

INSPECTION REPORT

MERRYDALE INFANT SCHOOL

Leicester

LEA area: Leicester

Unique reference number: 120023

Headteacher: Mrs M Horsburgh

Reporting inspector: John Messer
15477

Dates of inspection: 19 - 22 June 2000

Inspection number: 191755

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant school
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Claydon Road Leicester
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Rai Solanki
Date of previous inspection:	18 November 1996

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Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
John Messer	Registered inspector	Mathematics	What sort of school is it?
		Art	How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements
			How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
Ann Taylor	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) 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?
Alan Cowhig	Team inspector	Science	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
		Information technology	
		Design and technology	
Val Ives	Team inspector	English	
		Religious education	
		Under fives	
		Special educational needs	
Julia Miller	Team inspector	Geography	
		History	
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		Equal opportunities	

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The Office for Standards in Education
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7 - 10
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11 - 14
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	14 - 16
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	16 - 18
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	18 - 20
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	20 - 22
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	22 - 24
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	24
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	25 - 28
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	29 - 44

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This infant school has a total of 319 pupils on roll and is bigger than most primary schools and larger than at the time of the last inspection in 1996. There are nine classes, which include two nursery classes, one of which has 54 children who attend full-time and another which has 72 children who attend part time, either in the morning or afternoon sessions. There is an almost equal number of boys and girls. Over 47 per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is much higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than the national average; 55 receive special support and, of these, 31 are at an early stage of English acquisition. There are 68 pupils entered on the school's register of special educational need, which is a high number, and three pupils have Statements of Special Educational Need. Most children come from the immediate area though 34 per cent are from outside the area as a result of parental choice. A high proportion of pupils enter and leave the school part way through this phase of their schooling. Children's achievements on entry to the nursery are well below those normally expected of three and four-year-olds and, by the time they are five, despite the good progress they have made, the attainment of most pupils is below the standards expected nationally of five-year-olds. Many have poorly developed speaking skills and many lack the social skills which children normally develop by the age of five.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an improving school, which has many good features. The school has developed a clear focus on improving standards and has been successful in raising pupils' attainment. The school is effective in enabling its pupils to achieve well and make good progress. The quality of teaching is good in most lessons and pupils are eager to learn. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils attain standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science which meet the standards expected nationally of seven-year-olds. Despite the absence of a permanent headteacher for the past three years, the school has maintained good progress. The governing body was newly appointed six months ago and has already established sound leadership and management. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school is successful in raising standards and maintains high levels of care, which helps pupils to feel secure and confident.
- The nursery provides a very good foundation for future learning.
- Across the school pupils' attitudes to learning and their relationships with others are good.
- Time is used well and support staff make a major contribution to pupils' learning.
- Assessment of pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics is very good and helps to raise standards.
- The school is successful in maintaining good links with parents, who hold it in high esteem.

What could be improved

- There has been no permanent headteacher in post for over three years.
- There is an element of unsatisfactory teaching.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching in order to identify weaknesses and make improvements.
- Attendance, which is unsatisfactory.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

At the time of the last inspection in November 1996 the school had serious weaknesses. The school has improved significantly and now has no serious weaknesses. Since the last inspection there has been a marked improvement in standards, as measured by National Curriculum tests and assessments, in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Provision for religious education has improved satisfactorily. There has been an adequate improvement in the standards attained in design and technology and in information technology. An appropriate amount of time is now allocated to each area of the curriculum. The assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is now

good. The role of curriculum co-ordinators has improved somewhat though there is scope for further improvement. The quality of teaching has improved significantly. Rates of attendance have improved slightly but are still below national averages.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7-year-olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
reading	E	E	E	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
writing	E	E	E	C	
mathematics	E	E	E	E	

When compared with all schools nationally, the school's overall performance as measured by National Curriculum tests and assessments in reading, writing, mathematics and science was well below average in 1999. When compared with schools which have pupils from similar backgrounds, however, the school's results were average in writing and science, below average in reading and well below average in mathematics. The as yet unpublished test results for 2000 show that pupils have attained standards in reading, writing and mathematics which are considerably better than last year. The trend in the school's test results over the past two years has been upward. This year the school exceeded the performance targets it set itself in 1999 for the proportion of pupils who would attain the national target of Level 2 in the tests in reading, writing and mathematics in 2000. Inspection findings confirm that there has been a marked improvement and now standards are broadly in line with the standards expected nationally of seven-year-olds in reading, writing, mathematics and science. When taking into account the poor levels of achievement which many children have on entry to the nursery and the standards which are still below average when they reach the age of five, despite the good progress made by children in the nursery, pupils do well to attain the national target of Level 2 in reading, writing, mathematics and science by the time they are seven years old. The latest results show that an increasing proportion are attaining the higher Level 3 standard. Particularly good work was seen in writing in the reception classes and there were examples of good work in music across the school. By the end of the key stage, standards in information technology meet expectations of seven-year-olds and in religious education meet the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are eager to learn and willing to please.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils are well behaved in and around the school. A significant proportion of pupils present challenging behaviour but this is generally managed well by staff.
Personal development and relationships	Good relationships contribute to effective learning. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. The school does its best to promote good attendance.

The pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour contribute significantly to effective learning. There are opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility and show initiative but these are not as well developed as they might be. A minority of parents fail to ensure that their children attend school

regularly.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years
Lessons seen overall	very good	satisfactory

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

Teaching in English and mathematics is good and in science it is satisfactory. Teaching is particularly effective where teachers maintain high expectations of pupils' performance and where good relationships generate in pupils a keen desire to do well and confidence in their ability to succeed. Teaching is very good in 13 per cent of lessons; it is good in 42 per cent and sound in 37 per cent. Teaching is unsatisfactory in 8 per cent of lessons. Teaching is unsatisfactory where teachers do not have a sufficiently precise idea of what skills they will teach in a particular session and occasionally where behaviour is not managed well. The National Literacy and the National Numeracy Strategies are taught well, in line with national guidance. Pupils with special educational needs receive mostly good support in class and, where a nursery nurse or classroom assistant is available to give assistance, they receive particularly effective help. Pupils with English as an additional language receive adequate support and make sound progress in developing English speaking skills. The team of teachers and nursery nurses who run the nursery classes provide very good teaching. Pupils benefit from the mostly good teaching, which promotes effective learning and good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The school has concentrated on improving standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science, which has resulted in other subjects receiving less attention.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good. Pupils are identified early and their learning is well supported in class.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. A specialist teacher visits the school for a day each week and four trained classroom assistants concentrate on helping pupils who are most in need.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Provision for moral and cultural development is good and for spiritual and social it is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. High levels of care and support are provided. There are very good assessment procedures in place to record pupils' progress in English and mathematics.

The statutory requirements for teaching the National Curriculum Programmes of Study are met in all subjects. Religious education is taught according to the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. The school strives hard to develop a close partnership with parents and parents are usually supportive of the school. A particular strength of the school is the way it cares for its pupils. All staff are sensitive to the needs of each individual pupil and great efforts are maintained to develop confidence and self-esteem.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. Despite the lack of a permanent headteacher the acting headteacher has maintained staff morale, has led the school forward effectively and has succeeded in promoting improved standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The new governing body is developing good systems to fulfil its monitoring role. It is successful in fulfilling its responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Careful analysis of assessment results helps to highlight areas for development.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The library is underdeveloped and there are too few bilingual books for pupils with English as an additional language.

The acting headteacher has worked hard to raise standards. She has developed good systems for identifying the attainment and progress of each pupil in order to focus on how best to raise levels of attainment. She has succeeded in helping the staff to work as a united team which shares common goals. Accommodation is adequate but the open plan design of classrooms is not used well. There are an adequate number of teaching staff and a good number of support assistants. Resources are adequate to support teaching and learning in most areas of the curriculum but there is an inadequate supply of good quality books and resources to support history, geography and religious education. The new governing body, which was appointed six months ago, gives good support and is becoming increasingly effective in helping the school to move forward. All financial decisions are considered carefully and all with the ultimate aim of improving the quality of education which the school can provide.

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. • Their children make good progress. • The teaching is good and pupils are expected to work hard. • Behaviour is good. • They would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. • The school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A significant minority of parents do not think that their children get the right amount of homework. • A significant minority do not feel that they are well informed about how their children are getting on. • A minority feel that the school does not work closely enough with parents. • A significant minority believe that the school does not provide an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

Inspectors agree with the parents' positive comments. Inspection findings show that pupils receive an adequate amount of homework and good homework books are produced. Inspectors found that the school works hard to build a good partnership with parents. There are, however, few activities outside lessons.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The results of the latest National Curriculum tests and assessments in 1999 show that, when compared with all schools, the proportion of pupils who attained the national target of Level 2 was well below average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. The school's performance in each of these four subjects has been improving year on year over the past three years. The as yet unpublished results for 2000 show that results are now closer to national averages. Since 1998 the proportion of pupils who attain at least the national target of Level 2 has increased by 23 percentage points in reading and writing, by 17 percentage points in writing and by 10 in science. Inspection findings confirm that standards have improved and that in reading, writing, mathematics and science pupils are currently attaining standards which are in line with expectations of seven-year-olds. This represents good achievement for these pupils and has been accomplished despite the difficulties experienced by the school in recruiting staff and against a background of an increasing complexity of social issues. More pupils each year are at an early stage of acquiring English speaking skills, for example. When set against the low levels of achievement which most pupils have on entry to the nursery, by the age of seven pupils now achieve at levels which are higher than would normally be expected and this represents good progress. The test results in 1999 indicated that the school was moving in this direction. Comparisons with schools which have pupils from similar social backgrounds show that the school's results were average in writing, below average in reading though still well below average in mathematics. In 1999 the proportion of pupils who attained the higher Level 3 standard in reading and mathematics was well below the national average and in writing it was below. This year a much higher proportion have attained the higher Level 3 standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards as measured by National Curriculum tests are higher than at the time of the last inspection in reading, writing and mathematics. The school sets realistic targets for improvement each year and this year it exceeded its targets in reading, writing, mathematics and science.
2. Children enter the nursery with levels of achievement which are well below those normally expected of three and four-year-olds but they make good progress. On entry to the nursery many children have poorly developed speaking skills and limited social skills. One English speaking boy described his milk container as a cup and when this was discussed he understood that it was not a cup and referred to it as a 'glass thing'. The word bottle was beyond his grasp. Another, when asked which animal had big ears and a long trunk, suggested a lion whilst others called shells stones because they did not know the correct term. A significant number of children have English as an additional language. They make good gains in learning but, by the time they enter the reception classes, their attainment is still below the national expectations of five-year-olds in all the areas of learning described in national guidance. There is clear evidence that a significant minority of pupils have poorly developed speaking skills, limited vocabulary and lack confidence in explaining themselves. This leads to many of the youngest pupils in Key Stage 1 attaining levels in language and literacy which are below those expected for their age. By the time they are seven, most have developed greater confidence and most speak clearly but many still find difficulty when searching for appropriate words to express themselves. Most pupils can read by the age of seven but the depth of their understanding is limited by a lack of breadth in their vocabulary. They write well and reach the expected level for seven-year-olds but few attain the higher standards in reading or writing. This adversely affects the school's overall performance when compared with all schools nationally and indicates that pupils who might be able to attain the higher standards are not always targeted with enough precision in order to boost their attainment. Teachers' lesson plans do not often indicate how such pupils will be appropriately challenged and this results in an element of underachievement.
3. Good strategies to teach early writing skills in the reception classes help pupils to write confidently. Pupils understand that they can write passages by using the letter sounds that they know and can leave dots or lines where they are not sure of the spelling of a word. This enables them to write at some length without having to worry about accuracy. They can read their work aloud and take pride in their accomplishments. Accuracy slowly develops and, by

the end of the key stage, many pupils produce good pieces of written work, with correct spelling and accurate punctuation, in many areas of the curriculum. The National Literacy Strategy has provided a good framework for developing skills in literacy. Pupils develop knowledge about a range of literature when making collections of books by a particular author. In one class, for example, a display had been made of all the books written by Anthony Browne and pupils were able to discuss the common themes found in his books. By focusing on selected pieces of literature during the Literacy Hour they develop a sound understanding of how stories are assembled and how to use different techniques, such as similes, to add vigour to writing. They use the skills they develop by studying literature to enhance their own writing. There are opportunities for pupils to apply the skills they learn in literacy sessions across the curriculum, as in reading for information in history, but the lack of a well stocked library and no access to the Internet restricts the development of research skills.

