

INSPECTION REPORT

BIRDS BUSH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Tamworth

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124170

Headteacher: Mr Ralph Hill

Reporting inspector: Mr Joe Fitzpatrick
19874

Dates of inspection: 15 - 18 April 2002

Inspection number: 244347

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Bird's Bush Road Belgrave Tamworth Staffordshire
Postcode:	B77 2NE
Telephone number:	01827 475170
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Oates
Date of previous inspection:	22 September 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
19874	Joe Fitzpatrick	Registered inspector	English	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
19446	Sue Wood	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents and carers?
2607	Brian Griffiths	Team inspector	Information and Communication Technology Design and Technology Equal Opportunities	
15551	Pat Mitchell	Team inspector	Mathematics History Physical Education Special Educational Needs	
22380	Penny Parrish	Team inspector	Science Art and Design Music English as an Additional Language	
22058	Christine Richardson	Team inspector	Geography Religious Education Foundation Stage	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	10
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	12
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	14
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	17
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	18
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	19
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	21
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	22
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	26

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Bird's Bush is a bigger than average primary school with nursery, which has 386 pupils on roll. There are 63 children who attend the nursery part-time, mornings and afternoons, and a further 44 children are in reception classes. Approximately 12 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, below the national average. Eight per cent are on the register of special educational needs and 1.5 per cent have statements of special educational needs, both below the national average. Most pupils with special educational needs have learning difficulties; only a small number have behavioural difficulties. Almost all pupils are of white British heritage; none has English as an additional language.

The backgrounds from which pupils come are mixed, with about half coming from council housing and the other half from private housing, close to the national average in socio-economic terms. The school is popular and over-subscribed. There is a wide range of attainment among pupils. On entry the overall level of attainment is about average. This is below the level of attainment on entry at the last inspection which was above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Bird's Bush provides a sound education and has several good features. Standards are close to average at the end of Year 6. Teaching is good. Management is satisfactory but the quality of leadership is unsatisfactory. The school offers sound value for money. Pupils enjoy school, attend very well, have good attitudes to learning and behave well. The good practice in the school provides a basis on which further improvements can be built.

What the school does well

- Standards in science in the juniors are above average
- The quality of teaching is good throughout the school
- Pupils like coming to school and the rate of attendance is very good
- Provision in the Foundation Stage is good
- There is good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils
- The school provides a caring, secure environment for learning
- Pupils' standards of behaviour and attitudes to learning are good

What could be improved

- The standards attained by more able pupils could be higher
- The standards in history and information and communication technology in the juniors are below the expected levels
- The range of attainment in many classes reduces the effectiveness of the teaching
- The role of co-ordinators in monitoring, promoting and assessing standards and quality in their subjects is not sufficiently developed
- There is a lack of clear direction from the headteacher and governors ensuring coherent whole school systems for promoting standards

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Standards are now lower relative to national averages than they were at that time. The provision of clear written guidelines showing progression in each subject from reception to Year 6, which was anticipated in the last inspection report, has not been realised. Similarly the development of the role of co-ordinators in monitoring and evaluating their curriculum areas, which was confidently expected in the last report, has not taken place. Methods of assessment have improved but not in a sufficiently coherent way. The most notable improvements which have impacted positively on the quality of education have been the purchase of two additional part-time teachers and additional support assistants combined with better organisation of pupils for literacy

and numeracy and the addition of a new library, a new room for information and communication technology (ICT) and of new resources for learning.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

Results have fluctuated a good deal. Results in mathematics and science dipped in 2001 but English is comparatively the weakest subject over the past three years. Over that time results in mathematics and science were above average while results in English were below average. In 2001 the proportion of pupils attaining the higher level was below average in English and mathematics. The inspection judgement is that standards in English and mathematics are close to national averages in the infants and the juniors and that standards in science are average in the infants but above average in the juniors. Standards in other subjects are generally average in the infants and juniors with the exception of history and ICT where standards in the juniors are below average. Pupils' achievement relative to their standards on entry is satisfactory except in science in the juniors where it is good and in history in the juniors where it is unsatisfactory. The progress made by more able pupils is less than it should be but pupils with special educational needs make good progress in the infants and juniors. By the time they are five children achieve the appropriate learning goals and sometimes exceed them. The school achieved its targets for pupils aged eleven in English and came close in mathematics.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils like school and wish to do well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Almost all pupils have mature attitudes and show respect for teachers and others.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils relate well to each other. Inspectors saw no instances of bullying or sexist behaviour.
Attendance	Very good. Rates of attendance are well above average reflecting the pupils' positive attitudes to school.
Relationships between pupils and teachers	Good. The good quality of the relationships contributes strongly to the pleasant, calm and orderly ethos of the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	good	good	good

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

In all of the lessons seen by inspectors in the Foundation Stage, the teaching was good or better. In Years 1-2, well over fifty per cent of teaching was good or very good and in Years 3-6, the proportion of good and very good teaching was more than sixty per cent. One unsatisfactory lesson was seen. Lessons are almost universally well planned and prepared and pupils are well involved in their learning. Literacy and numeracy are well taught but too much time is devoted to these two areas. The needs of lower attaining pupils are being well met but higher attaining pupils could make faster progress. The pace of lessons and teachers' management of time and resources are usually good or very good. In lessons that are satisfactory the pace of work sometimes slows or less is achieved than the pupils are capable of. In the one lesson where teaching was unsatisfactory, the level of challenge was not right, the pace was too slow and pupils failed to make sufficient progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good in the Foundation Stage. Generally good also in the infants and juniors; however, the topic framework used in history and some other subjects detracts from the progressive and systematic teaching of skills, knowledge and understanding in the subjects concerned.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. The creation of smaller classes for literacy and numeracy and the occasional one-to-one support which some receive in and out of lessons help to support these pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Provision for pupils' moral behaviour is very good. Pupils are provided with many occasions for prayer and reflection; there is a general expectation that they will behave well and they have opportunities to develop social skills and cultural awareness.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory. Pupils are well known and cared for. Relationships are good throughout the school. There is careful analysis of national test results and the progress of individual pupils is tracked and targets are set. However, there is no unified approach to assessment throughout the school.
Partnership with parents	Satisfactory. There is one formal and one informal parents' evening each year as well as an open evening in the Autumn. There is room for improvement in the written communications to parents, such as the Prospectus and Governors' Reports, in order to make them more accessible and attractive.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. While management is sound, leadership is unsatisfactory and has yet to establish a clear educational direction. The headteacher is a highly visible presence and is a powerful force helping to establish the caring ethos which permeates the school. His curriculum leadership has been less vigorous and assured and the role of subject co-ordinators is not yet sufficiently developed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are supportive and fulfil their statutory responsibilities. They have a good grasp of the school's financial situation and a sound understanding of its academic performance but are not sufficiently involved in its strategic planning.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is aware of the fluctuations in its results in National Curriculum tests and has taken some action to raise standards. However, action has tended to be piecemeal and uneven.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Staff are sensibly deployed and there are now additional teachers and support staff to enable teaching to occur in smaller groups. However, the way in which pupils are organised reduces the effectiveness of whole class teaching. The school applies the principles of best value in all its purchases.
Staffing, accommodation and learning resources	The purchase of additional part-time teachers is helping to reinforce the good quality of the teaching. There is very good provision of books to support teaching and learning as well as collections of good quality fiction and non-fiction. The library and the dedicated ICT classroom are valuable additions to the school's resources. Teaching accommodation is adequate but not generous.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils receive a lot of encouragement, praise and rewards • The school is a happy place but disciplined • Attendance is very good and pupils usually behave well • Teaching is good • Children are expected to work hard • It helps pupils to mature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework should be more varied and should challenge pupils more • There could be better information for parents • There could be more interesting activities outside lessons

Inspectors agree with the positive views expressed by parents in the questionnaires they returned and at the parents' meeting. They consider that homework is sometimes too unvaried and does not always address pupils' true needs. Information to parents could sometimes be more precise and accessible and on occasion there could be more advance information of forthcoming events. However, inspectors believe that the school provides a good range of interesting activities outside lessons as well as additional classes to boost pupils' attainment in numeracy and literacy.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- 1 The standards of attainment of pupils are lower than they were in the last inspection when standards on entry, in reception and at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 were above the national average.
- 2 The standards of attainment of pupils on entry to the nursery are around the average. By the time they enter Year 1 children are on course to achieve the appropriate learning goals and sometimes exceed them. Their overall standard of attainment is satisfactory and their rate of achievement is also satisfactory.
- 3 In the national tests for 2001 pupils aged seven attained results below the national average in reading but in line with the average in writing and mathematics. This is also the case when the school's results are compared with the 2001 results in similar schools (that is, schools with similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals). Results in reading were lower than in recent years and those in writing also dipped in 2001. Results in mathematics improved. There is not a great deal of difference between the results of boys and girls: over the last three years boys have exceeded the national average for boys and girls the national average for girls. In reading, writing and mathematics the proportion of pupils attaining the higher level in 2001 was below the national average.
- 4 At the time of the inspection the attainment of pupils in Year 2 was in line with the national average in English, mathematics and science as well as in other subjects, including ICT and religious education. Girls attained at a higher level than boys, in line with the national trend. The achievement of pupils in Years 1-2 was sound, in line with their prior levels of attainment. Good quality provision enabled those with special educational needs to make good progress.
- 5 In the national tests for 2001 pupils aged eleven attained results below the national average in English and mathematics but above this level in science. This is also the case when the school's results are compared with the 2001 results in similar schools. English is comparatively the weakest subject since in both mathematics and science results over the past three years have exceeded the national average but in English they fell below the national average. Over that time, girls have attained a good deal better than boys in English but in mathematics and science the difference between boys and girls has been negligible. In 2001 the proportion of pupils attaining the higher level in English and mathematics was below the national average but in science it was close to the national average. The school's results in the 2001 national tests suffered to some extent from the entry into that year's Year 6 class of a relatively large number of pupils from other schools between 1997 and 2001. Analysis of the school's results shows these pupils to have achieved higher proportions of lower grades and smaller proportions at higher grades than other more long-standing pupils in the year. The school achieved its targets in English and came close in mathematics.
- 6 At the time of the inspection the attainment of pupils in Year 6 was in line with the national average in English and mathematics but above average in science. The higher results in science are attributable to the consistently good quality of teaching in the subject throughout the school. In other subjects pupils' levels of attainment were about average except in history and ICT where they were below average because the

requirements of the National Curriculum in these subjects were not fully met. Pupils with special educational needs made good progress both in Years 1-2 and in Years 3-6. This was largely due to the creation of small classes for these pupils and other lower attaining pupils in literacy and numeracy lessons and the individual support the pupils with special educational needs received in lessons and, occasionally, in one-to-one sessions outside of lessons. Good use is made of the individual education plans of relevant pupils to target their needs and so promote their progress. By contrast, the achievement of more able pupils was not as good as it might have been largely because the broad range of attainment found in most classes with more able pupils meant that it was harder for teachers to focus on the specific needs of the more able and move them on at a faster pace.

