

# INSPECTION REPORT

**ASHFIELD PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**ROSS-ON-WYE**

**HEREFORDSHIRE**

**Unique reference number: 116731**

**Head teacher: J J Williams**

Reporting inspector: J Darby  
2655

Dates of inspection: 25-29 September 2000

Inspection number: 224734

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ashfield Park Primary School Redhill Road Ross-on-Wye Herefordshire
Postcode:	HR9 5AU
Telephone number:	01989 562738
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	B Clare
Date of previous inspection:	1-4 July 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
J Darby	Registered inspector	Religious education	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements What should the school do to improve further? How well is the school led and managed?
C Hayes	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
L Dorling	Team inspector	Art Geography History	How well are pupils taught?
A Day	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Design and technology	How well does the school care for its pupils?
W Ellis	Team inspector	Mathematics Music Physical education Equal Opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
B Crossman	Team inspector	English Special educational needs Under 5s	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This is a large primary school with 238 boys and 206 girls aged between 4 and 11. It is situated in the market town of Ross-on-Wye. Some pupils come to school by bus. Most children spend two terms part-time in the nursery before joining the reception year at the beginning of the term in which they are five. The number of pupils who need help to overcome emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties is just above the national average. There are 89 children on the school's special educational needs register, nine have statements of special educational need. The school has a specialist teaching centre, which caters for the needs of twelve pupils. Almost all pupils are of white ethnic origin and everyone speaks English. Pupils come from a variety of social backgrounds. The school has far fewer pupils who take free school meals than most other schools nationally primarily because the Local Education Authority has not provided a cooked meals service for a significant number of years. Attainment on entry to the nursery and when they begin in Year 1 is average for most pupils.

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

Ashfield Park Primary is providing a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. Most of the teaching is good, much of it is very good and some is outstanding. Pupils are well served by the teachers and classroom support staff. Standards are now in line with national averages in English, mathematics and science and are improving considerably by the time pupils leave the school. Standards have risen significantly this year. In particular, more pupils at the ages of 7 and 11 are reaching higher levels than the national average. This is a result of the challenging teaching they now receive and the way teachers have made improvements to the way they assess and check children's progress. The care of pupils is very good. There is very good provision in the nursery where pupils are given a good start. The head teacher has continued to develop a climate where pupils are keen and able to learn, however there are aspects of his leadership, which need to be improved if progress is to be maintained. The deputy head teacher, key stage and subject coordinators provide very good support for the head teacher. Governors also give good support and commitment and know the school well. The school has the capacity to improve. It makes sound use of its resources and controls the finances available to it well. The school provides sound value for money.

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

- Teaching is good overall and is frequently very good or excellent.
- Standards in English and mathematics are at national averages and improving for all pupils, particularly the higher attainers.
- Progress and attainment made by pupils is very well assessed in the core subjects.
- Very good provision in the nursery where pupils are given a good start.
- Pupils' attitudes are positive and they enjoy going to school.
- Pupils are very well cared for by teachers and support staff.

### **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

- The school development plan in providing a clearer direction for school improvement.
- Monitoring and evaluating standards of attainment and quality of teaching and learning by the head teacher, senior managers, subject coordinators.
- Time allocations to the whole curriculum and the use of that time.
- Special needs management and coordination.
- The detail in the reports to parents.

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the previous inspection in 1996 has been satisfactory overall. There are significantly higher standards in English and mathematics this year as a result of good teaching and improved assessments. Higher-attaining pupils are doing better than previously. The response to some of the seven action points has been good but there has been insufficient improvement in others. A set of clear and appropriate educational aims have been published in the school's prospectus. Governors and staff are more involved in the strategic planning process and there is a strong and shared commitment to succeed.

However, the school's plan for improvement requires sharper focus on specific priorities to provide greater clarity. The school's leadership has begun to evaluate the school's work by monitoring the implementation of the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy. However, monitoring procedures across the school are not routine or rigorous enough. Efficiency and effectiveness levels have been raised by improvements to administration and financial planning.

Pupils' spiritual development has been improved. School procedures now comply with statutory requirements in regard to the special educational needs provision and in the use of training grants. The length of the school day has been extended to accommodate the daily literacy and numeracy sessions but the amount of taught time at Key Stage 2 is still below the recommended government guidelines.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			Similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
English	D	D	D	D	<i>very high</i> A*
Mathematics	C	D	D	D	<i>well above average</i> A
Science	C	D	D	D	<i>above average</i> B
					<i>average</i> C
					<i>below average</i> D
					<i>well below average</i> E
					<i>very low</i> E*

Standards in Key Stage 2 were higher in 1999 than in the previous two years and this improvement has continued with a significant rise in 2000. This is not reflected in the above table but standards are above the national average in English, mathematics and science this year. In particular this is due to the sharp increase in the number of pupils attaining the higher level 5 as a result of improved teaching.

The school exceeded the targets it had set for raising standards in both English and mathematics in 2000. As a result of the progress made by pupils in Year 5 last year the targets for 2001 have been raised to a more challenging level.

Standards of work seen in all other subjects are in line with national expectations for seven and eleven year olds and pupils' achievements are satisfactory. In some subjects in Key Stage 2, physical education, music and religious education, they are higher and above the expected standards.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good: pupils have positive attitudes to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good: pupils are well behaved. Pupils act sensibly and nearly all of the children are considerate, cooperative and show respect for each other and for adults.
Personal development and relationships	Good: Pupils are very willing to take on responsibility. Relationships within the school are very good.
Attendance	Good: Pupils enjoy coming to school and their attendance is above average. There is a punctual start to school and to lessons.

The atmosphere in the school is good and pupils play and work together in harmony. The school operates as a very orderly community.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	Aged 5-7 years	Aged 7 –11 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Good	Good

The quality of teaching is a strength of the school and it has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Good teaching occurs in every stage and there is more good teaching than at the time of the previous inspection. Most of the teaching is good or better (73% of all lessons seen) and there is a high proportion of very good or excellent teaching (31%). Few lessons were unsatisfactory (2%).

Skills of literacy are taught effectively both in the literacy hour and in other subjects, such as history, geography and RE. Skills of speaking and listening are very evident and different forms of writing are encouraged. Numeracy skills are soundly taught and teachers encourage their use in subjects such as science and geography. Planning for lessons has improved and is now a strength. Teachers are clear about what children are to learn and share these aims with pupils. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall and work hard, concentrating well in lessons.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory provision: the curriculum meets statutory requirements. Time allocations for lessons and for some subjects needs to be reviewed.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall: broad and balanced provision in special educational centre with very good teaching. Learning assistants provide good support in classrooms.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall: particularly good moral and social provision. There has been good progress in improving the quality of pupils' spiritual development. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good: this is a strength. There are high standards of care. The safe and secure school community provided by the head teacher and staff continues to promote the well being of pupils very effectively. Teachers and support staff know their pupils very well indeed. Procedures for assessing and monitoring their progress are good.

There is a rich and relevant curriculum for pupils in the Foundation Stage. Provision for pupils personal, social and health education is effective with good links with other subjects.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management of the head teacher and other key staff	Satisfactory with important weaknesses: strategic planning is not sufficiently focused on appropriate areas for improvement. Management of special needs is not well coordinated. Very good leadership is provided by the deputy head teacher and within the Foundation Stage. Good leadership is provided by the coordinators of key stages and of mathematics and English.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory: Governors take a keen interest in school life, work hard for the school and meet their statutory responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory: The school has good procedures for analysing the National Curriculum tests but makes insufficient use of the outcomes to inform the schools improvement plan. A weakness is the absence of monitoring and evaluating teaching on a regular basis. Skills of subject coordinators are insufficiently used and developed to monitor the work in school.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory: There are sufficient teachers and support staff to teach the full curriculum. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory and are used to good effect to support learning.

Senior managers, staff and governors effectively compare pupils' performance in tests with local, similar and other schools. Principles of best value are satisfactorily applied by the head teacher and governors.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils like the school and parents believe that their children are making good progress.</li> <li>• They feel that teaching is good and that their children are expected to work hard and do their best.</li> <li>• Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems about their children.</li> <li>• They feel the school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• The good behaviour within the school and the way children are helped to become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some parents would like more information about how their children are getting on at school.</li> <li>• The amounts of work pupils are given to do at home.</li> <li>• Some parents do not feel the school works closely enough with parents.</li> <li>• They feel there are not enough after school clubs or activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with the positive views of parents about the school, except that there are improvements needed to some important aspects of the leadership and management. The inspection team also finds that there is a wide enough range of after school clubs and activities. Whilst there are some inconsistencies with setting homework, it is generally appropriate and is sufficient to extend pupils' learning in school. The school provides parents with good quality information about school events but annual reports do not give enough information about what their children can do in all subjects.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1 When pupils start school, their early attainments in all areas of learning, including language, literacy and mathematics are in line with those of most four-year-olds. Pupils spend just two terms part-time in the nursery before moving to the reception class. Within this Foundation Stage, the majority of pupils progress well in all the areas of learning, achieving the expected standards in language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development. Their progress is even better in personal and social development and the creative areas and pupils achieve above national expectations for their age.

2 The results of the National Curriculum tests for seven year olds in 1999 showed that standards of reading and writing were below the national average and those in mathematics were average. In comparison with schools of similar characteristics, results were also below average in reading and writing and average in mathematics. These results were lower than in previous years. The pattern of the school's national results over the period 1996 to 1999 shows that the attainment of boys and girls to be close to that found nationally. Girls have outperformed boys in both reading and writing for each of the last four years, similar to the picture nationally. The results of the more recent tests in 2000 show an improvement on the previous year, notably with greater numbers of pupils attaining the higher level 3. Almost half the pupils achieved this level in reading and mathematics, well above the national average, with average attainment in writing. This improvement is because of the successful introduction of the literacy and numeracy lessons and the more focused teaching which has resulted.

3 Teachers' assessments in science for seven year olds suggest that attainment in 1999 and 2000 was below the national average. Inspection evidence shows that there is discrepancy between these assessments and the actual levels attained, which are higher and in line with national expectations, because of over rigorous procedures. The school has already begun to rectify this discrepancy.