4. Pupils develop confidence in their rapid recall of number facts during the quick fire sessions which form part of the numeracy strategy. By the end of the key stage, they know how to count in fives, tens and twos and can add two digits in their heads quickly. They develop a sound understanding of the correct terms for two- and three-dimensional shapes such as triangular prisms and cuboids. They collect data on their favourite drinks and use this data to create block graphs which illustrate their findings. They interpret these graphs accurately and can explain as a result of a traffic survey, for example, that twice as many white cars pass the school as red cars. In science, they study changes and know that ice can be changed back into water but that the ingredients of a cake they made cannot be changed back into the constituent parts. They develop a sound understanding of how an electrical circuit is made and which materials conduct electricity and which act as insulators. As a result of their experiments, they understand the conditions required to make things grow. Good links are made with design and technology as pupils make models, such as pop up cards which require pushing and pulling forces to operate them.
5. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are making sound progress across the curriculum. The youngest pupils make especially rapid gains in speaking English. Whilst basic communication skills develop well, the depth of pupils' understanding of the meanings of phrases is less well developed. Pupils who have special educational needs make sound progress and they attain satisfactory standards when taking into account their prior levels of attainment. The effective teaching programme for these pupils is having a significant impact on their progress, particularly in reading and English. Tasks are normally matched successfully to their specific learning needs and they have achievable targets. Their progress is regularly assessed and recorded so that the targets described in their Individual Education Plans can be modified at review dates with full information to hand.
6. By the end of the key stage, pupils' attainment in all the subjects of the National Curriculum are in line with the standards expected of seven-year-olds and in religious education they attain standards which meet the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. The sound standards which pupils attain by the age of seven indicate that, given the below average level of attainment on entry, the school enables pupils to learn effectively and make good progress. This is a particularly notable achievement as, at the time of the last inspection, standards fell below the standard expected in English, design and technology and information technology. Whilst examples of good work were seen in music, standards are generally not as high as they were in 1996 and standards in physical education are lower than they were. The last inspection reported that there was no significant difference in the achievements of boys and girls or between pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. This is also the finding of the current inspection.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

7. The school has been successful in maintaining pupils' good standards of behaviour, their positive attitudes to learning and the good quality relationships seen at the time of the previous inspection. These continue to be important strengths of the school.
8. Parents agree their children enjoy school and this is clear from talking to pupils and observing them at work and play. They are interested in their lessons and want to do well. These good attitudes to learning were clearly displayed in a short physical education lesson in the hall,

where the oldest children from the nursery were using benches and mats. They quickly changed, placed their clothes in neat piles and thoroughly enjoyed moving along the equipment using a variety of pulling and rolling styles, to resemble the movements of wild animals. This is the current theme in the nursery. Their good behaviour, the teacher's good use of the short amount of time available and the positive attitudes of the children ensured that they successfully completed their task and benefited from a good amount of exercise.

9. In a lesson on information technology in Year 2, pupils used a programmable robot in the hall. They were bright and alert as they recalled what they had done during the previous lesson. They listened well to the teacher's instructions and were enthusiastic about the prospect of the afternoon's activities. As a consequence, they quickly gained in knowledge about how to program a computer.
10. Occasionally, pupils' attitudes are unsatisfactory. This is often where the teaching does not capture their interest, behaviour is not controlled well and tasks are too easy for them. On occasions, teachers accept answers shouted out and this unsettles everyone. There are times when pupils become distracted as they watch others walking through the open-plan teaching areas and they appear bored with what is going on.
11. The good relationships between pupils and teachers contribute significantly to the good attitudes pupils have to their learning. There is a happy and secure atmosphere in school. This is largely a result of the commitment of the team of teachers and support staff, who work together effectively and who consistently put the needs of pupils foremost. Pupils who have special educational needs are well integrated into school life and their friends offer them help quite naturally if they are experiencing difficulties. At break and lunchtimes, pupils play together harmoniously on the wide range of play equipment.
12. Behaviour is generally good both in and out of lessons. Pupils understand the school rules and generally follow them. They have a sound understanding of the effects of their actions on others, though their control in situations where there is confrontation is still developing and often they will act first and think later. A small minority of pupils, mainly boys, present challenging behaviour. They try hard to cope and put into practice the advice given to help them but they struggle to retain an equable perspective. Generally teachers manage behaviour well and do not allow incidents of poor behaviour to unduly affect learning. There are occasions, however, where poor behaviour is not managed effectively. In these situations relationships become strained and learning is adversely affected. Parents at the meeting spoke of some bullying which takes place. Little evidence of this was found after discussions with pupils and staff. There are isolated incidents but they are managed well. Staff are vigilant in dealing with any kinds of oppressive behaviour and none was witnessed during the inspection.
13. In a lesson on religious education about anger and its effects, pupils explained how they would help each other to cope when they felt angry but many found this a hard lesson to learn. There have been no exclusions recently and this is the usual pattern for the school.
14. Pupils' responses to the opportunities the school is providing to enhance personal development are satisfactory. They carry out a range of class jobs, such as team and class leaders and librarians, with pleasure. Pupils are eager to volunteer and these positions are always popular. In a good assembly where the headteacher was showing pupils a treasured Christening gown, those chosen to hold the gown and to represent the children who had worn it did so confidently and sensibly. They showed a good sense of respect for occasion, which was befitting in an assembly in front of all the school.

15. Pupils' attendance is unsatisfactory and remains well below the national average. It is, however, rising gradually and there has been a steady improvement since the last inspection, when it was well below 90%. Whilst pupils enjoy being at school and want to attend, their presence is dependent upon parents and carers to bring them in each day. Many parents seem to consider regular attendance at school unimportant and mistakenly feel that, because pupils are young, attendance does not matter very much. Several do not feel inclined to bring their children to school if it is raining as is evidenced by the correlation between lower attendance rates and wet mornings. Many parents have various social problems to cope with and ensuring their child's regular attendance is an additional struggle for them.
16. The rate of unauthorised absence is also high, although again it has improved since the last inspection. A significant number of parents do not let the school know of reasons why pupils are absent, despite being reminded several times, and this results in the high figure.
17. Punctuality during the school day is good. There are several pupils who are brought into school late. Administrative staff make sure pupils are welcomed in and generally take a sensitive and encouraging approach to parents, emphasising that it is better for a pupil to be a few minutes late than to stay away for the whole day.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

18. Teaching in the nursery is very good and it is satisfactory in Key Stage 1. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. It is at least satisfactory in 92 per cent of lessons, it is satisfactory in 37 per cent, good in 42 per cent and very good in 13 per cent. Most of the very good teaching is in the nursery classes where no teaching is unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory in 8 per cent of lessons and most of the unsatisfactory teaching occurs in Year 2 though there were isolated instances of unsatisfactory teaching in Reception and Year 1. Teaching is good in English and mathematics. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been introduced successfully and most lessons are taught well. Teaching in music is good and it is satisfactory in science, art, geography, history, physical education and religious education. There was insufficient evidence to make judgements about the quality of teaching in information technology and design and technology.
19. The very good teaching is based on high expectations of pupils' performance, very good questioning strategies which challenge pupils' thinking and warm relationships where discipline and control are not an issue. Where pupils are kept occupied with interesting tasks and they have a clear understanding of what is expected of them their behaviour is very good. Where tasks are structured so that all pupils experience success, positive attitudes to learning are instilled. All these elements are prominent in the nursery classes. Children are introduced to a structured learning environment and are trained in daily classroom routines. These are quickly and firmly established so that pupils are able to feel secure and have a good understanding of how the day will progress. In each session of the part-time nursery, for example, a child will look through one of the shaped windows. He or she will be asked to name the shape of the window and its colour and to give a description of the weather outside. The child answers that it is windy and will then be asked to explain how he or she knows that it is windy. The child thinks hard and may reply that he knows it is windy because the trees are waving. In this way each and every school day the names of shapes and colours are reinforced and opportunities to use speech are provided. The work for the session is explained clearly by each of the teachers or helpers in turn so the children have an unambiguous understanding of what they are supposed to do and why. It may be that they have to 'build' a computer by cutting out the component parts from paper illustrations. They then label them before sticking them to a sheet of card in the right positions. It may be that they will observe what is happening in the wormery or how the wheat seeds they have planted are growing.
20. A rich range of activities creates a hive of purposeful activity in both nursery classes. The older children in the full-time library share a big book and study the text in detail in preparation for the more formal Literacy Hour sessions they will experience when they transfer to the main school. They study the 'Three Billy Goats Gruff' and the teacher expertly extends their language by explaining that a meadow is not just a field but a place where masses of sweet, juicy grass grows. The children listen to the well read story avidly. The teacher asks thought-

provoking questions such as why the text gets bigger and blacker when the Troll speaks. The children record their impressions of the story in intricately drawn pictures which include the relative size of the billy goats and make a good link with work in mathematics. The teacher scribes a sentence or two, following each child's dictated impressions. The children can, for the most part, remember what they have dictated and read it back to the teacher or nursery nurse. The specialist learning support assistant gives good assistance to one girl who has very little English speaking skills but is rapidly developing good levels of understanding. The nursery team of teachers, highly skilled nursery nurses and classroom assistants work closely together to provide exceptionally good, high-quality learning opportunities which lead to very effective learning.

21. In the main school the quality of teaching is less consistent but, overall, it is satisfactory. Relationships are generally good though they become strained where behaviour is not managed well. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly. Teaching is good where teachers use imaginative strategies such as mobile phones in a lesson in mathematics, a glove puppet which talks to the class or role play as pupils conduct a shoot-out as part of a lesson on learning to recall number facts quickly. Teachers' planning is generally sound and they have a clear plan of what they will teach. Whilst the activity to be provided is clearly described, the learning intentions which result from the activity are less apparent. Teachers do not always describe which skills they intend that pupils will learn or what knowledge and understanding will be developed. Without a clear picture of what learning is to emerge from the lesson it is difficult to assess with precision whether the learning has been effective or not. If the assessment of learning is unclear it is difficult to plan the next steps in learning on the basis of a secure knowledge of what has been learned already. Assessments of broad areas of learning and progress are carefully recorded at regular intervals and this builds into a clear picture of each child's performance. It is the more refined short-term assessments of the effectiveness of lessons which is less well developed. Where teachers have high expectations of pupils' performance and as a result set appropriate challenges, progress accelerates. Where teachers' expectations are too low pupils lose interest and they become restless. Teachers generally have secure knowledge of the subjects they teach but a significant proportion lack confidence in information technology. The quality of teaching is much better than at the time of the last inspection when nearly a third was unsatisfactory and gave rise to a key issue for improvement. There is now greater consistency both in teachers' planning and in teaching methods. This is largely due to the structured approaches which the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies introduced. These strategies are taught well and have a significant impact on pupils' positive attitudes to learning and the sound progress which they make. The key issue concerning improvement in the consistency of teaching has been addressed with a large measure of success but the issue of meeting the learning needs of all pupils, especially the higher-attainers, remains to be resolved fully. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching in order to bring about improvement is still not sufficiently rigorous.
22. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. This is seen through the clear planning of lessons, the appropriate match of work to the ability of each pupil and the individual preparation of resources to support their work. A secure learning environment is achieved and very good relationships are established which enable pupils to become confident and want to improve. In addition, clear instructions build confidence and enable pupils to sustain concentration and complete the tasks set for them to do, particularly when they are well supported. Efficient and effective use is made of the ancillary support assistants, who are well informed and work collaboratively with the class teacher on the pupils' Individual Education Plans. The good teaching does not always lead to good progress because a great deal of time has to be spent on consolidating learning as many of the pupils find it difficult to retain the knowledge and information which has been taught. Pupils who have special educational needs make mostly satisfactory progress and this is directly linked to the good teaching. For example, there was close and suitable oversight of four pupils in Year 2 during an independent writing activity, ensuring that these pupils kept focused and that they were given an appropriate amount of praise and encouragement to motivate them to try harder.
23. The school's high commitment to equal opportunities through its teaching highlighted in the last inspection report has continued. All staff work hard to ensure that pupils are offered an equal opportunity to be directly involved in accessing the curriculum. Effective support is provided for pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their first language.