- 7 Across the curriculum, the standards of speaking and listening, reading and writing are close to average in Years 2 and 6. Most pupils listen with good levels of attention and follow instructions well. They can express their point of view clearly and intelligently. Older pupils can give a clear account of their thinking, offering reasons and explanations with confidence. More able pupils ask good questions and make intelligent guesses when attempting to find explanations for events. The smaller classes created for lower attaining pupils in English and mathematics enable teachers to focus on pupils when their concentration lapses and encourage the pupils to take a more active and vocal part in lessons. Standards of reading are generally sound and there is a good proportion of pupils who are capable of reading difficult books with good levels of understanding. Older pupils can also use dictionaries and indexes well and can locate and retrieve information in the school library. Pupils produce a good volume of writing in their subjects and the older and more able achieve a good command of the conventions of punctuation and spelling. Standards of presentation are generally good throughout the school but there are relatively few pieces of extended writing and there is little of very high quality. The application of number in subjects such as science and geography is good. Almost all pupils in Year 6 understand how to use a computer to collect data and produce charts and graphs. However, ICT is not yet used sufficiently to develop pupils' skills in writing.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 8 Pupil's attitudes to school continue to be good. They are very keen to come to school and show great interest in their lessons where they settle quickly to tasks and activities. Pupils listen carefully in class and respond well to questions, giving answers that are sensible and pertinent to discussions. A good example of this was seen during a literacy lesson where pupils were discussing the different types of letter writing such as complaining or persuading letters. Pupils usually know what is expected of them and they are eager to please the class teacher by taking time to present their work in an acceptable manner. They work quietly and generally sensibly, usually sustaining concentration whether they are working as individuals, in pairs or in a group. However, they become distracted and inattentive when introductions to lessons are long or lessons are uninspiring.
- 9 The pupils clearly know that the school expects good behaviour and that they are encouraged to show respect to each other and to property. This is the result of good teaching that often interests and inspires pupils to learn. The school is a very orderly community and the majority of pupils move around the building sensibly. Although there are occasions when pupils behave inappropriately, teachers quickly address the problem without distracting from the focus of the lesson. The majority of pupils understand the impact of their actions on others and the consequences of inappropriate behaviour. However there are some instances of inappropriate behaviour. For example

in role-play in a religious education lesson name calling occurred which went unnoticed by the teacher. Pupils' behaviour is generally good throughout the whole school day and in the playground, although at lunchtime in the dining hall it is noisy as a result of pupils waiting to be served with their dinners.

- 10 Relationships are very good throughout the school community. Pupils know the daily routines of the school and quickly respond to teachers' requests. The adults who work in the school act as good role models for the pupils. Pupils are provided with a very wide range of responsibilities, such as dinner register monitors, selling tuck, working in the school office at lunchtimes and helping to maintain the school library. They respond well to these opportunities although many are for the Year 6 pupils only. They carry them out with enthusiasm. Pupils are polite to visitors; many offering to open doors or help them find the room they are looking for. They show initiative by preparing and running games at the summer fair or on occasions fund raising for national appeals.
- 11 The school's attendance figures are very good and have improved since the previous inspection. The regular attendance of pupils enables teachers to build on previous lessons with continuity and this has a positive impact on the overall attainment and progress of pupils. The majority of pupils consistently arrive at school on time to ensure that the school day starts promptly. Registers are completed quickly at the start of each session. There are no recorded exclusions in the last academic year.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

- 12 The general quality of teaching throughout the school is good. Of the 75 lessons observed, more than four out of five were good or better and a relatively small number were no better than satisfactory. Only one lesson was seen in which teaching was less than satisfactory. Teaching in the Foundation Stage was particularly strong with all teaching being judged good or very good. Planning was thorough and well matched to the children's needs. Throughout the school, lessons are almost always well planned and prepared, with resources to hand, and there is a good blend of whole class teaching, small group activities and working in pairs or individually. Final plenary sessions are usually – but not always – well used to reinforce learning points. The planning of lessons has been helped by the good practice disseminated through the national literacy and numeracy strategies, as well as by the useful feedback all teachers have received on the basis of lessons observations carried out by members of the senior management team. The good quality teaching reported at the time of the last inspection has been maintained.
- 13 In good and very good lessons time is well managed and pupils work at a brisk pace. In one very good literacy lesson for older and more able pupils, the pupils reinforced their grasp of how to spell certain families of words in common use, developed their sense of the audience their writing was aimed at and improved their grasp of the distinction between formal and informal styles, practising how to write letters in both styles. In a good numeracy lesson for lower juniors the teacher shared the learning objectives with the pupils; pupils settled down quietly and quickly and were alert and keen to put up their hands to answer questions; the teacher reinforced the pupils' use of appropriate technical terms; and good use was made of the small white boards on which pupils wrote down their answers to problems – this enabled the teacher to check the understanding of individual pupils quickly and efficiently and to focus attention on those who needed it most. In the lessons that were satisfactory the pace of work tended to be slower and less was achieved in the relatively long sessions than pupils were capable of. As a consequence the progress of pupils was slower than it should have been. In the one lesson seen where teaching was less than satisfactory, the level of challenge

was not well suited to the pupils, the pace of work was too slow and pupils were not organised so as to make good progress. But in most lessons the pace of work is good. In one very good lesson in ICT, for example, the teacher established a lively, positive and brisk atmosphere from the outset. He gave clear explanations and helped pupils by means of a variety of suggestions to use their computers efficiently. Basic skills were reinforced, links were made with work in science and technical vocabulary was used naturally and accurately by the teacher and the pupils.

- 14 The school has traditionally arranged for pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 to be taught in mixed age classes spanning two years. This results in mixed age classes comprising respectively pupils from Years 1 and 2, pupils from Years 3 and 4, and pupils from Years 5 and 6. A consequence of this method of organising children for learning is that the range of attainment in most classes is very great – greater than is normally found in primary school classes. In order to reduce the range of attainment in literacy and numeracy classes, the school sensibly decided over a year ago to set pupils for these subjects. However, pupils are not always set strictly on grounds of their ability in the subject but also on grounds of age, so that top sets usually comprise only pupils from the upper age group. This method of organising pupils is only partially successful. The main benefit has been in the creation of small classes for the lowest attaining pupils, including those on the register of special educational needs. This arrangement is working to the benefit of these pupils, enabling teachers to give them more individual attention and to match work more closely to their needs. It was also clear from lesson observation that the pupils concerned felt more confident in taking part in lessons and volunteering to answer questions. However, the top “sets” continue to consist of pupils with a broad range of attainment and it is more difficult for teachers in these classes to focus closely on the needs of the most able pupils and help them to move forward at the accelerated pace of which they are capable. Moreover, the needs of the more able pupils are even harder to address in lessons outside literacy and numeracy where classes are organised on a mixed age basis without the benefits of any setting. In these classes, although lessons are well planned and pupils and resources well managed, the effectiveness of the teaching is reduced because it is much harder for teachers to target the specific needs of groups of pupils of different levels of attainment.
- 15 The effectiveness of teaching is further reduced by the fact that although planning for each pair of classes is well done, the school has not yet produced schemes of work or clear subject guidelines indicating a pathway of progression in each subject from Year 1 to Year 6. The teachers of each pair of classes tend to work closely together and also to have some idea of what the teachers in other pairs of classes are doing. But approaches differ between teachers and, with the exception of art and a few other subjects, there is a lack of whole school guidance to ensure coherence in the teaching so that everyone can have confidence that pupils’ progress is continuous, with each stage building on the one before. The consequences of these shortcomings in the organisation of pupils for learning and the provision of whole school guidance for lesson planning is that the impact of teaching on standards is not as great as it should be and that it is more difficult for teachers to help groups of different levels of ability to make progress at the pace that is appropriate for them. In the case of more able pupils the problem is compounded by the fact that the school has not yet identified a group of pupils in any year group who are gifted and talented.
- 16 Boys and girls are treated equally in lessons and so make similar progress. This is true even in classes with substantially different numbers of boys and girls. On occasions, for example in some ICT lessons, teachers handle the wider age range – and thus the wider range of attainment – by pairing older and higher attaining pupils with younger and lower attainers. This has the virtue of ensuring that the lesson moves at a good pace but too often the older pupil dominates the work by, for example, being the one who uses the

mouse and keyboard to enter information into the computer. In other lessons, notably in science, some younger pupils benefit from the pace of learning that comes from working alongside older pupils.

- 17 The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good, especially in the infants and in English and science. The learning support assistants are experienced and capable and, when they are available, provide good quality support for the pupils. In some lessons involving large numbers of pupils there are no learning support assistants and teachers struggle to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. In one mathematics lesson, for example, it was notable how the higher attaining pupils mastered the methods of problem solving quickly and were prepared to take on more work while the lower attaining pupils had difficulty in keeping up with the rest of the class. Teachers of numeracy often provide pupils with special educational needs with practical apparatus to help them cope with number work. These pupils also on occasion benefit from receiving one-to-one adult support outside of lessons, including support in basic language development provided by a specialist teacher from the local education authority. Teachers make good use of their knowledge and understanding of pupils' strengths and weaknesses to adapt their teaching to their needs on a day to day basis. In all classes pupils with special educational needs are helped to gain in confidence and self-esteem by the teachers' use of praise for good work and effort and the good quality of the relationships which teachers foster.
- 18 Homework is regularly set for older pupils and is used on occasion to complete work begun in class or to encourage pupils to find out things for themselves. Too much homework, however, is repetitive and given over to rehearsing spellings and preparing for spelling tests, a point complained about by some parents and some older pupils.

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

- 19 The whole curriculum reflects the school's aims well. This is particularly the case in the good links with partner institutions and the very good range of extra-curricular activities provided for the pupils. These make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. The school meets statutory requirements to teach the National Curriculum and provide a daily act of collective worship. Equal opportunities to access the curriculum are provided for boys and girls but in some respects the curriculum is not well balanced.
- 20 The school has rightly placed additional emphasis on literacy but there are days when some classes have too great a focus on literacy. The amount of time devoted to English and mathematics, including the time for revision, is at the expense of other subjects. This leads to some subjects not being taught in an appropriate depth and detail to ensure that pupils develop their understanding in a systematic way. For example, there is limited time for music and history is not taught frequently enough for pupils to develop their skills and understanding to a satisfactory level before they leave the school. Since the last inspection there has been some improvement in the provision of subject guidelines, but this has not been satisfactory. Teachers have still to adapt some of the nationally developed guidelines to ensure that planning is closely matched to the needs of their particular pupils.
- 21 Teachers plan some purposeful links between subjects, for instance history and geography, religious education and English. Since the last inspection the national programmes for literacy and numeracy have been implemented and developed effectively. However, the use of literacy across the curriculum is underdeveloped in subjects such as history, religious education and geography. The length of time

allocated to lessons, including some in literacy and numeracy, is often too long for pupils to sustain their interest and energy.