4 The results of the National Curriculum tests for eleven year olds for 1999 indicate that overall attainment in English, mathematics and science was below the national average although the proportion of pupils achieving the higher level 5 was average in English and mathematics. In comparison with similar schools, results were also below average for all three subjects. Over the period 1996-1999 performance shows broadly average levels, with boys and girls attaining levels close to those reached by boys and girls nationally. Nevertheless, the underlying trend in recent years has been one of improvement and the results of the National tests in 2000 indicate significant improvement with above-average results in English, mathematics and science. The school is successfully raising the levels of attainment, particularly with regard to that of the higher attaining pupils. This is an improvement from the previous inspection when the lack of challenge limited the progress of such pupils.

5 The school set realistic targets for 2000 based on the prior attainment of that particular group of pupils. These targets were exceeded quite considerably in English and mathematics. The targets the school has set for 2001 are now thought to be too modest given this increase and because of the levels reached by the pupils at the end of Year 5. As a result, the school has raised them to more challenging levels.

6 Inspection findings show a similar picture to the tests. Standards are rising quite appreciably at both key stages, particularly in English and mathematics. This is a result of the good teaching, and the fact that most teachers have a secure knowledge of how to teach basic skills. Higher-attaining pupils are being challenged by their work and expected to reach the higher levels. Pupils are being more involved in their own learning by the setting of individual targets and this is leading to higher expectations.

7 During Key Stage 1, pupils make sound progress in English and standards in speaking and listening, reading and writing are in line with national averages by the age of seven. Skills of reading and writing are soundly taught. In particular, phonic knowledge is more secure than at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress as a result of the additional support from classroom assistants in some lessons. Most pupils maintain this steady progress throughout Key Stage 2 and their attainment at the age of eleven is again in line with expectations. The quality of teaching of the oldest pupils is particularly good. Speaking and listening skills are taught well and pupils apply these skills successfully in other subjects too. The standards reached by many pupils are above those expected nationally. All groups make sound progress in reading and writing and standards are at least in line with those expected nationally.

8 In mathematics, standards are average in both key stages with above-average numbers of pupils attaining the higher grades. Pupils make sound progress in mathematics as a result of the consistent approach to the teaching of the National Numeracy Strategy. Progress in pupils' mental skills is good because teachers have given it greater emphasis following an analysis of assessment scores. Numeracy skills are applied well in other subjects such as geography and science.

9 In science, standards of attainment are in line with expectations at the end of both key stages, with a significant number of eleven-year-olds reaching the higher levels. These pupils make very good progress at the upper end of the school because of the high quality teaching they receive. Overall, pupils make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of science and in the development of practical skills. Across the school, however, there is insufficient emphasis on investigative work, with too little time given to developing the principles and importance of fair testing.

10 Overall, pupils with special educational needs make sound progress in both key stages and they attain appropriate standards. Those in need of support receive sensitive and purposeful help from learning support assistants. Some pupils at Key Stage 2 make good progress because of the very good teaching they receive in the Special Education Centre.

11 Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are in line with national expectations at the ages of seven and eleven; some pupils attain above-average national standards. Standards were at similar levels at the time of the last inspection. The two computer suites, which the school has developed, are being used well to teach ICT skills and older pupils in particular are applying their skills in subjects such as science and history.

12 Pupils' attainment by the age of seven and eleven in history and geography is in line with national expectations. Attainment in religious education (RE) and physical education (PE) is average for pupils in Key Stage 1. As part of the PE taught programme in Key Stage 1, pupils have regular swimming lessons in the school's own training pool and, as a consequence, they reach above-average standards for their age by the time they are seven. Good teaching within Key Stage 2 ensures that pupils make good progress in PE and music, and standards are above the expected levels by the time pupils leave the school. Evidence from a limited number of observations indicates that above-average standards are also reached in RE and design and technology. No overall judgements on attainment could be

made in music at Key Stage 1 and in art at both key stages because little teaching was observed during the inspection and the sample of work of work seen was small.

13 All pupils have equal access to the curriculum, including pupils who are in the Special Education Centre. There are no longer inconsistencies between the performance of pupils in different classes, as highlighted in the previous inspection, because teachers are working in close collaboration with each other. Sometimes standards are constrained by lessons which are too long and the pace of learning slows.

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

14 Pupils have good and positive attitudes to the school and to learning. They come to school regularly and punctually, with attendance levels exceeding the national average, and demonstrate keenness in lessons. Unauthorised absences are very low. This confirms the overwhelming views of most parents who agreed that their children enjoy coming to school. Pupils under five are enthusiastic and confident about their learning. They develop their independence through choosing their own activities, retain their levels of interest and concentrate well. They also cooperate when working in pairs or larger groups and play well together. Pupils in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are also eager to learn and participate enthusiastically when they are motivated by stimulating activities. They persevere and apply themselves with dedication, except when lessons are too long or there are periods of inactivity and then their concentration lapses. One of the things pupils do particularly well is the way they cooperate and listen to and respect the views of others. Pupils with special educational needs value the help they receive and work hard to do their best. Pupils also eagerly participate in extra-curricular activities, for example in the well-attended after-school computer club.

15 Behaviour is good in class, around the school and at play. Most pupils are aware of what is expected of them, are considerate and cooperative, and show respect for each other and for teachers. There is a minority of pupils, particularly in Key Stage 2, whose behaviour occasionally has a negative impact on the learning of others and who need firm management from teachers. Assemblies are very successful in promoting high expectations of behaviour and setting the secure and friendly atmosphere within the school. No incidents of bullying were seen during the inspection and boys and girls get on extremely well together. The school has had only one exclusion in the previous five years. Children are polite and helpful to visitors and respect the school's and other pupils' property. Parents hold very positive opinions regarding pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Inspectors agree with these views and consider that the school has maintained the good standards seen during the previous inspection.

16 Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils respond well to the school's efforts to develop their individual learning and social skills. When given the opportunity, pupils gladly accept responsibilities and discharge them well. As they get older, pupils take on more responsibility for overseeing care of equipment and other duties. Examples of this are the Year 4 "book buddies", who help lower-attaining pupils with their reading and Year 6 prefects, who discharge their lunchtime and playtime duties with tact and thoroughness. The previous report indicated that there were insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning skills. This remains the case in some lessons, where pupils need more opportunities for individual research and to make their own decisions, but overall they do exercise initiative and responsibility well. Relationships between pupils, and with pupils and adults, are good.

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

17 The quality of teaching is a strength of the school and it has improved significantly since the last inspection. Teaching is now good overall. Previously it was judged to be sound although fifteen per cent was unsatisfactory. The percentage of lessons where teaching is good or very good has increased considerably with 73% of lessons good or better and only 2% of lessons unsatisfactory. In the nursery and the Special Education Centre teaching is very good. It is mainly good in Key Stage 1, with some very good teaching in Year 2 classes. In Key Stage 2 teaching is generally good, with a consistently high standard of teaching in Year 6.

18 Planning for lessons has been improved and is good overall. Across the school, teachers with parallel classes plan effectively together providing consistent learning experiences for pupils. Teachers have clear aims for what they want pupils to learn. They usually share these with pupils who therefore understand what they are trying to achieve and why. Although it is early in the school year, teachers have already made positive relationships with pupils and these underpin successful lessons so that everyone in the class is cooperating and making an effort with their work. In the best lessons, teachers expect and obtain high standards of behaviour, careful thought and a good work rate from their pupils.

19 Teachers skilfully target questions and challenge pupils to reason, to offer opinions, to recall or make connections with their previous learning. In the most effective lessons pupils are inspired to learn well because their teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the subjects they teach, particularly in English, mathematics, science, geography and personal, social and health education (PSHE). During and at the end of lessons teachers offer effective techniques to ascertain what pupils have learned and the progress they are making. In some lessons, useful opportunities for pupils to assess their own learning and that of others are given, but this is not sufficiently widespread. The recent setting of targets with individuals is a positive move forward so pupils know what they need to do to improve.

20 In the lessons that are judged to be satisfactory there are nevertheless some important shortcomings. In a few of these lessons, aims are not made clear to pupils, explanations are muddled and tasks are insufficiently challenging or lack variety so that the pace of learning is too slow. On some occasions, teachers spend too long at the beginning of lessons talking to pupils, leaving insufficient time for tasks and summary sessions. In a minority of lessons, pupils are not given enough choice within the activity and this limits attainment. In other instances, mainly in foundation subjects, the time available for a lesson is too short and, although planned activities are appropriate, time runs out leaving pupils and teachers dissatisfied. Conversely, some lessons, particularly in literacy and numeracy, are too long and what can start off as a good lesson deteriorates because teachers and pupils lose urgency and concentration wanes. The use of time within lessons and across the timetable is a matter for the whole school and needs tackling with some urgency.

21 The school is successfully implementing the National Strategies of Literacy and Numeracy. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the principles underlying the initiatives and are generally using the guidelines effectively in lessons to promote learning in the basic skills. Teachers make useful connections between subjects and pupils use their basic skills well across the curriculum.

22 Pupils with special educational needs are well taught both across the school and in the Special Education Centre. In mainstream lessons, these pupils are well supported by their teachers and, where available, by learning support assistants. The teaching in regular withdrawal groups is also good. Support staff work effectively with individuals and groups and help pupils to make progress towards their identified targets. This good support has a positive impact on the confidence and learning of pupils with special educational needs. The school has strategies for identifying talented or gifted pupils. Teachers cater for their

individual needs within the normal class by carefully matching work to attainment, supported where necessary by advice from external agencies. No pupils use English as an additional language.

23 Homework is generally used effectively to support learning in school. Younger pupils are asked to practise reading at home regularly, to engage in phonic and number activities and sometimes to bring resources or information to school to support their topic work. Many parents diligently support their child, but not all parents use the homework diaries effectively and sometimes the only entries are those written by teachers. At best the diaries provide a very good link between home and school. In Key Stage 2, homework is regularly set, especially in Years 5 and 6, though there are inconsistencies between classes on the amount of homework provided.

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

24 The quality and range of opportunities offered to pupils meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum in all subjects and religious education. Pupils in the Foundation Stage experience a wide ranging and relevant curriculum which is carefully structured and based closely on the Early Learning Goals for pupils under five. Overall the curriculum for pupils under five guides them successfully into the National Curriculum. The school has successfully adopted the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and gives a high priority to raising standards in English and mathematics. This is having a positive impact on the standards attained in reading, writing and mathematics in both key stages. The school makes good use of nationally developed schemes of work for other subjects which ensure that knowledge, skills and understanding build progressively throughout both key stages.