In lessons seen there was no bias towards either gender or culture in terms of questions asked, opportunities offered to pupils to demonstrate their knowledge, or in the level of praise or reprimand when appropriate. As part of the school's drive towards raising standards since the last inspection, analysis of attainment for particular pupils, such as those with special educational needs, English as a second language, those who are summer born and those whose attendance is poor, has been scrutinised. The outcomes have been used to assist in planning the most appropriate strategies to ensure these pupils also progress in line with their capabilities.

24. Accommodation is not always used to best effect by teachers. The classrooms are designed as open plan units with adjacent quiet rooms and practical areas which invite 'team teaching', where teachers work in tandem to teach a year group of pupils. In fact no team teaching takes place and teachers work alongside each other separated only by an invisible line half way across the classroom. This lack of co-operation leads to bizarre instances when half the classroom is empty as one class is crammed into a small quiet room so that the teacher can teach them without disturbing the other class. In hot weather this practice becomes more obviously strange than in cooler weather but the school has yet to appreciate the advantages of using the space available more creatively.

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

25. In the last inspection report, information technology and design and technology were described as not meeting National Curriculum requirements. The report also stated that the time given to the humanities and religious education should be reviewed to ensure adequate curricular coverage. The school now offers a broad and balanced curriculum which meets statutory requirements. The curriculum for children in the nursery is rich and varied. The curriculum for pupils in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory and meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and the Locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education. The school successfully allocates an appropriate amount of time to each subject and ensures a satisfactory breadth and balance across the curriculum with appropriate time given to literacy and numeracy. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been implemented smoothly and effectively. The school has recognised the great need to develop speaking and listening skills and 'speaking and listening' is a regular weekly feature on timetables.
26. The curriculum for children under the age of five is good. Nursery planning is well developed and addresses the six nationally recommended areas of learning for children who are under five. It gives the children a secure foundation, promotes positive attitudes to learning and provides a good preparation for work in Key Stage 1.
27. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. They have access to all areas of the curriculum, which is generally matched appropriately to their needs. Every encouragement is given to promote progress for these pupils and their Individual Education Plans are carefully constructed to produce clear targets for improvement and maintain high levels of self-esteem. The curriculum for those who have special educational needs is related to clear and practical targets in Individual Education Plans: it concentrates mainly on English, especially speaking and listening and literacy. Targets are related to other subjects where appropriate. Achievable targets are described in Individual Education Plans, which are written by the class teacher in discussion with the co-ordinator for special educational needs. The targets are shared with parents and pupils. These targets are also communicated to the special educational needs learning support assistants. Work is planned to match these needs. The co-ordinator for special educational needs is well organised and keeps detailed information on each pupil to enable her to advise on work which matches their needs. The school makes use of various published assessment tests to make successful diagnoses of the pupils' needs. These are used regularly to measure what is the next step. Regular reviews are planned and take place termly. Assessment and recording is used at termly reviews and the yearly audit. There is a broad and balanced curriculum, including a clear and comprehensive special educational needs policy. Careful consideration is taken of the needs of pupils through modifying activities or providing support.

28. Curriculum planning is soundly based on the school's own schemes of work and in relation to information technology, science, history and geography on the nationally promoted schemes of work. The curriculum content is also organised coherently throughout the key stage to ensure continuity and progression. The roles of curriculum co-ordinators are generally under-developed as little time is set aside for monitoring and supporting teaching and learning, especially in the non-core subjects of the National Curriculum.
29. The provision for extra-curricular activities is unsatisfactory. There is an art club, which meets in school time. The school has not made appropriate arrangements to provide a greater variety of extra-curricular activities to broaden and enrich the statutory curriculum. Provision for equal opportunities is good and there is an awareness among all staff of equal opportunities issues and they provide good role models.
30. The school has a good range of policies in place, which includes a policy for sex education, drugs misuse and personal, social and health education. The latter is currently being updated within the local cluster of schools and is designed to ensure a stronger framework to promote this aspect of pupils' education.
31. The school arranges a good variety of visitors to the school as well as visits outside school which help to enrich the curriculum. These extra-mural activities include visits to places of local interest, museums, places of worship, the zoo and local farms. The community policeman, the Fire Brigade, theatrical visitors and charity workers have visited the school.
32. Links with the local playgroup are good and the nursery teacher visits regularly. There are also some links with the local junior school but these are limited. Links with the local community are limited but are being extended with a new initiative involving all services and institutions in the Greater Humberstone area.
33. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Pupils are encouraged to listen to each other, to value others' contributions and to support each other's participation in activities. All staff show respect for cultural customs and, where possible, a compromise is reached to enable access to the curriculum: for example, where a girl is not allowed to remove long trousers for physical education, it is agreed that she can participate so long as she has bare feet.
34. The school makes sound provision for pupils' spiritual development. This is mainly fostered through religious education and the daily assemblies, which meet statutory requirements for an act of collective worship. In year group assemblies, opportunities are given for children to reflect on the world and how it began. For example, in assemblies for Year 1 and Reception classes, pupils were reminded of the beauty of the earth and that we need to look after everything. Time for reflection is given. Other beliefs are also affirmed, as when the song at the end of the assembly was sung both in English and Hindi. Work in various areas of the curriculum is sometimes used to promote the wonders around us. For example, during a science lesson, the wonders of nature with regard to plants were discussed. However, these opportunities just occur and are not planned for systematically.
35. The school makes good provision for pupils' moral development. The school tries hard to provide a happy, caring and nurturing environment so that pupils can develop a positive view of themselves and it is successful in its endeavours. Values are fostered through the caring and supportive relationships that exist between staff and pupils and by the good example set by all who work in the school. Throughout the school, right and wrong are emphasised by staff and pupils are encouraged at all times to care for one another and for the school. There is a good system of rewards and sanctions in the classroom and in school as a whole. Pupils are given responsibility for such positions as leaders or library monitors and the majority carry out these responsibilities with respect and enthusiasm.
36. The school makes sound provision for pupils' social development. Pupils' efforts are rewarded with 'class points' and there is a display in the entrance foyer which records the results on a whole-school basis weekly. Pupils work in a variety of different groupings in lessons, depending on the task. They are encouraged to express their views openly and to take an

active part in lessons. Pupils are provided with opportunities to take on responsibilities within their class for a variety of tasks. The quality of relationships between pupils and staff is generally good. The headteacher and staff set a good example and are good role models. There are male members of staff who work in the nursery, Reception and Year 2 classes, which is an important factor as many pupils come from single parent families where mothers are often the only family role models available in the home.

37. The school makes good provision for cultural development. During lessons and assemblies the traditions of other faiths and cultures are constantly reinforced. For example, the children learn songs in Hindi. Two teachers in Reception and Year 1 tell stories in Dutch, Somali and Gujarati as well as in English. There are many displays around the school illustrating the beliefs and culture of other people. Pupils in Year 2 have not only studied the Christian story of the Creation but also stories from China, the Norse story of creation and the beliefs of the Seneca tribe from North America. Pupils in Year 1 know the story of Moti in English and have heard it in Gujarati. Pupils in Year 2 visit a local Church, a Mosque and a Mandir. Pupils benefit from a wide range of visits and visitors, which enhance their experiences of national and international cultures. Pupils regularly listen to music from around the world such as traditional chants from Easter Island and drum dance music from the Cook Islands. They learn about famous artists such as Van Gogh and Picasso and in geography and history they learn about cultural differences in different places and at different times.
38. All pupils are encouraged to participate in every area of the curriculum. Examples of this were seen in a speaking and listening lesson where a teacher encouraged a pupil with English as an additional language to share his experiences with another pupil. Another example was in a music lesson where support staff enabled a young pupil to understand and express enjoyment of a particular piece of music. Also, in a lesson in physical education, provision was made to ensure that all pupils participated to the full. Further examples were seen where a dual language song was used in assembly to support cultural diversity and the easy repetitive chorus was used well to enable the younger pupils to take an active part.
39. No pupil is excluded from visits because of the inability of a parent to make a contribution towards the cost. Visits to a variety of places of worship are undertaken and these enhance learning opportunities and deepen understanding.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

40. The school provides high levels of care in a happy working environment where teaching and learning flourish. This is an important strength of the school. The warm and caring learning environment described at the time of the last inspection has been maintained.
41. There are very good procedures in place to help ensure pupils' health, safety and protection. Child protection procedures are good and the person with responsibility is well trained and experienced. A second person is also trained. All staff are regularly updated on child protection procedures and lunchtime staff are particularly vigilant. Whilst there is a clear, recently reviewed policy, no mention is made of procedures in the staff handbook or prospectus.
42. Procedures for health and safety are very good. A governor is nominated to monitor health and safety issues and to report to a governors' committee which has overall responsibility for assessing practices within school. This governor has benefited from a recent in-depth training course about risk assessment, which has resulted in an overhaul of practices and a general raising of staff awareness of potential hazards.
43. Careful support and guidance is given to pupils who have special educational needs and their parents are kept well informed about their progress. Effective links have been made with outside agencies such as the Special Needs Teaching Service, who have provided training and assessments, and the education psychologist, who is allocated 24 working hours per year to support the pupils in the school who have special educational needs. The school identifies pupils who are predicted as not going to attain the national target in literacy by the age of seven as in need of extra support.

44. The monitoring and promotion of attendance is good. There has been a gradual increase in pupils' attendance since the last inspection, although it is still well below national averages. The school benefits from very good support from the experienced Educational Welfare Officer, who is also a governor. She knows families well and is a regular visitor to school, working in close partnership to encourage regular attendance, as well as serving an important role in advising over a range of other pastoral matters. The administrative staff telephone parents or grandparents to establish why a child has not been in school, which is often more effective than writing, and work hard to convey the message that pupils' regular attendance is important. The headteacher plays an important role in reinforcing these messages; very often she will spot parents arriving late and go out and speak to them.
45. The school works hard to encourage good behaviour with a considerable degree of success. Parents are pleased with the standards of behaviour in the school, which are good. Bullying is rare and the few isolated incidents are dealt with well. The recently reviewed behaviour policy, which details a host of rewards for good behaviour, is based upon a philosophy of the school which emphasises creating a warm, safe, caring and positive environment and providing a good level of guidance for staff.
46. Staff have received training in managing pupils' behaviour positively and most are now skilful in using appropriate strategies. Several of the lunchtime staff are involved in an eight week supervisors' course and the skills learned are shared with colleagues. This helps to ensure consistency in the way behaviour is handled throughout the day. This is especially important as lunchtimes are longer than in many schools.
47. There is good support from outside agencies in helping the school deal with pupils who present challenging behaviour, including a programme which involves working with parents. The help and advice given to parents and their support for the programme has yielded a good degree of success for those pupils whose parents have persevered with the methods advised.
48. Staff know their pupils well and the monitoring of pupils' personal development, based upon their close knowledge of pupils, is good. Teachers, support staff and the acting headteacher, are readily accessible and all are interested in the pupil as an individual. All provide good care and support.
49. The school has very good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics. Good progress has been made on the key issue from the previous inspection, which was to ensure that procedures for assessing and recording pupils' attainment were applied consistently throughout the school.
50. The assessment co-ordinator, working with the acting headteacher, has attended several local meetings with other schools on developing assessment procedures and they have shared their good practice with others. The acting head and assessment co-ordinator work closely together and make a good team by exchanging ideas and supporting each other in developing whole-school assessment practices. Pupils' performance is monitored thoroughly and recorded in individual profiles. These profiles record pupils' performance and enable a check to be made to highlight differences in attainment by gender. They also include a range of social factors, including details of those with summer birthdays and low attendance rates so that these can be set against performance to highlight any significant factors. The profiles are used effectively to help the school to target individuals who, with a little extra support, have the potential to reach the next level in their National Curriculum tests. These good practices are helping to raise standards in the school.
51. A clear and manageable tracking system is used to record pupils' attainment and progress. Careful records of developments are kept in the nursery and these are used well to inform the next steps in learning. Assessments made soon after pupils reach the statutory age for starting school give a profile of each pupil's stage of development at the age of five. A very good system has been developed by the assessment co-ordinator for recording attainment and progress thereafter. Each class has a book, which follows a common format. This contains lists of the pupils in each class and each area of the curriculum in English and mathematics, which are broken down into their constituent elements. Each pupil's progress through the

stages of the curriculum is carefully plotted. This gives a clear picture of pupils' levels of attainment. The information gained through assessment is used well to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of the individual. Each pupil has a record sheet which includes targets for further development. The headteacher, working with the assessment co-ordinator, makes very good use of assessment data, including National Curriculum test results, to monitor each pupil's performance, to consider trends and to set targets for improvement. This is a very good model for further developments. The school is currently developing similar procedures to assess attainment and progress in science, information technology and religious education, which are due to be introduced next term. Assessment of attainment and progress in other subjects is not so well advanced but the school has a very good model on which to build.

