

INSPECTION REPORT

HASLINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Haslington, Nr Crewe

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique Reference Number: 111072

Headteacher: Miss J A Evans

Reporting inspector: Dr D A W Biltcliffe
1025

Dates of inspection: 7th - 10th May 2002

Inspection number: 196343

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
Type of control:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr B Tebbutt
Date of previous inspection:	7 th - 11 th July 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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1025	Dr D A W Biltcliffe	Registered inspector	History; equality of opportunity	Results and pupils' achievements; teaching and learning
9034	Mrs J W Biltcliffe	Lay inspector		Attendance; partnership with parents
1261	Mr R Heath	Team inspector	Mathematics; information and communication technology	Leadership and management
22841	Miss P M Jackson	Team inspector	English; physical education; religious education	
1678	Mr D A Peckett	Team inspector	Science; design and technology	Attitudes, values and personal development
2041	Mrs D V Reid	Team inspector	Foundation stage; geography	Pupils' welfare and guidance
4607	Dr D E Ward	Team inspector	Art; music; special educational needs; gifted and talented pupils	Curriculum

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school has 335 pupils aged 4-11 and is larger than average. The social and economic background of its pupils is well above average overall: only nine pupils (less than three per cent), for example, are known to be eligible for free school meals. The overall level of attainment of pupils on entry to the school is above the national average. Just two pupils have statements of special educational need (SEN), a low proportion. The proportion (14 per cent) of pupils on the school's SEN register is below the national average. The school's population is almost entirely white. Just 14 out of the 46 children in the reception year were under the age of five at the time of the inspection.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school that provides a high quality of education for its pupils. Amongst its many strengths is a noticeable ethos of great care, support and encouragement for children. Most pupils make sound progress throughout the school. The overall standard of attainment by the end of Year 6 is above average in nearly all subjects. The school's leadership is well focused on creating a high standard of learning and nurturing pupils' personal needs. Its management is caring, perceptive and diligent. Still more attention needs paying to tracking pupils' progress. Teaching is good overall, and quite often very good. Pupils work hard and are very friendly and well-mannered. Overall, the school has far more strengths than weaknesses. It gives good value for money. It is a good place for children to learn and grow up in.

What the school does well

- The overall standard of attainment is above average in nearly all subjects.
- Pupils work hard, show initiative and maturity, and made sound progress in their studies.
- Teaching is of high quality: pupils find lessons interesting, attend very well and are very punctual.
- The leadership and management of the headteacher and deputy headteacher are of high calibre.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning, to one another and to adults. They behave very well.
- Pupils are very well cared for. The school promotes their moral and social development very strongly, too.
- The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is strong: these pupils progress well.
- The vast majority of parents (rightly) rate the school highly: their children receive a good education here.

What could be improved

- Some unsatisfactory teaching, superficial marking and the provision made for gifted and talented children.
- The use of assessment data to monitor pupils' progress and the school's performance accurately.
- The overall provision for music.
- An enhancement of the staffing and accommodation for reception-age children.
- The monitoring and evaluation of the school's teaching and learning by subject coordinators.
- The accuracy of reporting to parents about subjects studied and of children's attainment and progress.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made sound progress overall since its last inspection in 1997. It has made satisfactory progress on the weaknesses identified at that time. For example:

- it has a sound approach to planning lessons and monitoring pupils' progress in class;
- most teachers successfully ensure that pupils take appropriate initiative and responsibility in lessons;

- senior management concentrates on ensuring that pupils make good progress in their studies; and
- the school's provision for pupils' spiritual development has improved to a good level.

Some progress has been made on monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and the school's performance, but there is more to be done on both these areas by senior management and subject coordinators, in order to know accurately about the overall quality of provision, the rate of pupils' progress and the school's performance.

Pupils' overall standard of attainment in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2 has been sustained at (and raised slightly beyond) the high level it was in 1997. It is about the same as it was at the end of Year 6. The school's good teaching has improved further. The vast majority of pupils continue to make sound progress. The school has successfully maintained its great care and encouragement of children. Its standards can be even higher by the end of Year 6. Governors and senior management are strongly committed to further improvement.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	A	A	A	C
mathematics	A	A	B	D
science	C	A	D	E

Key:

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

Pupils' overall standard of attainment on entering reception is above average. It has been well above average by the end of Year 2 over the whole of the 1996-2001 period in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. In 2001, all pupils reached the basic Level 2 in the Year 2 national test in mathematics and virtually all did so in the reading and writing tests; the mathematics result put the school amongst the top five per cent nationally in this subject. Teachers assessed all their pupils as reaching Level 2 in speaking and listening and in science. The proportions of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 in the national tests were well above average in reading and mathematics, but below average in writing – although the overall standard of writing is currently above average. When compared with the performance of pupils in similar kinds of schools, pupils in this school generally did very well, except for a dip in writing. Pupils make good progress between reception and the end of Year 2: the high overall quality of teaching during these years is the major factor in this achievement.

By the end of Year 6, pupils attained an overall standard in national tests over the last six years that was well above average, although with some differences. Over 1996-1998 and in 2000, for example, pupils' average point scores were at this high level, but, although still above average, were slightly lower in 1999 and 2001. Pupils' overall attainment was generally high over these years in English and mathematics (especially the latter). In 2001, the English performance was stronger than the (still good) performance in mathematics. Pupils did not, however, do as well in science: this underachievement in science was largely due in 2001 to reported inadequacies in teaching that have since been addressed. When the school's Year 6 results are compared with those achieved by schools of a similar kind, they tend to be in line with the group average. They dropped below it for the first time in 2001, however, largely because of the weakness in science.

The school's national test results over the last few years have risen in line with the rising national trends. Pupils generally make sound progress through the school. Boys and girls tend to do equally well. The overall standard of work seen during the inspection was above average in nearly all subjects by the end of Year 6. It is broadly

average, however, in geography, information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education (RE). It could be a little higher overall, particularly in music. The highest standards in the school are achieved as a result of rigorous, stimulating teaching and pupils' ready willingness to concentrate hard. The school's targets for pupils' attainment are reasonable.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils like school, are keen to learn, concentrate well and work hard. They get down to work without fuss.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave very responsibly. They show appropriate respect and concern for other people, their views and property.
Personal development and relationships	A very high standard and a strength of the school. Pupils are very polite, friendly and courteous. They respond warmly to others and show sensible initiative and maturity.
Attendance	Very good. Pupils are punctual, too, for school and lessons.

The vast majority of pupils display committed attitudes and often exemplary behaviour. They are a pleasure to teach, respond with enthusiasm and talk with interest and maturity.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Reception	Years 1- 2	Years 3- 6
Quality of teaching	very good	good	good

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

The quality of teaching is good overall (very good for reception children) and another strength of the school. It is better than it was at the time of the last inspection. It is good in nearly all subjects and year groups, but unsatisfactory throughout the school in music. It is sound overall in English, mathematics, geography and RE in Years 3-6. Literacy and numeracy are effectively taught overall. Very good (and occasionally outstanding) teaching was seen in more than one in every three lessons inspected, but teaching was unsatisfactory in about one lesson in ten. Pupils learn well because they generally receive stimulating teaching, show high interest and concentrate hard. In the many well-taught lessons seen, pupils make good progress through teachers' high expectations, meticulous organisation, clear explanations, a brisk pace and very good discipline. Unsatisfactory teaching is characterised by uninteresting work, low challenge and a slow pace of work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall. Pupils receive a broad, relevant and balanced education. The school provides a fair range of extracurricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school makes good provision for these pupils through its teaching, skill and number of support assistants, and through a careful match of work. As a result, most pupils make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is substantial, thoughtful and effective overall. Pupils' spiritual development has improved since 1997 and is now good. Pupils are taught clearly about the difference between right or wrong. Their social experience is very good. Cultural awareness is promoted satisfactorily.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Staff work hard and successfully to make children's experience of school safe and rewarding. They are particularly vigilant about Child Protection issues.

The school's pastoral care of pupils is impressive. Procedures are thorough for day-to-day routines and for promoting good attendance, behaviour and relationships. Most parents are very appreciative of what the school does. The school works closely with parents and tries to keep them well informed, but there is more work to be done on providing curricular information to them and reporting specifically about children's attainment and progress. The school has broadly satisfactory procedures for assessing academic progress (though with gaps), but no specific policies for promoting giftedness and talents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides very clear, sensitive educational direction for the school, ably supported by her management team. Curriculum coordinators work hard, but the performance of subjects is not monitored enough.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very experienced and committed. They have a sound overview of the school's performance, working closely with staff.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Generally good and improved since 1997. Extensive sets of data are used to monitor academic progress. More evaluation is, however, required of pupils' progress in most subjects.
The strategic use of resources	The school plans, monitors, assesses and controls its spending priorities carefully. It looks closely at how to achieve best value for its money.

Most aspects of management and organisation are strong and effective. The school monitors many aspects of pupils' progress well, but does not evaluate its (or pupils') overall academic performance rigorously enough. The school has, in the main, enough staff, learning resources and accommodation. Reception facilities are limited.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The high quality of teaching.• Children's progress, effort and achievement.• Pupils' behaviour and interest in school life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A few would like closer links with the school and more information about its work.

Inspectors' judgements support parents' views. The school's teaching and pupils' learning are, in nearly all respects, solid, well organised and very caring. Children enjoy coming to school. The school values the role of parents, but provides too little information to them about what their children will study and reports are sketchy. Overall, however, parents and the wider community rightly have very high regard for the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. When pupils join the school at the age of four, their level of attainment varies from well above to below average, but more pupils in this school are above average in attainment than is typical nationally. Pupils' overall standard of attainment in current classwork towards the end of reception (Foundation Stage), Year 2 and Year 6 is above average. Standards have largely been sustained at the same high level as they were at the time of the last inspection.

2. When pupils join the school in reception (at the beginning of the academic year in which they become five), their overall level of attainment is above average. The evidence of the school's early assessments indicates that pupils are above average in most aspects of learning – in, for example, their personal and social development, speaking and listening, mathematical knowledge and understanding, reasoning capability, physical skills and understanding of the world around them. Assessments suggest that they have a broadly average capability in science and technology and in reading, but (curiously) their overall standard of writing is judged to be below average.

3. By the end of reception, the overall standard of attainment is above average. A much larger proportion of pupils than usual have achieved the nationally recognised *stepping stones* of learning and *Early Learning Goals*: about a quarter well exceed normal expectations and are well on their way towards (or have reached) Level 1 of the National Curriculum programmes of study in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, whilst the rest have achieved the expectations for their age. Standards in personal and social development are generally well above average. Most children speak very confidently and clearly, with above average precision. They listen and respond very well to others. This rate of progress in reception indicates a good achievement by pupils. The consistently high quality of teaching of reception children is a major factor in ensuring that pupils lay secure foundations for the future.

4. The school's national test results taken towards the end of Year 2 have been well above average overall since the last inspection in 1997. In 2001, for example, the proportion of pupils who attained the national yardstick of at least Level 2 was well above average in all of reading, writing and mathematics. In mathematics all pupils attained this level. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 in 2001 was well above average in reading and mathematics, but below average in writing. Generally speaking, more pupils in this school reach the higher Level 3 in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science than in a typical primary school. Current pupils do not display the lower performance in writing indicated by the 2001 national tests.

5. Based on average point scores, pupils' overall attainment by the end of Year 2 in the last few years has nearly always been well above the national average in all of reading, writing and mathematics. Although standards have varied a little over the years in other aspects, teachers have generally judged that well above average proportions of pupils show good capability in speaking and listening and in science, too.

6. There is not much difference overall in the performance of boys and girls. Both sexes usually do equally well in reading and writing. Although both boys and girls do much better overall than what their counterparts typically achieve nationally, boys especially tend to do better than boys do nationally. In mathematics, girls have done marginally better than boys overall in three out of the last four years, but there is not much in it.

7. Pupils' attainment in the 2001 national tests in this school at the end of Year 2, when compared with that achieved in schools with a similar background (as measured only by the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals), was well above average overall. The ratings were, however, strongest in mathematics and science and weakest in writing. A similar comparison over the last three years shows a strong rise in the proportions of pupils reaching at least Level 2 in reading, mathematics and science.

8. The overall standard of work of current Year 2 pupils is above average in nearly all subjects, but is broadly average in geography and in information and communication technology (ICT). All available evidence, including the evidence of the inspection, indicates that pupils make good progress during their time in school. The quality of teaching from reception to the end of Year 2 is (with rare exceptions) good and much of it is very good indeed - and occasionally outstanding. This high quality of teaching capitalises very well on the knowledge and skills that pupils also bring with them from home.

9. In the national tests taken towards the end of Year 6 in 2001, pupils' attainment of at least the basic yardstick of Level 4 was well above the national average in English and above it in mathematics (in previous years well above). It was below average, however, in science in 2001 (although varying between average and well above average in the previous three years). The proportion of pupils reaching at least the higher Level 5 in 2001 was above average in English and mathematics, and average in science - a broadly similar picture to that of earlier years. Teachers' assessments of Year 6 pupils in 2001 were generally close to what pupils achieved in the national tests at both Levels 4 and 5.

10. When the school's average point scores over the 1996-2001 period are compared with one another and national trends, the school has achieved a steady, high performance overall. The strongest subject is usually mathematics, but English is not far behind. Science is usually the weakest of the three core subjects.

11. There is a slight overall difference in the attainment of boys and girls. The school's average point scores over the last few years have been broadly in line with the national trend. There is, however, some evidence that girls' overall performance has not held up quite as well as that of boys: whereas girls show a slight decline, relative to the national picture, in all three subjects over the 1997-2001 period, boys have generally held steady. This is especially true of English. The result is that the boys are generally further in front of boys nationally than girls in this school are in front of girls nationally – as they are earlier on in the school.

12. When the school's 2001 results at the end of Year 6 are set alongside those of schools with a similar "free school meals" background, this school's performance was below the group average overall. For example, the proportion of pupils achieving at least Level 4 or Level 5 was in line with the group average in English and mathematics, but below it in science. On the basis of average point scores, pupils in this school performed below the group average in mathematics, well below it in science, but in line with the comparator group's English standard.

13. There is limited statistical evidence to indicate pupils' rate of progress over Years 3-6. The national test results suggest that the majority of pupils make sound progress overall. This is particularly true of the Year 2 pupils of 1996 who left Year 6 in 2000, because they moved further ahead of the national trend-line during this period of time. The following year's cohort (those pupils who left school in 2001) showed, however, some evidence of slippage, particularly in science: in this subject, for example, pupils were assessed by their teachers as being well above average overall in 1997, but (largely the same pupils) performed in the national tests at a level just below average four years later in 2001. The reason for the dip in science has been investigated, but not convincingly explained, by the school. Overall, however, the school's results have broadly risen in the last few years in line with the rising national trend.