- 22 There is satisfactory provision for pupils with special educational needs. Teachers identify these pupils and their needs in their planning and they often receive additional attention from the teacher or support assistant during activities. On occasion some receive one-to-one support from specialist teachers provided by the local authority.
- 23 The curriculum for children in the nursery and reception classes is good. It is thoughtfully planned to ensure that every child has experience of the 'areas of learning'. There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to learn and activities are well prepared, challenging and enjoyable.
- 24 The provision for activities such as clubs, before school, at lunchtime and after school, is very good. Clubs such as the art and sewing club are well attended and make valuable contributions to the displays around the school. Pupils achieve very well in local sporting competitions and musical activities. Extra lessons are held in literacy and numeracy before and after school to boost pupils' attainment. Very good use is made of visits to enhance pupils' learning and the Year 5 and 6 residential trip to Shugborough, which is thoughtfully planned for the beginning of the school year to encourage social and personal development, is extremely well supported. There are many visitors to the school who support and enrich learning for pupils throughout the school.
- 25 Satisfactory provision is made for personal, social and health education. The School Council is now in place and is a good introduction to pupils' understanding of citizenship. Sex education is taught as part of the science curriculum and in discrete sessions that are supported well by the school nurse. The 'Life Caravan' visits the school to support the drugs awareness programme and Year 6 are involved in a valuable First Aid course each year. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 participate successfully in a road safety course each year.
- 26 There are good arrangements for the transfer of pupils to the secondary schools. Curricular links with other schools are good and support the development of the curriculum effectively. These include a day when a group of Year 6 pupils from all primary schools in the area work together on a project such as a design and technology challenge at a local secondary school. This project is supported by local industries. Arrangements for children to enter the nursery and transfer to reception are sensitively arranged and managed. Purposeful links with the community make a satisfactory contribution to pupils' learning. These include links with several local churches and religious groups. Valuable educational trips, such as the trip to Denby Pottery Museum, are well supported, and there are good links between the world of work and school.
- 27 A strength of the curriculum is the good provision it makes for pupils' personal development. Provision for spiritual, social and cultural development is good and for moral development it is very good. This is similar to provision at the last inspection. Assemblies are calm, orderly occasions and provide opportunities for pupils to consider human feelings and emotions through well-told stories by staff and visiting speakers. For example, pupils became quite excited when children were compared to plants and they thought about how children grew from reception to Year 6 because they were cared for and valued. Assemblies are enhanced by the singing and music played as pupils enter the hall. Pupils are made aware of the beauty of nature through the attractive environmental area and the eye-catching display of bulbs that some pupils have planted in the grounds. Their pride in developing the environment is recognised locally because the school has won the 'Tamworth in Bloom' award on several occasions. Pupils have

the opportunity to consider other religious beliefs and values when they study other cultures and faiths in religious education. Displays around school make a strong contribution to the positive climate of the school in which pupils are encouraged to grow and flourish, respect others and are respected.

- 28 There is a clear code of behaviour throughout the school. It is used very effectively to promote moral development because pupils know how rules are to be applied in the classroom and the playground. This provides a very good framework in which pupils can grow. The school has worked hard to develop an environment in which pupils feel that they can express their views and practise moral decision-making. For example, in a religious education lesson, pupils had no doubts that people should abide by the rules and not expect to have second chances when they deliberately break them. They asserted that people have to take responsibility for their actions. Pupils have a clear idea of what is right and wrong and they are delighted to see other pupils being rewarded for their efforts when they receive awards in assembly or stickers in class. The school's use of rewards recognises the positive aspects of pupils' work and behaviour so that pupils value any awards or praise. They take great pride in collecting litter to keep the grounds and school tidy and are keen to win an 'Eco' award. Pupils believe that rewards are worth gaining and this encourages good behaviour. Relationships in the school are very good and provide pupils with good examples on which to model their own social and moral behaviour.
- 29 Pupils work co-operatively, sharing ideas and helping each other as needed. Older pupils are given opportunities to contribute to the smooth running of the school. For example, pupils in Year 6 answer the telephone at lunchtime when there is no one available in the office and organise the tuck shop each morning. The school fosters a sense of community and there is pride in being part of the teams who compete, for example, in cricket or football games. The school participates in many competitions during the year and pupils are delighted by their many successes, especially when they know that they have contributed to them. The recently formed School Council enables pupils to participate even more fully in the life of the school.
- 30 There is good provision for pupils' cultural development. Pupils have a good experience of a wide range of music from around the world in assemblies each week. The religious education curriculum, geography, art and music offer good opportunities for pupils to learn about other faiths and cultures. The artefacts from various religions are of high quality and show that religious and cultural equality are valued. Pupils show respect for these items and enjoy talking about them. During the year pupils celebrate many festivals and the sharing of knowledge and enjoyment of them are central to many class assemblies. Involvement in local activities, in dance and music festivals and in studies of a wide range of literature provide opportunities for pupils to learn more of their own culture.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 31 The school continues to provide a caring environment in which pupils can learn. The headteacher and other staff know every pupil by name. There are satisfactory procedures in place to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety, and the school deploys appropriate agencies to support the needs of individual pupils. The coordinator for child protection has attended recent training and ensures that all staff are aware of relevant procedures. Pupils feel confident to approach any adult if they have worries or concerns. Younger pupils are made to feel secure and safe and their individual needs are identified at an early stage. There are clear practices that are followed to report and record accidents. All aspects of health and safety in the school are documented and regular

fire evacuation practices are held. However, many policies are dated and have not recently been reviewed, updated and ratified by the governing body.

- 32 The school operates a 'family style' service for its school dinners. These arrangements have been praised by some parents and grandparents who have been invited to dine with the pupils. However, they do create a crowded and noisy dinner hall. This is partly caused by pupils becoming restless, chattering loudly and playing with their cutlery while waiting for their meals. The food is carried to the tables by adults, and is served by the older pupils in hot containers and the limited space between tables makes carrying food hazardous.
- 33 The school's procedures for monitoring pupils' attendance are very good and this has a positive affect on the overall attendance figures that are well above the national average. Attendance cups are presented in assembly each week to the classes with the best attendance. Pupils receive termly and annual certificates for 100 per cent attendance. Parents are very clear about the procedures they have to follow if their child is absent from school and the school is proactive in quickly checking if no message is received. The school has effective systems in place to support all pupils' needs during their time at the school. Staff quickly recognise any change in behaviour or attitude. Concerns are recorded appropriately. Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for, with their personal needs being included in their individual educational programmes.
- 34 The monitoring of behaviour throughout the school is good. Pupils are regularly reminded of the school's high expectations. Teachers operate reward systems in their classes although there is not a consistent approach throughout the school. The school does not tolerate anti-social behaviour, such as bullying. There are suitable systems to follow if there is any inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour.
- 35 There are satisfactory procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress, and then using the information gathered to guide planning. In English, mathematics and science, test data is collected systematically and its analysis is used to place pupils in groups of similar attainment for English and mathematics. Standards in these subjects are rising, partly as a result of this. In many subjects, for example geography and ICT, teachers make regular opportunities to assess how well pupils have understood recent work. Subsequent lessons are then often modified in the light of the findings. Test data has recently begun to be collected and stored on computer and the first steps are being taken to use computerised analysis further to influence the formation of teaching groups and the planning of lessons. All of these processes are guided by a recently produced policy for assessment that is of good quality and is capable of improving practice considerably. However, this aspect of the school's work is less effective than it could be; there is too little sharing of good practice between teachers in the four age-group teams that are used for planning lessons; good practice in some subjects, such as ICT, is not adopted for other subjects; some of the collected data is not analysed in order to learn lessons that would influence provision.
- 36 The assessment of pupils' attainments is used, but not systematically, to advise pupils on what they need to learn next. In many cases these targets are not referred to sufficiently often by teachers to have their full effect.
- 37 Improvements to the impact of assessment on pupils' attainment are dependent on improvements to the strategic management of the school. Pockets of good practice exists but the school has yet to achieve a unified and coherent approach to assessment throughout the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 38 The majority of parents have positive views of the school and are satisfied with what it provides and achieves. They say their children like to go to school and they feel they make good progress as a result of the good teaching. There are good systems for the induction of children into the nursery and reception classes. Parents say that the school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best. A small percentage of parents who completed questionnaires feel that the school does not provide the right amount of work to do at home. The inspection team's judgement is that the homework provided is usually satisfactory but that the variety is limited.
- 39 Parents are informed about specific events through brief letters but there are no regular newsletters or information sheets for parents. The reading and homework diaries provide an opportunity for home-school communication and are used well. The school does not send home information to parents about curricular work or topics that are being studied in class. This prevents some parents supporting their children's learning by sharing first hand experiences or artefacts. The school has not recently held curriculum information evenings to familiarise parents of teaching methods such as those used in literacy and numeracy with the results that some parents are not confident in helping their children with their work at home. Parents enjoy and appreciate opportunities to share in their children's school experience through attendance at school productions and class assemblies.
- 40 The schools prospectus is a thin document which meets the statutory reporting requirements although it has very limited detail and is of an unsatisfactory quality. For example, the way the National Curriculum test results are reported is unattractive and unclear. The annual Governors' Report to Parents is a document that accurately reflects the work of the governing body and of the school. It does not, however, fully comply with statutory requirements as it does not include information on the action taken following the previous inspection, the use of funding for pupils with special education needs, or information for the school's arrangements for pupils with disabilities.
- 41 The parents are informed of their children's progress through the annual written reports. The information in the reports is inconsistent: some teachers clearly provide detail of the progress made whereas others describe what pupils have done in the subjects not how well they have done. Many teachers include targets for the next year but these are often general and lack clarity.- for example, pupils "should continue to read" or a pupil "should remain focussed" – and do not provide a stepped approach to improvement. Parents are formally invited to meet the teacher three times a year and have the opportunity to look at their children's books and work. There are a very small number of adult volunteers who regularly help in school. They feel welcome and valued for their work by the pupils and staff.
- 42 The school does not have a parents' association to support fund raising although parents support events put on by the school such as the Summer fair and sponsored activities. Funds raised are use to provide additional resources.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 43 The headteacher is a highly visible presence around the school, often leading in assemblies, supervising pupils at playtime and lunchtime as well as when they arrive and depart at the beginning and end of the day. He also takes some lower sets for numeracy lessons. Through his work and his presence he is a powerful influence on the calm, orderly and pleasant atmosphere that permeates the school. He has been

instrumental in bringing about many improvements to the school grounds and in ensuring that the recent building work was carried out with minimum risk to health and safety and minimum disruption to pupils' work. As part of the process for the successful introduction of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy in the school, the headteacher has also been active with other members of the senior management team in observing lessons and providing good quality feedback to teachers on the quality of their lessons.