52. Yearly reports to parents are clearly written and contain a good deal of information about pupils' progress in English and mathematics. For other subjects, including the remaining core areas of science, information technology and religious education, comments tend to focus on coverage rather than progress.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

53. Parents are supportive of the school and hold it in high regard. Merrydale is a popular school and over a third of the school's population comes from out of the immediate area.
54. There was a good response from parents to the pre-inspection questionnaire with well over a third of parents replying. A large majority of parents agree that their children enjoy school and make good progress. They agree that both the quality of behaviour and the quality of teaching are good. Parents generally feel comfortable about approaching the school with queries or problems and they agree that the school is helping their child to become mature and responsible. The views of parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting were also generally supportive. Inspectors agree with parents' positive views of the school and their largely supportive comments.
55. A significant minority of parents do not feel the school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. Inspectors agree that there are few extra-curricular activities. There is also a significant minority who feel their child does not receive the right amount of homework. The quality of homework in the school is satisfactory and similar to that seen in most Infant schools. The homework books the school produces are good. Almost a quarter of parents who replied do not feel that they are kept well informed about their child's progress and a smaller number do not feel the school works closely with parents. The quality of information about progress is good overall and explained in more detail below. The school does work closely with parents; they are pro-active in establishing a range of ways to encourage parents and the acting headteacher plays a strong role in being sensitive, friendly and welcoming. The adult illiteracy rate in the area is high and the school is sensitive to the needs of parents who lack confidence with filling in forms or reading information about the school. One governor, who also works in the school, is particularly supportive and helps parents to fill in school forms and reads newsletters over the telephone to those parents who have lost their copies.
56. The school's links with parents are effective and help to support pupils' learning. The school understands the needs of parents well and they are successful in arranging various events which appeal to parents and make them want to come into school. A particularly good example is the way in which the school informs parents about numeracy. Well aware that a straightforward information evening would not prove popular, they arranged a 'Games evening' with activities such as bingo and other games used during Numeracy Hour. This event was extremely well supported by parents. An explanation about the 'Literacy Hour' was incorporated into a school concert, with each year group presenting a 'big book' and relevant performance. Again, attendance was high. The acting headteacher describes this as 'an informal link with an educational twist' and it is working very well.
57. Information for parents about school life is good overall. Importance is placed upon the informal approach to building up relationships with parents. The times when school finishes and parents come in to collect their child are especially important for this and teachers are encouraging and welcoming. Very often, if parents have not attended the termly parents'

evenings, where attendance is often low, teachers will 'catch' parents after school and talk to them in a more informal setting. This is important in building up the home and school partnership. The fact that crèches are organised for parents' meetings is an indication of how well the school responds to parents' needs.

58. About fifty per cent of parents are regularly involved in discussions with school and class teachers where children have special educational needs. They are involved in reviews of the targets set in pupils' Individual Education Plans. Often teachers have to find other parents in the playground in order to inform them about the plans. It is a concern to the school that a significant number of parents do not attend these meetings. Formal annual reviews of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need also take place annually.
59. There are useful leaflets which explain to parents about the importance of reading with their child. Brightly coloured newsletters, sent out at appropriate intervals, are presented clearly. The school is careful not to bombard parents with too much information. The governors' first annual report, hot off the press during inspection week, from the new governing body continues the same clear format and the message from the chair is that an active partnership between parents, child and school will help to raise standards.
60. Pupils' end of year reports are satisfactory and especially informative about English and mathematics. This reflects the good assessment procedures the school has in place for these subjects. Comments are well matched to the individual pupil as, for example, in telling parents the number of words read and spellings learnt. There is good amount of detail, for instance in English where it was stated that the pupils' work output varied and that a pupil could produce work that varied in length from one line up to seven. The information about other subjects tends to focus on what the pupil has actually done rather than the progress made. Targets for parents to work on with their child, to help them improve, are clear and relevant.
61. Parents are making a positive impact upon school life, partly due to the valuable work of the 'Wednesday Parents' Group', a small but dedicated group of parents who meet weekly. They either help in classes or work as a group to produce activity packs which are then loaned to parents. The packs consist of a story book, word searches, suggestions for activities pupils can do, games and cards with ideas for activities parents can share with their child. These are popular with parents and the loan system is working well. The group also produces their own holiday activity books, which are sold to parents for a small amount. The demand from parents is high. These effective links with parents have a positive impact on pupils' attainment and progress.
62. Parental attendance at events such as class assemblies, school concerts, sports days and end of term nursery tea parties is very good and this sends out positive messages to pupils who see their parents valuing what they are doing at school. Parents are also willing to accompany pupils on school trips and the school takes as many parents as they can. Parents provide a satisfactory level of support for learning at home and school although levels of support vary enormously. Some parents listen to their child read regularly and help them to learn spellings. For others, this kind of support is difficult. A significant number of parents do not ensure that their children attend school regularly and a small minority do not ensure that their children arrive promptly at the beginning of the school day.
63. The school uses its own support staff, specialist staff from the ethnic minorities' and travellers' achievement team and other parents well to provide equal opportunities for parents to understand a range of matters such as admission to the nursery and the recent developments in literacy and numeracy.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

64. The school has been forced to cope under difficult circumstances during a long period of uncertainty about its future. It has been without a permanent headteacher for over three years as plans for the school's future have been discussed and deferred. A new governing body was appointed six months ago and, despite extensive advertising, its attempts to recruit a headteacher have been unsuccessful due to a lack of applicants. Throughout these difficult

times the acting headteacher has been successful in maintaining staff morale at a high level and in raising standards. She has focused efforts on identifying appropriate areas for development and particularly on developing a clear view of each pupil's attainment and progress in order to plan for improvements in performance. The new governing body, under the able leadership of the chair, is exceptionally well informed about the school and the area it serves. Governors are very supportive and work hard to help the school to move forward. Several of the governing body have close relationships with parents and are effective in providing good avenues of communication between the school and the community. The headteacher, the teaching staff and governors work well together as they strive to maintain stability and improve standards. Governors are closely associated with the school. They have a shared vision for improvement but the aims of the school do not reflect the school's intention to provide a high quality of education and to strive for excellence. The school's aims are ill defined and have not been agreed by all involved in improving the school.

65. At the time of the last inspection in 1996 the school had serious weaknesses. The school has successfully tackled the key issues raised in the last inspection report. Standards have been improved significantly, assessment and recording procedures have been developed to give consistency throughout the school, curricular coverage is now secure, there have been improvements in information technology and design and technology and the quality of teaching has improved. Nonetheless, there is scope for further improvement in developing the roles of curriculum co-ordinators and in monitoring the quality of teaching systematically in order to improve further the quality. The roles of curriculum co-ordinators remain underdeveloped partly because staff changes have led to new co-ordinators being appointed to different subject areas. Whilst there are areas for further development, the school now has no serious weaknesses. This is a significant improvement, which is largely due to successful leadership and management. The effective leadership and management of the school has had a significant impact on the improvement in pupils' learning but further improvements are constrained by the lack of a permanent headteacher.
66. Provision for supporting pupils with special educational needs is good. The acting deputy headteacher, who is the co-ordinator for special needs, liaises with the designated governor for special educational needs and has organised the policy and practice efficiently. The governing body maintain a good oversight of work through this nominated governor, who also works regularly in the school as a mid-day assistant. The school has updated its equal opportunities policy statement since the last inspection. It contains clear aims, all directed towards meeting the needs of the school's cultural, social and academic diversity. All teaching and support staff actively promote these aims throughout the school. Signs around the school are provided in other languages to assist parents and pupils and again to celebrate the diversity. Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory and pupils' progress in acquiring English speaking skills is tracked effectively. The number of such pupils is increasing and, as with other educational needs, class teachers are now accepting greater responsibility for organising support for these pupils within their classes rather than relying on support from sources outside the classroom. The emphasis is on using specialist assistants to work alongside teachers to provide the necessary support. Most pupils who speak English as an additional language make rapid gains in communication skills but their depth of understanding is often superficial.
67. The acting headteacher is supported well by advisers from the local education authority, who visit regularly to assist with monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching. Significant improvements have been made since the last inspection but the school is not yet in a position to monitor teaching systematically and rigorously in order to identify areas for improvement. There is a good teaching and learning policy but it is not applied consistently across the school. The acting headteacher monitors teachers' lesson plans but short-term lesson plans often fail to indicate clear learning intentions, how tasks will be matched to pupils' varying stages of development, how information technology will be used to support teaching and learning, how progress in developing skills will be assessed and consequently how the next steps in learning will be planned. Unsatisfactory lesson plans contribute to unsatisfactory teaching and the management of the school is not addressing this issue systematically. With the support of the assessment co-ordinator and other staff the acting headteacher has been highly successful in developing clear systems which plot each child's progress and performance. This system tracks pupils' attainment from the baseline assessment at the age of five through Key Stage 1

to pupils' attainment at the age of seven. The system is regularly reviewed and updated and is used well to set targets for improvement.

68. Governors are acutely aware of the school's financial position and the financial implications of their decisions and initiatives. The budget is set after due consideration of the priorities defined in the School Development Plan. A prudent level of reserves is retained to cover any unexpected contingencies and the budget is monitored carefully as the year progresses. Grants for specific purposes are used appropriately for their designated purpose. The bursar visits each week and gives good support. The secretarial staff work well in co-operation with each other and ensure that the day-to-day management of the office runs smoothly. Information technology is used well to maintain records but cheques are not generated by the computer but are hand written. Administrative staff have a good understanding of the needs of parents, staff and pupils and are very supportive. They help to ensure that teachers are not over-burdened with administrative tasks which would take away from the time they could devote to classroom duties. The School Development Plan is a comprehensive document which helps to focus initiatives and gives clear direction to the work of the school. It includes success criteria, personnel responsible for carrying out improvements according to a clearly defined time-scale and how initiatives will be monitored. It is a useful management tool but the success criteria are not always explicit in defining to what extent the success of initiatives has improved standards of attainment. The section on the implementation of the numeracy strategy, for example, refers to improved teaching as a measure of success but not to any improvement in pupils' attainment.
69. Good systems are in place for the induction of new staff, who receive good levels of support. Students are given good opportunities for developing their skills. A young student on work experience in the nursery, for example, had liaised with the class teacher and had her own very clear plan for promoting the development of specific skills, which she used well when assisting a group of children in using the computers. The governing body has not as yet developed performance management systems but intends to follow the new national guidance, which is due to be implemented next term. There is an adequate number of teaching staff and a good level of support staff to match the demands of the curriculum. Accommodation is satisfactory and space is generally used well though there are occasions when classroom space is not used to best effect. Resources are mostly adequate though the library is underdeveloped; there are too few dual text books to support pupils with English as an additional language and resources for history, geography and religious education are inadequate. The substantial investment which has been made in materials to support the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has had a positive effect on pupils' learning and the progress that they make.
70. The school applies the principles of best value to its work. It analyses results and makes comparisons between schools and different groups of pupils within the school. The governors debate alternative ways forward and are prepared to challenge a viewpoint or a spending decision. The guiding principle adopted by the governing body is that it should be able to demonstrate clearly that all decisions are aimed at improving the quality of education which it can provide. The governing body consults widely to ensure that it grasps all opportunities to maintain an effective school. Taking into account the pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning, the improving standards of attainment, pupils' good progress and the school's commitment to raising standards further, the school provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

71. In order to improve standards further the headteacher, staff and governing body should:
- (1) as a matter of urgency explore all avenues which could lead to the appointment of a substantive headteacher; (paragraphs 64,65)
 - (2) improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that short-term lesson plans describe precisely which skills, knowledge and understanding are to be taught in each lesson;
 - ensuring that activities are more closely matched to pupils' differing learning needs so

- that all pupils, especially the higher attainers, are challenged appropriately;
 - evaluating and recording what pupils have learned in each lesson in order to plan the next steps;
 - monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching systematically and rigorously;
- (paragraphs 21,67,92,100,110, 124, 135)