14. There is some variation in individual pupils' standards of reading, but the overall level is above average by the end of both Years 2 and 6. Most pupils read aloud with confidence, clarity and expression – and are keen to do so. The majority read accurately and tackle new words capably, partly as a result of the thorough teaching they receive. Pupils have the skill to sample books, skim their contents and extract relevant information from a range of written material. They enjoy a range of both fiction and non-fiction books, partly as a result of the school's well-planned reading programme.

15. The overall standard of writing is a little above average by the end of Years 2 and 6. The majority of pupils organise and structure their writing soundly and carry out written tasks carefully. Some extended, analytical writing is of a very high order. In most lessons, as a result of being provided with suitable guidelines, pupils focus on the essentials of written tasks and sequence their ideas reasonably; the lack of clear objectives or, for example, lesson-specific vocabulary on the board, however, leaves some pupils achieving less than they could. Note-taking is infrequently used by older pupils as a basis for essays or discussion. The presentation of

work, general neatness and handwriting are very good overall: most pupils take great pride in their work and are encouraged to do so. Spelling and punctuation are above average. Specialist vocabulary is appropriately used in most lessons.

16. High-attaining pupils usually produce work that is suitably descriptive or analytical to a high standard, accompanied, where relevant, by well-crafted illustrations or data-tables. The writing of pupils with special educational needs usually improves satisfactorily, as a result of skilled help. The writing of mid-range pupils is average overall in depth and range, but not enough work is completed in a small minority of lessons where pupils do not focus precisely enough on the task set or waste time on inessential drawing to accompany their writing. Unusually but very effectively, cursive (“joined-up”) writing is taught from reception onwards.

17. Pupils usually listen carefully. Irrelevant chatter is rare. The overall standard of speaking is above average in clarity, audibility and expression. Far more pupils than usual – and right from reception – confidently take the initiative in conversation and many give both precise and extended answers to questions. Pupils take pleasure in discussion and choose words carefully. Teachers and other adults in the school are good role models: many encourage pupils to reflect thoughtfully and to sustain an extended conversation or statement. Around the school, too, many pupils display a considerable facility for mature, thoughtful conversation.

18. The overall standard of mathematics is good throughout the school. Pupils have a capable grasp of number work, sound competence in mental mathematics and a solid understanding of such aspects as measurement and the correct abbreviations of units. They interpret and graph data appropriately in science, although there is little use of graphs in geography or history. Calculators are used sensibly – as, for example, to check out the conversion of a fraction to two decimal places.

19. Standards of attainment in science are above average throughout the school. Pupils have solid knowledge of basic scientific processes and carry out scientific investigations and written summaries of experimental work competently and enthusiastically. Pupils' attainment in ICT is broadly average at the end of all the main stages in the school: the new computer suite has a major impact on pupils' competence in the subject.

20. Pupils' level of attainment in other subjects is generally above average by the ends of reception, Year 2 and Year 6. Attainment is, however, broadly average in geography and by the end of Year 6 in music and religious education (RE). It is below average in music by the end of Year 2 and achievement in the subject is lower than it could be throughout the school.

21. The school has a fairly sound basis for charting and reviewing both pupils' progress and accomplishments and its overall academic performance. There has been a broadly satisfactory improvement in this aspect since the last inspection, when assessment was a key issue for action. The school does not, however, yet fully synthesise its range of data or interrogate and explain it adequately. Nor does it assess, to consistent national criteria, all the subjects that pupils study. The steps now necessary to produce a comprehensive, valid and robust system are well within its grasp.

22. The evidence of the inspection indicates clearly that pupils make good progress throughout reception and Years 1-2. Pupils' progress and achievements are sound overall during Years 3-6, but could be greater in some lessons through still more intellectual rigour and pace, particularly for the highest attainers (including gifted and talented children). The level of attainment of pupils with special educational needs is reasonable and in line with the targets set in their individual educational plans (IEPs). They generally make good progress throughout the school as a result of effective, well-planned teaching and support. The school's targets for pupils' achievement at the end of Year 6 in this year's national tests are appropriately high.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

23. At the time of the last inspection, pupils' attitudes, values and personal development were judged to be good. They are now very good and a significant strength of the school. Parents are very supportive of the school's management of pupils' behaviour and its promotion of positive values and attitudes, recognising the high priority that the school successfully gives to these aspects.

24. Pupils have very positive attitudes to school. They enjoy learning and are highly motivated. The school has an air of orderly calm, as pupils move quietly and quickly to and from lessons, assemblies or the playground: routines are well established and expectations of pupils consistently high. Pupils are attentive, keen to learn and participate enthusiastically and confidently in class. These attitudes permeate the school from the reception year, where pupils sit quietly, listen well, follow instructions, take turns and understandingly assimilate class routines. By Year 6, pupils are mature, confident, articulate and responsible.

25. On entering class, pupils settle immediately and expect to work. They are interested and used to working hard. In lessons they are alert and quick to respond by answering or asking questions or by joining a discussion with other pupils. Often their answers are full and detailed, giving articulate and complex explanations of their thoughts or of the approaches they have used to solve a problem – as, for instance, in mathematics or design and technology. They have a very good understanding of how to behave appropriately in different situations; this facility is strongly developed through the school's provision for moral and social education.

26. Behaviour in lessons is generally good and often very good. Pupils have well-developed social skills and collaborate effectively in pairs or small groups. They show respect for one another and for resources. During breaks and lunchtimes, groups of pupils play very happily together: for example, they skip, play football, sit quietly and talk or run about within a very friendly atmosphere. In a few lessons, when the teaching fails to engage and motivate them, their behaviour deteriorates and learning becomes unsatisfactory. Pupils still have good self-control, however, in those situations, are aware of their poor behaviour and know that it falls below their usual high standard.

27. Pupils are encouraged to exercise initiative in their learning and in their contribution to school life. The system of prefects provides good opportunities for pupils to learn about responsibility. The prefects manage other pupils very sensitively – as, for instance, at lunchtimes – and show care and respect in a most mature manner. Class representatives on the school council enable pupils to express their views and contribute to school developments. It is a system that pupils value, because they know that their views are respected and often acted upon. In the shared areas pupils are expected to show initiative by selecting and managing resources, often without close supervision. Pupils manage the tuck shop responsibly during the mid-morning break. Importantly, they show great personal responsibility after visiting the shop, for there is no litter visible at the end of playtime. Older pupils enjoy their time in paired-reading sessions with younger pupils, when their maturity and reading skills are used very skilfully and sensitively.

28. In lessons, pupils listen carefully to one another's contributions. They support and encourage one another and confidently share their personal thoughts and experiences. Sometimes pupils voluntarily follow up ideas from school and undertake extended research at home – as when pupils in Year 6 found out more about famous scientists. In science, art and in design and technology, pupils plan and organise their own work appropriately. There are, however, not enough of these opportunities, particularly for the most able pupils.

29. The improvement since 1997 in the school's provision for spiritual education has built well upon pupils' awareness of the feelings, sensitivities and beliefs of others. There is often a shared excitement, in moments of awe and wonder – as, for instance, when Year 4 pupils looked through microscopes at the surface of different kinds of paper. Both the internal and external environments of the school contribute to this sense of beauty, respect and interest and help pupils to reflect on what is important in life.

30. Relationships are very good throughout the school. Pupils show respect for fellow pupils and adults. They know that they are valued and respected by all the adults they meet in school. Their self-esteem is high and fostered by the school's inclusive provision. Teachers are, with very rare exceptions, highly sensitive to issues of poor behaviour or negative attitudes. Any examples of unacceptable behaviour are addressed quickly to reinforce the values, attitudes and personal development that are at the heart of the school's provision.

31. Pupils' level of attendance is very good and has been sustained at the high level achieved at the time of the last inspection in 1997. In the 2000-2001 academic year, for example, pupils' attendance was 96.5 per cent –

well above the pattern of primary school attendance nationally. In the same year the levels of both authorised absence (3.4 per cent) and absence without good reason (0.1 per cent) were noticeably better than the national picture.

32. This high level of attendance is a great credit to pupils, their parents and the school's staff. It is partly achieved through the considerable importance that the headteacher and her staff place on encouraging and monitoring attendance. Additionally, parents as a whole regard school attendance as a high priority. Nearly all absence is due to illness. There is little taking of holidays in term-time.

33. Pupils' punctuality for school is also very good: very few pupils are late for school. Pupils are punctual for lessons, too, usually entering the school building briskly at the end of breaks and lunchtimes. Once in their classes, pupils settle down promptly and (with rare exceptions) quietly to work.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

34. The quality of teaching is a strength of the school. It ranges from excellent to unsatisfactory, but is good overall. It is satisfactory or better in nine out of every ten lessons. In nearly two-fifths of all lessons seen the teaching was good and in a further third it was very good. In two lessons in the early years it was outstanding. In nearly one in ten of the lessons inspected, however, the quality of teaching was unsatisfactory. The evidence of the lessons seen shows clearly that in lessons where there is very good teaching pupils achieve noticeably greater depth of learning, high standards and good progress in their studies.

35. This high quality of teaching is fairly evenly spread across the school, but is at its strongest in the early years, where teachers are very ably led and where nearly every one is highly skilled. Overall, however, with rare exceptions, teachers are thorough, enthusiastic and buoyant. They know their craft well and work hard and imaginatively for the children in their care.

36. The quality of teaching is higher overall than that reported at the last inspection in 1997: most of the weaknesses noted then have been improved. Work is now generally matched satisfactorily, for example, to the different abilities of pupils within a class. Some teachers make helpful comments in their marking to show pupils how they can improve their work – although this is still not done frequently or specifically enough. The amount of unsatisfactory teaching seen has unfortunately increased slightly from seven per cent in 1997 to nine per cent now: this requires management's close attention. In contrast, nearly three-quarters of the teaching is now good or better – a substantial increase on the half seen at the last inspection. In particular, the amount of very good teaching has more than doubled since 1997 and a small amount of it is outstanding. Teaching is a strength in this school, because most children experience high-quality teaching nearly all the time.

37. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of what they teach. It is particularly extensive in the early years, in design and technology in Years 1-2 and in art in Years 3-6. This general depth of subject knowledge leads to a clear planning of the content of topics and the selection of suitable learning materials. With few exceptions, teachers proceed to give clear explanations and display confidence and imagination in answering pupils' queries, sometimes suggesting to pupils, for example, that they could research answers for themselves and discussing the usefulness of different sources of information. In the best cases, teachers draw on their width of knowledge to pose probing, open-ended or supplementary questions that effectively extend and enliven pupils' thinking. Many have the depth of knowledge on hand to answer pupils' questions convincingly and accurately.

38. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is, in the main, promoted well. This is done particularly through well-structured and imaginatively organised work around the national literacy and numeracy strategies. In many classrooms, important general or subject-specific words are prominently displayed and are occasionally directly referred to during lessons. In a minority of cases, however, repeated spelling or punctuation mistakes are not drawn frequently enough to the attention of older pupils in particular, even when the same fundamental mistake is made by many children. Very occasionally, school-produced materials contain spelling errors. Unusually but effectively, pupils are taught to use cursive writing from their earliest time in the school. Emphasis on using

correct terminology – such as “capital” and “lower-case” for letters – starts early. In mathematics lessons and occasionally in other subjects pupils are encouraged to sharpen their mental numerical skills well.

39. Teachers plan lessons well and generally have clear structures and notes. The vast majority are clear about what they want to achieve in lessons, mapping out themes at the outset. They generally use time well and adhere to suitable timescales for activities. In the best lessons, teachers formulate their objectives very precisely and share them with pupils. The result is that pupils’ interest is aroused, they know clearly what they have to do, can plan their own work sensibly and make good progress in their studies. In a minority of lessons, however, teachers are not specific enough on what they want pupils to learn. In consequence, they do not give pupils clear enough outlines or pointers to what they are doing and cannot assess their progress accurately.

40. Most lessons start with a quick revision of what has been done already. In the majority of cases, teachers briskly check pupils’ recall and understanding by posing clear questions, step by step, and skilfully drawing out pupils’ ideas – as in a Year 4 geography lesson when the teacher elicited an accurate, extensive recall of such features as the location, climatic features and attitudes of the inhabitants of Baffin Island. In contrast to the generally effective start to lessons, the ends of lessons are sometimes weaker, because teachers do not always leave themselves enough time in the last few minutes to draw cogently and precisely together what has been learned earlier. The result is that pupils in these classes are not always clear about the full significance of the lesson and teachers are not sure about the depth of pupils’ understanding. The most effective lessons often have brief, intermediate sessions that pull ideas together, sharpen pupils’ thinking and move work along briskly and rigorously.

41. In most lessons teachers have appropriately high expectations of what pupils can do. A brisk pace and intellectual rigour are the hallmarks of these classes. In the most effective lessons, teachers pose thoughtful questions and require pupils to give answers in suitably precise or technical language. They keep up a cracking pace. Importantly, they encourage pupils to explain the reasons for their views and often extend pupils’ first ideas by supplementary questions or alternative suggestions. Such very stimulating and effective teaching was seen in around a third of lessons as well as in optional classes. In the lunchtime French classes, for example, the teacher’s obvious enthusiasm was riveting and infectious, as she continually encouraged and animated her pupils to practise the language confidently. As a result, pupils made very good progress.

42. In a minority of lessons, however, more could be achieved. This is sometimes because the work set is too easy, because too little ground is covered in the time available or because fairly simple answers are accepted without deeper probing or alternative ideas and explanations being thoroughly examined. Occasionally pupils – many of whom are very capable and articulate – are able to coast along or are presented with work that does not extend their minds or imaginations enough.

43. Lessons usually have an appropriate balance of explanation and direction from teachers, followed by class activities. In the most effective cases, teachers carefully extend their own direct input by pupils working individually, in pairs or in groups on specific tasks. In a few cases they incorporate such activities as brainstorming and quick note-taking. As a result, pupils are generally confident in expressing a point of view, quite frequently and fluently outlining their thoughts, and listen carefully to what others have to say. Teachers are generally good at using question-and-answer sessions to take pupils over new ground, gradually leading them on to understand new ideas. In too few cases, however, do teachers encourage older pupils in particular to take quick notes of significant points that can be used later in paired or group work, for whole-class discussion or for extended written work.

44. The management of classes and pupils’ behaviour is a strength of the school. In nearly all classes pupils know exactly what is expected of them and respond in a sensible, mature way, getting on with their work immediately. Almost invariably, the control and direction of pupils are calm, precise and caringly positive. The atmosphere for learning is quiet and purposeful in nearly all lessons. Pupils are occasionally encouraged to undertake some work independently with a minimum of direct supervision, but this did not occur frequently enough during the inspection.

45. Time is normally used well and an appropriate amount of work is covered in most lessons. Books and equipment are generally well organised. Equipment such as an overhead projector is sometimes used very

effectively to analyse and summarise what has been learned – as, for example, in a dance lesson for pupils in Years 5 and 6, when future targets were also set. Individual, small whiteboards or number fans are used very effectively in a few classes to ensure that all pupils attempt to solve problems, enabling teachers to check all pupils' understanding directly and limiting the opportunity for pupils to coast along. Teachers and a variety of high-quality support staff work closely and effectively together for the benefit of pupils.