25 There are weaknesses in the way the school uses its available time. In some cases the time allocated for a lesson is too long, extending sometimes to 70 minutes, so that the pace of the lesson is lost and pupils' concentration wavers. In addition, the total teaching time is slightly below the nationally recommended minimum for Key Stage 2, an issue which was raised in the previous inspection. The school needs to undertake a careful review of the length of the teaching day, the time allocations for all subjects, and the particular slots in the timetable which are best suited to the teaching of each subject. The good cross-curricular links between different subjects are a strength of the school in that they help to deepen pupils' understanding. Any review of time allocations should seek to retain and extend these valuable links.

26 The school provides a curriculum that generally meets the needs of all pupils, including higher-attaining pupils. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers plan carefully to meet their needs and they are supported well by special needs support assistants. Pupils are fully included in all curriculum areas. The curriculum provided by the Special Education Centre is broad and well balanced and dovetails well into the main school curriculum. The whole school makes good provision for personal, social and health education through a planned programme which includes health education, sex education and teaching about drug misuse. The welfare of pupils is strongly promoted by this programme and by the ethos created by a caring staff.

27 The curriculum is enriched by the school's involvement in the local and wider community and through a number of extra-curricular activities. A significant minority of parents believe that the range of extra-curricular activities is unsatisfactory. The inspection evidence indicates that many staff support an appropriately wide range of extra-curricular activities which are mainly, though not exclusively, sporting and musical. They are open to all

pupils of appropriate age, mainly Key Stage 2, and are well attended by both boys and girls. The activities alter according to the time of year, but currently include recorders, choir, netball, first-aid, football, library club, computer club and cycling proficiency.

28 The curriculum is further enriched by visits which are used well to create interest and deepen understanding in work in science, history and geography. Periodic visitors, such as theatre groups, puppeteers, local writers and historians, enrich pupils' curricular experiences. The school has effective links with the community which contribute to learning. Access to the Internet took place at the time of the inspection and in future pupils will have the opportunity for worldwide contact as a resource for learning. The school's music makes a regular and important contribution to the community and, because of its excellent sporting facilities and the commitment of staff, the school hosts regular and varied sporting events for other schools in the region.

29 There are good links between the nursery and the pre-school groups, which have a positive benefit as pupils ease into the next stage of their education. Links with the secondary school to which most pupils transfer are also effective. Through exchange visits by teachers, the discussion and transfer of records, and a full day visit to the secondary school shortly before transfer, pupils and the receiving school are well prepared for the change.

30 The provision for pupils' spiritual development is good, an improvement since the last inspection when it was judged to be unsatisfactory. Assemblies provide good opportunities for pupils to reflect on important issues, such as how we should and should not judge other people. Opportunities in history and religious education enable pupils to consider the human sacrifice in two world wars, the differing beliefs of other faiths, and the life cycle of plants, animals and people.

31 The provision for pupils' moral development is also good. Staff are consistent in seeking to develop high standards of behaviour and consideration for others. For example, all classes devise and agree a set of classroom rules at the start of each year. These are displayed and, with few exceptions, pupils adhere to them. Nursery staff use the "snack time" as an important learning opportunity for teaching good manners and teachers throughout the school help pupils to develop a sense of right and wrong by emphasising fairness in all their dealings with them. The curriculum itself supports the teaching of moral values, for example, through the study of environmental issues in geography and a consideration of childhood during the Second World War in history.

32 The social development of pupils is good. Pupils work together well in mixed-gender pairs and small groups. Good relationships between staff and pupils strongly encourage pupils to listen to other points of view in discussion. Pupils readily volunteer their ideas safe in the knowledge that they will not receive ridicule. They share resources amicably and use the available space well, for example, when using the hall for physical education.

33 Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory overall, although some aspects are not sufficiently emphasised or promoted. There is limited evidence around the school of other cultures and the school is aware of the need to increase the range of resources in music and religious education. Within music, physical education, history and geography, and through visits and visitors, the school raises pupils' awareness of their own culture. In some lessons pupils learn about life in other countries, for example, when tasting bread from different countries. Many pupils are in correspondence with others from a school in Uganda and recently a teacher from the school visited and talked about life in his country and how he was able to teach despite being blind. These and other experiences broaden pupils' understanding of the world around them.

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

34 Since the last inspection, the school has maintained its high standard of care for pupils. The school community remains secure with an atmosphere that continues to promote the well being of all the pupils very effectively. This is a strength. All staff work in the pupils' best interests to safeguard their welfare, health and safety. Arrangements for child protection are very good. The head teacher and staff are vigilant about attendance and the school's arrangements for monitoring attendance are good. There are very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. The school has a clear behaviour policy and at the beginning of the school year, all classes have drawn up their own charters to support good behaviour in classrooms and the playground. Bullying is very rare but if it occurs, pupils agree that it is sorted out promptly.

35 The welfare of pupils with special educational needs is well catered for. There is effective support from class teachers and learning support assistants. Procedures for identifying and assessing pupils with learning difficulties and the provision to meet their needs are good and fully comply with the Code of Practice. Good systems ensure that pupils' progress is recorded, regularly reviewed and that programmes of support are appropriate. As a result, pupils make sound progress towards their targets in their individual education plans. On occasions, there is insufficient communication with class teachers when pupils are withdrawn for support outside of the normal lessons. As a result teachers are not always aware of the work which has been covered.

36 Procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress are good. This is a strength. The school has a very useful range of performance data in the core subjects, which is regularly analysed, interpreted and used by staff to set targets for individual pupils at the beginning of each year. Information from this data and from teachers' ongoing assessment are used well to check pupils' progress and to inform curricular planning. The programme is managed and monitored very effectively by the deputy headteacher. Teachers know their pupils well, and offer good support and guidance as a result of that understanding.

37 A useful programme where pupils set their own targets has been piloted across the school, including the nursery. This system allows teachers to discuss strengths and weaknesses with pupils and provide guidance to help them improve their work. It is very effective and is to be adopted throughout the school. Marking of pupils' work is always positive in tone but there is limited evidence that the marking guides pupils to improve their work. The school provides effective advice to pupils based on the systematic monitoring of progress. Rewards for achievement in both academic and non-academic areas are regularly awarded.

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

38 Parents are supportive of the school in many ways and good relationships have been maintained since the time of the previous inspection. Most parents expressed satisfaction with the standards achieved and in most of the other areas on which they were consulted. However, there are four areas where 20% or more parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire were critical, compared with only one area at the time of the previous inspection. These four aspects concerned the amount of homework, the range of extra-curricular activities, the reporting of pupils' progress and the closeness with which the school works with parents. In fact, inspectors do not share parents' concerns regarding homework, out-of-class activities or the efforts the school makes to work closely with parents. The inspection findings do agree that annual progress reports do not consistently provide enough information about what their children can do in each subject and they lack enough information on what pupils need to do to improve.

39 In most respects, the school enjoys good links with parents. Parents are welcomed into school and very many parents give valuable help in lessons. Teachers continually strive to increase the number of parent helpers, who are briefed well on how to be effective in this role. Parents' efforts have a positive effect on pupils' learning. Pupils' learning is further enhanced by the efforts of a small but hard-working team of volunteers who run the "Friends of Ashfield Park" association, which raises substantial funds to provide resources for the school. Parents receive regular and high-quality information about school issues and activities, through newsletters and curriculum evenings. In addition, annual letters from teachers explain what is to be taught in the coming terms and this effectively addresses a criticism in the previous report. The school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents give clear and useful information, although the latter is lacking in detail in some areas, as in the financial statement and teacher training information. There are excellent links between nursery staff and parents, which set the benchmark for the rest of the school. Parents regard teachers as being easily approachable and this was evident from the many conversations between parents and teachers at the end of the day.

40 The school seeks to obtain parental views on various issues, such as homework diaries, home-school agreement and some school policies. Parents of children with special educational needs are properly and fully involved in reviews of their children's progress and in their individual education learning plans. The school maintains very good contact with parents on behaviour and attendance issues. Parents are encouraged to support their children's work at home, particularly in reading, and many do so. The inspection team finds that the quantity and quality of homework are suitable and sufficient to extend pupils' learning in school, although there are some inconsistencies in the amount set by individual teachers.

41 Compared with the time of the previous inspection, the school has maintained good links with parents, has improved communications with regard to what is taught, has raised the involvement of voluntary help within the classroom and now needs to improve the quality of progress reports to parents.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

42 Supported by the staff and governors, the head teacher provides good pastoral leadership and has successfully developed a positive ethos where pupils are keen and able to learn. Since the previous inspection, he has expressed the school's vision, aims and values, in consultation with others, and communicated these clearly in the school prospectus. A strong commitment to good relationships and equal opportunities exists in the school, staff relate well to each other and all adults and pupils are valued. There is a welcoming atmosphere to visitors with an emphasis on providing an attractive environment. In this sense, the school has strengthened the secure foundation for successful learning that existed at the time of the previous inspection. Nevertheless, aspects of the leadership provided by the head teacher are unsatisfactory because he has not been sufficiently decisive in addressing key weaknesses identified by the previous inspection.

43 The head teacher has appropriately delegated leadership responsibilities to others in key management posts. The deputy head teacher and other senior managers provide very good leadership and a strong impetus for the improvement of standards of attainment and higher teacher expectations. Effective leadership is provided by the deputy in curriculum areas and in her role as assessment coordinator. Results of National Curriculum and year tests in English, mathematics and science are analysed and the findings used to set improvement targets for groups and individual pupils. This is leading to higher expectations of what pupils are capable. Other teachers are now involved in using the data and their work is commendable. Very definite ideas of how this can be further developed, using information technology to record pupils' attainments and progress, ensure that this process will continue to raise standards.

44 Curriculum leadership of Key Stage 1 and 2 is good, and leadership of the Foundation Stage for the youngest pupils is very good. The overview of the whole curriculum across all key stages is a weakness. Leadership of mathematics and English is good because the coordinators are successfully leading the implementation of the National Strategies for Numeracy and Literacy. All subject coordinators are aware of their roles in routine maintenance work and fulfil these roles effectively. Most have provided effective written guidance and appropriate levels of resources for their subjects, within the limitations of the funding available to them. Provision for pupils with special educational needs within classes, in support groups and in the school's specialised centre, is good but weaknesses exist in the current management arrangements for coordinating that provision. As a consequence, there is poor communication with teachers and delays in referring pupils for additional learning support.