(3) make every endeavour to help parents to understand the importance of their children's regular attendance. (paragraphs 44,62)

Less significant areas for development:

The aims of the school are not clearly defined.	(paragraph 64)
There are very few activities outside lessons.	(paragraph 29)
Teaching space is not always used effectively.	(paragraph 24)
Behaviour in class is not always managed successfully.	(paragraphs 21,98,106)
The role of curriculum co-ordinators is underdeveloped.	(paragraph 65,110,114,124)
The library is not well resourced.	(paragraph 69)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	71
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	34

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	13	42	37	8	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	90	193
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	31	85

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR– Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	12	51

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	55

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	25
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	14

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.4
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.6
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	30	30	60

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20	24	26
	Girls	19	23	23
	Total	39	47	49
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	65 (54)	78 (65)	82 (65)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	21	27	27
	Girls	20	24	22
	Total	41	51	49
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	68 (54)	85 (67)	82 (77)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	4
Black – other	2
Indian	9
Pakistani	4
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	117
Any other minority ethnic group	1

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y2

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.2
Average class size	24.1

Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	112

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	45

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	159.5

Number of pupils per FTE adult	12.85
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	519379
Total expenditure	517131
Expenditure per pupil	1874
Balance brought forward from previous year	26502
Balance carried forward to next year	28750

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	311
Number of questionnaires returned	108

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	71	26	2	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	56	37	4	2	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	42	52	4	1	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	39	15	6	15
The teaching is good.	57	36	2	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	49	28	16	7	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	24	5	4	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	36	2	1	9
The school works closely with parents.	44	36	12	6	3
The school is well led and managed.	51	36	2	2	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	35	5	3	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	18	29	20	7	26

Other issues raised by parents

Parents are appreciative of the school's efforts to provide a good education for their children. There were no significant issues raised at the pre-inspection meeting for parents.

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

72. At the time of the last inspection, the provision for children under five in the nursery was judged to be good. Since then the provision in the nursery has improved and it is now very good.
73. There are three intakes of children into the nursery at the beginning of each term and two intakes of children into the reception classes in September and January. The under fives who were born in the summer stay in the nursery until the end of the summer term and transfer to Year 1 in September. There are two nursery classes, one that caters for younger part-time children, while the other has the older full-time children. There are no children under the age of five in the reception classes. The majority of pupils enter the nursery with levels of attainment which are well below the levels normally expected of three and four-year-olds, although there are also children with well-developed skills and understanding. By the age of five, they have made good progress but most have not reached the expected standards in all of the six areas of learning defined in national guidance. For many, the development of language and literacy and mathematical understanding is particularly weak. Children with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are identified quickly and fully integrated into the class. They make sound progress. Good use is made of assessment. The information gained when the children first join the nursery is used effectively to plan activities for them. Continual observations and assessments are made of each child's progress to ensure that work continues to match their needs and builds on their previous learning. Staff work extremely well together and collaborate effectively to plan activities and assess children's needs. An exceptionally able nursery nurse runs the part-time nursery under the supervision of the principal nursery teacher. A strong team of teachers, nursery nurses and classroom assistants provide a high quality learning environment. Children with English as an additional language are supported well and make rapid gains in acquiring English speaking skills.

Personal and social development

74. By the age of five, the majority of children are close to achieving the nationally expected standards in their personal and social development. Many of the children are reluctant to speak when they enter the nursery. With helpful encouragement they begin to form positive relationships and to communicate suitably with one another and with adults. Relationships are very good and staff are effective in creating a warm, caring and stimulating learning environment in which the children develop good attitudes to learning and become self-confident. They are taught the difference between right and wrong. The children in the nursery are appropriately taught to treat living things with respect and find out how to look after animals through going on visits; for example, to a farm. They are expected to listen to each other and put their hands up to answer or ask a question. In both classes in the nursery, clear routines have been established in which the children thrive. The children are expected to help clear away after finishing their activities by returning equipment to the correct places, putting chairs under tables and generally tidying areas for the next session. The older children remain interested in tasks until completed, particularly when working with an adult. They are becoming confident when they are asked, for example, to take the register to the office and they follow instructions carefully. The children are beginning to share equipment and collaborate appropriately during group work as, for example, when using materials to stick on a paper plate shape to make a tiger mask.
75. The overall good teaching in this area has a positive impact on children's learning. Where classrooms are well managed children are secure and confident. Teachers plan very good opportunities for the children to learn and to concentrate on a given task. No opportunity is missed to help them learn how to live amongst a large group. Staff have high expectations that children will learn how to give and take, share and begin to understand what they may expect of others and others of them. By working well together, the staff give the children very good role models.

Language and literacy

76. By the time they are five, the majority of children are below the required standard in language and literacy. They make good progress from entry and are developing their communication skills satisfactorily. The majority of children in the early years do not have the necessary vocabulary and confidence to talk about their stories. Nevertheless, the adults use skilful questioning to encourage them to express their ideas and increase their vocabulary. The older children listen avidly and pay close attention to, for example, a well read story of 'Three Billy Goats Gruff'. By the time they are five, they are developing skills in writing that appropriately build on their previous learning. The older children are beginning to identify the initial sound of words in their attempts at independent writing. However, handwriting skills are under-developed. The majority of children have poor hand control and have little concept of spacing between words. They understand how books are written and know that pictures tell a story and words have meanings. A higher-attaining child in the nursery could remember a number of phrases in her school-made book but the other children could read only a limited number of common words. Teachers encourage all children to take home their books to share with their family and most do this regularly. Information technology is used effectively to support this subject, for example, through word processing ideas or using letter-matching picture programs. The introduction of the modified Literacy Hour in the nursery is having a beneficial impact on learning.
77. Overall, teaching in this area of learning is very good. The very good teaching does not always result in very good progress because the poorly developed speaking skills displayed by many children mean that a great deal of time has to be spent consolidating learning and going over the same ground until language skills are grasped securely. Adults interact well with the children, particularly in discussion, to exploit any opportunities to increase children's vocabulary. For example, when reading a book, the children were expected to give reasons as to why the answer was always 'No'. Teachers, nursery nurses and ancillary staff use praise well to build up confidence and self-esteem. Suitably challenging work is successfully planned which makes children think and keeps them focused with interest on the activities provided. Some of the wall displays are closely linked to favourite nursery rhymes and songs, such as 'Humpty Dumpty' and 'Six Speckled Frogs', while others make valuable contributions to the children's experiences of the world around them, such as flowers, pets and minibeast displays. These effectively reveal and result in a rich and stimulating learning environment.

Mathematics

78. In this area, the majority of children enter school with skills which are well below the standards normally expected of three and four-year-olds. They make good progress but are still below the nationally expected standard by the time they are five. The children count numbers to six orally and are beginning to compare, sort and match everyday objects such as socks, cubes, teddies and model dinosaurs. They sort such items by size and colour. There are good links with literacy; for example, when a child recognised a colour by the initial letter in the word, pink. Children have experience in ordering and sequencing days of the week. They are appropriately introduced to mathematical language such as 'big', 'little', 'smallest', 'full' and 'empty'. The story of 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff' effectively reinforces the children's understanding of 'large', 'small' and 'middle-sized'. Teachers use every opportunity to reinforce their knowledge and understanding of number through consistent repetition, for example, in the singing of various number rhymes, such as 'Five Fat Sausages' and 'Five Fairy Cakes in a Baker's Shop'. The introduction of a modified Numeracy Hour is having a positive impact on attainment and progress.
79. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. The very good teaching does not always lead to very good progress because many children have a poor understanding of the vocabulary associated with shape, size and position. Much time has to be spent consolidating understanding and repeating work to ensure that children have a secure grasp of the areas that are taught. Very good teaching is characterised by clear and precise explanations and instructions so that the children know what is expected of them. Skilful questions are used to stimulate thought and provoke discussion, from which children learn much. Work is effectively planned to meet the needs of all the children and clear objectives ensure that the children progress well. Teachers, including the nursery nurses and ancillary staff, have a secure understanding of how young children learn and provide a rich learning environment in which the children flourish. Resources are carefully chosen, well prepared and accessible to the

children.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

80. By the time they are five, the majority of children come close to meeting standards that are expected nationally of five-year-olds in their knowledge and understanding of the world. They are beginning to show an awareness of the features of living things, through going on visits to places of interest, such as a farm and the park. Effective opportunities are provided for the children to develop their designing skills through making, for example, a stable and a pig sty with moveable joints. They enjoy using dough and handle a variety of tools to experiment in making different shapes. The children look closely at the changes in the growth of a seed and find out what it needs in order to grow. Stimulating provision is planned to enhance the children's understanding through many practical and first-hand experiences such as a visit to a farm that enabled the children to look carefully at the different animals. A well-planned baking activity enabled the children to develop their knowledge and understanding of how to perform everyday tasks. Computer skills are satisfactory; the children are suitably developing eye and hand co-ordination through controlling the mouse when following the instructions for programs. A small group of younger pupils identified the keyboard, computer and mouse but had difficulty in remembering the word 'monitor'. Visits from the local Fire Brigade give the children worthwhile opportunities to see how a fire-engine works and meet a fireman.
81. Overall, the quality of teaching seen in this area is good. Very good relationships have been established between the staff. The nursery nurses are extremely able and make a major contribution to the children's learning by skilfully reinforcing their understanding and supporting them effectively. The stimulating displays support this area effectively. Teachers plan activities that develop and increase the children's skills, particularly of observation. Plans clearly set out appropriate learning intentions for lessons. The activities are well matched to the needs of the children and they are precisely explained and demonstrated. Resources are very well prepared prior to each session.

Creative development

82. By the time they are five, the majority of children come close to meeting standards that are expected nationally of five-year-olds in this area of learning. The children's creative development is fostered well through a very good range of activities. Children have daily opportunities in the nursery to express themselves by drawing, painting, engaging in imaginative play, using malleable materials, such as play-dough, and experimenting in sand and water-play. They produce pictures by using a wide range of techniques, such as sponge, finger and hand printing, and create collage pictures by using a good range of materials. They paint pictures of animals and flowers, working carefully and thoughtfully. In music, the youngest children join in the action songs with enthusiasm. They are beginning to memorise the words of many nursery rhymes and songs and are becoming aware of the difference between loud and quiet and fast and slow. The role play areas of the grocery shop, home corner and telephone kiosks provide stimulating opportunities for the children to play co-operatively and develop their imaginations by enabling them to take on the various roles and jobs. For example, the older children enjoyed playing in the shop with an adult and, when asked for some Dairylea, a child responded, 'We've run out of Dairylea'. In another situation with the younger children, an adult was involved in talking on the phone to a child. Pupils learn effectively and make very good progress.
83. Overall, teaching is very good in this area of learning. Creative development is well fostered through a wide variety of activities. Teachers and support staff are well organised and use stimulating resources which are well prepared. They constantly talk to the children and ask relevant questions to enlarge their vocabulary and support their efforts. All the staff work closely together and make positive contributions to the children's learning. They participate in role play situations and they help the children to select the most appropriate materials for their models. Resources are satisfactory but there is a shortage of sets of good quality dressing-up clothes.

Physical development

84. By the age of five, the majority of children make good progress and come close to reaching the nationally expected standards. When the children enter the nursery, many of them experience difficulty in controlling small tools such as pencils, glue spreaders and paint brushes. However, there are many effective opportunities planned for the children to develop these skills successfully. By the time they are five, the majority of children are beginning to control and manipulate small objects such as pencils, construction apparatus, modelling tools, scissors and paint brushes, which they handle safely. They have many opportunities to cut, stick and join materials together, for example, when making model spiders, snails, junk model tractors, pigs in a sty and horses in a stable. The outdoor play area provides a good range of equipment and large apparatus to develop the children's ability to control and co-ordinate their bodies and gives them an awareness of space. In lessons, the children further develop an awareness of space, when moving like different animals and stretching up and down. Valuable opportunities are provided for the children to become familiar with the main school through the use of the school hall for a short physical education lesson every week. They use their hands and feet to slither over the mats and pull themselves effectively along benches and balance quite well on them.
85. The quality of teaching is good in this area. Teachers make good provision for the children's physical development. All staff have a sensitive awareness of the children's safety. Good teaching is characterised by clear and precise explanations and instructions so that the children know what is expected of them as, for example, when the children were made aware of such words as 'under' and 'over' to help them to understand the language of movements.