46. Teachers generally assess pupils' work and progress satisfactorily during lessons. In the best cases, they often make quick assessments of pupils' progress by circulating round the class. Pupils' work is usually marked regularly, but constructive comments are much rarer of the kind that clearly indicate to pupils the quality of their work and how they can improve their standards for the future. Homework is normally set reasonably to extend work in class; some pupils show great initiative in undertaking research at home, often as a result of teachers' prompting them to investigate issues more deeply and sometimes for the benefit of the whole class.

47. Teaching is good overall throughout the school. It is predominantly sound in English, mathematics, geography and RE in Years 3-6, but unsatisfactory overall throughout the school in music. It is very good in reception, in design and technology in Years 1-2 and in art in Years 3-6. In all other subjects and stages of the school it is good.

48. Pupils make sound progress in their studies because of the high quality teaching they normally receive, the school's ethos of orderly calm and the confidence that most children have to express themselves. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress owing to the well-planned and encouraging teaching they receive. High-attaining pupils usually make reasonable progress, although their needs are not always finely identified. Boys and girls learn equally well and, on the whole, make similar progress. Pupils persevere with their work and take part in lessons with obvious enjoyment.

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

49. The school provides an appropriately broad and suitably balanced curriculum, with a good quality and range of learning opportunities. The curriculum successfully meets the all-round needs of all its pupils, although the school has not specifically identified pupils who are gifted or talented; there are, therefore, no formal curricular arrangements for them.

50. The school's curriculum is enhanced by a satisfactory range of activities outside daily lessons. These include football, cricket, athletics and swimming as well as chess club, recorder groups and choir. Pupils benefit from a good range of educational visits – as, for example, to Chester, to the Manchester Museum of Science and Industry and to Quarry Bank Mill. The school meets the statutory requirement to teach all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education (RE).

51. The allocation of time to each subject has been carefully considered in the light of the effective implementation of the daily literacy and numeracy hours. The overall time allocated for teaching is slightly below that recommended nationally for pupils in Years 3-6. This is due to the over-long, daily half-hour provided on the timetable for assembly. The overall design of the curriculum strikes a good balance between topic-related activities and discrete subjects. Realistic links are made where possible – as, for example, between the historical study of Ancient Egypt, modern Egypt and pupils' own artwork based on Egyptian designs and patterns.

52. Some classes receive separate lessons in personal, social and health education (PSHE). These lessons are based on the use of published material. Pupils in Years 1-3 consider and reflect well on their personal and social experiences in "circle time". The school does not, however, organise these important lessons according to a formal plan. Sex education is taught appropriately to pupils in Year 6, with the agreement of the governing body. Health education, which includes the dangers of drugs, is taught both in lessons and by such visiting experts as dentists and the police.

53. There are effective policies in place for the teaching of all subjects: the school makes good use of nationally published schemes of work. In some subjects such as art, design and technology and ICT, especially thorough work has gone into adapting these schemes to the particular needs of the school.

Subject coordinators have limited roles at present, particularly in the foundation subjects: as a result, there is insufficient formal assessment of pupils' attainment and too little sharing of ideas and practice to enhance daily lessons.

54. The school is well aware of the issue of equality of opportunity. Boys and girls have equal access to all activities. So too do pupils with special educational needs (SEN). The school has fully adopted the revised Code of Practice (January 2002) which emphasises the importance of ensuring that these pupils are taught alongside their peers, wherever possible. The school is moving quickly towards a pattern of withdrawal (where desirable), so that support teachers can follow up the tasks set by class teachers. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are written by the coordinator for SEN (SENCO) and then shown to class teachers and parents for comment. Files containing regular test results are kept and monitored carefully.

55. Links with the local community are good. A significant number of parents help regularly in lessons and there is an active parents' and friends' association, *Friends of Haslington School* (FOHS), which both organises social events and raises considerable sums of money to help the school to buy additional resources. The school enjoys the support of a major bank and a prestigious car company. There are also regular visits to the school by police, health workers, clergy and governors who offer expertise and advice based on their own professional backgrounds.

56. The school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils is good. Spiritual development is well promoted through daily assemblies, which are also occasions for collective worship. Since the last inspection, the school has worked well to strengthen its provision for pupils' spiritual development. Staff have received training and effective advice from, for instance, an experienced teacher of RE. The school's attractive internal and external environment positively promotes pupils' aesthetic and spiritual development. The school has effectively improved its spiritual provision since 1997.

57. In assemblies, pupils are told about sources of spiritual experience – as, for example, through family bonds, care and security. In one assembly the teacher told pupils about his closeness to his own children and his deep attachment to his extended family, symbolised by soft toys. Pupils have recently visited a mosque and a local church: these visits also provided very good opportunities for art work, which is proudly displayed in school. The youngest pupils are encouraged to talk about their own feelings, engendered by stories from the Bible and other sources. Pupils in Year 6 write about important festivals and celebrations. The coordinator for RE has compiled an impressive folio of pupils' work, photographs and other material to encourage pupils' reflection. Spiritual experiences arise in some other lessons, too – as in a science lesson where pupils were clearly moved by microscope-images of the structure of paper.

58. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. Pupils learn much, above all, from the very clear examples of desirable conduct set by staff. When pupils' behaviour is unacceptable, teachers appeal to their reason and discuss the error of their ways sensitively but clearly with them. Pupils receive clear, moral messages in assemblies, in RE and in PSHE lessons – as, for example, about caring for one another in the story of the Good Samaritan and other stories that portray moral dilemmas commonly experienced by people.

59. Moral issues arise in other daily lessons, too. In history, for example, pupils learn about democracy during their study of the Ancient Greeks and about the devotion to duty exemplified in the work of Florence Nightingale. There is a clearly understood system of rewards and sanctions. During the inspection only minor sanctions were seen to be necessary. The pupils themselves have helped to formulate rules of conduct for the whole school through their elected representatives on the school council.

60. Pupils' social development is also promoted very well. Many lessons include tasks in which pupils work together in a spirit of cooperation, as was very evident in art and physical education (PE) lessons. Pupils also enjoy "paired reading" and opportunities for debate in English lessons. Further opportunities arise for forming a variety of friendships through extracurricular activities and school visits. Pupils may belong to the school council, at which they represent the concerns of their own classmates. Around 20 of the oldest pupils serve as prefects, undertaking sensitively and effectively such duties as helping in designated classrooms and in supervision at lunchtime. Pupils regularly assist in lessons with such routine tasks as setting out equipment.

61. The school's very orderly ethos ensures that pupils can work and socialise in a safe, secure and pleasing environment. The old and new parts of the building provide a very good range of spaces for recreation and socialisation. Near the main reception area and at other points around the school are comfortable seats which are both functional and reminiscent of a family atmosphere. Arrangements for lunch are well organised: pupils are able to enjoy their meals and conversation in a very civilised manner. The high level of parental involvement in lessons and other school activities helps further to reinforce pupils' social experiences. Pupils learn good social skills by welcoming and talking to the many adults who visit the school. They also perform songs and recorder pieces regularly to senior citizens at a nearby home.

62. The school's provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Every class has at least one educational visit each year. These include visits to places of historical and cultural interest such as a Roman settlement and an arts theatre. Pupils also have visitors in school – such as a drama group that presented Greek drama and a church minister about to leave for The Gambia; she gave pupils a rare flavour of life and the state of education in that country. The school provides lunchtime lessons in French which are taught with a very high level of expertise; these sessions include French songs.

63. In assemblies, pupils regularly hear music by established composers. In art lessons, for instance, their work is stimulated by presentations of notable art work by Chagall, Mondrian and Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Lessons in PSHE include information about life in such remote places as Siberia, and the PE policy includes giving pupils "a taste for life" through its various activities. The school, however, provides only a limited range of opportunities to experience (for example) arts activities at a high level or for face-to-face meetings with people from non-white communities.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

64. The school displays a very high quality of care and concern for pupils' welfare. This is an improvement on the good quality of welfare reported at the previous inspection and remains a strength of the school. The school is a very friendly, happy and harmonious community, where all pupils are valued and respected – a place where pupils like to be.

65. All the adults in school work well together and have very good relationships with the pupils. This climate provides a good model for the pupils, who in turn have good relationships with one another and with staff. The school's "code of conduct" is agreed by staff and pupils in each class. These commonsense rules are well observed: pupils consistently come up to the school's high expectations of respect for others and their property. This high level of care and concern is further supported by the commendable code of practice for parent-helpers and support staff, by the prefect system, the school council and by the attractive and well-maintained surroundings.

66. Supervision is good at all times. Pupils are encouraged to be sensibly independent. Procedures for child protection are very strong. The teacher responsible for this aspect is fully trained and all staff receive regular, up-to-date guidance on how to ensure that children are protected properly. Health and safety are taken very seriously. The premises are regularly inspected, fire drills take place regularly and there is a good level of first-aid cover. Accidents are correctly recorded. Additionally, health and safety matters are sensibly stressed in practical lessons.

67. In PE, for example, pupils understand the need to stretch their muscles and relax them after exercise with "warm-up" and "cool-down" routines at the beginning and end of lessons. In science, children know to wash their hands after sorting and classifying leaves. The pond area is fenced and pupils visiting it are always supervised. The school has improved its provision for health education and education about the dangers of drugs to a good standard. Procedures for first aid and medicines are consistent, clear and useful, but the school has no medical room.

68. The school has successfully addressed the basic weaknesses in assessing pupils' attainment and progress that were indicated in the previous report. There remains a need, however, to make further improvements to the systems now in place, in order to ensure that pupils make sufficiently good progress in lessons and over time.

69. Although the majority of teachers and support staff know pupils well, procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are still not good enough overall. They are effective for reception-age children and are very good for pupils with special educational needs. They are adequate (and sometimes good) in individual lessons. In the best cases, for example, teachers use a wide variety of ways to check pupils' progress and understanding. The planning and organisation of these lessons are such that all pupils are suitably challenged to achieve their best and given work matched to these expectations. Marking in such lessons tells pupils where they have done well and what they need to do to improve.

70. This good practice is not, however, applied consistently throughout the school. The result is that some pupils are not always stretched enough or find they can easily complete the work without much effort. A good feature of reporting, in contrast, is the three consultative meetings for parents held annually. For these, teachers prepare progress reports in English and mathematics (as well as science in Year 6). This is a very useful, formal system of contact with parents.

71. The assessment of pupils' learning is effective in English and mathematics, in that it generally guides appropriately both the teaching of these subjects and whole-school planning. In the main, teachers now have clear objectives for lessons and evaluate these to form the basis for the next stage of teaching. This is an improvement since the previous inspection but, again, is not consistently applied. In lessons where teaching objectives are shared clearly with pupils, they understand precisely where they are going and the learning expected of them. As a result, they make good progress. On some occasions, however, in classes of mixed-ability pupils all are faced with the same level of work and the same expectations.

72. The school has done much work on the setting of targets for pupils to attain. These help to focus teachers' attention on pupils' potential and achievements. The school does not, however, have a robust system for monitoring effectively the extent to which the targets were realistic, how far they have been met across all subjects, for identifying the reasons for success or for knowing clearly and quickly where progress is not as expected – and in these cases doing something about it. The school has made great strides in developing a good bank of reliable information on paper about pupils' past performance at the age of five, seven and eleven, and about individual pupils' attainment in a range of year-on-year external and internal testing. The results of each year's national tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are very thoroughly analysed to gain an accurate picture of performance in English, mathematics and science.

73. All this information is presented to staff and governors in a variety of formats. This diversity is unhelpful. It does not give clear enough information to enable senior staff, other teachers and governors to be secure about pupils' – and the school's – strengths and weaknesses, how to use and maintain the strengths, and how to ensure that any weaknesses are remedied. There is no overview of each pupil's attainment and progress from the start of school until Year 6. This makes it difficult to track pupils' progress quickly and reliably, to see where an individual pupil is not making the expected progress or to make changes in, for instance, the system of "setting" for mathematics.

74. Pupils are carefully and sensitively assessed on entry into the reception class. This system includes the useful *All about Me* booklet, where parents say what their children can do. Staff complete the local authority's "baseline" tests for all children within their first half-term in school and again towards the end of the year. The information is shared with parents, who can then help their children at home. Assessment at this stage is appropriately based on regular, close observation of pupils engaged in independent activities, on reading and by assessing class lessons in literacy, numeracy and science. This information is then used very effectively to guide the next stage of learning. As a result, the teaching has clear objectives, high enough expectations and well-matched work: pupils of all abilities, in consequence, make good progress and attain well.

75. In subjects other than English and mathematics, pupils are not assessed annually against National Curriculum levels. Progress is, however, assessed against the units of work in the national schemes of work used by the school. This form of assessment gives a clear indication of the work covered by pupils and teachers, but lacks sufficient rigour in assessing, monitoring and recording pupils' knowledge and understanding. A more systematic procedure is required in these subjects to provide teachers with more accurate information on which to plan the next stages of learning, to give clear information to parents about their children's progress and attainment, and to help staff to identify giftedness and specific talents amongst pupils. Individual education plans

(IEPs) are in place for children with special educational needs: these are used well to monitor pupils' overall progress and to guide teaching and support staff.

76. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is good and effective, even though largely informal. Teachers and support staff know their pupils well and have built up trusting relationships. The "house" system works very well. Personal achievement is acknowledged and rewarded, for example, in Friday assemblies and with team and house points. The school is aware that its record-keeping is generally informal and intends to compile a formal record of achievement for each pupil.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

77. The evidence of both the pre-inspection questionnaire to parents and the parental meeting is that the vast majority of parents are highly satisfied with what the school does for their children. They are particularly pleased with what their children learn in school and the progress they make. Virtually all parents who expressed a view feel, for example, that the school expects their children to work to the best of their ability, helps them to grow up in a mature and responsible way and enables them to make good progress in their studies. Inspectors agree. One set of parents, for instance, described how "thrilled" they were with their child's progress. Virtually all parents indicated that they felt comfortable in approaching the school about any issues to do with their children.

78. The small number of parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting generally expressed high satisfaction with most aspects of the school's work. In particular, the majority felt that they had fruitful links with the school. About two-fifths of parents returned the inspection questionnaire and the vast majority agreed with the views expressed at the meeting. A small proportion (around ten per cent) of this minority sample, however, expressed some reservation on three issues: they felt that they had insufficient information about their children's progress, that the amount of homework was insufficient or that the school did not provide sufficient activities outside lessons.

79. The inspection team's judgement is that the school's annual written reports to parents have many satisfactory features, but could be better. They usually give at least an outline idea of children's attainment, but often lack specific detail. Parents' evenings are well attended and are held at the good frequency of three times per year. Parents receive outline information about the curriculum in the school's prospectus, but are not sent guidance about what is studied in each subject each year – a weakness in the school's provision. Homework is, as the majority of parents feel, set appropriately in frequency and content, dovetailing reasonably with work in class. The range of extracurricular provision is weighted towards a variety of PE, but is fairly typical of what is found in a primary school of this kind and size: the school extends normal classroom work through these in science, French, music and PE, making a modest charge for those in science, French, instrumental music and dance.