45 Although there is some improvement in the way the school monitors its performance and takes action to secure improvement, overall monitoring remains a key weakness. Monitoring is neither regular nor systematic and the head teacher has not yet established a framework to guide coordinators in their work. This means that little time is available to subject leaders to check standards in their subjects and their monitoring skills remain under-developed. The head teacher himself does not have a regular programme for monitoring standards and quality of provision. In this respect, the school is not yet well prepared to cope with the demands of performance management, which is soon to be implemented. The school has had recent successes, however, on which it can build a more directed approach. In the past two years teachers, including the head teacher, senior managers and the subject leaders, with the support of Local Education Authority consultants, have successfully monitored the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies.

46 The school's planning processes have been improved by the head teacher since the previous inspection by involving staff and governors more closely. Significant weaknesses

remain, however, because the improvement plan still does not provide a clear strategic direction to the school's current and future work. It does not project beyond the immediate year, lacking a long-term view. The plan attempts to keep the number of developments that it can sustain at any one time to a manageable level and it does this by identifying areas for 'development', 'consolidation' and 'maintenance' for the year ahead. In one way this is an appropriate arrangement. Its weakness, however, is that the development priorities have not been identified as a result of a clear and shared analysis of strengths and weaknesses, nor do they take sufficient account of national and local priorities but are simply part of a three-year rotation for all subjects. This means that priorities are often not the most appropriate ones. The lack of precision in the plan's details, such as financial implications, timetable, progress checks and measures for evaluating outcomes, is the same shortcoming that was identified four years ago.

47 The governing body provides good support to the work of the school and fulfils its statutory responsibilities satisfactorily. Efficient arrangements for regular meetings, committees and working parties enable the governors to be fully involved in personnel, financial, premises and curriculum matters. Governors have a close working relationship with the head teacher who keeps them well informed. The governing body fulfils its 'critical friendship' role effectively and knows the work of the school well. Individual governors have visited the school to observe the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and see lessons in other subjects such as music. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when it was reported there was a lack of governor involvement in teaching and learning. Governors are involved in setting targets for raising standards in English and mathematics in the National Curriculum tests. Arrangements are in place for appraising the work of the head teacher and deputy head teacher and the governing body has set appropriate performance targets for them.

48 Procedures for the professional development of staff are satisfactory. A good record of staff training has been maintained to make sure that teachers are competent to teach the recent changes in the English and mathematics curriculum. Appraisal arrangements, which were found to be unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection, were suspended eighteen months ago. Current systems for managing teacher performance are informal and discussions are held as needed. Induction arrangements for new staff are not fully established and they need to be formalised. Teachers do work in harmony with each other and there are supportive networks through the school for teachers and learning support staff.

49 There is effective financial control and administration. The governing body budgets systematically for all expenditure and because the budget is so tight, the finance committee works with the head teacher to make regular checks on spending. The most recent audit report judged financial management to be adequate and the school has acted promptly to address the issues raised. Governors ensure that all additional funding is used for its intended purposes. Administrative systems are now computerised and the day to day running of the school is carried out efficiently by the school's secretary and the administrative assistant. The school makes sound use of its resources and regularly applies the principles of best value when making spending decisions.

50 The school enjoys sufficient accommodation and benefits from an excellent site with extensive fields, marked pitches and hard play areas. It is satisfactorily maintained internally and externally, although the governing body is rigorously pursuing the replacement of two large mobile classroom blocks and the fabric of the building gives them much cause for concern. The building is generously equipped with specialist facilities for physical education, two halls, a swimming pool, two key stage computer suites, a music room, a special educational need facility and three library areas. Provision is used well by the teachers and learning support staff and adds considerably to the quality of education provided. The

recently developed junior garden havens are an excellent resource which is already developing pupils' independence, sense of responsibility and good behaviour. The cramped conditions in some Key Stage 2 classrooms restrict learning because of the large class sizes and the old and small desks and chairs. The school's provision of learning resources is satisfactory overall.

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

51 The governing body should include the following key issues in its post-inspection plan:

**Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that the head teacher works closely with the deputy headteacher and all staff to:**

**Improve the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by:**

- establishing a regular and systematic programme for the head teacher to observe teaching so that he has a clear oversight of strengths and weaknesses in provision (paragraphs 45 and 48);
- developing a framework for monitoring and evaluating which enables senior managers and coordinators to maintain an oversight of standards and quality in their subjects (paragraphs 45, 76, 87, 93, 102, 127 and 134);
- provide time and training for coordinators to carry out their work (paragraphs 45 and 102).

**Improve the effectiveness of the school's improvement plan by:**

- providing an overview of planned developments beyond one year so there is a clear and shared direction for the future improvement of the school (paragraph 46);
- ensuring the plan has clear priorities for improvement for the year ahead based on an audit of identified needs, rather than on a rotating programme (paragraphs 46, 97, 127 and 134);
- taking into account national and local priorities (paragraphs 46 and 76);
- ensuring the actions which have been identified have appropriate costs and times allocated to them (paragraphs 46 and 87);
- ensuring the progress towards successful completion is checked and reviewed (paragraph 46).

**Improve the curriculum by:**

- ensuring there is effective coordination of the whole curriculum (paragraph 44);
- reviewing the balance of time allocated to different subjects so that lessons are not too long and all subjects receive adequate time slots (paragraphs 14, 20, 25, 81, 91 and 101);
- undertaking a review of the length of the teaching day for Key Stage 2, where it still does not meet recommended guidelines (paragraph 25).

**Other issues that the school should consider for inclusion in the action plans:**

- review the management and coordination of special needs provision (paragraphs 35, 44 and 57);
- improve the quality of reports to parents so that they provide more information about what pupils can do and what they need to do to improve (paragraph 38).

## THE SPECIAL EDUCATION CENTRE

52 The Special Education Centre continues to be an effective local resource for Key Stage 2 pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Pupils have access to the full range of National Curriculum subjects and religious education. The Centre follows the main school's schemes of work, which are carefully selected and adapted to meet the pupils' individual needs. The curriculum is appropriate and effective.

53 Pupils achieve well and make good progress in literacy and numeracy. They have the ability to talk and discuss their findings quite openly and work well on different tasks. They successfully build on their own individual targets for improvement. The trust and security that teachers generate in the classroom underpins the progress which the pupils make. An improvement since the last inspection is that pupils are now able to work more independently and within groups whilst the teachers work with individuals.

54 Pupils have a very positive attitude to learning and their behaviour is good. They enjoy their work because they are provided with interesting activities and their successes are valued. Pupils receive meaningful praise and encouragement when they do succeed and their self-esteem and confidence in their own learning grows as a result. Pupils are well mannered, "*please*" and "*thank you*" are encouraged, and they wait patiently for each other when taking turns. Relationships with the teachers and the support staff are good.

55 The quality of teaching is very good. This is an improvement on the last inspection report. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly and maintain a good, purposeful pace to their teaching. As a result, pupils' interest is maintained and they make good progress. Teachers continually build a good rapport with their pupils and this promotes the good behaviour that exists. Adults are skilled at using a wide variety of strategies to deal with individual pupils and meet their social and learning needs. Another strength of the teaching is the way the two part-time teachers offer the same very good standards, a consistency of approach to teaching the wide curriculum on offer. They both have high expectations of the pupils' work and standards of behaviour. Targets are set for each pupil and progress towards them is carefully checked and recorded. Portfolios of evidence and 'achievement' files, containing examples of writing, test results and assessments in English and mathematics, are used successfully to support future planning for each pupil. This is an improvement from the previous inspection, which found that the procedures for the assessment, planning and recording of individual work in English and mathematics were unsatisfactory.

56 The curriculum in the Centre is rich, stimulating and covers a range of experiences in and out of the classroom. Basic skills are taught well within mathematics and English lessons and when taught across other subjects. In a mathematics lesson, pupils were able to use the correct language in number calculations and select the appropriate resources for the activities. In an English lesson, which was linked with design and food technology, the pupils made individual pizzas and used suitable vocabulary when making predictions and suggesting ideas as to how the final results would look and taste. Personal, social and health education is a priority and contributes very effectively to building pupils positive self-image and autonomy in learning.

57 Leadership and management of the Centre are very good. There are clear targets for development supported by good policies. Resources are used effectively within a very well organised and stimulating classroom. Liaison is good with support assistants and there is effective teamwork. Pupils do join other classes in the main school for some lessons and this helps them to integrate within the whole school better. There are fewer opportunities for teachers to work with others beyond the Centre and the expertise they have in working with pupils with special educational needs is not fully utilised for the benefit of the whole school.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	84
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	24

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2%	29%	42%	25%	2%		

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	Y R – Y 6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	20	405
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		12

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	Y R – Y 6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		9
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	89

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	16

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	95.5
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.5

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	35	31	66

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	23	24	28
	Girls	27	27	26
	Total	50	51	54
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	76 (80)	77 (92)	82 (89)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (81)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	21	23	26
	Girls	25	25	24
	Total	46	48	50
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	70 (83)	73 (84)	76 (87)
	National	82 (80)	86 (84)	87 (85)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	32	40	72

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	18	23
	Girls	30	26	29
	Total	48	44	52
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	67 (63)	62 (57)	73 (67)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	19	21	26
	Girls	30	30	28
	Total	49	51	54
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	68 (58)	68 (66)	75 (70)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (71)

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	369
Any other minority ethnic group	1

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

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	1	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)	17.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	27.6
Average class size	27.9

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

Total number of education support staff	10.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	123

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	32

Number of pupils per FTE adult	10
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	778242
Total expenditure	773518
Expenditure per pupil	1674
Balance brought forward from previous year	19289
Balance carried forward to next year	35978

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

425

Number of questionnaires returned

140

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	60	36	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	47	46	6	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	38	53	6	1	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	52	16	4	3
The teaching is good.	44	50	6	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	45	16	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	52	38	6	3	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	50	45	4	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	32	49	18	1	0
The school is well led and managed.	43	49	6	2	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	51	7	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	21	42	18	12	7

### **Other issues raised by parents**

58 Some parents were concerned at the instability to education caused by teacher absence. The inspection team is satisfied that appropriate steps are taken if and when staff are absent to keep the disruption to a minimum.