ENGLISH

86. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests for seven-year-olds at the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment when compared with all schools was well below the national average in reading and writing. When compared with similar schools the school's performance was below average in reading and average in writing. Results were much better than those in 1998 and there has been an upward trend over the last three years. Standards of attainment on entry to the nursery are very low and, by the time they are five, most pupils fail to attain the standards that are expected nationally of seven-year-olds in language and literacy. A high proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language, starting the National Curriculum with limited English and often very low standards in language and literacy. Currently, standards of attainment in Year 2 are broadly in line with national expectations but few pupils exceed these expectations. The as yet unpublished National Curriculum test results this year are considerably better than last year's. There is evidence that aspects of the National Literacy Strategy are resulting in improvements in progress and are having a significant impact on attainment. Since the previous inspection there has been a significant improvement in standards in English. The key issue in the last inspection report, which referred to raising standards in English, has been tackled successfully.
87. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards in speaking and listening are below the standards that are expected nationally of seven-year-olds. Although by the time pupils are seven most begin to show increasing confidence in speaking, many find it difficult to explain their ideas in any detail and they still have a limited vocabulary. Higher-attaining pupils demonstrate satisfactory standards with some good features; for example, when talking about their reading books. By the end of the key stage most pupils listen attentively.
88. Progress across Key Stage 1 is good. Many opportunities are planned to encourage pupils to increase their vocabulary and use of spoken English. In the reception classes, pupils make good progress as one describes, and the others guess, which animal they have selected to talk about. The teacher helps the pupils to be more precise, as when describing in great detail a teddy on the wall. Pupils in Year 1 are given effective opportunities to describe a picture or an object, while pupils in Year 2 make good progress as they recall their previous work and suggest alternative words to replace some of those in the story they have read. No answer or comment made by a pupil is ever dismissed as useless by any teacher and this effectively builds up an atmosphere of trust in which self-esteem and self-confidence are enriched. Teachers are very good role-models for pupils to follow in valuing and respecting the ideas and opinions of both pupils and adults. Learning support assistants in the classrooms make an

effective contribution to pupils' good progress. They clarify questions, explain new vocabulary and encourage pupils to offer answers.

89. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards in reading are broadly in line with the standards that are expected nationally of seven-year-olds. The majority of pupils read well enough to make sense of texts that are appropriate for their age and several retell stories with confidence. Younger pupils are beginning to build on a number of skills in order to read the text. Pupils in reception know that print carries meaning, use a finger to follow the text and often identify words by their initial sounds. In Year 1, pupils begin to self correct and show more confidence in retelling a story by studying the pictures, while pupils in Year 2 use phonic skills successfully to work out unfamiliar words such as 'dangerous' and have a satisfactory understanding of alphabetical order. For example, they understand that letters beginning with 'p' can be found towards the end of the dictionary. Lower-attaining pupils recognise some words in familiar text and know initial letter sounds. By the end of Key Stage 1, the majority of the pupils are increasing their understanding of library skills through the positive impact of Literacy Hour. They explain the meaning of an author, title, illustrator, index and the contents in a book. A significant proportion of lower-attaining pupils experience difficulty in expressing ideas and have poor spelling ability. This means that they have more confidence when following formal written exercises than in story writing. Overall, pupils who have special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make sound progress as group activities are well supported. Those with English as an additional language make rapid gains in developing communication skills. Many understand English to a greater extent than they can speak it. Most are becoming increasingly fluent but the depth of their understanding of the meaning of certain words and phrases lags behind their ability to read them. One fluent reader, for example, could read the word 'junction' confidently but did not actually know what the word meant.

90. The combination of a well-structured Literacy Hour together with good teaching has a positive effect on pupils' attainment in writing. The majority of pupils in Year 2 attain the expected standards. They write for a range of different purposes, sequence their ideas appropriately and use simple punctuation. Higher-attaining pupils write more imaginative stories and make good progress in developing punctuation and spelling skills. Progress across the key stage is good with some very good features. Many pupils are at the early stages of independent writing in the reception classes but they write with conviction and confidence. Pupils are taught to follow simple structures and learn to plan their writing, working with the teacher as a class or in a group. Very good progress is evident in the scrutiny of a sample of pupils' past work. For example, pupils in the older reception class use more whole words in their early independent writing tasks than those in the younger class. In Year 1, there is a clear improvement in the amount of work completed and the appropriate use of simple grammar. In a Year 2 class, a higher-attaining pupil produced an expressive poem about Spring by writing, '...Sparkling flower beds with colours brightly sprayed...all the shiny buds turn into glistening pearls of pink and white'. After observing an actual building on fire close to the school, the event was turned skilfully into an opportunity to write about it: for example, "*When everyone saw the fire they gasped in wonder and when the sparks came out everyone jumped*". Another pupil wrote a poem:

*'... flames spread high,
Blocking the sun, the clouds in the sky,
Patterns that swirled and swirled around
It tapped and rapped like a thunder sound.'*

91. Learning skills are generally sound. Pupils are nearly always ready to apply intellectual and creative effort in class, as a result of their own positive attitudes, the clear learning ethos in the school and the good relationships that teachers maintain and foster in class. They show interest and concentrate well, except for a small minority who have difficulty listening for sustained periods. The majority of pupils understand what they are doing and know how to improve their work because of the clear instructions their teachers give them. Most are keen to participate and as a result they are not afraid of making mistakes, particularly in oral work. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and most enjoy their lessons. There are good relationships in all classes and personal development is fostered well. In all lessons, the majority of pupils co-operate and collaborate well in small group work. They listen to the views and opinions of others and usually treat them with respect. There are no instances of

intimidation or aggressive behaviour.

92. Overall, the quality of teaching is good with some very good aspects though there is an element of unsatisfactory teaching. The overall good quality teaching has a significant impact on pupils' sound learning. The good teaching does not always result in good progress because most pupils have a low level of basic understanding about language and literacy and for many of these, understanding is not fostered effectively at home. The scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that there is much good teaching but its impact on pupils' level of attainment is sometimes disappointing. This is largely because the pupils' low prior levels of attainment mean that a considerable amount of teaching time has to be spent on reinforcing and consolidating earlier learning. In marking the pupils' work, teachers make regular comments to encourage and to give points for improvement and ensure that pupils understand what to do next. Individual targets that are set half-termly for writing are referred to daily by the pupils. This practice is contributing to the good progress pupils are making in the subject. Lessons are interesting and motivate pupils to learn. Almost all teachers speak clearly, providing very good role models of spoken English. Teachers have good subject knowledge: most explain concepts precisely and introduce pupils to relevant technical vocabulary. Group activities are usually well matched to pupils' needs. Relationships are good and teachers manage behaviour well. Teachers use skilled questioning strategies to check on pupils' understanding and to consolidate learning. Unsatisfactory teaching is characterised by inadequate planning for the development of the skills needed to enable the pupils to understand what they have to do and the slow pace that results from the constant stopping and starting to reinforce behaviour expectations during the lesson.
93. A scrutiny of pupils' work and of displays shows examples of pupils' written work in all relevant subjects. There are good examples of written work in science, religious education, history and geography: for example, the recalling of a reception class visit to a farm appropriately reinforces the pupils' speaking and listening skills. Information technology successfully supports pupils' learning in this subject. In the reception classes the pupils are provided with a very effective computer program which supports their literacy well through matching phrases to pictures from the 'Big Book' they are reading. The school library is unsatisfactory and in the process of being re-developed. Currently, it is small and is not equipped to cover all the areas of the curriculum. This limits opportunities for independent research.
94. The subject is well managed by the co-ordinator, who is influential in helping to improve standards. The support for teachers is good and the literacy project training has been carried out thoroughly. A broad and balanced programme of work has been produced that provides a good range of structured tasks. The co-ordinator monitors the subject effectively and has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses across the school. There are good assessment procedures and pupils' progress is monitored regularly. Test results are analysed carefully to identify targets for improvement. Apart from the shortcomings in the library, resources are well-organised, accessible and in good condition. The teaching and the quality of provision have improved significantly since the last report.

MATHEMATICS

95. The school's results in the 1999 National Curriculum tests show that pupils' attainment was well below the national average, both when compared with all schools and when compared with schools which have pupils from similar social backgrounds. Nevertheless, since 1996 the trend in the school's performance has been upward. This year's results show an improvement both in the proportion of pupils who attained the national target of Level 2 and those achieving the higher Level 3 standard. Results are better than they were at the time of the last inspection. Inspection findings indicate that, by the end of the key stage, most pupils attain the standards that are expected nationally of seven-year-olds. This achievement represents good progress when set against the low levels of achievement on entry to the school.
96. In the reception classes, pupils count to a hundred in tens and suggest strategies which will help the teacher to count accurately. They point out to the teacher, when he makes a deliberate mistake, that the eight must come first in the number eighty one and not the one. They have difficulty with the language of position and describe a number as being 'behind'

rather than 'after' another. In Year 1, pupils can describe the strategies they use to find the difference between ten and six, for example; 'You can put six in your head and see how many more you need or you can use your fingers up to six and count on to ten or you could use penny coins to help you'. By the age of seven, pupils have gained confidence in using numbers and have good memories for recalling number facts. They deduce which numbers have been omitted from a section of a hundred square and understand the term 'multiple'. They calculate the missing number in simple equations and count accurately in fives and tens. They use their knowledge well in other subjects. In information technology, for example, they remembered that the robot must be programmed with the number 180 to turn through half a circle and 90 to make a quarter turn. The analysis of pupils' completed work showed good levels of understanding of tessellation, for example, along with a knowledge of simple properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes.

97. The report of the previous inspection stated that progress at that time was satisfactory but now it is clear that pupils make good progress. Assessments made at the age of five show that many pupils are performing at levels which are below national expectations for their age so they do well to gain average standards by the time they leave to go to the juniors. Pupils have positive attitudes and learn well in lessons. For example, pupils in Year 2 were enthusiastic about playing a quick fire tables game and they are proud to relate the rules about number which they have deduced, such as 'If you add ten to any number the units stay the same, all even numbers can be divided exactly by two and, if you divide an odd number by two, you will always have one left over'. They enjoy collecting data to make graphs of favourite drinks or sweets and are becoming adept at interpreting their graphs accurately.
98. In most lessons, pupils with special educational needs learn well and make sound progress where there is a classroom assistant available to give extra help or where tasks are well matched to pupils' learning needs. In these lessons, pupils make good gains in learning because the extra adult can take immediate steps to ensure pupils are attentive and the class teacher can then concentrate on the matter in hand. However, on the rare occasions when there is no support for the teacher in those classes with a relatively high proportion of pupils with behavioural difficulties, the pace can become slow and the flow somewhat fractured as the teacher uses up time to maintain discipline. Pupils with English as an additional language make sound progress. Where an assistant is available to support, this again has a very positive impact on learning and the pace of progress increases. In one lesson an assistant was translating material into the pupil's native tongue and the pupil was responding confidently in English. Generally, such pupils have an understanding which exceeds their ability to express themselves in English.
99. Evidence based on the lessons observed, together with evidence derived from an analysis of completed work, shows that, overall, teaching is mostly good. Half of the lessons seen were good and occasionally very good, a quarter were satisfactory and a quarter unsatisfactory. At the time of the last inspection, teaching was judged to be satisfactory at best, so the quality of teaching has improved significantly since then. There is, however, still a large proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. Imaginative teaching was seen in each year group. In one of the reception classes each pupil was provided with a cut out mobile phone. This immediately captured their imagination. The teacher led the pupils through a number of operations which included reinforcing the idea of tens and units and of counting accurately. In another reception class, numbered cut out shapes of footballers were used imaginatively to develop the idea of ordering numbers and placing them in a specific position before or after another. In Year 1, a teddy was used well in conjunction with a 'function machine'; the teddy took a number into his machine, calculated how many more were needed to make ten and out shot the answer. Here a glove puppet was also used well to stimulate interest and imagination. In Year 2, pupils thoroughly enjoyed a quick fire shoot out activity and vied with each other to become the class top gunslinger by answering tables facts quicker than their opponent.
100. Teaching is unsatisfactory where pupils are not sure exactly what is expected of them and the pace of learning slows in consequence. This uncertainty about what it is intended that they should do is related to poor short-term lesson planning which does not always indicate what skills are to be taught or what the end product will be. It also occurs where teachers do not explain requirements clearly. Lessons are more purposeful when the learning intentions are shared with the pupils and examples of what is expected are demonstrated. Teaching is

ineffective when tasks are not well matched to pupils' specific stages of development. In such cases the lower-attaining pupils were seen to struggle while the higher attainers grew bored due to lack of challenge and simply not having enough to do. In such situations pupils are usually very tolerant and behave sensibly. At the time of the last inspection there were concerns that higher-attaining pupils were not challenged enough and in a minority of classes this is still the case. Relationships between teachers and pupils are generally good and this promotes effective learning. Teaching is enhanced where teachers are clearly confident both in their own ability and in their knowledge of the subject. Such confidence is not apparent in all classes.