80. Parents are provided with a broadly satisfactory range of information about the school's work and life by means, for example, of the school's prospectus and termly newsletters from the *Friends of Haslington School* (FOHS), to which the teaching staff and governing body usually contribute articles. The school's partnership policy emphasises its keenness to involve parents, a view endorsed by the majority at the pre-inspection meeting for parents.

81. The prospectus is well laid out and gives much outline information, but lacks detail for parents on how they can assist their own children's education. The school does, however, run several imaginative schemes to assist parents. Amongst these are the *Pre-Admission Library Service* (PALS) to foster links between the school and the families of those children who will start school in the following September and *La Maternelle*, an out-of-school club to care for the children of working parents. The school's induction of new pupils into the school is well planned and effective.

82. The school has implemented a written, home-school agreement: all parents have signed up to it. The school welcomes parents helping appropriately in school. A small number of parents help on a regular basis in the school with such aspects as reading, cooking, mounting work, ICT, filing, sports activities or accompanying children on visits. The total number of parents on the school's Parental Volunteer Helpers'

Register is 18: during the inspection, voluntary helpers gave valuable support to both teachers and pupils. The school undersells itself a little, however, by not having documentation that indicates clearly to parents the full range of ways in which governors and staff seek to foster the closest home-school relationship for the benefit of pupils.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

83. The school has thoroughly reviewed and revised its aims and values since the last inspection. They now reflect a very strong emphasis on high standards of achievement in addition to a clear commitment to pupils' personal development. The ethos of the school matches these aims and conveys a calm atmosphere in which pupils thrive and learn. Pupils receive a good, all-round education and generally achieve appropriate standards.

84. The leadership and management of the headteacher and other key staff are good. Their hard and successful work over many years, together with very effective and committed efforts of governors, ensure that the school is held in high regard by parents and the wider community and that pupils receive a high quality of education. Although the headteacher was unfortunately away from school through illness for the whole of the inspection, her leadership and unstinting diligence on behalf of pupils are widely recognised and valued. Teachers, non-teaching staff, pupils and parents share a firm commitment to the school. Very good relationships and a strong sense of pride are evident in all that the school does, both inside its gates and in the wider community. Pupils feel secure, valued and happy here.

85. The governing body meets regularly and, together with its committees, supports the school exceptionally well both in its strategic management and its day-to-day activities. One governor, for example, gives knowledgeable and enthusiastic support to pupils in ICT lessons. Each subject is linked to an interested governor and many of them visit during lessons to see pupils at work. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities very well and ensures that statutory requirements are met. Together with the school's senior management team, the governors provide a firm steer to raising standards by monitoring the school's performance in national tests and seeking to analyse underlying trends or weaknesses.

86. The monitoring and evaluation of quality and standards have continued to improve since the last inspection. Senior members of staff have a satisfactory programme of monitoring the quality of teaching. Each teacher tends to be formally observed teaching two or three times during the school year and the ensuing discussion on teaching methods and organisation helps to hone their skills.

87. This regularity of monitoring the quality of teaching provides a helpful contribution to the sound strategies that the school adopts in managing the performance of teachers and setting them appropriate targets. Such monitoring does not, however, always incorporate sufficient analysis to pinpoint the means of improving pupils' attainment or progress. Furthermore, despite the significant attention given to the monitoring of teaching, the few teaching weaknesses revealed by the inspection have not been tackled specifically enough to secure acceptable improvement. The monitoring of standards and effectiveness of pupils' learning in individual subjects is inadequately done overall.

88. Planning for school improvement is generally good and productive, and is better than at the time of the last inspection. Priorities for action are embedded in the aims of the school, its achievements and spending commitments. Each objective is costed and the staff responsible for leading the improvements are clearly identified. Nevertheless, some objectives lack sufficient precision to make the intended outcome clear or fail to indicate how success will be measured with enough clarity to make meaningful evaluations afterwards.

89. The assessment of individual pupils' progress is undertaken regularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. It is beginning to be used comprehensively to determine pupils' long-term progress, to indicate trends and to identify issues that require further investigation or action. Analyses of pupils' performance are used well to arrange pupils into groups of similar attainment in numeracy, for example. The assessment of pupils' attainment in other subjects is not adequate enough to track their progress nor to identify clearly those pupils who deviate unexpectedly from their track record. Equally, the

systematic identification and monitoring of the progress of very able pupils are unsatisfactory. The management and coordination of work and assessment for pupils with special educational needs are detailed and effective.

90. The number, experience and qualification of teachers are generally well matched to the needs of children of reception age and of pupils in Years 1-6. Staff have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities expected of them and much good support is given to inexperienced teachers – although each of the three newly qualified teachers has the extra burden of being responsible for a class of pupils of mixed age.

91. Classroom support assistants are well qualified and work closely with teachers in helping pupils with special educational needs. Children in the reception year, however, lack the permanent support of a suitably qualified assistant of the kind normally found in schools having this age group. Teachers and classroom support assistants attend appropriate courses of training to help them to improve pupils' learning: all have received training in ICT, for instance, and this has contributed to better standards in this subject. Administrative support staff are efficient in assisting the headteacher in the daily management of the school and provide a very friendly welcome to pupils, parents and visitors. The caretaker and cleaning staff work hard and successfully to ensure a clean, safe and tidy environment within both the building and the school's grounds.

92. The buildings generally offer good provision for the teaching of the curriculum. Classrooms are adequate in number and most are of sufficient size and appropriate design for the number and ages of the pupils. The new classrooms occupied by older pupils offer attractive and flexible work spaces. The new hall is used well for PE and assemblies, but remains too small for the needs of older pupils during PE. Reception children lack ready access to suitable outdoor provision, thus denying these children some significant learning opportunities nationally recommended for the Foundation Stage.

93. The extensive grounds are a great asset to the school and offer very good spaces for outdoor PE and both large and small areas for play and socialising. Although small and lacking sufficient ventilation, the new computer suite is a bonus that is used well. The separate dining room, music room and an additional room used for such activities as extracurricular French add extra benefits to the school's curriculum rarely found in primary schools. In spite of all these features, the library facilities are in corridors and do not offer adjacent spaces in which pupils can work independently. Learning resources are satisfactory overall, but good in mathematics, art, ICT and PE. The shortfalls identified in the last inspection have been rectified.

94. The governors and the headteacher effectively and efficiently manage and monitor the school's finances. They are well informed on matters of income and expenditure. Spending is carefully aligned to the school's priorities for improvement. The school secretary efficiently tracks day-to-day expenditure and provides governors with up-to-date information. Good use is made of the considerable professional expertise among the governors: they consider carefully how to achieve best value for money. For example, in providing perimeter fencing to the school's extensive grounds, good use was made of local contacts. Specific grants are used well for their intended purposes. This school serves its community well and provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

95. To improve and build upon the good quality of education that pupils already receive, the governors and senior management of the school should:

- (a) raise still further pupils' level of attainment and rate of progress by:
- removing the weaknesses in a minority of teaching, as identified in the main body of the report;
 - formulating a policy to identify giftedness and specific talents amongst pupils and providing suitably challenging work, on a consistent basis, for all high-attaining pupils; and
 - improving the quality of teachers' marking by indicating to pupils more consistently the strengths of their work and what they need to do to improve (## 28 34 38-40 42-44 46-49 70 71 87 89 135- 137 139 141 149 153-157 167 169 193).
- (b) extend and improve further the quality and usefulness of the assessments made of individual pupils' attainments and progress by:
- assessing pupils' attainment in all subjects to National Curriculum "levels";
 - periodically collating and summarising these assessments in a coherent, cumulative way across the school in order to evaluate pupils' progress accurately;
 - analysing crisply the reasons for success and any slowness in pupils' progress, on at least an annual basis, to match the very thorough analysis made of national test results in Years 2 and 6; and
 - using the same sets of data to evaluate the school's overall academic performance (## 13 21 68-73 75 89 143 160 170 171 178 188 194 204 213 227).
- (c) improve the school's unsatisfactory provision in music (## 214-220).
- (d) strengthen the school's provision for reception children by:
- bringing the ratio of qualified adults to pupils close to that recommended nationally for children of a similar age in nursery education; and
 - attempting to enhance the school's accommodation for them by giving them more space and easier access to outside play (## 91 92 100 121).
- (e) extend the roles of subject coordinators into appropriate monitoring, evaluating and (where necessary) improving the quality and effectiveness of the teaching of subjects (## 53 86 87).
- (f) improve the quality and range of information to parents by providing:
- reports that are consistently clear and specific about children's attainments and progress in their work; and
 - suitably detailed, written curricular information about the content of the subjects that pupils study (## 75 79 81 82).

In addition to the key issues above, other less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the school's future plan of action. These are indicated in paragraphs 51 52 63 67 88 93 and in subject paragraphs.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

76

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

91

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	25	28	14	7	0	0
Percentage	3	33	37	18	9	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

YR – Y6

Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	335
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

YR – Y6

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	47

English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0
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Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.4
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for 2000-2001.

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	22	24	46

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 or above	Boys	21	21	22
	Girls	24	24	24
	Total	45	45	46
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	98 (95)	98 (95)	100 (98)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 or above	Boys	21	22	22
	Girls	24	24	24
	Total	45	46	46
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	98 (95)	100 (98)	100 (98)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

Percentages in brackets refer to 2000.

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	32	22	54

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 or above	Boys	28	28	28
	Girls	20	15	17
	Total	48	43	45
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	89 (98)	80 (94)	83 (98)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 or above	Boys	28	28	28
	Girls	20	17	20
	Total	48	45	48
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	89 (96)	83 (92)	89 (94)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

Percentages in brackets refer to 2000.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	285
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Perman-ent
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 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.2
Average class size	30.2

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	5.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	114

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	637,533
Total expenditure	623,345
Expenditure per pupil	1,878
Balance brought forward from previous year	44,878
Balance carried forward to next year	59,066

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	332
Number of questionnaires returned	128

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	51	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	58	41	1	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	44	2	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	57	11	0	1
The teaching is good.	60	40	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	50	9	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	32	3	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	65	32	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	38	52	7	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	55	38	3	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	49	2	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	50	7	2	15

Other issues raised by parents

There were additional comments from parents on ten of the questionnaires returned.

Amongst the positive points mentioned were:

- the good rate of progress made by children in their studies; and
- the good quality, hard work and approachability of staff.

Amongst the few concerns expressed in questionnaires were:

- a wish for greater communication with the school.

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

96. Children enter the Foundation Stage in the reception classes. They all start in the September of the academic year when they will become five. There are 46 children in the reception year: the 30 youngest are in one class and the 16 oldest are taught in a mixed-age class with the younger Year 1 pupils. By the week of the inspection, 32 of these reception pupils were already five years old. Almost all children enter the reception class after a variety of pre-school experience.

97. The school usefully shares its early assessment of pupils' capabilities with parents in its *All about Me* booklet. This, together with visits made to the reception class before children start school, ensures that children and their parents build good relationships with staff from the beginning. The strengths identified in the last inspection have been maintained and improved by the adoption of the national guidance for the Foundation Stage. Education at this stage remains a strength of the school.

98. When they start in the reception class, pupils' overall attainment is above what might be expected for their age. The exception is in language and literacy skills, where the evidence points to very few having high levels: in this aspect the attainment of the vast majority is average. Overall, because of very good teaching, pupils make good progress – and very good progress in communication, literacy and language.

99. By the end of the reception year, pupils' attainment in all the areas of learning reaches, and often exceeds, the expected levels. At the time of the inspection around a quarter of the pupils were already working at Level 1 of the National Curriculum in all areas. The proportion is greater in English and mathematics. Nearly three-quarters were already working at the level expected by the end of the reception year. Those with special educational needs are well supported, make good progress and achieve their best.

100. Pupils are accommodated in the oldest part of the school's buildings that makes access to separate, safe, outdoor provision difficult. The class teachers have no permanent adult assistance, with the result that, despite the very best efforts of the teaching, children do not have regular, well-planned, structured activities across the six areas of learning both in and out of doors. The very high windows prevent them even seeing the outdoors. In spite of these difficulties, the accommodation is very well organised and every space used to its best advantage. This includes the use of the main school hall for further personal development, by joining in school assemblies, and for their physical education. Some music is taught in the separate music room. A little extra time outdoors is organised twice a week when, with additional staffing, pupils experience a range of activities in safe, attractive surroundings.

101. Teaching is very good and at times outstanding. Excellent teamwork, high expectations of behaviour, very good questioning and a very good understanding of how pupils of this age learn are ever-present features. There is a very good balance between direct teaching of the whole class or groups and of pupil-selected activities. The development of language and mathematics is a priority. No opportunity is missed to consolidate and practise these important aspects. Very well planned and organised teaching in the mixed-age class ensures that an appropriate curriculum, with well-matched work, is provided for these pupils. All this takes considerable time, effort and skill. The curriculum is well balanced and includes all the six areas of learning for all reception pupils. Well-planned, structured play enhances their learning very well. Adults prompt and challenge pupils appropriately in their chosen activities, extending their understanding, knowledge and skills.

102. Pupils make good progress in each lesson and over time because of teachers' very good planning and assessment. Baseline assessments are conducted during the first half-term and towards the end of the academic year. The information gained from these is also used to focus on improving weaker areas. Results are shared with parents.

103. The assessment of pupils' progress across all aspects of learning is very good. The data gained are used very well to plan for children's needs, whether as a whole class, in groups or as individuals. Pupils' progress is carefully noted throughout each day. Work is very carefully marked: lengthy commentaries tell very clearly of progress and the next steps in learning. In this way, teachers ensure that individuals and groups have well-targeted work that is based on a careful assessment of their individual needs. Very good teaching ensures that pupils of different abilities have equal access to all experiences and so an equal chance of making progress. Support staff are very effective in helping pupils, particularly those with special educational needs, to learn and to gain confidence.

104. The Foundation Stage is very well led and managed. Pupils' strengths and weaknesses are well known: action is taken to maintain the strengths and to make any necessary improvements. Resources for each of the six areas of learning are generally adequate, but there are gaps in those for pupils' physical development. Learning resources are used to maximum benefit, very carefully organised and used effectively.

Personal, social and emotional development

105. Pupils make good progress in this area of learning. The majority already achieve the level expected by the end of the reception year. This is largely because the learning environment strongly promotes these aspects of pupils' development. Pupils have very positive attitudes to school, to learning, to one another and towards themselves. They understand what is right and wrong in a variety of situations. They appreciate, for example, the need for rules, how to move through school and to enter the hall quietly, and that good behaviour is always rewarded. They take turns in small-group activities and join confidently with larger, older groups of pupils for assemblies. They become increasingly independent and confident – as, for instance, when they choose activities or evaluate the performance of others in PE and drama.