## **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**

59 At the time of the inspection there were 39 part time pupils in the nursery and 17 full time pupils in the reception class. Most pupils have experience of local playgroups. Pupils enter the nursery the term after their fourth birthday and stay there for only two terms. In the first term they attend the afternoon sessions and in the second term they attend the mornings. Pupils start full time in the reception class at the beginning of the term in which they are five years old. Attainment on entry to the nursery is broadly in line with national expectation for pupils of this age. Early years' profiles (Baseline Assessments) are completed at an appropriate time following the pupil's entry into nursery and reception class. The majority of pupils are working well within all the six areas of experience in the nursery and they make good progress. Standards are at least in line with the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

#### **Personal and social development**

60 Pupils' attainment in personal and social development is very good. They make good progress and standards are above average at the end of the reception year. The pupils are responsive, attentive, interested in what is going on, they listen well and show confidence. They are happy and secure and ask for help when they need it. They develop independence and have the ability to concentrate. They share and take turns and use resources sensibly. They show a sense of pride in their belongings, tidy away very well and play outside with an attitude of calm and safety. They concentrate well in literacy and numeracy sessions and remain on task until they have finished. As a result of all of this, pupils are confident and outgoing by the time they are five years old.

#### **Language and literacy**

61 Pupils make good progress and standards at the end of the Foundation Stage are in line with the expected Early Learning Goals. They respond well to the stimulating surroundings provided for them. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are good. The majority of pupils have the confidence to speak and listen in different situations and for different purposes. They show confidence in recognising letters and reading familiar words and communicate these to the teacher and each other confidently. The work achieved on 'Jolly Phonics' supports the improvements made. They enjoy looking at books and have access to a wide range of stimulating materials. They also write in a variety of situations and know that print carries meaning. Many write their names without help and form letters correctly. They write as part of planned play activities. Writing is well supported by the nursery layout and organised activity areas. Pupils use language effectively across the whole learning environment, both indoors and outdoors. An example of this was where two pupils were playing outside with dinosaur models and said excitedly, "*Come and see how we have arranged the dinosaur in the forest.*"

#### **Mathematical development**

62 Most pupils meet the required standards by the time they leave the reception class. They develop a secure understanding of numbers by playing games and carefully planned activities. Teachers provide pupils with daily opportunities to count and use mathematical language. Most pupils can count reliably to ten and recognise single digit numbers. Many know numbers up to twenty. Pupils can compare small quantities using terms such as '*more*'

*than*, *'less than'*, *'the same as'*. They develop a secure understanding of shapes through practical investigations and handling solids such as cubes, cylinders, prisms and spheres. They have good recognition of common shapes, such as squares, rectangles, and triangles. Enjoyable activities, such as singing and performing the actions to number rhymes, give pupils an understanding of adding and taking away.

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

63 Pupils' attainment in knowledge and understanding of the world is in line with the expected standards. Pupils explore and take delight in observing, solving problems and making decisions. Their natural inquisitiveness is encouraged. They talk with confidence about the pet guinea pig, what it needs and how to look after it. Teachers use topics to bring together and extend early ideas in geography, history, science and information technology. The interesting and interactive displays in the classroom give pupils opportunities to discuss their topics such as 'holidays', 'harvest' and 'families'. They learn by encountering different objects in their natural environments and work with a range of materials and tools in their activities. They gather information by looking at books, pictures, magazines, photographs and artefacts and by talking to visitors and making visits. They have drawn plans on travelling to school, grown runner beans, visited a farm and handled the animals with care, helped with the school's Millennium Mosaic, practised using a wheelchair when role-playing a hospital theme, investigated road safety and planned the making of a bird table. By the end of nursery, pupils are familiar with computers to support their learning, for example, in reading and writing work where they access and use phonic programs to learn sounds and construct words.

### **Physical development**

64 Standards in physical development are in line with expectations. There is now a good outdoor play area with suitable large play apparatus and equipment. This is an improvement on the findings in the previous inspection report. The hall is also used well and the pupils enjoy dance and gymnastics. Pupils gain confidence in what they can do and this enables them to feel the benefits of being active. Many pupils require little help to dress themselves. They can handle tools well, play with and manipulate dough and handle small construction equipment with confidence. Pupils are developing their fine motor skills well and cut and add to collages with reasonable dexterity. Photographs kept by the teacher also highlight dance on a 'grand scale' where a dragon dance and full costumes were used when celebrating the Chinese New Year. Pupils also enjoy swimming in the school's own pool.

### **Creative development**

65 Standards are above the expected standards and pupils make very good progress. They use their imagination well in role-play situations. They enjoy making collages, finger painting, making hats, playing with clay and painting willow patterns. They observe fruit and vegetables very well and enjoy talking about the textures and colour. They also remember rhymes and action songs and enjoy singing together. Pupils sing well. They can clap in time to their singing and can accompany singing effectively using a range of percussion instruments. Listening skills are well developed.

### **Teaching**

66 The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is very good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of early years. The clear strengths of teaching are based on very good subject knowledge, the good use of on-going questions, maintaining a very good pace, modelling good attitudes and high levels of interaction between adults and pupils. Teaching strategies are adapted well to suit the needs of the individual pupil. The nursery and reception teacher plan effectively together, although there is a continued need for the older pupils to have more access to planned investigative experience to consolidate their understanding and skills.

### **Curriculum provision**

67 The quality and range of learning opportunities is now very good and meets the needs of individual pupils. All six areas of experience are fully covered in a relevant and stimulating way. Teachers have successfully reviewed the curriculum for the new Foundation Stage. The leadership and management of the nursery is very good. There are good links between the nursery and reception class. It will be vital to continue with joint planning, teaching and assessment procedures when another reception class begins in January. Relationships with parents and carers are very good in the nursery and is a real strength. Strong links are made to include them in the learning partnership between home and school. Curriculum meetings on reading and writing are held and there are libraries of books, jigsaws and board games for parents to use with their children at home.

### **ENGLISH**

68 Standards in English have been below the expected levels for seven and eleven year olds in recent years. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests, standards of attainment at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 were below the national averages in reading and writing.

69 The picture is the same when the school's performance is compared with other schools with pupils from broadly similar backgrounds, with standards at the end of both key stages below average in reading and writing. Despite the below-average attainment over the period 1996 to 1999, the improvements in reading at the end of Key Stage 1 were similar to those made nationally and more than those nationally in writing. Over the same period the trend at the end of Key Stage 2 was close to the national average, with no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls. Results in 2000, however, indicate a significant increase on previous years' results at the end of both key stages, with more pupils achieving level 3 and level 5. Standards this year are at least in line with national expectations.

70 Inspection evidence indicates that as a result of good teaching in Key Stage 1, and often very good teaching in Key Stage 2, standards in lessons are in line with those expected nationally. Pupils with special education needs make satisfactory progress towards their individual education plans. There are no longer inconsistencies between the performances of pupils in different classes as highlighted in the previous inspection report.

71 By the end of Key Stage 1, standards in speaking and listening are average and sometimes above for the higher-attaining pupils. Pupils can talk fluently about their activities. They respond confidently to new situations and listen well to others. They listen intently to the teachers' instructions and enjoy conversations. Those who need support receive sensitive and purposeful help from learning support assistants. At the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils can use language expressively, engage other listeners, speak clearly and debate well. Speaking and listening is now developed in other subjects and good progress is made. Standards by the end of Key Stage 2 are above those expected nationally. Speaking and listening skills are strengths of the school.

72 By the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils can read fluently, understand beginnings and endings of words, sound out letters and recognise familiar words. The higher-attaining pupils can focus on meaning derived from the text in books as a whole. Standards are in line with national expectations by the end of Key Stage 1 and all pupils make satisfactory progress because they have regular opportunities to read to teachers within the daily literacy lesson. Teachers emphasise the value of reading at other times too. Pupils read to the teachers in a session which is extra to the Literacy Hour, reading books are changed weekly and parents and carers are encouraged to read with their children at home. Parents are also invited into Key Stage 1 classes to change books according to individual progress. All of these strategies mean that, by the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils read with fluency, have clear and precise intonation when reading aloud, read well together, and select books with interest. Pupils are encouraged to look for deeper meaning in texts and many refer to the text to support their views and opinions, as with Year 6 pupils who were studying the characters in *'Carrie's War'* and *'Cider with Rosie'*. Phonic knowledge is now more secure since the last inspection report. Reading standards are in line with those expected nationally and all groups make sound progress by the end of Key Stage 2.

73 At the end of both Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils' standard of writing is in line with what is expected nationally. In Key Stage 1, pupils write with an interesting vocabulary and organise words in sentences, using capital letters and full stops correctly. The higher-attaining pupils are very confident with spelling. In handwriting, pupils generally form letters well and most pupils develop a joined-up style. Within Key Stage 2 the handwriting style is less consistently taught and some work is poorly presented. Work in Year 6 is much neater, however, and the style is joined, legible and often in ink. Pupils have good knowledge of punctuation, use ICT well to enhance their work and demonstrate a good range of writing forms in their presented work. Spelling is usually accurate and sentences are generally carefully punctuated. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

74 Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and they enjoy the subject. Teachers have imaginative ways of making lessons interesting. For example, one teacher made toast at the end of a lesson, using the instructions provided by pupils to test their understanding of sequencing. These Year 2 pupils showed great interest when toast was popping out of a toaster. Another example was in a Year 4 class, where the teacher's lively reading took the pupils along in the excitement of chariot racing in ancient Rome. In both key stages, pupils are well behaved, show initiative, treat resources with care, form constructive relationships and work well together developing personal skills. They improve their own performance with the help of their individual target cards and when teachers ask, "*Do you think you have reached your targets?*" In a few lessons, however, there is a small minority of pupils who demonstrate a less positive attitude to their work because they find it difficult to concentrate when lessons are too long.

75 The quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 1 and good, with some very good features, in Key Stage 2. The clear strengths of the teaching are based on a secure knowledge and understanding of English, good modelling of reading and writing, effective use of clear and challenging questions, and having a sharp pace and focus to the lessons. Pupils know what they are expected to learn because teachers share the learning objectives at the beginning of the lessons. The quality of teaching is now significantly better than that reported in the 1996 inspection. In the previous report, an over-emphasis was placed on English exercises and there were few opportunities for pupils to use and develop their skills purposefully. This is no longer so and the joint planning between the teachers has supported a more creative approach to literacy. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to develop reading and writing in other subjects. Pupils' research skills allow them to work independently and write clearly in subjects like science, history and geography. Pupils' work

is generally well marked and suitable encouragement is given, although it does not sufficiently tell pupils what they need to do to improve further.