101. The school has implemented the National Numeracy Strategy according to the guidelines. The co-ordinator is new to this post and there has been little recent monitoring of teaching, although planning has been scrutinised thoroughly. Assessment procedures are good. The progress and attainment of each individual is carefully followed and recorded. The results of national tests are analysed for each pupil to see if any pattern emerges and where teaching has been most and least effective. The results of these analyses are used well to inform further teaching plans. Teachers use their informal assessments in lessons effectively to form groups of pupils who are at similar stages of development and to judge when a group needs extra support. Whilst most of the work seen in lessons was concerned with number skills, all strands of the subject, including work on shape and pattern as well as data handling, are given due emphasis. Numeracy is effectively promoted across the curriculum in other subjects though opportunities are sometimes missed to emphasise the numerical element in activities. In science, for example, a cake was baked to show that some changes are irreversible but there was insufficient emphasis on the need to measure the exact quantities according to the recipe. Opportunities to use numeracy skills in such activities as cooking are infrequent. Resources are adequate to support teaching and learning and they are generally used well but opportunities to use computers to reinforce and extend understanding are infrequent.

SCIENCE

102. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils attain the standards that are expected nationally of seven-year-olds. The National Curriculum Teacher Assessments for 1999 indicated that pupils' attainment was well below the national average when compared with all schools but average when compared with similar schools. The as yet unpublished results of this year's Teacher Assessments indicate that standards have improved considerably. The school's policy of now targeting the more able pupils is proving successful with an increase again this year in the number of children achieving the higher Level 3 standard. Lesson observations, scrutiny of children's work and talking to pupils and teachers confirm that standards are currently in line with national expectations.
103. Most pupils make satisfactory progress. They learn effectively as they develop sound knowledge and understanding and a satisfactory range of skills in each strand of the subject. A limited number of lessons were observed during the inspection but, by the end of the key stage, the higher-attaining pupils can observe, discuss and record their findings with confidence. For example, in Year 2, in one of the target groups for Level 3, pupils record and talk about what happens when seeds are planted, what conditions are needed for healthy growth and go on to predict what might happen in adverse conditions. Other groups work at a less challenging level but still recall and talk about work done on plants in the previous year. Pupils in Year 1 work on an experiment to show what plants need to grow with the emphasis on what is required to produce a fair test. They find it difficult to predict what might happen if conditions change but are confident describing, observing and recording what they can see and do. The subject makes a good contribution to the development of speaking skills when pupils are encouraged to discuss the results of their work. The written recording of work, coupled with measuring and noting the heights of plants, helps to provide a purposeful focus for developing skills in literacy and numeracy. Good work was observed in Reception where pupils were able to talk about, design and draw a house to meet the needs of a hamster. The need to consider the hamster's welfare made a good contribution to pupils' moral development.
104. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers consolidate previous learning and work hard to ensure that pupils of all abilities progress at a satisfactory rate. For example, in Year 2 the

teacher reminded pupils about previous work and used this to move onto new work by drawing out the pupils' knowledge. There was, however, a lack of scientific detail. Teachers do not provide pupils with a word bank or a list of appropriate words to encourage a good scientific vocabulary. Teachers have a sound knowledge of what they teach. Classroom assistants know the pupils well and make a good contribution to their learning, especially those with special educational needs.

105. Long-term planning is good but in short-term planning, although objectives are generally clear, they do not always make reference to the skills, knowledge and understanding which pupils should acquire. The school is adopting the nationally promoted scheme of work and, together with their long-term planning of the curriculum, this is influencing standards positively throughout the key stage.
106. Relationships are good. Teachers are largely successful in their efforts to foster positive attitudes in behaviour and response. A minority of pupils are restless and sometimes disturb the flow and pace of lessons by calling out, for example, instead of following the clear class rule to put their hand up. Teachers do not always explore ways in which these pupils can be encouraged to participate in a more positive way.
107. The co-ordinator has good subject knowledge and is working hard to improve all areas of the subject. She has, however, limited opportunities to work alongside colleagues or monitor teaching and learning in the classroom. Assessment of the subject was identified as an area for development in the previous inspection report and has still to be fully developed. Staff development both for the co-ordinator and rest of the staff is limited although the cluster group meets on a regular basis and is supportive in identifying needs and providing shared solutions. Good use is made of educational visits to support environmental studies. For example, pupils in Year 2 contrast their local environment with a visit to Beaumanor Hall. Resources are adequate to support teaching and learning. This subject has been identified as an area of priority for development in the next academic year.

ART

108. Little teaching was observed during the inspection but, from the evidence of work in classrooms, by the end of the key stage attainment meets the standards that are expected nationally of seven-year-olds. Sound pastel pictures inspired by Kandinsky's paintings have been produced by pupils in Year 2. These pupils also produced effective patterns using a tying and dying technique. Good paintings inspired by Van Gogh's 'Sunflowers' are displayed imaginatively in the school hall. Pupils work well together collaboratively as when painting a large mural of the seaside. Good links are made with literature as in a good mural based on 'The Jolly Postman'. Picasso's 'Girl Before a Mirror' has been used well to inspire pupils' work. They each took just a part of the painting and made good attempts at recreating the shapes and colours in the picture. Pupils create good, detailed drawings after observing objects closely. A good example is a carefully drawn flute in charcoal and chalk. Cleverly built structures based on the weaving of birds and spiders have been created from twigs and fabrics. Pupils use a good range of media and learn a range of techniques associated with printing and collage, for example. There is little use of clay and in some classes pupils have few opportunities to develop skills in three-dimensional work. Overall, the standards observed during the current inspection are similar to those described in the previous inspection report but there are now fewer examples of high quality work.
109. In the three lessons seen two were unsatisfactory and one was good. The work produced indicates that overall teaching is generally satisfactory and promotes sound achievement. The main reasons for the unsatisfactory teaching were imprecise planning, which did not clearly indicate what skills were to be taught nor what the result was supposed to resemble, a lack of structure so that pupils were unsure of exactly what was required and low expectations of the quality of work which pupils are capable of producing. Teaching was good and learning was more effective where the teacher knew what skills were going to be taught and had a clear vision of the quality of work required.
110. The subject is adequately resourced but the kiln is underused. The subject has not maintained

the high profile which it had at the time of the last inspection. The quality of teaching is not as high. The school has, quite properly, been concentrating hard on improving standards in English and mathematics and therefore there is not as much time or energy to devote to other subjects. Coupled with this, the acting headteacher co-ordinates the subject and has been at full stretch in managing major whole-school issues, which has not permitted her to give as much attention to the subject as she did in the past. Short-term lesson plans, which are often inadequate, are not monitored by the co-ordinator but it is the inadequacy of plans which is largely responsible for the lack of quality in the work produced. There is a scheme of work but it is not followed consistently with the result that skills, knowledge and understanding are not developed consistently and progressively from the nursery to Year 2. The co-ordinator offers good advice and gives clear guidance to colleagues.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

111. At the last inspection standards were judged to be below those expected nationally and were therefore a key issue. Although it was possible to observe only one lesson, evidence derived from the work produced shows that standards are now just in line with national expectations - a marked improvement since the last inspection.
112. The work produced indicates that teaching is sound and that pupils learn effectively and make satisfactory progress. Pupils in Year 1 were observed improving their understanding and knowledge of structures. For example, the teacher used careful questioning to obtain answers from the pupils about the shape and strength of a triangle and how it could be used to make a base for a model see-saw. Completed examples of these were on display in another Year 1 class and also examples of model swings using similar techniques. Previously completed work on display, including food technology, puppets, wheeled vehicles, winding mechanisms and pop-up cards from a Year 2 project on the seaside, indicates that all aspects of the design and make process are being undertaken and taught throughout the key stage. However, insufficient progress is made in designing, selecting tools and employing different materials and techniques. Good use is made of classroom assistants to help children, especially those with special educational needs.
113. The co-ordinator has been in the role for eighteen months and is still in the process of defining and developing his role. Staff plan together as a year group and use the nationally recommended scheme of work. The introduction of these measures is improving knowledge and raising standards in the subject. There is also a useful skills check list in place for each year group but it is not yet used systematically to improve the quality of the work produced.
114. Assessment is not yet developed and very little evaluation of the quality of provision takes place although the co-ordinator has now started to keep samples of work to encourage good practice. At present there is no time available for the co-ordinator to monitor teaching and learning. There is a satisfactory selection of resources kept in a central area.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

115. On the limited evidence seen through observation of lessons and a scrutiny of work, pupils' standards of attainment in history and geography at the end of Key Stage 1 have been maintained since the last inspection and continue to be in line with the standards nationally expected of seven-year-olds. Pupils also continue to make satisfactory progress.
116. Pupils enjoy their work and are keen to share their knowledge. They are supportive of each other and most are prepared to listen and offer ideas. Pupils are inquisitive and often think carefully before asking questions and offering answers. They are beginning to understand subject vocabulary such as 'in the past', 'long time ago', 'Victorian era', 'monsoon', 'desert' and 'rainforest' and, by Year 2, use them appropriately.
117. Since the last inspection changes have been made to the approach to humanities and now both history and geography are taught separately in all age ranges. Some topics such as 'The Seaside' and 'Our local Area' are used effectively to support both subjects.

118. In geography, the pupils develop a range of skills. They understand the reason for maps and interpret keys which use symbols to denote specific features. Pupils discuss in simple terms the effect of weather on such things as clothing, land use and housing. Through local visits and observation they distinguish different uses for buildings, such as living, shopping and worship, and to understand the purpose of environmental signs such as road markings. They are also developing an understanding of different types of environment found around the world and beginning to make simple comparisons between other areas and their home area.
119. In history, pupils develop a sense of chronology through looking at their own family group in Reception, recording the seasons in Year 1 and plotting events from the past in Year 2. They can recall facts about famous people such as Mary Seacole and Florence Nightingale as well as historical events including The Fire of London and the Gunpowder Plot. They are also aware of the difference in the way people lived in the past and now through looking at differences in such matters as clothing, housing, jobs and play.
120. Pupils use a range of types of recording to support their findings including factual and fictional writing and drawing, the use of questions and answers and worksheets where answers have to be filled in gaps in sentences. They use a range of mediums including pencils, pastels, paint and the computer. Most work seen was, however, only in two-dimensional format.
121. Since the last inspection teaching has improved and is now satisfactory with some good features. Teaching is good where the lessons move at a good pace, are well planned with clear objectives and use available resources and additional support staff well. All staff now show a more secure knowledge of the subject matter. Staff help pupils to associate the topics with their own experiences by reminding them of visits they have made to local places of interest. They recall stories they have shared in the past and use the good features of pupils' own work to move their understanding forward. In some lessons insufficient use is made of this strategy in order to involve those who find learning difficult. Ranges of appropriate pictures and books or artefacts connected with a specific topic are also used to reinforce pupils' understanding. This was particularly evident in Year 2 where a good range of books on India was made available so that pupils could compare and contrast the differences between living conditions in India and those in their own area. In one lesson an old leather travelling bag and a range of old bottles were used to stimulate interest. Simple bandages were used to illustrate aspects of the life of Mary Seacole in Year 1. Notwithstanding these examples, there is insufficient emphasis on using the evidence from a study of artefacts as the basis for making deductions about life in the past. Care is taken to display pupils' work to good effect.
122. Teachers' planning for the long- and medium-term has developed since the last inspection and is now good. However, there are instances where the planning of specific lessons in terms of objectives, activities and learning outcomes continues to be imprecise and does not support future learning in a constructive fashion. The management of pupils is satisfactory, although at times a small minority of pupils become restless when tasks are not sufficiently well matched to their differing stages of development so that they are not all appropriately challenged.
123. The lack of systematic assessment highlighted in the last inspection remains an area of weakness. However, the school is aware that work needs to be undertaken and this is identified in the current School Development Plan. Marking is consistent in approach and supportive of pupils' work but does not take subject learning forward through the use of open-ended questions or suggestions for further investigation.
124. The co-ordinator is new to the post and has had little opportunity to provide a supportive role for staff. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is supported through schemes of work that have been revised since the last inspection and are supplemented by the nationally promoted schemes of work for these subjects. These identify areas of learning with suggestions for appropriate topics and sources of reference. There are few suggestions for cross-curricular links except with maths and science. However, systematic monitoring or evaluation of teaching has still not been undertaken.
125. The school makes very good use of the local area for visits to museums, parks and farms. The lives of pupils' family members, such as those who served overseas with the forces, are discussed to extend both geographical and historical knowledge. Pupils contrast their own

urban environment with a rural environment when they visit such places as Swithland Woods and Bradgate Park. Resources are available in classrooms, the small school library and a central staff resource area. These include a range of non-fiction and fiction books, teachers' resource packs, large and small posters, photographs, maps and some artefacts to support the work in humanities. The centrally held resources are underused by staff. However, whilst teaching resources are sometimes supplemented by the use of the local library, the overall quality and range of resources have not been developed since the last inspection and remain limited. In particular, there are no atlases or world globes nor is there an adequate range of artefacts to stimulate historical enquiry. This overall deficiency restricts learning opportunities.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