- 44 The last inspection report says of the headteacher that "his leadership creates a positive school atmosphere in which staff are encouraged to work as a team and much good practice is in place". Much the same can be said at the present time. But in respect of how pupils are organised for learning, of guidelines for the planning of teaching throughout the school or of the creation of whole school methods of assessment, there has not been sufficiently clear leadership provided. Action has tended to come from the teachers working individually or in small teams. The result is that there is a general lack of coherent whole school systems designed to promote standards. The school finds itself behind many other schools in drawing up and operating systems aimed at raising standards of attainment. For example, the adoption by some subjects of nationally developed subject guidelines is very recent and has not had sufficient time to influence how those subjects are taught right through the school. Similarly, methods of assessment and of recording assessment differ from teacher to teacher and subject to subject. Both in the case of planning and of assessment there is some good practice but this good practice is not widely disseminated and is not consistently followed right through the school. Provision is patchy and uneven because there has been a lack of clear and vigorous direction from the top.
- 45 The development of schemes of work and of the role of the subject co-ordinator in monitoring and promoting standards – both considered to be imminent in the last inspection report – has not taken place. Although the role of the subject co-ordinator is clearly described in school documents and the provision of additional part-time teachers might make it possible for co-ordinators to exercise their monitoring role more fully in the future, there are some subjects where no one has a clear overview of the quality of work, the standards being attained, or the progress being made by pupils. The school has also failed so far to identify pupils who might be considered gifted or talented.
- 46 The quality of the school development plan was criticised in the last inspection report. Since then there have been improvements in how it is written and organised. For example, targets are clearly identified, their cost implications are clear, timescales are set out and there is identification of the teachers with responsibility for overseeing the achievement of the targets. But the plan extends only to the current year with an outline plan for the following year. Since the major ground for the criticism of the plan in the previous report was that it did not sufficiently support the long-term development of the school, it would be better if the school development plan extended at least over three years while indicating the detailed action required in the current year. This would help senior managers, governors and teachers to achieve a better understanding of how current plans fit into a strategic vision for the school.
- 47 Governors are supportive of the school and take pride in its achievements and its popularity. They have a sound grasp of the school's attainments in national tests and a good grasp of its financial situation. They were closely involved in promoting and checking the recent extensions to the school buildings and co-operated with the headteacher to ensure that matters of health and safety were attended to and that disruption was kept to a minimum. However, governors have not ensured that the improvements deemed necessary in the last inspection report have been carried out and

they are not sufficiently engaged in strategic planning for the school and in charting a clear strategic route for the school to follow over the foreseeable future.

- 48 The school's budget is well managed and the school is in a healthy financial condition. The school has made wise purchases of additional part-time teachers and support assistants to support the work of permanent teachers and raise standards. This has made it possible to organise pupils more flexibly for learning. Governors and school managers apply the principles of best value in all their purchases. Book resources are in good supply and classrooms hold good collections of fiction as well as dictionaries, textbooks and sets of readers. Resources for art, physical education and science are satisfactory. The school library is a valuable acquisition, is well organised and labelled and is kept in good condition with the help of pupil volunteers. It is helping pupils to develop good library and study skills as well as being a source of good reading and reference material. The new ICT room is well appointed and well equipped with computers. It is a general asset to the school as well as being an excellent resource for the teaching and learning of ICT.
- 49 The school enjoys extensive outdoor playing fields and good hard surface playgrounds. There is also a well developed nature reserve and there is a fenced off quiet area to which pupils can retire if they wish to escape the hurly-burly of the playground. There is at present a dedicated small secure play area for nursery children and the school has plans for extending the area outside the reception classes to link up with this so that reception and nursery children can play in their own area. Teaching accommodation in the school is satisfactory without being generous. In particular, the creation of additional small groups in literacy and numeracy and the additional support of some pupils on a one-to-one basis places a lot of pressure on the accommodation. Some matters affecting health and safety were brought to the attention of the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

50 In order to improve the quality of education provided and raise standards, the governors, headteacher and staff should now:

- ◆ take steps to raise the standards attained by more able pupils by creating teaching groups where their needs can be more closely addressed and their progress accelerated;
(paragraphs 6, 14, 15, 70)
- ◆ raise standards attained by the age of eleven in history and ICT by improving the quality of planning in these subjects and taking steps to improve teachers' subject knowledge;
(paragraphs 15, 28, 110, 111, 114, 115)
- ◆ improve the effectiveness of teaching and its impact on standards by means of clear subject guidelines to assist lesson planning and by taking steps to reduce the range of attainment among pupils in many classes;
(paragraphs 6, 14, 15, 20, 21, 70, 72, 75, 76)
- ◆ develop the role of subject co-ordinators so that they are enabled to monitor and assess the quality of work in their subjects and feed the results into their planning for the subject;
(paragraphs 34, 35, 43, 44)
- ◆ provide strong, clear direction to improve the quality of educational debate among governors and staff and to ensure that the school benefits from whole school systems of planning and assessment designed to raise standards of attainment.
(paragraphs 34, 43, 44, 45, 46)

In addition to these issues for action, the school should take steps to address minor weaknesses concerning the quality of information sent to parents (paragraphs 38, 39)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	75
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	34

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	12	42	19	1		
Percentage	1	16	55	25	1		

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR - Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	30	316
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	/	43

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR - Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	39

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	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	25

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

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

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

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	16	18	21
	Girls	21	21	24
	Total	37	39	45
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	80 (89)	85 (89)	98 (87)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	22	20
	Girls	20	24	22
	Total	37	46	42
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	80 (89)	100 (89)	91 (89)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	25	23

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	15	21
	Girls	17	16	22
	Total	33	31	43
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	69 (71)	65 (78)	90 (91)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	17	16	22
	Girls	17	16	22
	Total	34	32	44
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	71 (71)	67 (82)	92 (91)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	270
Any other minority ethnic group	1

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR - Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.6
Average class size	28.7

Education support staff: YR - Y6

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	185

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	30
Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	68
Number of pupils per FTE adult	15

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	6.4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Financial information

Financial year	
	£
Total income	662537
Total expenditure	693402
Expenditure per pupil	1932
Balance brought forward from previous year	105190
Balance carried forward to next year	74325

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	419
Number of questionnaires returned	156

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	34	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	66	30	2	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	42	1	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	43	41	15	0	2
The teaching is good.	65	31	2	1	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	43	8	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	33	3	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	27	1	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	39	44	10	3	4
The school is well led and managed.	64	30	3	1	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	64	32	3	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39	33	10	3	15

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

- 51 Children enter the nursery after their third birthday and transfer to the reception classes either in September before their fifth birthday, or in January. Both the nursery and the reception classes are bright and welcoming. Children are provided with a stimulating, supportive and caring start to their school life. There is a wide range of attainment within the groups of children who enter the reception classes. Attainment is mostly typical of children of this age but about a third of the children are attaining at a higher level, especially in the areas of language and communication and mathematical development. Boys and girls, including those with special educational needs, make sound, and frequently good, progress across the areas of learning recommended for young children. By the time they are five, the majority of children reach the expected levels of attainment in all of the six areas of learning, and approximately a third achieve levels above those typical of children of the age of five.
- 52 Teaching and learning for children under the age of five is at least good in all the areas of learning because teachers and support staff are enthusiastic and very skilled practitioners. This stimulates enthusiasm in children and encourages them to work hard and show pride in their achievements. Staff are quick to praise and encourage children and recognise any progress they have made in behaviour or the learning of skills. Day-to-day assessment is good and is used well to select a wide range of interesting and enjoyable activities that include all the skills staff want children to acquire and refine. Activities offer challenge to children and help them to develop confidence in their own abilities and to actively seek involvement. In large measure, the standards have been maintained since the last inspection and the initial assessment information is used well to prepare targets for children and ensure that their learning experiences are built on systematically during their time in reception. Children are re-assessed at the end of their reception year and this information provides an effective basis for tracking children's progress through the school.

Personal, social and emotional development

- 53 By the time the majority of children leave the reception class they met or exceeded the expected levels in personal, social and emotional development because of the very good teaching they receive and the purposeful atmosphere. Some children are immature and do not communicate easily with unfamiliar adults when they enter the nursery. They require much support to take part in the interesting activities around them but they quickly settle into routines, growing in confidence because they know that systems are fair and that everyone has a turn during the week. Members of staff know children very well and talk through activities thoughtfully so that pupils know when they are expected to wash their hands, for example, when cooking or playing with sticky materials. Children know the routines for their drinks break when they take turns in passing plates around the table, speak their prayer together and say a polite "thank you" when offered a biscuit. Children are learning the rules that there are times for one person to talk and others to listen. Although some find this difficult, they are improving their listening skills.
- 54 In the reception classes the teachers build well on the good start made in the nursery. For example, children soon see that there are new routines for discussing the days of the week and sharing equipment. They learn that they have to walk sensibly when taking the register to the office and go quietly into the hall for assembly. There are clear rules and routines such as sitting quietly for a longer time in literacy and numeracy sessions.

The organisation and management of the classrooms are good and pupils begin to select and use resources and activities independently, working purposefully without direct supervision. A few children still find it difficult to wait to give answers because they are so excited when they know the answer to a question, but staff consistently reinforce the need to allow others to have a turn to speak. Children work sensibly in small groups, sometimes independently, sometimes with adult support.

Communication, language and literacy

- 55 The majority of children make good progress in their learning because the teaching in the nursery and reception classes is good and they attain the expected levels by the time they are five. About a third of the children attain at higher than expected levels because of the emphasis on the development of language and reading skills in the nursery and reception classes. Imaginative play opportunities are planned very well to encourage logical thinking and the use of questions and answers, encouraging children to talk to a point. For example, in the nursery, children are asked, "What do you do first if you want to go into the zoo?" They respond quickly, "Buy a ticket," and this immediately provides an opportunity for interaction and entry into role-play as office personnel or visitors. Staff read stories very expressively to children and are very skilful in encouraging them to concentrate and participate in discussion. They lose no opportunities to encourage children to think of the initial sound of words, for example, when selecting the day of the week for the calendar. Children are encouraged to sit and look at books together or asked to help read instructions. They try to write their names and enjoy making marks and letters on any work they do or when at a writing table.
- 56 Information about children's progress in reading, writing and knowledge of sounds and letters is passed on to the reception teachers so that future learning builds on the skills already developed in the nursery. As a result, higher attaining children read simple storybooks confidently by the time they are five. Other children read one or two word sentences with prompting and the majority of children show great interest in books and a desire to read. Children enjoy reading the big books together. In religious education they read a big book about a hunter and made very thoughtful comments about the different children in the book and some photographs they were shown. They are learning that some books have stories and some have information in them. They are delighted by the idea that they, too, are authors and illustrators of books. There is a clear focus on the development of language in these lessons and good organisation ensures that small groups of children receive tasks well matched to their level of attainment when they move to writing activities. The teachers' writing on the board is a very good model for the children to copy and children learn well from this. Some groups are able to read back the simple sentences they have written in their book. Parents actively help their children at home by helping them to learn key words or listening to them read. This helps children to make good progress with their literacy skills.

Mathematical development

- 57 By the age of five the majority of children attain standards that are typical for their age and approximately a third achieve above this level because of the good teaching and the very good range of practical tasks. Staff in the nursery ensure that each area of learning provides opportunities for mathematical vocabulary and counting skills to be developed. For example, in cookery children see how heavy the bag of flour is and look carefully at the scales to check when the indicator reaches the number given by the teacher. They count how many animals are in a basket and take out a specified number. The majority of children count up to six reliably and recognise patterns and numbers on a dice.

Purposeful activities throughout the sessions reinforce pupils' grasp of counting, shape and colour as well as their ability to recognise numbers and sequence them correctly.