76 The leadership, management and coordination of English is good. The two coordinators are now appropriately focused on the achievement of high standards. Good liaison and teamwork means there is consistency and continuity of approach in teaching English across the school. There is clear evidence of good staff development opportunities. For example, moderation of writing has helped to establish a shared view of assessing and improving standards. Teachers have a good understanding of the analysis of tests and the importance of setting targets for year groups as well as for individuals. Some monitoring has taken place, but coordinators recognise a need for more as part of a strategic programme. The school improvement plan is weak and does not include clear methods of checking action and measuring success. English is outlined as a '*maintenance*' subject in the plan, when there are clearly developments such as improving the quality of pupils' writing, and training on teaching grammar which are taking place. Books are still not positively promoted in all classes and some books in the classrooms and central library area in Key Stage 1 need replacing.

## **MATHEMATICS**

77 In the national tests carried out in 1999, attainment was close to the national average at the end of Key Stage 1. At the end of Key Stage 2 attainment was below average. In comparison with schools serving pupils from similar backgrounds, standards at the end of Key Stage 1 were average and at the end of Key Stage 2 were below average. A significant feature in both key stages, but particularly in Key Stage 1, is the high proportion of pupils attaining the higher grades. From a low point in 1998, the trend has been one of improvement. The test results and national comparisons for the year 2000 became available close to the inspection. They show an improvement on the scores for 1999 and confirm the inspection evidence that standards are average in both key stages, with above average numbers attaining the higher grades. Standards are similar overall to those reported during the last inspection but the greater proportion achieving the high grades represents an improvement.

78 By the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils are confident in addition and subtraction to, and beyond, 100. They have a secure understanding of place value and can solve problems, for example, involving money and time by using addition and subtraction. They use standard measures accurately, for example, in measuring length, and can describe the properties of two-dimensional mathematical shapes. Some pupils show confidence in making approximations and can explain their thinking in mental arithmetic. They understand more complex fractions such as two-thirds and three-quarters and recognise how two fractions can have equivalent value. They can collect and record data on bar graphs, interpreting the information which they contain. Some are beginning to use coordinates to plot position.

79 By the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils show confidence using addition, subtraction, multiplication and division to and beyond 100. They show understanding of the links between fractions, decimals and percentages. Most understand terms such as factors and square numbers and can use their knowledge of tables to identify the factors of two-digit numbers in mental arithmetic. They understand the mathematical use of brackets to sequence problem solving. They use and interpret computer generated spreadsheets and frequency tables. For example, pupils in Year 5 tabulated the energy and fat content of their daily diet using spreadsheets. Higher-attaining pupils show particular mental agility when manipulating numbers to arrive at accurate answers. Some pupils in Year 6, for example, were able to offer rapid, accurate answers to questions such as 'add together all the square numbers between 20 and 50'. Some pupils can draw and measure angles accurately, use and

interpret coordinates in all four quadrants and can work out the metric equivalents of those imperial measures still in use.

80 Pupils make sound progress throughout the school as a result of consistent approaches to teaching of the National Numeracy Strategy. Progress in pupils' mental arithmetic skills is good because the school has given it greater emphasis following an analysis of assessment scores. Most teachers pitch oral work appropriately high and often ask pupils to explain how they arrive at answers. In comparing different methods and encouraging pupils to look at problems in different ways, teachers enable them to gain a better understanding. In some lessons, progress is reduced because teachers do not make the best use of summaries at the end to reinforce what has been learned. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress as a result of good liaison between class teachers and support staff and careful planning to meet their needs. Teachers use mathematics effectively to support learning in other curriculum areas, for example, in the use of coordinates to develop mapping skills in geography and in constructing tables and graphs to record data on plant growth in science.

81 Pupils have positive attitudes to mathematics. They listen well to one another in oral work and many contribute enthusiastically. In almost all classes behaviour is good. Pupils settle to written tasks well so that, in almost all lessons, the working atmosphere enables everyone to work without interruption. Sometimes, lessons extend to 70 or 75 minutes and this results in a loss of pace and urgency. Pupils' concentration suffers and their progress slows.

82 The overall quality of teaching is good. It is often very good in both key stages, though it is more variable in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1. The quality of teaching now is better than that reported at the last inspection. Teachers have clear purposes for lessons and, usually, these are shared with pupils so that they know exactly what they are going to learn. This gives a clear sense of direction and improves progress. In almost all lessons teachers plan thoughtfully using carefully selected resources to match the needs of pupils of differing attainment. This is an improvement from the last inspection in which it was reported that, often, pupils worked systematically through text books which did not always meet their needs. The high expectations are mostly consistent across the school so that the habit of listening carefully and getting on with work is well established and contributes to progress. It is less consistent in parts of Key Stage 2. Teachers make good use of individual targets for improvement. Printed on cards, these are out on desks during lessons and serve as a constant reminder to pupils. Homework is set regularly by most teachers and supports learning effectively. It is usually an extension of pupils' class work. Some teachers make very good use of registration time to extend pupils' knowledge, by planning a series of short mathematical tasks which build during the week. Pupils are encouraged to share these with parents at the end of the week.

83 The management of the subject is good because of the energy and expertise of the coordinators, who are in senior management posts. The effective liaison between the two coordinators ensures good continuity through the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. An appropriate range of assessments is used to monitor pupils' progress and these, along with the national test statistics, have been analysed and actions implemented so that standards are improving. The timetabled use of the new Information and Communication Technology (ICT) suites is developing pupils' ability to use the new technology to support their mathematics.

## **SCIENCE**

84 In the last inspection in 1996 standards were judged to be above the national average for pupils aged seven and eleven. Over the last four years, however, pupils' attainment in science in both key stages has varied. At the age of eleven, there was a drop in standards to well below the national average in 1998. In 1999, standards rose again but were just below the national average. The most recent National Curriculum tests indicate that standards are in line with national expectations, with an above average number of eleven year olds achieving higher levels. Attainment at the age of seven, as measured by teacher assessment, is significantly lower this year than in 1999 and below national expectations. The assessments teachers make are too harsh and suggest that standards are lower than they are. Pupils work over a period of time and their current work indicates that standards are, in fact, in line with national expectations at both key stages. The school is right to have identified science assessment as an area for improvement and the assessment coordinator is taking suitable action. Pupils are making good progress across the school. At the upper end of the school some high-attaining pupils are making very good progress.

85 The quality of teaching in science is good in both key stages with some very good teaching in Year 6. Teachers plan carefully in year groups and this is very effective in ensuring that work is consistent. A strength of the teaching comes from the good structure of lessons. Teachers effectively build on prior knowledge, set clear objectives which are shared carefully with pupils, and make good use of demonstrations and explanations. Task are suitable and time is given for pupils to draw conclusions from their results. Teachers often encourage enquiry and useful debate to extend pupils learning. For example, Year 4 pupils were identifying particular foods and were discussing which part of the plant they came from. The teacher skilfully drew the pupils into a very useful discussion about whether a carrot was a root or not. Pupils, particularly the higher-attainers, were able to test out their own thinking and secure their knowledge. In a Year 1 class, pupils were engaged in work about 'ourselves', which included a very useful discussion about changes. Good questioning and well prepared resources ensured that all pupils responded with great interest and were able to draw upon their own experiences as babies and small children, whilst providing some interesting observations about growing old. Most teachers are confident in teaching science and this enables them to ask relevant questions and give good explanations. As pupils respond well and have positive attitudes to the subject they generally make good progress, including those with special educational needs.

86 Overall, there is insufficient emphasis on investigative work with too little time given to acquiring an understanding of the principles and importance of fair testing. However, a good example of pupils engaging in some valuable investigative work was seen in Year 6 where pupils were challenged to investigate the effect of water on weight. They made relevant suggestions about suitable recording methods and predicted outcomes. Carefully using all the equipment, including the forcemeters, they were able to explain their ideas very clearly and consolidate their thinking. The lesson required pupils to work accurately and cooperatively which they accomplished very well. As a result, pupils make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of science and in the development of practical skills.

87 The management of the subject is satisfactory. The two coordinators have clear views about attainment in the subject and what needs to happen in order for the subject to develop further. Both are implementing changes in guidance for staff and are upgrading and reorganising resources. However, their roles do not include sufficient emphasis on monitoring and evaluating teaching and improving standards in the subject. It is unclear from the school improvement plan how these weaknesses will be tackled because the proposed actions lack the necessary details of resources, time and suitable measures for evaluation.

## ART

88 Due to timetable arrangements, only one lesson was seen in art and evidence is insufficient to make a secure overall judgement on standards, teaching and learning in the subject. A scrutiny of work from the previous school year and work done this term indicates that pupils' attainment in both key stages is in line with that expected nationally. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress.

89 Displays of pupils' work used to enhance the learning environment around the school give evidence that an appropriate range of skills and themes is being systematically taught. In direct observational work, for example, the development of increasingly close observation and drawing skills can be seen from the Year 1 studies of fruit and vegetable cross sections to more detailed ones in the Year 2 work. Studies of still life in Key Stage 2 build on these skills, with the result that pupils can produce increasingly individual and sophisticated pieces of work. Work with colour is progressively developed and pupils have sound knowledge of primary colours and colour mixing. A Year 4 class used this knowledge to produce a good range of green shades and tints for a montage of a rainforest that is part of their geography work.

90 In the one art lesson seen, teaching was satisfactory. The pupils made sound progress because the teacher had planned well, shared the aims for the lesson with them and had high expectations of the pace of work. The difficulty in working in close proximity with others and the lack of running water in the classroom were minimised because of pupils' good behaviour and common sense. Opportunities to reflect on their work were curtailed by the short time available for the lesson, although the teacher quickly returned to the aims and usefully drew out the main learning points at its conclusion.

91 The main emphasis on literacy and numeracy since the last inspection means that less time is spent on art than previously. Staff manage to cover all the curriculum requirements but lack of time is a problem for them and the pupils. Lessons vary in length but are rarely long enough to allow pupils to finish the task, evaluate it and reflect on their feelings about what they have learned or achieved. In a Year 4 class pupils worked very carefully with oil pastels to try to make pictures of cobs of corn. The teacher and pupils were frustrated because time ran out before they had completed the work to a high standard and the plans for the next lesson in the following week moved on to another theme and area of skill. Additionally, art shares the timetable with design and technology and, while some tasks are structured to have elements of both subjects, the emphasis is on art in one half term and design and technology for the other half term. This results in adequate curriculum coverage but without the depth of study, time for reflection, refinement and development of skills and creative responses that teachers and pupils value. Some pupils spoke of art being their favourite subject but they wanted more opportunities to do it. Certainly, on the evidence available pupils have good attitudes to their work in art, they apply themselves diligently and take pride in what they achieve.

