourage pupils to think about issues and share their views. They encourage pupils to identify aspects of their own experiences and feelings and this, in turn, is used well to promote discussion about caring for others. Teachers use artefacts well to enable pupils to gain greater knowledge of the areas they are studying. For example in a Year 1 and 2 lesson, pupils gained a good understanding of the differences between a Torah and a Bible. Teachers carefully clarify the meaning of religious terms and use time at the end of the lesson effectively to check how well pupils have learned new knowledge and to repeat facts to ensure that all pupils thoroughly understand. The good management and calm working atmosphere established are reflected in the good behaviour and concentration levels of the pupils. An analysis of work in books shows that there are not enough opportunities to support writing across the curriculum. There is also not enough challenge for pupils to find out information about religion for themselves through researching information from books and through greater use of information and communication technology.

139. Leadership is satisfactory. The subject leader has recently attended appropriate courses in order to implement the revised syllabus which is to be implemented in the Summer term. The tracking of pupils' progress through the topics is recorded, but this, in common with most subjects, is not in a format that makes it easy to use in future planning. Attractive displays like the one in the Year 1 and 2 class of a Torah scroll picture of a Menorah and a seder plate draw good attention to the religious symbols and words associated with other faiths.