- 58 By the time children enter reception they have acquired considerable confidence in their basic number skills. Teaching and learning are good because the teachers plan well organised and managed lessons and nursery nurses support the activities very effectively. All are confident and knowledgeable about teaching basic numeracy skills and challenging tasks are matched well to children's understanding. Children count from a given starting point - for example, seven - and go round the circle until everyone has given the next number. There are few hesitations. Children recognise patterns on dice and higher attaining children write numbers correctly on a sheet to record the numbers thrown on the dice before working out double that number. Songs and rhymes are used well to reinforce understanding.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

- 59 Children make at least sound progress, with about a third of the children achieving above the expected level by the age of five because of the well-planned experiences and activities in the nursery and reception classes that attract children's interest and arouse their curiosity. For example, children planned habitats for animals on a mat covered with a fascinating range of natural materials such as stones, twigs and bark. This led to purposeful imaginative play as they explored the possible use of the materials. They saw how flour changes when butter and sugar were added to it to make biscuits and laughed with glee as they controlled the program on the computer screen with the tracker-ball to make parts of pictures move.
- 60 In the reception classes children build on their understanding and previous experiences. Children compared a seaside landscape with a typical dinosaur landscape and made their own landscapes with soil or sand. Through skilled questioning from the teacher children are able to explain to the rest of the class what they have done and why. They looked carefully at a photograph of a dinosaur skeleton before making their own skeleton with straws. They said confidently that this was a 'tyrannosaurus rex' or a 'pterodactyl'. When using the computer, children show good co-ordination as they click on individual bones and drag them into the correct position to complete the dinosaur shape. Children learn to experiment and build successfully with construction materials. Children acquire a good understanding of time and the routines of the week. They are very clear about the sequence of the days of the week, about yesterday, today and tomorrow, and chant the months of the year very confidently.

Creative development

- 61 Children make good progress and achieve well. Higher attainers attain above the expected levels at the age of five, because they have many opportunities to learn skills through interesting activities. In the nursery children concentrate well on their painting and use paint with deliberation and good control of the brush. Thoughtful questioning by staff makes them think about what they are painting and the colours they can use. Children try hard to tear black paper circles to stick on a large animal shape to make a collage picture of a leopard. They use glue purposefully and efficiently and weave ribbons into a cardboard 'loom' to make walls for the zoo with high levels of concentration and accuracy. There are many opportunities for children to play imaginatively. Children play purposefully together with toys or a selection of construction materials or in special areas such as the zoo, the clinic or the weather centre. Children enjoy singing and making music. They are learning the names of instruments and watch carefully to see how to play them correctly. Children sing and play instruments at the

same time and clap in time to the music. They are improving their ability to leave the instruments on the floor because of the calm, consistent approach of the nursery nurse.

- 62 Children in reception build well on previous learning and demonstrate that they know the names of all the instruments they use in the lesson. They obviously look forward to their music lessons and learn new songs quickly. In one lesson, they showed that they recalled the story of 'The Three little Pigs' well and this helped them sequence their playing and singing very effectively. Children painted recognisable figures and their observational drawings improved as they matured and their attention was drawn to ways in which they could improve their work. In dance they moved imaginatively, with increasing control and flexibility, as different types of animals, and responded very well with appropriate neck and shoulder movements when they strutted like an ostrich. Imaginative play in the dinosaur den or with a wide range of interesting play mats provides welcome opportunities for children to sit together to write or develop stories.

Physical development

- 63 Children make good progress because of the variety of opportunities for physical development in indoor and outdoor activities. By the time they are five the majority of children attain at an above average level. Nursery staff make imaginative and thoughtful use of the outdoor area so that children move with confidence, control and co-ordination on wheeled toys. They learn to play croquet and improve their hand and eye co-ordination as they work around the short course. Children's use of space in the hall in physical education lessons is improving and their skill in travelling around the hall at different levels and speeds is developing well. They respond to the teacher's signal to stop quickly. From entry into the nursery they learn to use a wide range of tools with increasing dexterity and have a good level of control when emptying and filling containers. Children use a wide range of construction equipment to build and make objects, which develops their manipulative skills effectively.
- 64 In reception children build on these skills well. Opportunities for outdoor play are more limited, but the school anticipates that the planned development of the site will soon go ahead to provide the reception classes with very good outdoor opportunities. In the hall children use the space effectively and have a good understanding of the benefits of a warm up session and relaxation at the end of the lesson. Children show confidence and good levels of co-ordination in using a wider range of tools and in their work with construction kits.
- 65 The provision for children in the foundation stage is good and staff plan across the six areas of learning thoroughly and confidently. All staff have a very good understanding of the needs of children under five and they work together as a very effective team. The organisation of activities is good and planned so that children have the opportunity to learn independently and to develop their own skills in planning. Children make good gains in learning because of the good quality of the teaching and the thorough planning which take good account of children's needs, as well as identifying clear links with the National Curriculum. There are efficient and effective assessment procedures which enable teachers to set targets for all children. These are shared with them and their parents.

ENGLISH

- 66 The standards pupils attain are lower than in the last inspection when standards were reported as being above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6.

- 67 In the 2001 national tests the results of pupils aged seven, in comparison with both results in all schools and with those in similar schools, were below the national average in reading and in line with the average in writing. The results in reading and in writing were lower than the results in previous years. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls: over the past three years boys and girls have exceeded the respective national averages for boys and girls by a similar margin. However, the proportion of pupils in 2001 attaining the higher level in reading and writing was below the national average.
- 68 At the time of the inspection, the standards attained by pupils in the infants in speaking and listening, reading and writing were in line with the national average. This level of attainment is slightly better than that achieved by last year's Year 2 pupils in national tests and is explained by the difference in the ability of the present cohort of Year 2 pupils. Pupils listened with good attention and good levels of understanding. They could give a clear account of their ideas and average and more able pupils read appropriate texts with fluency, accuracy and understanding. Pupils wrote sensibly organised pieces of imaginative prose which showed a sound command of spelling and punctuation. They also produced a range of writing in a variety of styles including a good many short pieces on aspects of language, as part of the national literacy strategy. The achievements of pupils, including those with special educational needs, were satisfactory, in line with their prior levels of attainment.
- 69 In the 2001 national tests the results of pupils aged eleven, in comparison with results in all schools and with those in similar schools, were below the national average in English albeit they were slightly better than results in the previous year. English results were weaker than results in mathematics and science since over the past three years results in these two subjects have exceeded the national averages while results in English fell below the national average. In that time girls have attained results that are better than the national average for girls but boys have attained results below the national average for boys. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher level in 2001 was lower than the national average. The results of the 2001 cohort of pupils were adversely affected by the results obtained by a group of pupils who entered Year 6 during 2001: analysis of the results of this group shows that they attained on average more lower grades and fewer higher grades than more long-standing pupils.
- 70 At the time of the inspection, the standards attained by pupils in Year 6 were in line with the national average. Pupils listened with good levels of understanding and all but the relatively few lowest attaining or those with special educational needs could give clear explanations and present arguments for their point of view. Average and more able pupils read relatively demanding texts with accuracy, fluency and good understanding. The more able could cope with long books at good speed and were able to detect and appreciate irony and humour. Both average and higher attaining pupils knew how to consult a contents page or an index page and could locate and retrieve information in the library. The standards of presentation in the pupils' writing are good. Most average and higher attaining pupils have a good command of spelling and punctuation, assisted by the large amount of time they devote to these aspects in their literacy lessons. The minority of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs could cope only with relatively simple texts and some had difficulty in coping even with these. They were sometimes unable or unwilling to present their point of view at any length, preferring to give brief answers to the teacher's questions, and their writing tended to consist of short, discrete pieces of work. Average and more able pupils produced a good volume of writing in a range of styles, including letters, diary entries, poems, reports and a large number of comprehension exercises and exercises on aspects of language. Pupils were often encouraged to find more suitable or exciting ways of

expressing their ideas but there were relatively few pieces of extended writing and few pieces were word processed or benefited from being redrafted.

- 71 The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. Learning objectives are usually clear from the outset and teachers often share them with the pupils. Teachers are skilful in their use of big books at the front of the class, interacting well with the pupils and involving them in the reading while reinforcing language points linked to the learning objectives. Pupils for the most part have positive attitudes to the subject and are keen to do well. Activities flow naturally from the introductions and are well managed and supported with resources. Support assistants provide good support for pupils' learning, often focusing on a group of weaker pupils and helping them to overcome difficulties and maintain a good pace of work. Teachers and support assistants are particularly good at providing close guidance or restricted frameworks to support the writing of younger or weaker pupils. The creation of an additional small class in most literacy sessions is proving beneficial to the pupils concerned, mainly the lowest attaining and those on the register of special educational needs. Teachers are able to match work closely to the needs of the pupils, breaking tasks down to small steps, and can take the time to ensure that they understand what they have read or what they have to do; the pupils gain in confidence and are more willing to take part in activities and in discussions than they would be in larger groups or in mixed ability groups. The result is that the pupils make faster progress and their progress is more assured. Lower attaining pupils in Year 1 are benefiting from the early literacy support and those in the juniors from the work done through the additional literacy support. Although there is some restriction on the range of attainment found in top "sets", the way in which these sets are arranged means that the range of attainment is relatively broad. This makes it harder for teachers to focus on the needs of the more able pupils in particular and ensure that they make the progress they are capable of making. Not all more able pupils are making sufficiently good progress or attaining the standards they are capable of attaining.
- 72 Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but quite often marking is perfunctory and is not sufficiently detailed and specific to help pupils make improvements. On some occasions rather feeble writing, including some poems on display, received exaggerated praise which showed a lack of discrimination and low expectations of what pupils were capable of achieving. Although more able pupils produced some good work, showing in particular good command of spelling and punctuation and good standards of presentation, there was relatively little work of the highest quality.
- 73 Work in English has been greatly assisted by the successful introduction of the national literacy strategy. The strategy has provided teachers of each pair of classes with clear learning objectives and a reasonably coherent programme of work and the co-ordinators have helped the teachers to acquire suitable books and resources to use in order to achieve the objectives. On occasion the teachers and the pupils find the very long period of time occupied by most literacy sessions difficult to cope with: teachers find it hard to maintain the momentum of the lesson in the 70 minutes of allocated time and pupils find it hard to sustain their concentration. The school's allocation to English of 25 per cent of the time-table in Years 1 - 2 and of 27.5 per cent in Years 3 - 6 is excessive and reduces the time available for other subjects. In addition to this, the school runs booster classes and occasional periods of revision. It would be profitable for teachers and pupils if this amount of time were reduced and more thought given to how aspects of the subject could be taught through the medium of other subjects. This would help to ensure that appropriate language objectives were included in the lesson plans of other subjects and would enable language to be taught in more varied and realistic contexts.

- 74 There are two co-ordinators for English, one for Years 1 - 2 and the other for Years 3 -6. While they are both competent and knowledgeable, in the interests of coherence and of obtaining an overview of the subject throughout the school it might be better if there were only one co-ordinator with responsibility for the subject. A single co-ordinator would also be in a better position to ensure that planning for the subject was systematic and progressive, with one part building on and reinforcing another, and would be able to form a clearer overview of the range of resources the school holds for teaching the subject. The subject is in fact well supported by a good range of book resources but computers are not yet used enough to help pupils develop their writing skills. Accommodation is satisfactory overall, albeit the creation of smaller groups for literacy has placed additional pressure on accommodation.