92 The school has recently adopted national schemes of work adapting them to fit in with other subjects especially in Key Stage 1 and where feasible in Key Stage 2. The school, sensibly, intends to evaluate these at the end of the year, especially since their previous schemes of work were judged to be effective in the previous inspection and are more closely linked to other subjects studied.

93 The coordinators support colleagues well by offering advice individually and through a comprehensive art policy. However, they do not have the opportunity to monitor planning or evaluate standards of teaching and learning and pupils' work. The last inspection found that resources for art were inadequate and insufficiently well organised. Satisfactory improvements have been made. Resources are accessible to staff now and they are

adequate to support the curriculum. In particular, the range of picture and book resources has been considerably increased. These are well catalogued and easily available.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

94 Only two lessons were seen during the inspection and insufficient evidence was available around the school to make a judgement on standards or to comment on improvements since the last inspection. At that time, seven and eleven year old pupils were attaining the expected standards.

95 In the two lessons seen, one in Year 1 and one in Year 6, attainment was in line with national expectations and a significant minority of pupils in Year 6 were achieving beyond national expectations at this point in the year. The rates of learning for all pupils within the lessons, including those with special educational needs, were good.

96 The quality of teaching in the lesson seen in Key Stage 2 was excellent and in Key Stage 1 it was very good. This is because the two teachers involved have very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Careful planning with clear objectives resulted in the tasks being introduced very well, with teachers making their expectations very clear. Because teachers plan interesting activities, pupils are very keen to learn new skills and apply ones they have already mastered. In both lessons, excellent use of questions helped pupils develop their skills, clarify their thinking and extend their understanding and knowledge. This was particularly so in the lesson in Year 6, where pupils were evaluating the performance of materials used in camping and outdoor equipment. Skilled questioning helped pupils make rapid progress. The first-rate use of resources, which included tents, rucksacks, cagoules and walking boots, enriched the learning and helped all pupils to be involved with the lesson. The end of lesson review drew some very interesting conclusions from pupils, including some good use of technical language.

97 Management of the subject is satisfactory. The coordinator is aware that there is an insufficient amount of time overall for the subject and fully understands the value of continuing to develop design and technology in other subjects, for example, art and science. Teachers in Key Stage 2 successfully complement the curriculum with design and technology 'challenges', tasks for pupils to complete at home each half term. Aimed at improving pupils' skills in designing and making, the tasks successfully involve parents in the activity and are evaluated in school. The recently revised policy provides good support for staff and shows the links with other subjects including ICT and mathematics. The coordinator has already begun to upgrade and extend the resources for design and technology in line with the new requirements. A higher profile is now needed for the subject with some rigorous planning at whole-school level in the school improvement plan.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

98 Standards in geography by the end of both key stages are in line with those expected nationally. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are generally knowledgeable about their locality and are aware of places beyond their own environment. Pupils can make and read simple maps using basic keys and symbols and can recognise some countries on a world map. They are beginning to recognise the differences between their own locality and a contrasting area. For example, Year 2 pupils compared their home area with that of Katie Morag's island home in a story. Teachers skilfully use the experiences of pupils to set work in context, reminding them of links with previous studies. Both Year 2 classes successfully used the tasting of breads from different countries to link geographical knowledge with the healthy eating studies in science, for example '*It reminds me of my holiday in France*' and '*this is spicy – it's peppery – I have it at home – it's Indian.*' The use of challenging questions such

as (after pupils taste soda bread,) ‘Do you know anything about Ireland that will help us find it on a map?’ produced responses – ‘It’s got a bump like a nose’ and ‘it’s very near to us’ - which the teacher used to assess the knowledge and understanding of individual pupils.

99 By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils can use a range of maps and atlases competently. They have good knowledge of their local area, which is enhanced by the use of fieldwork that promotes effective learning based on real experiences. In a Year 3 lesson all pupils could plot their journey from school to the town’s swimming pool on a local map. They could all describe in words the details of the journey and higher-attaining pupils can write clear directions that a visitor could use. By the end of the lesson, pupils could offer several reasons why directions may be more use to a visitor than a map and suggested the elements required for good instructions - ‘clear directions’, ‘they need to make sense’, and ‘you need to use right and left’. Year 6 pupils made a note of geographical terms used in a video about the River Usk on its journey from source to sea. In subsequent discussions adeptly led by their teacher they provided good definitions for terms such as erosion, deposition and confluence, showing how carefully they had listened to a complicated video clip.

100 Pupils’ attitudes to geography lessons are good. In lessons, the enthusiasm and good subject knowledge of the teachers motivates the interest of pupils. Teachers share their aims for learning so pupils understand what is required of them. The majority of pupils respond well to teachers’ high expectations by behaving well, working diligently and at a good pace. They listen well to their teachers and each other, respecting opinions and confident to offer their own. Teachers take time to encourage hesitant pupils to answer questions or give their views.

101 The quality of teaching is good. The curriculum, now based on national guidance, ensures that work is planned to ensure a build-up of geographical skills and knowledge as pupils move through the school. Since the previous inspection, the amount of time given to the subject has been reduced to accommodate the literacy and numeracy strategies. This means that the study units are taught in less depth. In addition, lessons vary in length and sometimes, even though introductory explanations, discussions and research tasks are wholly appropriate and pupils learn well, the time given to written work is limited and the volume of work produced less than in the past. Last time, standards were judged to be above average whereas now they are generally average overall. The coordinators for geography also have management responsibility for history. Their management of both subjects is satisfactory.

102 Both coordinators look after resources well, provide useful advice to colleagues and keep up-to-date with subject developments. However, they do not have the opportunity to check planning, apart from in their year group, or to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning and standards achieved by pupils in either subject.

## **HISTORY**

103 Standards in history, by the end of both key stages, are in line with those expected nationally and, overall, pupils make sound progress. It was not possible to observe any history lessons in Key Stage 1. However an analysis of previous work indicates that pupils achieve standards at least in line with those expected. Pupils develop an understanding of the past and can compare life now with life in a past period, for instance at the time of the Great Fire of London. They can write simple accounts from the viewpoint of a person at the time being studied and produce newspaper reports of events. Pupils begin to use first-hand evidence, for example, when they are using a questionnaire for parents entitled “*What was it like at the seaside when you were young?*”

104 Standards in Key Stage 2 are at least in line with national expectations and sometimes above. In the three lessons seen, some higher-attaining pupils achieved above expected standards for their age. Pupils generally offer insightful ideas and opinions during discussions because teachers use very effective and often challenging questions to promote thinking. In Year 4, pupils are able to discuss reasons for the Roman Army's success. Motivated by the teacher's lively explanations and selective use of video clips, pupils can suggest plausible reasons giving detail of organisation, armour and strategies. They begin to understand the nature of war and the individual's role in it, *'auxiliaries weren't important – so it didn't matter if they got killed!'* Pupils work carefully and can produce good pieces of narrative or empathetic writing, which show understanding of the issues and the lives of people of the times studied. They can compare the lives of people from different times with their own and by Year 6, many are able to place events into a time line. Pupils in Year 5 studying Tudor times can ask and begin to answer relevant questions, such as *'Why would later wives want to marry (Henry VIII) when they knew what had happened to the others?'* Using three portraits of Henry VIII, Year 5 pupils made deductions about his lifestyle, wealth and fashions of the period. They speculated on the accuracy of the portraits, mindful of the politics involved for the painters, *'You'd make him look better - to keep your head!'* Pupils can interrogate evidence and use reference books and CD-ROMs to seek information in support of their opinions. In this way, teachers ensure that skills in literacy and information technology are developed in history lessons.

105 The quality of teaching is good overall and sometimes it is very good. Teachers have a secure understanding of the subject, and teach it with enthusiasm and enjoyment. This inspires pupils to learn. Work is carefully planned to allow all pupils, including the higher attainers and those with special educational needs, to have full access to lessons. Questions are targeted to challenge individuals appropriately so that they grow in confidence in their own opinions. Teachers develop supportive relationships with pupils so that pupils are not afraid to ask questions or offer opinions, secure that they will be listened to and their views valued. One teacher said to a class during a short session researching from reference books, *'Some people have found out things that I didn't know, and that's great - I'm learning too – we're learning together!'*

106 Pupils are interested and keen to learn about history and they generally behave well and work hard in lessons. In Year 5, where the classes are large, it is more difficult for teachers to engage all the pupils for all the time and occasionally some pupils lose impetus. Teachers quickly spot this and revive flagging interest for those pupils by apt questioning, or by refocusing on the task.

107 A range of visitors and visits to a variety of relevant places of historical interest supports learning in history. Drama groups, focusing on reconstructions of a period being studied, add to the understanding that pupils gain, especially in realising that historical evidence is open to interpretation. The school also has a good range of video and audiotapes to support learning and provide insights into life at different times.

108 Since the last inspection the good quality of teaching has been successfully maintained, resources remain adequate and well organised and pupils are enthusiastic about the subject. The picture is similar to that of geography with the amount of time reduced because of the emphasis on literacy and numeracy. As a result, the history units are taught in less depth and standards are not as high as in the previous inspection. Teachers are aware of this and look for ways to provide better opportunities to develop work more thoroughly. For example, in Year 4, the research findings from history lessons are sensibly used in subsequent literacy lessons as the content for non-fiction writing.

## **INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

109 Standards in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) have been maintained since the previous inspection and are in line with expectations for their age at the end of both key stages. Overall, seven and eleven year old pupils attain what is expected nationally, whilst some reach above the national standards. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make steady progress in Key Stage 1 and good progress in Key Stage 2.

110 Throughout the school, pupils use ICT with great enthusiasm and with a growing understanding of how to apply it for a range of purposes and uses. In Key Stage 1, pupils are able to select and use appropriate tools to convey a picture with text and use appropriate software for design purposes. A Year 2 class successfully designed a plate of food using their knowledge of different food groups. They have developed opinions and preferences and said of ICT *“using the computer gives me confidence”* whilst another said *“if you don't like your drawing you can get rid of it!”*

111 In Key Stage 2, pupils can access menus, use toolbars effectively to prepare multimedia presentations, share ideas and make relevant choices. They can confidently redraft and improve their work on screen. Younger pupils have access to four roamers and are currently working with six dictaphones to record their stories and support their developing language skills. Pupils are keen to finish their work and older pupils can often be found in the Key Stage 2 computer suite independently refining and developing their work.

112 Pupils have very positive attitudes when learning to use ICT. They are prepared to work hard and persevere when tasks are challenging and they are able to cooperate well when working alongside a partner on a particular task. This was particularly the case as pupils worked on multi-media presentations in Year 6 and when year 5 pupils used CD-ROMs to learn about the working of the human heart.