106. Pupils discuss and share such feelings as being tired, grumpy, happy, sad, cross and left out with adults and other children and through stories and drama. In a whole-class, "circle time" activity, for example, pupils sensitively explored the notion of friendship with their teacher through Rachel, the glove puppet. In drama, they very effectively took the parts of fed-up, tired, hungry and thirsty soldiers, marching up the hill led by a tyrant, the Grand Old Duke of York – their teacher. These two excellent examples enhanced pupils' insight significantly.

107. Teaching is very good. Adults skilfully establish very good relationships. Pupils are welcomed warmly by name at the start of sessions. High expectations of behaviour are clearly explained, with reasons and consequences. As a result, pupils are happy, confident and secure, and enjoy coming to school. They understand class routines and are eager to learn. All pupils learn thoughtfully how to form good relationships, to share and use equipment carefully, to play alongside others and to respect one another.

Communication, language and literacy

108. Relevant elements of the literacy framework are used effectively to extend pupils' reading and writing. Adults talk constantly with pupils, developing their powers of self-expression through good questioning and the introduction of new words. Because of the emphasis on speaking, listening, reading and writing across the curriculum, most pupils achieve very well: most already attain or exceed the levels expected by the end of reception.

109. Pupils listen well to stories, understand the idea of sequence, and relate known stories and rhymes confidently. Different elements of learning are purposefully linked. In one class, for instance, a book corner was designated as "Jack's Cottage" and letters were received from, and written to, the "giant" in his castle at the top of the "beanstalk". In the other reception class, nursery rhymes provided the basis for excellent drama and learning the words of action songs. In class, pupils are very eager to answer questions and suggest ideas. On many occasions, the responses are very clear, lengthy and well structured.

110. In reading, pupils enjoy sharing books with adults and with one another. The majority of pupils know that an author is the person who writes the book and that an illustrator “does the pictures”. The majority also identify letter sounds and blends and have begun to recognise a few familiar words. A quarter of the children read confidently at National Curriculum Level 1. They are encouraged to improve their reading by taking books and spellings home to share with their parents.

111. In writing, pupils develop skills in handwriting very well. They are led very impressively to start joining letters in cursive form at this age – and can do it. They enjoy writing and know that its purpose is for reading – as, for example, when they write about what they have done, complete charts in science, write lists for the “garden centre” or do shopping for the “giant”. Average- and higher-attaining pupils copy below adults’ writing, while a few write simple words and sentences independently.

112. Teaching is very good. Good use is made of the National Literacy Strategy. All adults are clear about pupils’ individual needs and the results expected from each activity. Resources are used well to capture pupils’ interest – as, for instance, when puppets “talk” to the teacher and “listen” to totally enthralled children.

Mathematical development

113. Pupils are given many opportunities to become confident and competent in their mathematical learning, including the use of appropriate computer programs. These experiences include suitable practical activities and the direct teaching of counting, sorting, matching, finding patterns and working with numbers, shapes and a variety of measures. As a result, pupils learn key mathematical skills and begin to use them confidently. For example, the majority count accurately to 20 (forwards and backwards), know numbers missing from the sequence and add and subtract numbers up to ten. They have a good grasp of capacity and time through such activities as “How many towers of five cubes can you build in a minute?”, using a sand timer.

114. The majority of pupils have already attained the expected mathematical levels for the end of reception, with around half working at Level 1 of the National Curriculum. In practical work, discussion and on paper, they use and practise the correct vocabulary to describe sorting, matching and counting. Numbers are correctly formed. Pupils construct models and make collages, choosing and naming shapes in two or three dimensions accurately. They understand such comparative descriptors as “long”, “longer”, “tall”, “taller”, “shorter than”, “less than” and “more than”.

115. Teaching is very good, providing rich opportunities and good understanding of this area of learning. Pupils’ understanding is promoted orally through stories, action-songs, rhymes, games, imaginative play, storybooks and through mental mathematics as part of the numeracy strategy. Questioning is very good in that it extends pupils’ understanding by probing and checking their understanding. Pupils are given continual opportunities to acquire and use new vocabulary.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

116. Pupils make good progress overall in this area, and make particularly good progress in science. Many well-planned activities, usually linked to a theme and matched to a season such as “growth”, make learning relevant. Pupils know and name accurately, for example, the parts of plants and understand how a stem is used like a straw to suck up water to the leaves and flowers. One said, “That daffodil is sad, because it needs water and when it has some, it will be straight and firm and happy again.” They know what plants need to survive through a very good range of experiments with different seeds – as, for example, by growing beans and completing very careful observational drawings of root formation or by placing seeds in different situations with or without light, heat and water. Most importantly, pupils learn to ask questions and find answers – and to be observant and curious. Learning excites them. They were engrossed, for instance, as they watched water being coloured and guessed what might happen when the carnation “sucked in” this solution.

117. Pupils gain a good awareness of different cultures and beliefs through work in RE, role play, stories

and music. They begin to understand the past in terms of their own lives and that of their families and by visits to museums. They have fine control, when cutting or sticking to make models, or to make recognisable vehicles with fixed wheels and moving models with kits. They confidently use computers to assist them in other aspects of their learning. For instance, they control the computer-mouse very well to direct the cursor, when using language, number and art programs. Some children print out the results.

118. The use of Barnaby Bear, travelling to different places and sending postcards, extends pupils' geographical understanding effectively. At the time of the inspection, he was skiing in France and visiting the Netherlands! Pupils select clothes to pack for him and, in doing so, learn to identify the features of other places, different climates and their effects on people, and compare these to Haslington. Parents are closely involved. One child had completed a valuable piece of research with his parents about Barnaby on holiday.

119. Pupils make good progress and most already exceed expectations by attaining at National Curriculum Level 1 in science, design and technology, geography and ICT. This is predominantly because the teaching is very good. Pupils are provided with a wide range of materials and experiences. All adults intervene very appropriately to challenge pupils' thinking and extend their learning.

Physical development

120. Reception pupils acquire appropriate physical skills during sessions in the hall and outside. They talk clearly about what they can do and how to be careful when moving around and using benches for jumping. Twice a week, limited time outdoors allows pupils to practise and gain suitable confidence in hopping, using ropes to skip, running, jumping, balancing, throwing and catching. They move safely and confidently in both the classroom and playground. They have good control, when using pencils, pens, crayons, scissors and paintbrushes. In model-making they are skilled at joining and fastening in different ways, including cutting, stapling and sticking. Construction kits are used well to build intricate models.

121. Teaching is very good and pupils achieve well. By the time they are ready to start Year 1, nearly all are on target to have attained the expected standards in using tools and equipment, and have a good spatial and bodily awareness. The lack of pupils' regular, daily access to an outdoor area and of a wide enough range of wheeled "vehicles" to extend their movement and control restricts their learning.

Creative development

122. Within a rich environment, pupils have very good opportunities to develop creatively and expressively through music, imaginative play, role play, drama, art (including sketch books) and construction. A very good range of activities allows them to use all their senses. Progress in this area is good and all pupils are well on course to achieve the nationally expected levels by the end of the reception year; around half are likely to exceed them.

123. Pupils rapidly increase their skills, techniques, knowledge and understanding by exploring a wide range of media such as paint, a range of mark-makers, materials such as dough, fabrics and computer programs. They make collages, using a variety of textures and shapes, and make large and small models in two and three dimensions. Their imagination is very well fostered through a very wide variety of role play and "small-world" play. They enjoy dressing up and using equipment in role play. They enter into different characters very readily and convincingly in the "giant's" and "Sleeping Beauty's" castles. In music, they sing in tune and have a good sense of rhythm. They know a wide repertoire of songs from memory.

124. Teaching is very good. Adults support and involve themselves well in activities chosen by pupils. This partnership successfully prompts further learning without the adult taking over – as, for example, in model-making, when a child was taught to cut "feet" at the end of a card cylinder and successfully managed to stick them firmly to a flat surface.

ENGLISH

125. The national tests taken in 2001 by Year 2 and Year 6 pupils indicated that the overall standard in English was well above the national average. For Year 2 pupils, this standard was reflected in both the reading and writing tests, although the proportion of pupils obtaining the higher Level 3 for reading was considerably higher than that for writing. When these Year 2 results were compared with those in schools having pupils from similar backgrounds, standards in reading were above the group average, whilst standards in writing were average. Results in English for Year 6 pupils were also broadly in line with the average for similar schools. On the basis of the 1997 Year 2 test results and the subsequent 2001 Year 6 results, the progress made by this group of pupils was a little below that of similar schools. Trends over the last four years show that the school's results have broadly kept pace with the rising national trend.

126. When pupils enter Year 1, their speaking and listening skills are good. A significant proportion of pupils are very confident, articulate speakers, able to give reasoned answers, when asked to give explanations. They have a good range of vocabulary and use sophisticated sentence structures. In one lesson, pupils were making suggestions about what might be seen from a beach and their answers included phrases such as "seagulls sparkling in the sky" and "fish floating in the shallow water".

127. Throughout the school, pupils maintain their ability to speak and listen well, to follow instructions carefully and to respond thoughtfully to other people's ideas in group discussions. With increasing confidence, they read both from their own work and from texts with, and in front of, the whole class. In a Year 5 lesson on performance poetry, for example, the pupils individually contributed to the effective reading of one poem and then, having prepared their group's verses, performed an excellent choral reading of a "Rap" and a third, contrasting style of poem.

128. Very few pupils have lower than expected reading levels when they join Year 1 and many are above the normal expectation for their age. These good standards of reading are continued in each year and, by the time they leave school, most Year 6 pupils are very competent, fluent readers. Year 1 pupils understand and know initial letter sounds, such initial consonant blends as *st.., cr.., th.., pl..* and know about double vowels such as *ee* as in "tree" and "feel". A number of lower-attaining pupils in Year 1 have benefited greatly from the additional work of the national Early Literacy Strategy: most attain a standard in reading that is broadly in line with that expected for their age. The majority of Year 2 pupils read words with *ght* endings and "magic e" sounds with ease and accuracy. Pupils become increasingly fluent and a fair proportion read with marked expression and good attention to punctuation.

129. In Years 3 and 4, pupils read silently and begin to be selective in their choice of books from within a prescribed range. By Year 6, many pupils read for pleasure in their own time and understand how to access and scan reference books for information. Older pupils are not, however, familiar with carrying out any regular, critical appreciation of books and only one or two understand how to access a range of information by using a catalogued library system.

130. Although the Year 2 national tests in 2001 showed the overall standard of writing to be well above the national average, this was mainly due to there being very few low-achieving pupils: the number of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 was below the national average and much lower than the scores reached in reading. Good progress has been made in addressing this issue in the last year: the inspection evidence indicates that pupils' writing in Year 2 is as good as their reading.

131. Pupils in Year 1 write well for their age. Many already use capital letters and full-stops to punctuate their work correctly, whilst lively vocabulary enriches their creative writing. In Year 2, pupils write for a various purposes – such as giving directions, making lists and tables for recording, and using a narrative style to write about imaginary situations and report on visits.

132. Through Years 3-5, building on this good foundation, steady progress is made with grammar, spelling and the range of writing. Pupils in Year 3, for example, plan and draft their work before writing such things as character descriptions and play-scripts. By Year 4, pupils confidently use a range of punctuation such as apostrophes, speech and exclamation marks, whilst pupils in Year 5 understand the use of paragraphs and

chapters to enrich their writing. By the time they leave the school, most pupils write extensive stories, with good attention to characterisation and plot, spell well and use most forms of punctuation correctly. Although they understand about bullet points and note-taking, there is little evidence of these being used on a regular basis.

133. Standards of handwriting are particularly good from Year 1 through to Year 4. A few pupils in Years 5 and 6 still struggle to use a good standard of cursive writing, clearly having used printing only during their earlier years. Pupils now come into Year 1 with a very high standard of cursive writing – a practice that is very effectively working up through the school. High standards of presentation are evident in all classes.

134. The quality of teaching is good in Years 1-2, sound in Years 3-6 and good overall. Teaching in five of the lessons seen was very good, but in two it was unsatisfactory. Over time, no group of pupils consistently receives unsatisfactory teaching. Most teachers have good knowledge of the subject, well grounded in the National Literacy Strategy. This ensures that pupils systematically build up their skills in grammar and spelling, which are generally well taught. The spelling of common words and regular spelling patterns are systematically and regularly developed. Each week in Year 5, for instance, pupils are expected to learn ten words: five spellings are given by the teacher and five are selected by pupils from marked work. A partner tests the last five spellings.

135. In the very good lessons, planning is based on a careful assessment of what pupils can do and what they need to learn next; the objectives of the lesson are shared with pupils at the start. This only happens, however, in a few lessons. In a well-taught Year 4 lesson, for instance, it was clearly explained to the pupils that they would be learning about the purpose and use of paragraphs. This helped the teacher and pupils to remain focused throughout and, at the end, to evaluate together what had been learned. The lack of good lesson planning, detailing exactly what pupils will learn, is one of the causes of unsatisfactory teaching.

136. Teachers' expectations vary. Although the majority of teachers set reasonably challenging work most of the time and all the pupils try hard and concentrate well, there are times when some pupils, particularly the more able, coast and are not pushed as hard as they could be. In whole-class sessions many teachers are very skilled at using open-ended questions and at requiring pupils to explain why they think as they do – and to which the pupils eagerly respond.

137. Individual and group tasks, however, are not always sufficiently demanding and pupils finish them quickly. Valuable learning time is then wasted by, for instance, the drawing of pictures that do not reinforce the purpose of the lesson. This weakness was seen in both Years 1 and 3. Occasionally, particularly where lessons are not firmly based on what pupils need to learn next, work is too easy for the more able pupils. It was evident in one lesson that a fair number of pupils already had a good grasp of what constitutes a question and could easily change statements into questions. The written task set did little to extend their knowledge or understanding.

138. The range of methods and techniques used by teachers to stimulate and motivate pupils is good. Class discussions are usually lively and pupils are keen to be involved. Plenty of opportunities are provided for pupils to discuss and plan with partners and in small groups. Pupils confidently and enthusiastically share ideas and usually listen well to one another. In an inspirational lesson in Year 5, for instance, pupils excitedly worked together when rehearsing their group's performance in a whole-school, poetry recital. Reasonable opportunities are also provided for older pupils to do independent research, using reference books and the Internet, but these are not as frequent as they could be.

139. Pupils behaved very well in nearly every lesson and showed a willingness to learn. Most teachers use praise well to reinforce and enthuse pupils in their efforts; there is strong mutual respect between teachers and pupils. Only rarely do pupils chatter off task and not concentrate: this normally occurred when the work set was insufficiently challenging.

140. Support staff make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils with special educational needs and low attainers have benefited particularly from the expertise of teaching assistants through the Early Literacy Strategy. Classroom assistants and volunteer helpers give valuable help and support in many

classes, especially with reading and group activities, and teachers plan work well for them. At times, however, during whole-class discussions, support staff and volunteers are inactive and their time could then be used more productively.