MATHEMATICS

- 75 The standards reached by pupils aged seven and eleven are at the national average. Pupils make steady progress throughout the school but standards are not as high as at the last inspection. Pupils could achieve better, especially more able pupils, who are underachieving by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. However standards are improving and have improved since last year with an increase in the number of pupils reaching the national average. This is because the National Numeracy Strategy has been effectively implemented, the teaching is good and there is a suitable emphasis on investigative mathematics and problem solving. Pupils are placed into ability groups for mathematics throughout the school. While this is helping to raise standards to some extent it is not as effective as it could be in the juniors because the grouping is not solely on ability but also on age. This results in a wide spread of ability within one class and work is not always adapted to cater for this range. Other initiatives such as additional classes before and after school for pupils in Year 6 again help to raise standards.
- 76 The mathematics co-ordinators have analysed test results to find out where there are weaknesses and done something about them. For example, probability and problem solving were found to be weaker areas and an emphasis was put on teaching these. This is proving effective in improving standards. They have also observed and improved the teaching of mathematics. However no one has an overview of the standards being achieved throughout the school and so the progress pupils make over time is not being adequately monitored. The tracking system that records the test results of individuals each year is very recent, is not yet being used to monitor individual progress and so has not yet made a serious impact on attainment.
- 77 Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. They are taught in ability groups that are generally small and therefore they receive more individual help. This helps them to learn and also helps to increase their confidence. However individual programmes are not always used to plan, resulting in work that is too hard or too easy and impeding progress. For example, a group of Year 3 and Year 4 pupils with special educational needs learned to partition tens and units when adding two digit numbers. Within the class there was a wide range of abilities including one more able pupil with behaviour problems. Some pupils completed the work easily and then disturbed the others, others needed a lot of help and never really grasped the concepts. The mathematics lessons are too long for pupils with special educational needs and a variety of interesting and motivating activities are not always provided to help them to sustain concentration.
- 78 This is the first year that pupils in Year 1 have been grouped by ability and it is proving successful in raising standards. Pupils of all abilities are making good progress in lessons in both ability groups because of the good teaching. More able pupils learn how

to put numbers up to 100 in order and are starting to understand place value. Less able pupils are introduced to more demanding tasks and learn to read and write numbers beyond 20. They all work hard, the work is challenging and they achieve well. In Year 2 pupils continue to improve their accuracy in the use of numbers and the more able group are able to explain simply how they achieve their answer, using a good range of mathematical vocabulary. However, the pupils in the lower achieving group need a lot of adult help to complete more challenging tasks.

- 79 Throughout the juniors pupils learn how to use number skills quickly and accurately, to use correct mathematical vocabulary, to construct and interpret various kinds of graphs and to measure accurately. They are encouraged to explain how they worked out their answers and discuss their work using mathematical language. By Year 6 pupils have developed their own strategies for problem solving and they arrive at and provide reasoning for their answers. For example, they work in pairs using cards to make a given number by selecting the appropriate operation, which they then explain confidently. Although the work is challenging they are keen to start, enthusiastic and able to sustain concentration throughout. Boys and girls work very well both independently and collaboratively, in mixed ability pairs.
- 80 The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have good knowledge of how to teach mathematics and are enthusiastic about it, motivating the pupils. Pupils respond well, enjoy the lessons, work hard, take a pride in their work and present it carefully. Teachers manage behaviour well resulting in high standards of behaviour and a pleasant working atmosphere in the classrooms. Relevant ideas are explained well with the result that all pupils understand what they are learning. Plans are evaluated weekly and teachers are able to adapt their work according to how well pupils have learnt and to build on this and extend it. They question skilfully so that pupils have to think carefully about their answers. They use a variety of strategies and methods to help pupils learn - for example, pupils use small white boards to write up their answers. This keeps all pupils involved and concentrating on the lesson and enables the teacher to see who does not understand. In the best lessons the work is adapted for the wide range of different abilities within ability groups. In the few lessons where teaching is satisfactory rather than good work is not adapted within the lesson and the pace is a bit slow; the long time allocated for mathematics is not used to the best advantage. The concluding plenary at the end of the lesson is sometimes a bit rushed and so the opportunity is lost to check and summarise what has been learnt. Homework is set each week to extend the learning in the lessons
- 81 ICT is not used sufficiently to support mathematics although it was skilfully used in one excellent lesson in the lower juniors when pupils used the computers to display data in a variety of ways. Numeracy skills are well supported through other areas of the curriculum. For example, in science pupils draw charts and graphs to present their results.

SCIENCE

- 82 Standards are average for seven-year-olds and above average for eleven-year-olds. Most pupils achieve well. The most able of the older pupils, however, in the mixed age classes are not fully challenged and do not reach a higher level within investigative and experimental work. Since the last inspection, the Year 6 pupils continue to attain above average standards but Year 2 pupils attain standards that are no better than average. The fall in results in 2001 was attributable to a small number of pupils who joined the school between the ages of seven and eleven but failed to reach an average level of attainment. Compared to other schools with pupils from a similar background, results for eleven-year-olds in 2001 were above average. Most pupils in Year 2 reach the

standards expected nationally for the age group, but few of the more able attain the higher level because teachers do not expect enough of higher attaining pupils.

- 83 For seven-year-olds, this judgement broadly supports the teachers' assessments of pupils' work in 2001, when standards were average overall compared to all schools nationally and to similar schools. However, inspection evidence indicates that few seven-year-old pupils this year are likely to achieve a higher level in the subject. The teachers' assessments of pupils at this higher level are based on insufficient evidence of attainment.
- 84 The standards of pupils aged eleven observed during the inspection are above average. The relatively high standards achieved by most pupils at eleven are due to consistently good teaching throughout the school. A significant feature of the pupils' attainment by Year 6 is the confidence and accuracy in the use of scientific vocabulary that the pupils use in discussing their work, together with their good recall of previous learning. The methods of teaching science throughout the school are successful because they are focused on enabling pupils to learn through first-hand scientific investigations and experiments. The teachers' subject knowledge is generally good. Their confidence and enthusiasm are conveyed to pupils who become very interested in finding things out. The practically based learning activities are linked to opportunities for thorough discussion with individuals, small groups or whole classes, leading to very secure understanding in the subject for most pupils. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 work learn to understand the forces of pushing and pulling by using a wide variety of toys and describing what is involved in making each toy move. In Years 3 and 4, work includes practical investigations of the sense of sight before being linked to learning about the components of the eye. In Years 5 and 6, pupils investigate fully a variety of sounds before deducing that sound is linked to vibration, that it travels more slowly than light and that controlling the vibrations can cause changes in pitch. They are shown that when a pupil striking a cymbal stands at a far enough distance from the rest of the class, such as at the other end of a football pitch, the action is observed before the sound is heard. Lessons are very well organised and managed and appropriate consideration is given to safety. As a result, pupils are well behaved and learning time is well used.
- 85 Lessons are well planned and generally build well on what has been taught before. All the lessons observed were interesting and well prepared; objectives were clearly stated, ensuring that pupils had a clear understanding of what was expected. Teachers use good questioning skills to encourage pupils to think about what might happen and to draw conclusions, developing the scientific understanding of most pupils well.
- 86 However, lessons address the needs of the average majority of pupils in the class, with support made available for those who find learning more difficult. More difficult work is not usually planned for the older and more able pupils within the mixed age classes in order to challenge them fully and foster independent learning. This is a weakness in otherwise good teaching that is limiting standards in Year 2, in particular, but is also evident within the work of pupils in Year 4 and Year 6. For example, the more able pupils in Year 2 showed that they knew that factors other than the strength of a push or a pull affected the movement of toys such as the see-saw. They were ready to deduce that weight and the balance of forces play a part but this was not brought out for them within the lessons observed, which largely concentrated on the needs of the younger and more average pupils. In Year 6, the more able pupils rarely devise their own experiments or record results in greater detail and depth than other pupils in the class. A system for checking the attainment of individual pupils in the subject is not yet fully established through the school, and as at the time of the last inspection, does not provide a clear basis for future planning. This is a factor in the low numbers of pupils achieving high

levels in the national tests and already a focus for review by the teachers of the pupils in Years 1 and 2. The wide range of ability within the mixed age classes provides a significant challenge for teachers in extending the skills of the older and most able pupils.

- 87 The pupils with special educational needs receive appropriate guidance from the teacher and additionally from learning support assistants. As a result, the great majority of pupils achieve at least an average level of learning in the subject.
- 88 The use of ICT within science work is limited but now that the new computer suite is established, more opportunities exist to explore its use. Numeracy skills are appropriately used within scientific investigations for measuring and compiling statistics. The subject provides good opportunities to develop the pupils' speaking and listening skills and the discussions within class groups and between small groups of pupils is a strong feature in the school's work in the subject.
- 89 A new co-ordinator has been appointed this year and has yet to develop a clear structure for leadership of the subject in order to raise standards further. Resources have been better organised and results in the most recent national tests for eleven-year-olds have been reviewed in order to identify areas within the curriculum requiring development. However, no time is allocated for the co-ordinator to review teachers' planning, the outcomes of pupils' work or the quality of teaching and learning in lessons. There is a good range of learning resources available and storage is orderly and accessible.

ART AND DESIGN

- 90 The attainments of pupils at both seven and eleven years of age are average and meet the expectations set nationally. The achievement of most pupils is satisfactory overall but there is evidence of good achievement within some pieces of work by average and higher attaining pupils. The above average standards reported in the last inspection have not been wholly maintained, largely as a result of the school's concentration on the development of skills in literacy and numeracy.
- 91 A review of work in all age groups and three lessons observed for pupils in Years 3 to 6 indicate that the quality of teaching is satisfactory throughout the school. The teachers organise the lessons carefully, are very positive in their response to pupils' work and activities run very smoothly. As a result, pupils show enthusiasm for the subject, develop a good level of confidence and concentrate well. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding in the subject.
- 92 The teachers' subject knowledge is sound and the co-ordinator sets termly plans for each of the three groups of mixed age classes. This ensures that the curriculum is sufficiently broad and balanced, and equal in quality across the classes. The pupils' learning is most successful when it forms part of a useful unit of work which takes pupils' skills to an appropriately high level. For example, a unit of work in Years 5 and 6 began with the pupils making pencil drawings as they observed a guitar. The best showed the results of very close observation and included different weights and widths of pencil marks. This work was then extended to individual drawings of different parts of the guitar. These parts were next used to design an abstract representation of a guitar. In turn, this work was extended to eye-catching monochrome paper collages, using white, black, silver and shades of grey. A similar procedure was followed with other items chosen by pupils, such as a car or a mobile phone. Drawings of school bags from different angles were successfully extended to coloured paper collages. Termly units of work, however, do not always form such a cohesive sequence of work, where

skills build towards work of increasing quality. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 practised successfully the different ways of hatching shade and detail into their drawings. This skill was not further developed, for example into drawings of the cross-sections of citrus fruits, as suggested within the published scheme used by the school for guidance. In later work, such as pastel drawings of fishes, the pupils did not add the detail practised and as a result, some of the work was very simple in style for the age of the pupils. This sometimes happens because the subject knowledge of the teachers does not extend quite far enough to make important links and connections between different pieces of work, and sometimes because insufficient resources are provided as a stimulus for the pupils' work. These might be detailed photographs or examples of work of quality completed by other artists.