113 An after-school computer club for older pupils is popular and enables pupils to work individually on computers to develop ICT, research and problem solving skills. The range of work seen indicates that pupils use a wide range of tools and information to support work in other subjects. For example, in a geography project in Year 6, writing a poetry anthology and writing memoirs in English, data handling and spread sheets in mathematics and in geographical work following field trips.

114 The quality of teaching in ICT is good overall, with some very good teaching in both key stages. One of the strengths is the way teachers provide very clear explanations and give helpful demonstrations when introducing new skills or when referring to previous learning. This enables pupils to consolidate their learning and to move on to developing new skills with confidence and a good understanding. Lessons are well structured with objectives and expected outcomes shared carefully with pupils at the beginning, good support provided by teachers during the practical stage and a good summary at the end. This often involves the pupils in deciding whether the objectives have been met or not. Teachers' shared planning in year group teams is very helpful in providing consistency. The national scheme of work has been adopted to support continuity across the school. This scheme also puts the school in a good position to improve the quality of assessment. At present there are no systematic procedures for assessing or recording what pupils can do; this is a key area for development.

115 The coordinator for ICT is knowledgeable, experienced and a valuable source of information and advice. His expertise will be helpful to Key Stage 1 teachers who are to begin their nationally-funded training programme shortly. Timetabling the coordinator to teach ICT skills in each year group has enabled him to use his expertise effectively across the school, while giving him an opportunity to sample the levels of attainment throughout the school. A

structured programme to enable the coordinator to systematically monitor and evaluate standards across the school has yet to be clarified.

## **MUSIC**

116 It is not possible to make a judgement on standards in Key Stage 1 as no music lessons were observed. However, the quality of singing in assembly was typical for the pupils' age. At the last inspection standards for seven year olds were found to be in line with national expectations. Standards have been maintained in Key Stage 2, where they are above national expectations.

117 Pupils are able to make thoughtful, insightful observations when comparing the mood of contrasting pieces of music and can use tuned instruments to create different moods. Younger pupils are able to sustain contrasting rhythms, for example, when chanting nursery rhymes in a small group and super-imposing an ostinato. In assemblies, pupils sing tunefully, with enthusiasm and control. Singing by the over-forty strong school choir is very good. The almost equal numbers of boys and girls give an unusual timbre to the sound quality and they sing rhythmically complex songs with very good control of pitch, tone and volume.

118 Pupils' progress in music is good as a result of the enthusiastic teaching they receive and the rich range of extra-curricular experiences provided by staff. These include recorder groups, the school choir and frequent concerts in the community in which many pupils are involved. Progress is further supported by peripatetic teachers who, between them, give weekly lessons to 38 pupils on brass instruments, violin, clarinet and flute. Pupils enjoy music lessons and have positive attitudes to singing, playing and listening. They cooperate well when asked to work together in small groups. For example, pupils in Year 5 worked successfully in threes and fours, composing a mixture of calm and strident sounds which they shared with the class. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated in lessons and make satisfactory progress.

119 Too small a sample of lessons was seen to form an overall judgement about the quality of teaching. However, in the lessons observed, teaching was good. Several staff have good musical expertise and teachers' planning indicates that others are well supported by the national scheme of work adopted by the school. Resources are carefully chosen and used well to improve pupils' understanding and progress. Teachers have high expectations and so pupils respond well to the challenge when asked to listen carefully and offer opinions, compose simple pieces or practice a particular musical skill. Music makes a good contribution to the community life of the school. Parents greatly value the high quality musical concerts which are produced each year and the dedication and commitment of staff.

120 The coordinator for the subject is new to the school. His expertise and enthusiasm is already influencing the quality of singing of the school choir. However, he does not have the support of whole-school systems which will enable him to monitor and influence practice across the school effectively. Planning is not collated formally by the coordinator and there are no systems, other than informal means, of evaluating present provision systematically before deciding what needs improving.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

121 By the end of Key Stage 1, standards are in line with those expected nationally and are above the national expectation by the end of Key Stage 2. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly similar to those reported during the 1996 inspection and are now better at

the end of Key Stage 2. Attainment in swimming is above that expected nationally in both key stages.

122 By the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils can copy and repeat actions such as travelling and balancing with coordination in gymnastics. Younger pupils are confident in water. They are able to regain their feet from a prone position and some can swim widths of the pool using a buoyancy aid. Pupils in Year 1 can throw and catch in simple games and are developing an understanding of the bodily changes which take place as a result of exercise.

123 By the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils show good control and precision in rugby and hockey when passing and receiving. They can dribble a hockey ball with above average levels of control. Standards in swimming are high. Almost all pupils are confident in water on their front and back and many have good and sometimes excellent front crawl technique. Pupils who have only just entered Year 6, for example, can coordinate the arm and leg action well and some show complete mastery of the stroke, adding the difficult breathing action with maximum efficiency.

124 Pupils make sound progress in gymnastics and good progress in swimming and games. This is because of the good and often very good teaching, the commitment of many staff in providing extra-curricular activities and the on-site swimming pool, which enables all year groups to have swimming lessons. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into PE lessons and make sound progress.

125 Pupils have positive attitudes to PE and participate with enthusiasm. They listen carefully to instructions and work hard to improve when teachers give guidance. Concentration is good except, on occasion, when activity levels drop. Behaviour is good and pupils cooperate well in paired and small group work.

126 The quality of teaching is good overall. It is very good in Key Stage 2 and good in Key Stage 1. Teachers make the purposes of lessons clear to pupils and they manage behaviour well. As a result, pupils know what is expected of them, they work hard and interruptions to learning are minimal. In the main, teaching methods are effective, involving pupils in individual and small group tasks which ensure they are purposefully active. Sometimes, tasks are prescribed too tightly so pupils have no opportunity to experiment with possible solutions around a clear movement idea. As a result, the activity levels drop and concentration lapses. In some lessons teachers involve pupils effectively in evaluating one another's performance. In Year 6, for example, pupils have individual targets for improving their swimming. In paired work, each watch the other carefully as they swim in turn, attempting to improve their performance. Each listens carefully to the other's evaluation and both learn from the experience. The quality of teaching is now better than that reported during the last inspection.

127 The coordinator is very enthusiastic but he does not have the support of a defined management structure for monitoring and evaluating standards and quality in PE across the school. The school has not yet developed adequate systems to evaluate development needs in the subject, strategically plan change and evaluate the effectiveness of those changes. Many staff, including the caretaker, support a good range of extra-curricular activities and these are well attended by pupils. Resources are good and accessible. The school has excellent facilities for PE including two well-equipped halls, two hard areas marked for games, a swimming pool and an excellent playing field. These, and the commitment of the staff, make an important contribution to pupils' progress and standards. The good range of sporting activities provided by the school helps to develop the confidence, ability and self-esteem of pupils at all levels of attainment

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

128 On the evidence seen, overall attainment is at least in line with expectations of the locally agreed syllabus at the end of Key Stage 1 and above the expected standards at the end of Key Stage 2. This is a similar picture to the previous inspection. Pupils are making good progress in their learning.

129 The youngest pupils in Key Stage 1 know that harvest is a festival for some Christians to say '*thank you*' to God for food. They are encouraged to reflect on meaning, to think about and write to someone they would like to thank. Older pupils can recount the main features of religious stories and are learning about the lifestyles and the shared beliefs of Christians and Jews.

130 In Key Stage 2, the current work of the oldest pupils is above expected standards and pupils are likely to achieve high standards by the end of the current year. Pupils show secure knowledge and particularly good development of RE skills. As part of a unit of work on concepts of God, they prepared and took part in a whole class debate, showing their ability to reflect on beliefs and practices relating to different faiths and 'The Creation'. During the debate, they referred to differing views, drawing on the discussions some of them had had with their parents, as part of homework, and with others in their class. This class debate was of very high quality. They drew out essential ideas from the 'Big Bang theory' and the view of the Creation within the Old Testament and learned to distinguish between opinion, belief and fact.

131 Pupils show good attitudes. Pupils enjoy their RE lessons and their response is generally good. They listen and show maturity in discussions and consider views of others. As in the previous inspection, the quality of their answers and the way they reflect on religious issues is good. Pupils develop their own spiritual and moral understanding by exploring and reflecting upon questions about meaning and purpose of life.

132 Teaching is good overall and this ensures that pupils make good progress. A good feature is the way teachers use their secure subject knowledge to extend pupils thinking about religious issues. For example, in a year 4 lesson pupils, having heard the story of Paul's conversion told in a captivating way, were asked to think deeply about the effect the blinding of Saul had on his beliefs and the strength of his faith which resulted in his conversion to God. Teachers help pupils to understand the relationships between beliefs, the ways people celebrate and the way they live their lives

133 Teachers' lesson planning is thorough and is supported by good documentation provided by coordinators. Teachers use an appropriate variety of approaches, which extend beyond mere story-telling and colouring religious pictures. This is an improvement on the previous inspection, when it was found that much of the work at Key Stage 1 was unchallenging. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development. Good use is made of whole-class and group discussions and teachers use these opportunities to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. For example, in Year 2, pupils are provided with opportunities to talk about feelings of jealousy as part of the story of Joseph told to them from the Old Testament and the Torah. Another good feature is the way teachers make links with other subjects, for example, playing a piece from Hayden's 'Creation' to provide a mood for reflection.

134 In some respects, good leadership and management are being provided in both key stages. The two subject leaders work well together, despite a lack of time. There has been a marked improvement in provision since the previous inspection in Key Stage 1. While the Key Stage 2 coordinator, who has significant additional responsibilities, has been successful

in maintaining the good standards at the end of the key stage. However, subject weaknesses that were identified in the previous inspection, that is, monitoring and evaluating standards, have still to be addressed. Although both coordinators monitor teachers' plans, they have limited opportunities to check the quality of teaching of their colleagues and develop strategies for evaluating pupils' work. Their job descriptions include responsibility for *'maintaining system of monitoring, evaluation, testing and record keeping'* and yet such systems are not yet in place. The school improvement plan identifies RE a *'development'* area this year, yet the actions which are proposed are not well focused to take care of these weaknesses.

135 Resource provision has improved since the last inspection and there are now satisfactory levels of resources. The school still needs more books, video material and music, which are representative of major religions and cultures. The school also makes effective use of the local authority library service to complement its own provision.