126. A limited number of lessons were observed during the inspection week so judgements are also based on observation of pupils use of information technology within lessons, scrutiny of work, displays, planning and discussions with staff and pupils. At the end of the key stage, standards are in line with national expectations. This is a marked improvement since the last inspection where standards in information technology were judged to be below those expected nationally and therefore became a key issue.
127. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, are introduced to the computer from the time they enter into school in the nursery. In a reception class pupils were observed practising their skills. For example, they were able to click and drag an object competently, using the mouse to match picture and text appropriately. In Year 1, pupils were using the computer in a literacy lesson to select appropriate words from a word bank. In Year 2, pupils were learning to use 'Windows applications' by choosing the appropriate window box to change font size and to move text around the screen.
128. Overall, pupils generally make satisfactory progress and in some areas progress is good. Pupils make good progress in recognising that control is integral to many everyday devices and that devices can be given commands that produce a variety of outcomes. For example, when pupils in Year 2 were observed working with a programmable robot, the 'roamer', they gave precise instructions and used the correct terms such as 'programming'. Mathematical knowledge and vocabulary were also being reinforced with the use of a numerical input of 180 for a half-turn. There is less progress in using models or simulations to explore real or imaginary situations. Computers are underused and many teachers still lack confidence, skills and knowledge.

129. The co-ordinator took over after the last inspection and is working hard to develop the subject but has had little opportunity to have an impact on standards because the school has been focusing its attention and resources on improving literacy and numeracy. Appropriate computer hardware is now in place in most classes and plans are well advanced to equip the nursery with the latest technology and to train staff under the national training initiative. The nationally promoted scheme of work has been introduced and there is suitable planning to cover all stages of the curriculum. However, assessment of the subject is not yet in place and the co-ordinator has had a limited amount of time to monitor the quality of provision.
130. A scrutiny of work and displays indicated that there is a satisfactory coverage of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study with evidence of skills being developed progressively in word processing, information handling, control and modelling as well as the use of pictograms and art packages. The use of the Internet by pupils has yet to be developed but plans are well advanced for the school to access this facility.

MUSIC

131. By the end of Key Stage 1 standards attained are in line with the standards expected nationally of seven-year-olds. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the key stage. Judgements made at the last inspection indicate that pupils were then achieving at a higher level. However, it must be borne in mind that not only has the subject not received any real priority in terms of development due to the school having other priorities over this period but the specialist teacher has been in the position of acting headteacher and has, therefore, had limited time to take the subject forward. Within these constraints some good work has continued to be produced but standards are generally not as high as they were.
132. Pupils sing with confidence, participating enthusiastically and with considerable enjoyment. They sing in tune, understand dynamics and have a good sense of rhythm. They learn a range of songs from different cultures and are taught simple songs in other languages such as Hindi. Pupils in the reception classes accompany their singing with simple clapping rhythms. By Year 2, pupils use a range of percussion instruments to accompany their work. They readily offer ideas as to the most appropriate instrument to use and how to improve their performance. Pupils also show an understanding of the importance of practice to develop their individual and group skills.
133. Pupils follow simple rhythmic patterns using symbols and show an understanding of musical notation such as bar lines and repeat signs. By Year 2, they are also familiar with some specialist musical vocabulary such as tutti, solo and fanfare. They are gaining a familiarity with a range of different instruments through a variety of music such as the 'Carnival of the Animals' and 'The Planets'. Such activities are also developing their listening skills. Through this they respond to changes of mood such as between 'The Aquarium' and 'The Lion' in the 'Carnival of the Animals' and add appropriate actions to enhance these feelings. They enjoy listening to music from around the world such as drumming and chanting from the Cook Islands, Arabic music and the sounds of Aeolian harps.
134. Pupils' attitudes continue to be good. They behave well in lessons and show a real eagerness to learn. They are attentive and keen to offer ideas. Their relationships with the teacher and each other are good.
135. The last inspection identified that the teaching was good and this has continued to be the case. The music specialist, who has very good subject knowledge, teaches most lessons. These lessons are lively and move at a good pace with clear objectives, showing a balance between performance and discussion. A range of strategies are used to involve all pupils with good use being made of voice, instruments, demonstrations by pupils and discussions to draw out the best of each individual. Pupils are encouraged to offer ideas and take part on an equal basis. The National Curriculum attainment targets are covered through careful planning that is supported by a detailed scheme of work. Staff are now encouraged to develop their own skills by taking follow-up lessons based on the same objectives. However, there has still not been any systematic monitoring or evaluation of such teaching. There is also as yet no formal programme of assessment of individual pupils' attainment.

136. Since the co-ordinator has been the acting headteacher for the past three years, there has been little opportunity to develop extra-curricular activities and the school no longer has a Year 1 or Year 2 choir. This has had an adverse effect on the standards attained. However, there is a clear recognition by all staff that music can play an important part in cross-curricular and cultural activities and every opportunity is therefore taken to support music through dance, drama and religious education. Musicians and dancers from the Asian community visit the school and all pupils take part in a range of celebrations that honour the various religious beliefs represented by the school's intake. The school is well provided with variety of instrumental resources and those that support the development of pupils' listening. However these are somewhat biased towards western cultures and hence there is an imbalance in pupils' experiences.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

137. By the end of the key stage, pupils attain the standards that are expected nationally of seven-year-olds. The judgements at the time of the last inspection indicated that pupils were performing at a higher level than at present. However, this is in some ways due to the fact that the subject has not received any specific emphasis since that time as the school has rightly concentrated on improving standards in basic literacy and numeracy.
138. Pupils perform a range of controlled physical activities that show an understanding of different speeds, directions and use of space. Simple ball skills are being developed with many Year 1 pupils able to control balls with their feet in a simple dribbling action. Pupils are beginning to show the ability to perform cartwheels and forward and backward rolls. They also show an awareness of their body through making curled and stretched shapes and are, at times, creative in their interpretation of ideas. This element of creativity is particularly evident in Year 2 where they show an ability to perform short sequences in dance depicting anger and sorrow. Pupils are, however, less confident in performing short sequences in gymnastics. They use the small apparatus in the hall with ease and are aware of the safety issues when handling such equipment. There is no evidence of differences of attainment between gender, those from difference cultures or those identified as having special educational needs.
139. From Reception onwards pupils show considerable enjoyment in their lessons. They are familiar with the specific requirements for controlled behaviour in such lessons; most listen well and respond appropriately. Many pupils are appreciative of each other's efforts. A small minority show an element of restlessness in lessons, are not prepared to take turns on apparatus and need firm handling.
140. The teaching in Key Stage 1 continues to be satisfactory with some good features. Teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and plan carefully to ensure progression. They give clear explanations as to what they expect from pupils although in some lessons these were rather long, resulting in a small minority of pupil becoming inattentive for a time. Teachers demonstrate clearly their requirements and are actively involved in the lesson with the pupils. Most lessons move at a good pace and pupils make satisfactory progress. At times, however, sections of a small minority of lessons move too slowly and this again affects the attention of the pupils. Teachers constantly encourage pupils and offer praise to raise pupils' esteem in their own ability. They have a very good relationship with pupils and handle those who can become restless in a supportive but firm manner. They do not, however, use pupils effectively enough to demonstrate good practice and systematically involve pupils in an evaluation of their own actions. Teachers assess progress through the evaluation of the outcomes of lesson plans but, as yet, there continues to be no formal system of assessment of pupils' skills acquisition to support future development.
141. The co-ordinator shows great enthusiasm for her subject and works hard to support the subject throughout the school. The school is well provided with a range of good quality equipment that is well stored and easily accessible. The subject has not been a priority for school development since the last inspection and, therefore, little time has been available for staff development through monitoring or evaluation of staff practice. The school's programme continues to be well supported by a detailed scheme of work which offers good advice on

strategies and resources to support teachers' planning. A recent in-service training programme, as part of a commercially sponsored scheme which gives training to staff in organising early team games and provides equipment and lesson plans, has resulted in good progression.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

142. At the time of the last report a number of weaknesses were highlighted. No judgement was given in relation to standards attained by pupils owing to the lack of evidence that was available. Since then the subject has improved significantly; a scheme of work has been written and reviewed, the allocation of time has been increased and the subject has been a priority area for improvement on the School Development Plan.
143. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment is in line with that expected by the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Pupils of all ages make satisfactory progress in religious, moral and social understanding. Judgements have also been based on additional evidence from a scrutiny of pupils' past work, discussion with staff, a scrutiny of photographs of religious events and visits and displays of pupils' work throughout the school.
144. Pupils in Key Stage 1 make satisfactory progress in their understanding of stories from different religious traditions. They are acquiring a suitable understanding of similarities and differences among religions and are familiar with stories from the Bible, such as the story of Joseph and his brothers and the religious festivals in the Christian and other faiths' calendars. They learn about different interpretations of the creation story from, for example, China, the Seneca Tribe of North America, the Norse story and the Christian story from the Bible. Pupils who have special educational needs and those who learn English as an additional language make satisfactory progress when taking account of their previous learning. The curriculum is enhanced by visits to places of worship. Pupils in Year 2 have visited the local church, a Mosque and a Hindu Temple.
145. The majority of pupils are well behaved and attentive during lessons. Pupils usually show respect for other people's beliefs and cultures when, for example, participating in a class visit to a Mandir temple. The pupils' reports on the visit were enthusiastic and well written, particularly when writing about the opportunity for sweet-tasting. Most pupils are willing to answer questions and offer opinions, which, for instance, they shared in Year 2 about how they felt when they were angry and what they do at such times. Several made thoughtful contributions. One pupil said that she counts to ten in French, while another said that he read a book. There are a small minority of pupils who behave inappropriately and need firm handling and patience as was apparent during a Year 1 lesson about the Christian belief of the Creation story.
146. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory and promotes sound progress. In all the lessons observed, the teachers have sound subject knowledge that is effectively communicated to pupils and increases their understanding. They have good interactions with pupils and make good use of questioning to encourage them to develop their thoughts and keep them focused and interested in what is being discussed. The contributions of the daily acts of collective worship and lessons on personal, social and health education reinforce pupils' understanding and their spiritual, social and moral development. These make a satisfactory contribution to religious education. For example, the story of 'The Very Angry Ladybird', considered in assembly, was used successfully to provide a starter for the Year 2 lesson on anger. Pupils' individual needs are met and the caring approach builds up pupils' confidence and self-esteem. The teaching of religious education makes a positive contribution to pupils' literacy skills. Recording of information in lessons often involves sequencing events in the story for younger pupils, while older pupils are encouraged to record their knowledge through writing their own accounts.
147. The subject is skilfully co-ordinated and managed well. It is well supported by a clear and detailed scheme of work that is effectively linked to the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Procedures for assessment opportunities have been thoroughly planned but not as yet implemented. Resources have improved since the last inspection but there is still further room for improvement. Suitable use is made of religious artefacts, which are usually handled carefully

and with respect.