- 93 Where teachers present the work of other artists as a stimulus to the study of skills, interesting work results. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 worked in the style of Van Gogh to produce the paintings of vases of flowers, finished to a good quality, and displayed in the school's entrance hall. The work is enhanced by using textured paper as a base which adds detail and interest to the work. The attractive foil frames for the pictures make sure that pupils know that their work is highly valued. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 worked successfully on paper collages in the style of Matisse to make a picture of a snail, showing a sensitive use of colour and design. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 practised colour mixing and used the skills to make patterns, sometimes in concentric circles in the style of Kandinsky. Pupils attending the weekly Art Club completed paper collage work to depict work on harbour scenes in the style of Dufy. Where the use of the work of other, sometimes famous, artists is used it provides a source of inspiration which adds significantly to the learning of the pupils throughout the school.
- 94 In the lessons observed, pupils were being taught to develop their printing skills. In Years 3 and 4, pupils tried printing using imprints worked into polystyrene tiles, and in Years 5 and 6, pupils learned to make and use positive and negative stencil designs. In all classes, teachers successfully taught the pupils the mechanics of the printing operation and so they were able to carry this out successfully. However, in all lessons, opportunities were missed to provide a range of similar work by other artists and designers to inform pupils of the possible ways of using the skill creatively. Even the fabrics readily available within the classroom were not brought into use as examples of printing. As a result, the pupils' work developed down rather narrow channels, with their designs limited to a given range of simplistic drawings. Creativity was inhibited by the pupils' resulting lack of awareness of greater possibilities.
- 95 Other examples of pupils' work include three-dimensional work within design and technology, such as colourful weaving and stitch work in textiles and collage. Computer programs are beginning to be used, now that the new ICT suite is installed, to generate art work such as the book illustrations completed by pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- 96 The co-ordinator is enthusiastic about the subject and works hard to ensure that pupils complete a suitable amount of artwork each term. There is as yet no system for assessing pupils' work or for compiling a portfolio of work to help to set and extend standards in the subject. Resources available are appropriate and include a satisfactory range of examples of the work of other artists. Some of these are helpfully compiled into books to make them accessible to both staff and pupils. There is a limited range of examples of the work of non-European artists.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 97 Too few lessons were observed to make secure judgements on the quality of teaching nor detailed judgements on pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons. However, a number of displays around school, a collection of photographs and conversations with older pupils make it possible to judge some key aspects of the subject.
- 98 Standards are in line with national expectations both for seven-year-olds and for eleven-year-olds, as they were at the last inspection. The best attainment is in those aspects of the subject that are linked to art and design. Throughout the school, pupils' skills with tools, equipment and materials are well-developed. However, the design stage of the subject is less well used and the evaluation of finished work is usually limited to discussions of what was liked about the product with too little emphasis on how improvements could be made.
- 99 All pupils make steady progress. Year 1 pupils develop their cutting and sticking skills in activities such as map making, giving a useful link to the development of geographical understanding. By Year 2, higher attaining pupils can explain in writing how to make a Christmas decoration, with the necessary materials and equipment clearly identified. However, they usually work to a design that they are given and have too little experience of developing their own ideas in ways that would allow them to make good progress in that aspect of the subject.
- 100 Almost all Year 4 pupils are able to write simple instructions for others to follow in order to make, for example, a clown, using cardboard cylinders and coloured papers. Whilst they do this effectively there is too little opportunity for pupils to develop their own ideas beyond personalising the appearance; the overall shape and materials are decided for them. Year 5 and 6 pupils have made Victorian toys in connection with a history topic. They speak of this with considerable enthusiasm and they clearly worked hard and enjoyed the topic. However, as with younger pupils, their contribution to the design stage was limited; all the moving parts were designed by adults whilst the pupils contributed well-thought out figures for a carousel-like toy. Discussion allowed pupils to identify possible improvements, but not to the moving parts. Other work has included building a bridge and making a wheeled vehicle (a 'buggy'). None of these were seen although Year 6 pupils could describe the work with enthusiasm.
- 101 Standards in the subject are supported by a good range of learning resources and by links to other subjects that ensure that pupils see the relevance of their work; these links also enhance standards in the other subjects concerned. The use of nationally developed guidelines for the subject are helpful, but they have not been fully adapted for use in the school's mixed-age-group classes nor is there whole-school guidance on how skills should be developed from Year 1 to Year 6. Some good work is done on this kind of continuity in each of the three teams into which the six year groups are split, but a lack of overarching direction prevents this good work having its full impact. The co-ordination of the subject has yet to include systematic monitoring and evaluation and the overseeing of improvements.

GEOGRAPHY

- 102 Attainment of pupils aged seven and eleven is in line with national expectations and with standards at the last inspection. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, build steadily on their understanding of the subject and achieve standards in keeping with their prior attainment.

- 103 Pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 extend their knowledge about different types of maps and plans. They use a key to identify places in the area on an aerial map, make maps of the route they take on a walk to Wilnecote and colour in maps of the school to show the places they know well. Pupils draw and write thoughtfully about the different types of houses in the area. Good quality photographs of the buildings they see on their walks stimulate relevant observations about the route. Pupils use the computer to draw houses and higher attaining pupils write at length about their 'ideal home' and houses in other countries.
- 104 Pupils in Years 3 and 4 describe the places they have visited on holiday and try to locate them on maps of the world. Many children find this difficult at first but improve their skills in working out where places are when they match countries on several different maps. This helps them to identify the climate in each part of the world on another map of weather zones. Higher attaining pupils work out their own key for maps of climatic zones very quickly and are able to transfer them to a map of the world by carefully checking one map against another. Pupils produce well-written reports on their road safety test that confirm the benefits from this aspect of their study of the area and how proud they are 'to show the judges they could cross a road safely.'
- 105 In Years 5 and 6 pupils produce good quality booklets that they complete as 'Globetrotters' around the continents. They show a good understanding of the major cities and countries on each continent, use keys to mark mountain ranges and add important rivers accurately. They find grid references for cities and mark the equator and Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn on attractively coloured maps. Pupils use secondary sources, including books and the computer, to find out additional information for their booklets. They work carefully to find accurate information about the countries that comprise the European Union and the capital cities of each one.
- 106 Teaching is at least satisfactory and was good in the lessons seen. Teachers have good subject knowledge and ensure that lessons are planned carefully to match the topic being studied. They plan some good links with other subjects. For example, the topic on houses in Years 1 and 2 is linked effectively with the history of the area and the changes that can be seen. There are additional links with literacy in all classes since pupils write reports, complete sentences with missing words and write imaginatively about their dream house.
- 107 Pupils find the topics interesting. Their understanding and geographical knowledge increases year on year because there is a good range of activities in each topic. There are interesting videos to watch and they have several practical activities, such as the road safety test and walk around the area. Pupils enjoy talking to visitors and taking part in visits to museums and places of local interest.
- 108 The subject is well managed and the enthusiastic co-ordinator has revised the curriculum to include many of the national guidelines. This ensures that pupils build their geographical skills systematically as they move through the school. Geography makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through visits, visitors, orienteering on the residential trip to Shugborough and the range of interesting opportunities teachers provide. Resources are good for the curriculum as currently planned.

HISTORY

- 109 Standards reached by the age of eleven are below those expected nationally. Pupils are not achieving as well as they could by the time they leave school. Throughout school there is a lack of challenging work for higher achieving pupils who are, in consequence, underachieving.
- 110 History is taught as part of topic work and in some year groups the amount of history taught is relatively small, restricting the curriculum offered. For example in the Year 5/6 classes history is taught in a block of time during the last half of the summer term only. This means there is a long period of time between lessons and pupils do not have the opportunity to practise and consolidate skills. There is no overall scheme of work in use to ensure pupils steadily build up skills and there are no standard assessment procedures in use to monitor pupils' progress. The co-ordinator is new and has clear targets for development. However these have not yet been implemented as no time has been allocated and there is no one who has a clear overview of the standards being achieved. Pupils with special educational needs make unsatisfactory progress because they are in large classes, mixed by age and ability: work is not always adapted to their needs and they do not always have the help of a learning support assistant.
- 111 Although only one lesson was seen in the infants, evidence from pupils' work and teachers' planning shows that standards reached by the age of seven are as expected nationally and pupils make satisfactory progress. They know that evidence about the past can be found by looking at photographs and artefacts and are starting to compare what happened in the past with what happens now - for example, when they study houses and homes through the ages. The teachers in the infants work together to plan work for Years 1 and 2 and have thus formed a scheme of work that reflects the National Curriculum, builds up history skills and uses the local environment well. However, because of the wide range of ages and abilities in the classes there is a lack of challenge, especially for the older, more able pupils who do not achieve as well as they could.
- 112 No lessons were observed in the juniors, reflecting the lack of history teaching, especially in Years 5 and 6. Evidence from pupils' work, teachers' planning and discussions with pupils show that they make unsatisfactory progress. Each topic is planned in detail and studied in depth but topics do not fully cover the requirements of the National Curriculum. Topics are, however, supported well by visits that bring the subject alive for the pupils. For example, pupils in Year 5/6 have a day as evacuees when they study the Second World War. This is, however, studied in isolation after nearly a full year without history and pupils have a very limited understanding of chronology, limited skills of historical enquiry and no clear ideas about the consequence of events. ICT is not used sufficiently to support the teaching of history and there is a lack of primary sources and artefacts, limiting pupils' progress.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

- 113 Pupils' attainment in ICT is at the nationally expected level at the age of seven and below that level at the age of eleven. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are progressing well in lessons in the new computer suite but eleven-year-olds have still not made up the ground they lost when resources and teacher skills were insufficient to keep pace with developments in the subject. A key feature of attainment is that pupils up to the age of nine are reaching standards that are very close to average; the oldest two year groups have not made up lost ground.

- 114 At the age of seven, most pupils use the computer mouse accurately, for example, to 'draw' and 'paint' evocative portraits. Many understand and use terms such as 'user name', 'log on', 'icon', 'mouse' and 'program'. Keyboard skills vary a good deal, with pupils who have experience of computers at home being skilful whilst others work slowly, but usually accurately. Most pupils understand how to use the Internet and higher attaining pupils can, for example, print out from a website a picture of their 'favourite house' and add some of their own writing on the subject. Standards reached in the use of programmable robots is below average as they are used too infrequently.
- 115 Eleven-year-olds' standards are below average because they have only in the past year begun to experience a well-planned curriculum and to use a well equipped computer suite. Their computer vocabulary is reasonably broad and they use it accurately. Standards in the use of the keyboard are around average, with some higher attainers being very skilful. Most of the work they do at the keyboard consists of entering work that they have already written by hand; although they make minor improvements as they copy-type they rarely compose a piece of writing at the computer and so do not acquire a full range of skills. Almost all pupils understand how to use a computer to collect data and produce charts and graphs. They can extract straight-forward factual information from these graphs readily and accurately but are not able to use them to identify possible connections between, for example, the flight characteristics of birds and their habitats or whether they are resident or migrants. They have too little experience of using computers to control the movement of simple machines to reach the expected standards.
- 116 The standards reached are closely related to a number of factors. Firstly, attainment has been enhanced by the effective use of a recently provided, well-equipped computer suite. Secondly, teachers' work is well supported by a carefully designed description of what pupils are to learn from the time that they start school to leaving. This scheme of work includes clear guidance on teaching, and well thought-out opportunities to assess how well the pupils understand what they are taught. The associated, good quality, lesson plans go a long way to supporting a number of teachers whose skills in the subject are limited; at its best this allows these teachers to teach well. However, on some occasions a lack of both teacher confidence and subject knowledge reduces the effectiveness of teaching and slows the progress made by pupils. Teaching is good on balance only because at its best it is outstanding. For example, in one lesson a teacher very skilfully linked work in mathematics on collecting information and producing graphs and charts with ICT. The confident use of an electronic teaching aid allowed pupils to see on a large screen how the teacher used the computer and pupils easily followed the clearly expressed instructions. The very good relationships ensured that pupils behaved very well and had enough confidence to make sensible contributions of their own. As a result, pupils worked hard, thoroughly enjoyed the lesson and reached good standards in that aspect of the subject. Although the teaching of the oldest pupils is good overall, with on many occasions several of the positive characteristics described above, there are times when teachers stick to a lesson plan when pupils could cover more ground. If the Year 5 and 6 pupils are to reach the nationally expected standards it will be necessary to recognise when work is understood and then move on quickly to more advanced material.
- 117 At the last inspection, standards were judged to be average. For some time after this the school did not keep pace with changes in expectations in the subject and this explains the less favourable judgement of this inspection. However, the school's provision – both of resources and curriculum – is now at least satisfactory. In the light of

good leadership in the subject, the school is well-placed to make the necessary improvements.