141. Teachers know their pupils well. Most are skilled at helping individuals to make progress during lessons by talking issues through with them. Careful use of marking for this purpose is much less evident. Where it is good, pupils know what they have to do to improve through such pertinent comments as *“Try to use different words for each sentence.”* (Year 2), but frequently work is just ticked. A few teachers, as in Year 3, help pupils to set individual targets, but this is not sufficiently developed to enhance pupils’ learning through the school.

142. Most pupils receive, and conscientiously complete, homework each week. There is a regular, daily pattern in most classes of encouraging reading at home and most pupils have weekly spellings to learn. Occasionally, older pupils work on research projects, but the inconsistency between classes about homework is a justified cause of concern for some parents.

143. A considerable amount of useful data is collected from the annual testing of pupils’ attainments in both national and school-based tests. National test results from Years 2 and 6 are analysed very carefully to identify areas of weakness and work has been done to address these (such as the standard of writing in Year 2). This improvement is mainly due to the hard work of the headteacher and the coordinator, but there is no effective system to identify and track the progress of individual pupils, year by year, and thereby to set realistic and challenging targets to improve standards. Overall, satisfactory progress has been made in the subject since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

144. The proportion of pupils who attained at least the basic standard expected of seven year olds in the 2001 national tests at the end of Year 2 was very high; indeed all pupils achieved Level 2 or better. The proportion attaining the higher Level 3 was well above the national average. Based upon the average points scored by all pupils, results over recent years have been consistently well above the national average. Pupils’ attainment is also well above the average of schools in similar social circumstances. Boys and girls do equally well.

145. The proportion of pupils who achieved at least the basic standard expected of 11 year olds in the 2001 national tests at the end of Year 6 was above the national average. The proportion achieving the higher levels was also above average. Based upon the average points scored by all pupils, the school’s results were above the national average for all schools, but below average, when compared with those of schools of a similar kind. Other than the dip in 2001, the pattern of results during recent years has been consistently well above average. Boys have done a little better than girls overall.

146. As a result of effective teaching, pupils make good progress throughout Years 1 and 2, so that by the end of Year 2 most pupils achieve the standard expected of seven year olds and a significant number of them achieve above it. They have a good understanding of numbers to 100, and higher. They develop successful methods of mental calculation, when adding and subtracting numbers, and recognise patterns when, for instance, they add ten successively to a given number. Higher-attaining pupils competently generalise their ideas by describing them unambiguously in clear statements. Such pupils in Year 2, for example, offered several clear statements of rules for rounding numbers to the nearest ten. In such work they demonstrate clear understanding of the order of numbers and of the value of each digit. Pupils learn to solve appropriate problems in everyday settings, involving money and measures, with much success. Most pupils know the names of common shapes, in both two and three dimensions, and describe well some of their properties. They represent neatly on simple graphs the data they have collected and recorded in tally charts.

147. By working through carefully structured practical activities and by frequent, well-paced discussions, pupils in Year 1 build on the good start they made in reception and make good progress. They quickly acquire a firm understanding of counting and ordering appropriate ranges of numbers. Many are confident about numbers to 100. Their confidence is boosted by short, daily sessions of mental work, conducted at a

brisk pace, during which they learn or consolidate appropriate basic knowledge to the level expected. During one such session, for example, a mixed-age class of pupils in Years 1 and 2 consolidated their understanding of odd and even numbers; the older pupils developed well their accuracy in mentally adding two-digit numbers such as $53 + 26$.

148. Pupils in Year 1 also learn to estimate, measure and compare length, weight and the capacity of objects. In a mixed-age class of reception and Year 1 pupils, for instance, the older pupils learned, by skilful teaching, to estimate the capacity of each of three containers and compare them using a cup (of water or lentils) as their “standard measure”. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in Years 1-2 as a result of detailed planning by teachers that also ensures classroom support assistants have a clear role. This enables these pupils to do work that is similar to that of their classmates.

149. Pupils’ progress in Years 3-6 is sound overall so that, by the end of Year 6, their attainment is above average: a larger proportion than usual achieve the standard expected and a significant number of pupils achieve above the normal standard. Nevertheless, attainment could be higher. Pupils in Years 5-6 are regrouped into sets based upon their attainment. These arrangements, together with the effective use of teaching methods prescribed by the National Numeracy Strategy, enable teachers to plan work that is generally well suited to the needs of pupils. The pace of lessons is steady and learning is systematic. Such lessons, for the higher-attaining pupils in particular, however, lack sufficient challenge in the content and pace of working to enable such pupils to achieve their potential fully or consistently.

150. Each of the three sets of pupils in Years 5-6 make steady progress in arithmetic, geometry and data-handling, and generally achieve what is expected of them. They accurately recall basic number facts, although too many do so hesitantly. They have a good grasp of arithmetical processes and know, for example, the equivalence of fractions, decimals and percentages – such as that of $1/20$, 0.05 and 5%. They solve appropriate problems in everyday contexts. Many pupils have a good understanding of measurement (including angles) and apply this knowledge well in finding, for example, missing angles in geometrical diagrams. In both mathematics and science they handle data well, using a variety of forms of graphical representation. The above average standards reported at the last inspection have been maintained. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, because work is adjusted well to their needs: in the lower-attaining set in Years 5-6, for example, pupils used computers effectively to consolidate their understanding of angles and their measurement.

151. The three classes of pupils in Years 3-4 are regrouped into three sets and make sound progress overall. They consolidate and extend their understanding of arithmetic, for instance, and achieve appropriate accuracy. They develop well mental methods of calculation. One set of pupils, largely from Year 4, showed impressive accuracy in calculating mentally their answers to problems such as “I go out at 7.25 pm and return at 9.45 pm. How long am I out?”.

152. Pupils response very well to the teaching they receive. They have very positive attitudes and are willing to work hard; almost all present their work neatly. They are often eager to answer questions and to explain their ways of working out mental calculations. Behaviour in lessons is very good. Pupils form constructive relationships with their teachers and their peers, and enjoy sharing humour.

153. Teaching is sound overall, but good in Years 1-2. In about one lesson in six it is very good. The best teaching occurs with pupils in Years 1-2. Teaching in Years 3-6 is satisfactory or good in equal proportions. The satisfactory (and some of the good) teaching did not contain quite enough rigour, pace or expectation of what the pupils can do. For example, the teaching of higher-attaining pupils often missed opportunities to add a little extra “twist” to challenge them fully. Equally, some lessons for other pupils lacked enough enthusiasm, pace and demand to motivate them into eager and interested participation in the lessons, or specific activities went on for too long and pupils lost interest. In contrast, where the teacher’s high expectations of pupils had been established by the fast pace of mental work at the start of the lesson, combined with good questioning such as “Talk me through this part....” or “Tell me why....”, pupils enjoyed their work and learned the subject matter very successfully.

154. Teachers' expectations and planning overall reflect a sound knowledge of the National Numeracy Strategy. The setting arrangements in Years 3-6 allow much of the subject matter and methods of teaching to be readily adapted to the needs of most pupils in a class. Occasionally, however, planning to meet pupils' specific needs is not good enough and the progress of such pupils is then slower than it should be. For example, the highest-attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently in Year 6. In contrast, lower-attaining pupils in Years 3-4 made good progress in a lesson where the activities were carefully planned to build on earlier work and teaching methods were adapted to meet their learning needs. Pupils' confidence was further increased by, for example, taking turns to count back from 100 in twos: almost every pupil gave a prompt and accurate answer.

155. Teaching methods and classroom organisation are strongly influenced by the guidance given in the national strategy. Lessons are clearly divided into the recommended three parts and appropriate activities are included. Teachers give clear starts to lessons, explaining their purpose and making clear their expectations of pupils. Occasionally, in some lessons, this is not done with sufficient clarity. Introductory or plenary activities often successfully include those designed to improve pupils' confident recall of number facts and increase their strategies of mental calculations. In a few classes this could be done at a faster pace and with pupils being required to give more accurate explanations of their thinking. Teachers use ICT effectively to help pupils to learn aspects of the subject. For example, lower-attaining pupils improve their confidence in basic numeracy by the judicious use of suitable programs.

156. The stage of lessons where pupils work independently or in groups is conducted effectively. Tasks are clearly explained and are usually well matched to pupils' rate of learning. Occasionally, when pupils do not have specific times during which to complete these tasks, the pace of lessons is not brisk enough. Teachers quickly identify errors and deal effectively with misunderstandings or half-remembered knowledge. Plenary sessions are generally well used to sort out misconceptions, allowing pupils to explain their work to the rest of the class or to consolidate learning. In a few lessons, however, not enough time was left for this aspect to be done effectively.

157. Homework is generally used well to enhance pupils' learning. Teachers have calm and effective ways of managing the behaviour of pupils very successfully. The assessment of pupils' progress is done in a variety of helpful ways and generally used well to influence planning for the future. The subject has a good range of resources and ICT is used selectively and successfully to enhance pupils' learning. Leadership and management of the subject are sound. An area for improvement is the evaluation of the effectiveness of the starter and plenary activities in lessons.

SCIENCE

158. In the 2001 assessment of Year 2 pupils, the proportion who attained the expected Level 2 standard was very high in comparison to the national average. Similarly, the number of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 standard was well above the national average. Pupils' level of attainment was also assessed as being well above average, when compared to that in most similar schools. This high standard is similar to that reported at the last inspection.

159. In the national assessment of Year 6 pupils in 2001, the proportion of pupils who attained the basic standard of Level 4 was below the national average, but the number achieving the higher Level 5 was close to average. Compared to that of pupils in similar schools, pupils' overall standard was well below the group average. Standards over the last four years have varied, but show a steady decline, in contrast to the improving national picture. In recent years boys have achieved a little more highly than girls.

160. The overall standard of Year 6 pupils in the subject shows some decline since the last inspection. Even though 83 per cent of pupils achieved at least the basic Level 4 (compared with 87 per cent nationally), the results show that not quite as many pupils attain the expected standard as their general or earlier performance suggests they should: an underuse of revision materials and "booster classes" suggests a degree of under-preparation for the national tests. Although the school analyses national test questions and pupils' answers to them very thoroughly, assessment data for each age group are not used precisely enough

to track the progress of individual pupils – and especially those who are considered to be most in need of assistance to ensure that they attain the required standard.

161. Pupils in Year 2 have completed a wide range of work in the subject in the current academic year. In the lesson seen and in work examined, pupils' level of attainment was above average and similar to the high standard recorded at the last inspection. In their current work, pupils achieve the nationally expected level of understanding in their work on *Life Processes and Living Things*. They know about the conditions for growth and how plants produce and grow from seeds. Some pupils begin to understand and discuss the idea that the size of the seed does not relate directly to the size of the plant that will grow from it.

162. The scientific work undertaken in Years 1-2 is focused on investigations, so that pupils understand how to observe and record their findings. Standards are above average for *Materials and their Properties* and for *Physical Processes*. When investigating the properties of materials, pupils undertook some exciting work when sorting materials with special properties – such as rubber for Wellington boots and glass for windows. This led on to testing the strength of different paper bags and to understanding the use of a “fair test”. Pupils understand the simple forces used to push and pull to create movement. Magnetism was the focus of another fair test to find the strongest magnet. Pupils also acquire a good understanding of sound and enjoyed the construction and use of string telephones.

163. Pupils in Year 6 have a wide range of opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding in the subject. The standard of work seen in lessons was above average overall. Pupils have a good understanding, for instance, of what a fair test is and have conducted many investigations to produce reliable results – such as to show how to test the force of friction on different materials. All measure and record their findings with satisfactory accuracy. Pupils are particularly good at observing experiments and investigations. They have a good understanding of the basic parts of plants and animals – as, for example, the organs of different plants. They are very knowledgeable about the ear, how sound travels and how we hear sound.

164. Pupils' understanding of materials and physical processes is good. Pupils can explain, for example, how filtering can separate materials in a suspension and that the heating of solutions enables substances that have been dissolved to be reclaimed. Equally, they know that some changes to materials are not reversible. Their memory and recall of such technical terms as “solution”, “dissolving” and “sound waves” are good. They have a firm understanding of the relationship between the earth, the moon and the sun.

165. Pupils' progress (including that of pupils with special educational needs) is good in Years 1-2. This is an improvement since the last inspection and is the result of a structured scheme of work that has underpinned a more consistent approach to teaching and learning. Pupils are now learning to investigate and observe closely. They acquire early skills and scientific knowledge and understanding through interesting, purposeful activities. Progress across Years 3-6 is more variable, ranging from very good to satisfactory. This, too, is an improvement overall. The scheme of work and associated guidelines have ensured that all pupils get a wide range of experience in the subject, with the focus on practical investigations.

166. Both attitudes to science and behaviour in lessons are very good. Pupils enthusiastically enjoy the subject. They have a very good attitude to learning and present their work to a high standard. They are curious and excited by the opportunities for practical work. Their skills of listening and reflecting upon their learning enable them to give acute, accurately observed and well above average answers to questions that are often challenging. When conducting investigations, they work well together in pairs or small groups and use equipment very carefully. Year 4 pupils, for instance, were very engrossed by their work on materials and looking through microscopes at the surface of different kinds of paper.

167. Teaching throughout the school is good and sometimes very good. All teachers show solid subject knowledge and their lessons meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Teachers use the school's guidelines and the published scheme of work as the basis of their planning: this has led to a consistent approach and to the clear identification of learning objectives for each lesson or series of lessons. In the best cases, teachers share these learning objectives with pupils, set the context for the lesson clearly and base their assessment of pupils' progress during the lesson and their marking on this planned learning. This good

practice is not, however, used consistently: pupils are then not aware of how well they are making progress. There is very good practice in some marking that includes a clear assessment of progress, positive and encouraging comments, and an indication of what pupils have to do next to improve. Again, this practice is not consistently used to help to monitor pupils' progress.

168. Teachers are skilled at asking questions and then using pupils' answers to add supplementary questions that extend their thinking and understanding of scientific concepts. They are careful to ensure that proper safety measures are in place. Pupils handle equipment and resources with care and respect. Relationships and the management of pupils are always very good. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, particularly in respect of better subject knowledge and clearer planning.

169. The school's policy statement and scheme of work ensure that statutory requirements are met and encourage good practice. The published scheme of work helpfully includes a range of resources and worksheets. These are normally used with sensible discretion, but on occasions are allowed to restrict the opportunities for pupils by being too prescriptive and unimaginative. The school is aware of this weakness and of the need to encourage pupils to organise more of their investigations with the need for fair testing in mind.

170. The subject coordinator is effective. She is enthusiastic, knowledgeable and aware of some of the strengths and weaknesses of the current provision. Resources are carefully organised and matched to the planned scheme of work. The delegated budget is used carefully and wisely to replenish resources and improve the range available. There is some monitoring of pupils' work and an analysis of its strengths and weaknesses. There is, however, no systematic monitoring of teaching and learning as part of the school's self-evaluation. Since taking on the responsibility for the science curriculum, the coordinator has not attended any training. The school's portfolio of pupils' work contains very good examples of marking and of the standards pupils achieve.

171. Overall, there has been some improvement in the subject since the last inspection. The priorities for development now are the systematic monitoring of teaching and learning, so as to be certain that planned learning takes place and to assess pupils' progress more consistently. There is greater use of assessment information and data than before, but still insufficient systematic tracking of pupils' progress across the school to ensure that all pupils reach the standards expected.

ART

172. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 2, their attainment in the subject is above the national average. Only one lesson was seen at this stage during the inspection, but judgements of standards were also made on the evidence of the coordinator's folio, samples of work submitted and work on display. Pupils control pencils, brushes, scissors and use a variety of materials with confidence. They look at the structure of wheels, for example, to make pictures in relief, using clay, polystyrene and straws. They also produce very strong images of bicycles, old and new, with charcoal. At this stage they draw, colour and frame pictures of characters from stories and make impressive wall-friezes based, for instance, on *Giant Longbeard's Garden* or the nursery rhyme, *Mary, Mary*, with the use of coloured paper, gold gift-wrap and paper cones to represent the bells and shells.

173. By the end of Year 6, pupils attain standards that are well above the national average. They draw and use colour very confidently, particularly in portraits of their friends in class. In one lesson they made portraits from unusual angles – as, for example, by asking the "sitter" to sprawl with feet on the table, in order to capture the odd perspective of a person with extra large feet. Some pupils focused on the patterns of the soles of shoes, representing these in great detail. Pupils also used a wide range of materials and processes, including hessian, felt and stitching, to produce a frieze based, with a strong element of realism, on the Bayeux Tapestry.

174. The quality of learning in Years 1-2 is good overall. Pupils enter the school with a good sense of colour and design, and mostly with good confidence in using pencils, brushes and other tools. The good teaching they receive builds well on the very good experiences they gain in the reception class. This was

particularly noticeable in a lesson in Year 1, in which the pupils drew and coloured pictures depicting what they imagined children to be doing both before and after a scene taken from a magazine. In this exercise they used both an imaginative and an imitative approach in their image-making. Pupils are generally very interested in their lessons and quickly become very absorbed and serious about the task in hand.

175. In Years 3-6, pupils learn very well and make very good progress. For those pupils with a “natural” aptitude for the subject, this progress appears to come easily. Other pupils apply themselves diligently and with great interest in their tasks. In some lessons they become very excited by their work, often provoking very good discussion and evaluation of the content and form of their developing images. In a lesson with Years 5 and 6 together, for example, pupils studied and researched information about the design of hats. Their own three-dimensional representations included a wide range of forms and styles, including cones, top hats, spiral forms and an extravagant, carnival-style form supported by a headband. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in the subject and make very good progress.

176. The attitudes of almost all pupils are very good throughout the school. Pupils show great interest in the wide variety of form, media and styles they meet in their work. This interest is sometimes clearly connected to their experience of great artists’ work – such as that of Chagall, Mondrian and Lowry. Other interests arise out of their work in other subjects: the influence of Mackintosh, for example, is potent on their work for chair designs.

177. Teaching is very good overall, and particularly so in Years 3-6. This very good teaching is characterised by a confidence in approaching image-making (often from an unusual aspect) and, in some cases, learning alongside the pupils. Where the teacher (or sometimes a parent- helper) has a particular skill, it is imparted well to pupils. Teachers across the school are eager to draw on a variety of sources and ideas to use as stimuli for pupils’ art work.

178. Good ideas often come from the coordinator, who works very enthusiastically to promote the subject not only in lessons, but also in mounting the attractive and stimulating displays around the school. Procedures for assessing the standard of pupils’ work and progress are, in contrast, unsatisfactory. The coordinator has, however, in a very short time, collated a folio of work and photographs which are valuable for many purposes, including the possibility of being samples for future assessment of individual pupils’ levels of achievement and rate of progress.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

179. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 2 and Year 6, their overall standard in the subject is above that expected of pupils of their age. This is an improvement on the standards attained at the last inspection, when they were reported to be in line with the national average. Only one lesson was seen during the inspection, but an extensive examination was carried out of the range of pupils’ work, teachers’ planning and other useful documentation.

180. Pupils in Year 2 have a good range of opportunities to design artefacts, which they make and evaluate well. Barnaby Bear, for example, was the source of stimulation for the pupils to demonstrate a good standard, as they designed and made a shirt for him to use on his travels. Their ideas for designing a vehicle for a fairy-tale character were imaginative and of a standard well above the usual level.

181. During the inspection, pupils were involved in making a winding mechanism for a well. Their simple box-models successfully supported the winding gear and allowed the mechanism to turn effectively. They used a range of materials and ideas to join the pieces together and to prevent the handle from slipping. After experimenting with levers and sliding mechanisms, pupils made moving pictures. A notable feature is their enthusiastic talk about what they have done, suggesting ways in which their work, or that of others, could be improved.

182. As they move through the school, pupils generate ideas of increasing complexity, so that by the end of Year 6, for example, they had made a vehicle based on a wooden A-frame for the chassis. Using a range

of materials and shapes, they then fit on a body, developing their basic design to their individual specifications and colours. Power is provided by a small electric motor and a series of pulleys and elastic bands and then all the cars and drivetrains are tested for their efficiency. Pupils have also, for example, designed and made shelters, using a range of ideas, materials and structures. They evaluated their products by testing the strength of construction and the properties of the covering materials. In a close link to science and the study of sound, they made a range of sounding instruments. These varied in shape and size, but some were very large and had presented a considerable challenge to pupils. Pupils take care with the quality of construction and often achieve an impressive standard of finish.

183. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress throughout the school. Young pupils design clay flower-pots and make box-models, using all kinds of ideas to join materials together. By Year 3 they have extended the understanding of levers to produce moving pictures in simple story books that are of a high standard. In Year 4 they use a similar theme to make pop-up mechanisms and moving pictures, whereby fish swim across the page or a goalkeeper dives to make a save. Their models of moving monsters displayed a rich variety of designs and an exciting mix of colour and shape. At the time of the inspection, pupils in Years 5 and 6 were engaged in designing and making hats: these ranged from the simple to those that were imaginatively exotic and which require much planning to support the structure being made.

184. A whole-school project, based on designs for Easter eggs, gave pupils a good opportunity to extend their learning in several ways and produced stimulating results. The work in textiles, based on the Bayeux Tapestry and *The Owl and the Pussy Cat*, is of a good standard. Pupils in all classes spend an appropriate amount of time on the design stage and prepare suitably annotated drawings. Overall, pupils' standards and progress have improved since the last inspection, as a result of the consistent approach taken to the subject and an increased emphasis on both planning designs and evaluating the finished products.

185. Pupils enjoy the subject. They are highly motivated by both the ideas that they are encouraged to develop and the practical side of making things. Much of the work requires sustained effort over several lessons, because ideas have to be modified, products remade and new materials introduced. Pupils are very good at sharing resources and working together. They discuss their ideas and evaluations and are quick to help one another to make progress. Many exciting ideas and projects have highly motivated the pupils.

186. The quality of teaching has also improved since the previous inspection: teachers now use the scheme of work consistently and have better subject knowledge to improve standards in the subject. Teaching is now good overall, with examples that are very good (particularly in Years 1-2). Teachers have detailed planning and clear learning objectives. In the best lessons, teachers share their learning objectives, so that pupils understand the context and relevance of their work. Teachers consistently challenge pupils, through skilful questioning, to think through and solve problems in design and construction. There is close attention to safety issues. Very good classroom management contributes significantly to the quality of learning.

187. The coordinator provides good leadership for the subject. Clear guidance has been given to enable teachers to follow the scheme of work and agreed guidelines. The learning resources are carefully organised and managed. Their use is monitored, so that they can be replenished and improved to underpin new ideas and developments. The coordinator has attended a training course for new coordinators. She is enthusiastic and knowledgeable, and has a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Both the collection made of pupils' work and the portfolio of photographic evidence assist the coordinator to judge the development of skills and understanding, as pupils move through the school.

188. There have been considerable improvements in the provision for the subject since the last inspection. The next stage of development requires a more systematic programme of monitoring teachers' planning, scrutinising pupils' work and evaluating teaching and learning, in order to judge pupils' progress accurately against the expectations set out in the National Curriculum.

GEOGRAPHY

189. Only three lessons could be observed, because the concentration in humanities during the term of the inspection was on history. Inspection judgements are based on these lessons, a scrutiny of pupils' previous work and teachers' planning, displays around the school and discussion with the coordinator and pupils in Year 6. Overall, pupils achieve the standards they should: seven and 11 year olds have the range of knowledge and geographical skills that is normally found. Pupils' progress is satisfactory overall. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.

190. By the end of Year 2, pupils have made satisfactory progress in their acquisition of an average level of geographical skills. They learn soundly about their local area – for example, making maps of the school site (using a key), describing and sketching parts of the village and conducting a traffic survey, using mathematical skills appropriately in graphs and tallying. They compare Haslington with different environments. For instance, pupils learn about other countries through the travels of Barnaby Bear. This good technique helps pupils to familiarise themselves with the major countries of the world and their features, including the climate and its effect on people's clothing and habits. It also involves parents taking "Barnaby" on holiday, keeping a log, sending postcards and collecting information about the area.

191. By the age of 11, pupils have sound geographical knowledge. They use a limited number of atlases and maps of varying scales – from local street maps to maps of Britain and the world. Many classes work from photocopied maps that accompany units of work. The Year 6 pupils involved in a discussion had difficulty remembering what an Ordnance Survey map was and how it differed from other, smaller-scale maps, but they took up the challenge with relish and found the information later the same day. Pupils locate key features such as mountain ranges, understand (for instance) what contour lines denote and describe clearly what makes a volcano erupt. They can locate major cities and rivers. Pupils attain well in Year 4: they know, for instance, the size and temperature of Baffin Island and can locate it on a map.

192. As they move through the school, pupils effectively build up their knowledge of geographical vocabulary and increase their knowledge of environmental issues in the immediate locality and further afield. They make comparisons of environments by, for example, visiting the wildlife area of Crewe Business Park and comparing it with the Orinoco River. In writing about the water cycle and describing the course of a river, a high-attaining pupil in Year 6 confidently and knowledgeably referred to "precipitation", "estuary" and "tributary". Similarly, pupils effectively develop their understanding of environmental issues. This was evident when pupils in Year 6 discussed the effects of pollution on the River Angara in Central America. Pupils use ICT to assist them in their geographical investigations, but it is insufficiently used to sort, query and present information.

193. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall for the older pupils and good for those in Years 1-2. In the lessons where teaching is good, pupils are managed very well. Teachers have a clear understanding of what they want pupils to learn and use time, resources and good questioning to ensure effective learning. Teachers make good use of geographical vocabulary and build well on pupils' knowledge. Work samples indicate, however, that all pupils tend to be given the same tasks, regardless of their ability. This lack of specific challenge for higher-attaining pupils limits their progress in the development of geographical skills and understanding. Pupils with special educational needs receive appropriate support, enabling them to make sound progress.

194. The school has reorganised its curriculum since the last inspection and now uses the nationally recommended guidelines. Learning resources have improved to a satisfactory level. On the evidence available, mapping skills have regressed, partly because the school has concentrated on, and improved, broader geographical skills and knowledge. The subject coordinator provides effective support and has a clear understanding of future priorities. She is aware, for example, that assessment procedures do not accurately identify individual pupils' attainment and progress. The school lacks sufficient maps of a good range to underpin continuous learning outside the time given to specific subject teaching.

HISTORY

195. Pupils' standards of attainment range from high to below average, but are above average overall by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. In reception and in Years 1-2, history is generally taught within broad topics. The subject becomes more specifically identified in Years 3-6.

196. By the end of Year 2, most pupils have a fair, elementary knowledge about key people and events in their own families. With the help of visits, photographs and class discussions, for example, they have a satisfactory understanding about the functions and relative age of key buildings in Haslington. They learn satisfactorily about changes within living memory by, for example, talking to grandparents about changes in modes of transport from their childhood or by the display of old domestic and educational objects. They have above average knowledge about a small range of important historical figures as diverse as Guy Fawkes and Florence Nightingale.

197. They acquire a reasonable understanding of the passage of time and about change over time. In a project on bicycles, for example, most pupils observed accurately changes in design, made good deductions about the age and sequence of bicycles by noting such features as shape, seats, height, wheel size and brakes, and made informed judgements about the relative safety and suitability of different models. Seaside holidays provided a very relevant focus for pupils to note how social attitudes and practices have changed over time. Pupils suggest and use a variety of appropriate sources of information such as family members, first-hand investigations, visits, books or the Internet.

198. In a particularly vivid and effective lesson, some pupils in Years 1 and 2 gained considerable insight into the Queen's coronation in 1953. After a brisk, thorough revision of the purpose, features and concept of a coronation that they had already studied (in which the pupils showed that they had remembered and understood much detail from a video), the teacher (as Archbishop of Canterbury) led an enactment of the Coronation itself. Children entered fully into the spirit of the event, dressing up and playing the parts of royalty, bishops, nobility and commoners with aplomb and conviction. The teacher brought the subject further alive by showing many well-sequenced photographs of specific stages and ensuring that only the Queen gave the royal wave. Throughout, as a result of careful guidance, pupils expressed their ideas clearly and precisely.

199. By the end of Year 6, through their work in Years 3-6 on Egypt, ancient Greece, The Romans, Vikings, the Tudors, Victorian times and some local history, most pupils acquire an above average understanding of the passage of time and a satisfactory framework of chronology. They are adept at identifying how things change and in understanding how people lived and thought differently in the past. They know a range of significant facts about the daily lives and cultures of some past times: through extensive work on the Victorians, for instance, pupils learned about key events and many facets of such aspects as transportation, inventions, housing, and working and social conditions.

200. Most pupils have an above average skill in identifying and using relevant evidence from a variety of sources. Most record their findings well. The best work (and there is much of it) is appropriately analytical, well structured, of suitable length and carefully presented. There is an appropriate range of analytical and descriptive writing alongside pupils' personal views and conclusions. By the age of 11, most pupils have acquired a good range of specific historical vocabulary and give convincing reasons for changes in events.

201. In a good lesson in Year 5, for instance, the teacher elicited pupils' views about the notions of "true" or "false" in a version of the story of the Trojan War. Most pupils wrestled well with the difficulty of the concept, particularly where the issue was far from clear cut. In another lesson the teacher very well capitalised on a toy sphinx that a boy had brought from a dig in his garden. Pupils confidently and thoughtfully put forward ideas as to how it may have got there and showed an above average ability to communicate their views.