MUSIC

- 118 The overall attainment of most pupils aged seven and eleven meets the expectations set within the National Curriculum, and for those learning to play a musical instrument, the expectations set for the age group are exceeded. Although this indicates similar overall standards to those reported in the last inspection, improvements have been made to the curriculum and all the most recent national guidance for teaching the subject has been incorporated into planning for lessons. Teaching is good and most pupils achieve well but the improvements in the quality of the curriculum have yet to impact fully on overall standards. The school states in its aims that it is committed to providing for high standards in music but allocates less time to the subject than the average in most schools. This is a further factor in the standards being average despite the strong commitment of the specialist music teacher.
- 119 The strongest element of attainment in the subject for most pupils is singing and standards are above average for both seven and eleven-year-olds. Pupils know a good range of songs and can be heard daily, in school assemblies and hymn practices, singing tunefully and lustily. When at their best, they demonstrate particularly good diction, phrasing and control of the pitch and duration of their voices. This is the result of very good teaching by a teacher, who has specialist subject knowledge and a very clear understanding of how to improve the pupils' skills. Much more is achieved than in most schools within the weekly hymn practices arranged for the older pupils in Years 3 to 6 and the younger pupils in reception and Years 1 and 2. This work is backed up by further good practice within class lessons and pupils show that they are able to sing successfully with or without the accompaniment of the piano. The older pupils sing well in two and sometimes three parts and the younger pupils show that they are ready to join in. When accompanied by percussion instruments, the mood and feeling generated by the singing is enhanced to a high level.
- 120 During class music lessons, the teaching is generally good and most pupils make good progress although there are sometimes limitations on the attainment of the older and higher attaining pupils within each mixed age class whilst the needs of the younger pupils are taken into account. This was evident in the lesson observed for pupils in Year 6, when pupils performed at a lower level than they were capable of as a new musical score for the Pied Piper, more suited to younger pupils, was introduced to the class. A more suitable level of work was evident in recordings of compositions of percussion music for 'Space Journeys', using tuned and untuned instruments. The music was based on the characteristics of individual planets devised by small groups of pupils. These were creative and individual, portrayed distinctive moods and included repeated melodies.
- 121 In Years 3 and 4, pupils devise instrument sounds to accompany short stories about animals, showing satisfactory awareness of the range of sounds available and correct playing of instruments. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 compose enjoyable, and sometimes humorous, 'up and down' rhymes based on notes which go up and then down in pitch, with words that keep time with the music. Diagrams represent the notation for the use of the chime bars. In a lesson observed, pupils in Years 1 and 2 were heard exploring the timbre, or different types of sounds, of percussion instruments in order to represent different types of weather. The pupils were able to choose from an interesting range of instruments, including some from other cultures, to represent thunder, rain or wind. Pupils in Year 2 knew the names of the most frequently used instruments and some

higher attainers knew the names of the more unusual instruments. The teacher was careful to check for correct holding and playing of instruments and this, with discussions of features of differing types of weather, led to greater success and improved performance. However, the close proximity of the practising groups within the school's music room meant that pupils could not clearly hear their own compositions and this limited their ability to improve their own performance. When the hall is available, older pupils work there to allow for greater space between groups and this works well allowing pupils to make faster progress.

122 Pupils who are able to take part in extra lessons or lunch-time clubs in order to learn how to play the recorder, violin, clarinet or flute make very good progress and achieve well for their age. The pupils are enthusiastic and practise regularly at home. Some members of the advanced group of recorder players, aged between nine and eleven, play the treble or the tenor recorder in addition to the descant. This enables them to play as an ensemble, with each instrument taking different parts. Playing reaches a high standard and, when joined by percussionists, the combined skills of the musicians create a distinctly captivating mood to the music, such as was heard when they played 'Sellenger's Round'. Players are able to maintain their own part with a good awareness of how the other parts fit together. Some of the recorder players go on to learn to play the clarinet or flute, make very good progress and become increasingly competent in reading and responding to music written in standard notation.

123 Pupils listen to music daily as they prepare for school assembly and the music co-ordinator makes sure that the title and composer of the music are displayed at the front of the hall. The music played is mainly classical, such as 'Hall of the Mountain King' composed by Greig, or 'Scherazade' by Rimsky-Korsakov. When the co-ordinator is present, the attention of classes arriving is helpfully drawn to the music with questions such as, 'What instruments can you hear?' or 'What do you think you can see in the hall of the mountain king?' During class lessons, pupils hear a wide range of music linked to their topic work in other lessons. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 listen to Tudor music to supplement their work in history, and pupils in Years 5 and 6 hear music from other cultures as part of their 'Globetrotter' topic in geography.

124 The co-ordinator organises, leads and teaches the subject very well, working very hard to ensure that the curriculum extends the pupils' skills sequentially. She generally makes very good use of the time available for the subject to make sure that pupils make as much progress as they can. A satisfactory system for assessment has been devised, which is completed each year in the summer term in time for reports to parents. Opportunities are used to practise literacy skills through reading the words of songs and hymns, and numeracy skills through counting beats within the music. Little use is made of computer technology, but an electronic keyboard is available for use. Recordings are made of pupils' performances, which help them to appreciate their own music. A good range of instruments of suitable quality is available, including instruments from different cultures. The range of music available for appreciation work is satisfactory and supplemented well by a published music scheme.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

125 Standards reached by the ages of seven and eleven are typical of pupils of this age and pupils are achieving satisfactorily. The above average standards reported at the last inspection have not been maintained for the majority of pupils as the introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies has resulted in a reduction of time allocated to teaching physical education in the infants. The mixed age and mixed ability classes contain pupils with a wide range of abilities and sometimes lessons lack challenge for the more

able and older pupils. The infant, lower junior and upper junior teams of teachers plan well together to ensure lessons are consistent in year groups but there is no whole school scheme of work to ensure that skills are developed and built on. There is no formal assessment of skills used throughout school although there are areas of good practice. For example, in the upper juniors each pupil has an individual record card where they record their achievement in athletics over the weeks.

126 The co-ordinator is a keen sportswoman and the school provides a varied, well-balanced curriculum. This is well supported by good resources and a very good range of out of school activities such as football, swimming, netball, rounders, cricket and athletics. These are well supported and pupils who attend them reach standards above national expectations. The sports teams train regularly, are successful and often win tournaments.

127 The standards reached in swimming are above national expectations. All pupils learn to swim and many learn to swim distances using different strokes and obtain life-saving awards. The swimming team win the inter-school tournament every year, recently winning 29 out of 35 events. As well as regular lessons, two sessions are run in the morning before school to help pupils who are struggling and to improve the skills of more able pupils. These are successfully raising standards.

128 Teaching and learning are good; activities are well planned, with clear aims, which develop skills. Good relationships between adults and pupils help to increase confidence. In the infants, pupils practise and improve their skills of passing and receiving a ball in different ways and develop skills for a simple travelling game. Demonstrations by teachers and pupils help others to improve their control of the ball and there is good insistence on safe ways of working on a hard surface. Pupils enjoy the lessons, behave well and work with enthusiasm, maintaining a good level of physical activity. By the end of one lesson most pupils were able to use the side of the foot to send the ball accurately to a partner, stopping it with the ball of the foot.

129 In the juniors pupils develop sound hand-eye co-ordination and learn the skills needed to play a variety of games - for example, batting and bowling skills in cricket and the high jump in athletics. They start to understand the tactics involved in playing different games and co-operate well as a team. There is good teaching of the skills needed and, in cricket for example, pupils learn how to hold the bat properly and stand correctly. They enjoy the lessons, behave well, follow the rules and take their turn, accepting with good heart when they are out. The teachers evaluate the pupils' attainment well and use this to plan the next lesson to challenge the older, more able pupils and to provide extra help to the younger, less able pupils. Pupils in Year 6 are able to organise themselves in groups to practise athletics skills, working hard and co-operating throughout.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

130 Standards attained by pupils aged seven and eleven are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed guidelines and have been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils are acquiring a sound knowledge of Christianity and other religions and developing a clear understanding of what religious belief means to people in their daily lives.

131 Pupils in Years 1 and 2 write joyfully about a beautiful world and compose thoughtful prayers for harvest time. One Year 2 pupil showed sensitivity when she wrote, "I thank you for the lovely rustling sound that leaves make when you scrunch them up." Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of the stories from the Bible and are beginning to understand some of their meanings and implications. They listened

carefully to the story of the lost sheep, groaning with disappointment when the shepherd said, "Serves him right. I'll leave him." They were relieved when the shepherd quickly changed his mind. The majority of pupils were able to relate the feeling of being lost and the happiness that comes when found again to their own experiences and this helped them to understand well the meaning of the story.

- 132 Pupils in Years 3 and 4 clearly have an understanding of special places and how they affect you. "I feel peaceful in school," wrote one pupil and Year 4 pupils increased their understanding of feelings when one loses something special and then find it through an expressively told story of the lost coin. They know that places of worship are special to different people and label drawings of the interior of a church and a mosque very carefully. Year 5 and 6 pupils have developed their understanding of stories from the Old and New Testaments and extended their knowledge of other religions, and the significance and special nature of some of their symbols and rituals. They showed great interest in the creation stories from different sources and watched a video about creation from a Hindu viewpoint. They talked about the story in an open way and pointed out aspects that puzzled them. Another group watched a video of the Christian story of creation and ordered the events of each day successfully. They completed the written work at the end of the video quickly and accurately. Year 6 pupils completed interesting and informative booklets about Islam and gained a greater understanding of Muslim celebrations and respect for the Qur'an.
- 133 Teaching and learning are good because pupils learn the teachings of religions as well as learning facts and information about them. Pupils are encouraged to find similarities between religions. For example, they looked for similarities between worship in a variety of Christian churches and in other religions. Teachers plan lessons carefully for the wide range of age and abilities within the class and provide pupils with written tasks that are matched well to their abilities. Skilful questioning and expressive story telling, sometimes with puppets, encourages pupils to listen carefully. Pupils have good attitudes towards religious education. They listen carefully and are keen to contribute to discussions. The majority become closely involved in what they are learning. They show a developing respect for other people's beliefs and customs.
- 134 The subject is led and managed well by the knowledgeable co-ordinator. Resources are good and used well to interest and stimulate pupils.