202. Pupils' learning and progress in their studies are usually good throughout the school. This is because pupils enjoy the subject as a result of stimulating teaching, interesting topics and generally good resources. The vast majority of pupils work with concentration, interest and enthusiasm and respond well to teachers' questions. They share ideas sensibly and work conscientiously without continuous supervision. Occasionally, pupils acquire less knowledge and understanding than they could, because the learning objectives are not clear enough or

class control is too loose. Both pupils of high attainment and those with special educational needs generally make good progress in their studies.

203. The quality of teaching is good overall (and often very good) throughout the school. Teachers like to teach the subject and know enough about it to handle most pupils' questions confidently. The best teaching is marked by stimulating questions, the rigorous discussion of evidence and views, and pacy progress. Only occasionally is teaching unsatisfactory, when pupils do not learn or concentrate enough in the time available. Teachers provide relevant, documentary materials, sometimes drawing on the resources of local museums. Marking, however, often does not offer encouraging criticism, so that pupils know how they can improve further. During the inspection, only one classroom had a time-line to help pupils to appreciate when events took place and the passage of time.

204. The curriculum offered is well balanced and meets national requirements. It is based on a national scheme of work and satisfactory short-term planning. The subject is well managed, but is insufficiently monitored to be certain that good standards and understanding are achieved and that assessment is carried out to national criteria. There is a fair range of study visits to historical locations such as Chester, Ely, York and the Manchester Museum of Science and Industry. Displays of relevant work (in a suitable variety of media and formats) are very well presented. There is a generally good range of videos, photographs and reference books (sparse, however, for the early years), but other reference materials such as old maps and computer software as well as artefacts are in limited supply. Overall, however, the subject makes an important, vibrant contribution to children's learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

205. At the previous inspection, the overall standard was judged to be above that expected nationally of pupils by the age of seven and average by the age of 11. Since then, national expectations have become more demanding. Pupils' attainment is currently at the normal level now expected of pupils by the end of Years 2 and 6. This level represents an improvement since the last inspection. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and, regardless of age, use the equipment to explore computer programs confidently.

206. By the age of seven, pupils have gained a good range of ICT skills. Most in Years 1-2 log on to the computer network, for example, and use the mouse to select a program from the list of screen icons. Samples of work by pupils in Year 2 indicate good control of the mouse when, for instance, using a paint program to create a pattern and fill spaces with colours. They demonstrate confident use of simple search techniques in finding information from a CD-ROM. Their work in controlling a programmable toy indicates a clear understanding of the need for precise instructions in a specific format, in order to control a sequence of movements.

207. Pupils in these years use word processing well to enter, edit, save and print text. During a lesson for a group of pupils in Year 1, all demonstrated confident management of the hardware in selecting a program that enabled them to produce a graphical display of the data they entered, using a mouse. They went on to select further features of the program from a drop-down menu that required them to comment on their graph.

208. By the age of 11, pupils extend their skills in a wider range of applications to a satisfactory level overall. For example, during a lesson for a mixed-age class of pupils in Years 5 and 6, they worked in pairs to retrieve information successfully from the Internet and to enter it into a desktop publishing package. They then went on to edit text, to refine the balance of text and pictures and to create a brochure on their chosen theme. By the end of the lesson, potentially impressive brochures began to emerge.

209. Pupils make good progress throughout Years 3-6. Extensive samples of work show that pupils acquire appropriate experience and competence in the required areas of study. For example, they increase their knowledge and use of features of a word-processing package. They competently use a variety of forms of data storage from which to find information, learning to search for information that satisfies more than one criterion. By Year 5, pupils are introduced to spreadsheets. In Year 6 they extend their applications of ICT by using equipment that controls and monitors light sensors in, for example, scientific experiments.

210. Pupils' attitudes to learning when using computers are very good. They handle equipment sensibly and work together in pairs calmly, yet eagerly. They readily help one another and interact positively with their teachers and the other adults who support their learning. Behaviour is very good, especially in the confined space of the small computer suite.

211. Three lessons were observed during the inspection and the quality of this teaching was very good overall. All teachers and classroom support assistants have recently undertaken ICT training. Teachers make good use of both the ICT suite and the stand-alone computers in each classroom to teach ICT skills and to enhance the learning of subjects. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection: subject knowledge is now good and better use is made of the resources.

212. Basic operational skills are well taught: the youngest pupils listen carefully and learn, for example, to log on and select the required program, using a mouse. Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to plan and organise effective lessons. Expectations of pupils are explained clearly and good support is given to pupils both by teachers and classroom assistants. A governor also gives generous and effective support to pupils and teachers. Teachers manage behaviour very well and use both time and resources effectively. Thorough, ongoing assessments are made of pupils' progress in individual lessons.

213. The leadership and management of the recently appointed subject coordinator are very good. Resources and the organisation of the subject have been put on a firm footing. Programmes of study are clearly defined. The subject is well placed to continue improving. The main area for improvement is the assessment and recording of pupils' attainment and progress in ICT – their learning during lessons in the subject itself, from using the resources to enhance learning in other subjects, and from the skills they learn when using computers at home.

MUSIC

214. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 2, their attainment is below average. Pupils sing satisfactorily in tune and acquire some knowledge of dynamics – such as whether music they hear is high or low, fast or slow, or loud or soft. They also clap the simple rhythms of words by, for example, using the words of songs. In one lesson in Year 2, pupils identified tunes which were in either major or minor keys. Some were reasonably confident and successful in this exercise, although many remained confused amongst the concepts of high, low, loud, soft, major or minor. No evidence of pupils' composition was seen during the inspection.

215. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is broadly average. These pupils have retained some knowledge and understanding from their earlier musical education as well as from the current weekly music assemblies. At these assemblies they hear music from such significant composers as Debussy and Chopin. Pupils sing reasonably well in tune, but do not sustain notes well. They hear and recognise dance forms (played by their peers on recorders) and many know the four instruments of the string family. Again, no evidence of pupils' composing was provided during the inspection.

216. The quality of pupils' learning in Years 1-2 is unsatisfactory. This is because pupils have too narrow a range of musical experiences, especially in creative work. The activities seen included singing, recorder-playing for a few pupils and singing with percussion as "punctuation". Much emphasis was put on pupils learning to identify major and minor melodies.

217. In Years 3-6, the quality of learning is also unsatisfactory. In the class lessons, learning experiences are too narrow: too much time is spent, for example, on learning the rudiments of music without immediate reference to musical sound. In all lessons seen during the inspection, approximately half the time was spent on writing the number of "counts" underneath semibreves, minims and crotchets given on a worksheet. In some classes, pupils rapidly lose interest in this activity and often become restless. Learning is better in the assembly for Years 3-6, where pupils perform before their peers, hear recorded music from great composers and acquire some knowledge about orchestral and other instruments.

218. Pupils' attitudes to music are good overall. Pupils are interested in music and show pleasure when they achieve some success in their singing and acquisition of knowledge. Behaviour in lessons is satisfactory overall,

although this quickly deteriorates when lessons lose pace or when the teacher dwells too long on musical rudiments. Pupils show good levels of maturity as they reach the top of the school when, in spite of faulty lesson management, they remain biddable and cooperative.

219. Overall, and across all year groups, teaching is unsatisfactory. Whilst the music specialist teacher has good subject knowledge and expertise, the choice of material for lessons is often irrelevant and the management of pupils is inconsistent. Fair attention is paid to the teaching of literacy, usually through a focus on reading the words of songs and also by pinpointing essential musical terms. A significant amount of time is wasted in lessons, particularly when the musical activity is being changed. In some lessons, pupils crowd round the teacher, asking for help, while the rest of the class remains disengaged. The piano is used too intrusively in many lessons.

220. Around eight pupils receive individual instrumental lessons. Sometimes these pupils play before their peers. There are two small recorder groups and a choir of about 13 pupils. These groups occasionally perform outside school to senior citizens in a nearby home. There is almost no interaction between the music specialist teacher and the class teachers in school. This is a major educational disadvantage in the provision of music over the whole school. Pupils unfortunately now achieve lower standards than those reported at the last inspection. The situation with music is unsatisfactory and requires significant improvement.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

221. At the last inspection in 1997, standards were judged to be above the national expectation, with satisfactory progress made by pupils in all years. The good standards have been maintained over the last five years and progress continues to be satisfactory. During this inspection, lessons were seen in dance, games and gymnastics, but, because of time-tabling arrangements, it was not possible to observe any lessons in Year 2: it is therefore not possible to make a reliable judgement on teaching in this year group. At the start of Year 1 and in the lesson seen, pupils' standards are higher than expected for their age. Pupils in Years 3-6 also achieve an above average overall standard.

222. Pupils in Year 1 demonstrate good control of body movements and have a mature awareness of themselves and others in a confined space. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are already skilled games players, throwing and catching small balls with ease and confidence. Several of them (girls as well as boys) are able to bowl over-arm, cricket-style, with some measure of accuracy both in direction and length. This is due to some very good teaching. By Year 6, pupils move with poise and confidence and develop original, well-planned sequences.

223. In two delightful dance lessons, Year 5 and Year 6 pupils produced very thoughtful and imaginative ideas based on the North American Indian *Dream Catchers*. Boys and girls worked equally hard and cooperatively to produce a small group dance that sensitively expressed the idea of accepting good dreams and rejecting bad ones. Teachers in games and dance lessons encourage pupils to evaluate their movements and strive for improvement. Pupils are very willing to do this and make positive suggestions to refine their own and other pupils' work. Innovative use was made of the overhead projector at the end of two lessons to help pupils to focus on what had been learned.

224. The quality of teaching is good overall and at times very good. One lesson was unsatisfactorily taught. The majority of teachers have good subject knowledge and carefully plan their lessons to develop skills and understanding systematically, with interesting activities that motivate and challenge the pupils. Only in the one unsatisfactory lesson, where the purpose of the lesson was unclear, did the pupils make little or no progress in their learning.

225. Pupils in all classes are enthusiasts for PE and work energetically. The quality of behaviour and relationships is mostly very good and makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal and social development. Moments of significant spirituality were also created in dance lessons. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated and achieve successfully. Appropriate opportunities are provided to ensure that practically all pupils achieve the required standard in swimming by the time they leave the school.

226. A number of sports activities extend and enrich the taught curriculum. Most of these are enthusiastically enjoyed by a significant number of pupils, including girls who are encouraged to play cricket and football. Links with Crewe Alexander Football Club and involvement with the Rotary Club's annual *Swimathon* also enhance pupils' interest in local sports.

227. The management of the subject is satisfactory and the coordinator plays a very strong role in encouraging extracurricular activities. The school clearly values the subject and a generous time allowance has been maintained, despite the considerable pressures on curricular time. Little has, however, been done to assess individual pupils' progress or to monitor the quality of teaching, in order to raise standards even further. Overall, satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

228. By the end of Year 2, pupils have made good progress and, overall, attain a standard above that normally expected for their age. Steady progress continues and builds on previous learning, so that each year standards improve. Pupils' overall level of attainment in Year 6 is average for their age, because these pupils have not benefited from the systematic, continuous programme that is now being followed through the school. This improvement in provision has been brought about through the school's good use of the new local Agreed Syllabus and national guidelines. The coordinator has been instrumental in developing these.

229. In Years 1 and 2, pupils are taught to accept that people hold different religious beliefs and celebrate important aspects of their lives in different ways. By the time they leave school at the end of Year 6, pupils have studied various aspects of the Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Hindu faiths, but have done little to compare key aspects of Christianity with each of the others. For example, younger pupils have visited a church and learned much about the symbolism and meaning it holds for the worshipping community. Skilled teaching has also helped these pupils to compare their own experiences of Harvest Festival with the Jewish celebration of Sukkoth. Although pupils from Years 5 and 6 gained a great deal of knowledge and understanding from their visit to a mosque and produced detailed descriptions about the five pillars of Islam, comparisons between different faiths and styles of worship are not sufficiently explored.

230. Good improvement has been made in many areas of teaching since the last inspection. Owing to timetabling arrangements, it was not possible to see any lessons in Years 5 or 6. Judgements about this section of the school have been made through the close scrutiny of pupils' work since September, together with teachers' planning and assessment documentation. In the lessons observed, teachers had moved away from the "story, then draw and write" model that was identified as a weakness at the last inspection. Much more time is now spent in discussion and reflection.

231. Pupils in Year 1 and 2, for example, were enthralled by the teacher's sensitive telling of the story of Joseph, helping the pupils to focus on the feelings of Joseph's brothers. The ensuing discussion elicited very thoughtful reflections on jealousy, anger and fairness. These pupils are also aware that Christians, from the Old Testament part of the Bible, and Jews from the Torah hear similar stories about how God wants people to live. Pupils also acquire a good understanding about the difference between Christian and Jewish beliefs about Jesus. This good teaching in Years 1 and 2 does not limit pupils' knowledge of the Christmas story to mere facts, but extends pupils' understanding to reflect on the Christian belief in passing on God's gifts of love, peace and hope through people's actions.

232. Pupils' knowledge and understanding are soundly built on in Years 3 and 4 by good (and sometimes very good) teaching. Pupils study pictures of Jesus from a range of Christian denominations, for example, and from different periods in history. Teachers use these well to stimulate ideas about what people thought of Jesus, even though they had never seen him. This reflective thinking and discussion was further extended in the lessons in Years 3 and 4 by the good use of stories about Jesus. From textual evidence, pupils shared ideas about what Jesus' friends and acquaintances thought of him and his behaviour. Older pupils in Years 5 and 6 have satisfactory opportunities for personal reflection on such topics as "my thoughts" and "my special place", and have carried out personal research on Islamic beliefs from books and the Internet.

233. Teaching is good in Years 1-2, sound in Years 3-6 and sound overall. In all the lessons observed, teachers used skilled questioning to elicit ideas, extend pupils' thinking and assess knowledge. Pupils mostly respond very thoughtfully and use their good speaking and listening skills to explain and share ideas both in whole-class and small-group discussions. Suitable opportunities are provided for pupils to ask questions, which they do confidently – such as when a pupil in Year 2 asked whether the story of Joseph was true. Pupils' motivation is usually well maintained, but in one lesson, mainly due to the oppressive heat and airless atmosphere, pupils were lethargic and, despite the teacher's good questioning, unresponsive.

234. Teachers mostly pay good attention to developing literacy skills and linking RE to other subjects. In addition to the good opportunities provided for pupils' reading, speaking and listening, work is recorded in a variety of ways from an early age: this includes lists, descriptive writing, reflective poetry, flow diagrams and notes on group discussions. In one class the teacher effectively used a computer to record the findings of a group discussion. Links to geography and history are made through such activities as local visits and, in Years 5 and 6, pupils located mainly Islamic countries on a world map. Pupils' recorded work in Years 5 and 6 is not, however, consistently well marked. Crucial spelling mistakes are sometimes ignored and there is an absence of evaluative comments to develop and improve individual performance.

235. The coordinator has made a significant contribution to the improvements in this subject and to the good contribution RE now makes to pupils' spiritual development. Although further improvement is necessary, a good start has been made to the assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress through whole-class evaluations at the end of each topic of work. This aspect of good practice is helping to raise standards.