

# INSPECTION REPORT

## ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC LOWER SCHOOL

Northampton

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 122036

Headteacher: Mrs F Johnson

Reporting inspector: Mr C Parker  
11897

Dates of inspection: 30<sup>th</sup> June – 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2003

Inspection number: 248319

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First school
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 to 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Woodside Way Northampton
Postcode:	NN5 7HX
Telephone number:	01608 581001
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs S Kealy
Date of previous inspection:	19 <sup>th</sup> January 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
C Parker 11897	Registered inspector	Science Information and communication technology Physical education Equal opportunities	The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
A B Anderson 14083	Lay inspector		The 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?
M Powell 19387	Team inspector	English Art and design Music Design and technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
J Collins 27541	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Special educational needs Mathematics History Geography	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Mary's Catholic School is a lower school for pupils aged four to nine years. As a result of re-organisation, it is about to become a primary school. The present Year 4 will remain at the school for years 5 and 6. There are currently 108 pupils on roll. About a third of the pupils have special educational needs which is higher proportion than usual. One pupil has a statement. A very small number of pupils speak English as an additional language. About one in ten of the pupils comes from backgrounds other than of UK heritage, the largest group being of mixed race. The pupils' attainment on entry is wide ranging but taken overall it is below average.

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

This is a good school. The pupils achieve well and make good progress as a result of the predominantly good teaching. The headteacher provides good leadership and together with the governors she is guiding the school effectively through a period of reorganisation. Taken overall, the school provides good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. The pupils also do well in art and design, history, geography and music.
- The pupils are achieving well and most are making good progress because the teaching is good overall.
- The Foundation Stage curriculum is well organised and carefully planned. As a result, the youngest children make a good start at school.
- The school makes good provision for the personal development of the pupils; and spiritual development is a strong feature of its work with the pupils.
- The school offers a good level of care and support for its pupils.
- The information provided for parents is wide ranging and of very good quality.
- The headteacher provides good leadership and effective management. There is very good monitoring of the quality of the teaching and the pupils' work.

#### **What could be improved**

- The school improvement plan and, in particular, the clarity of the priorities within it.
- The range and frequency of opportunities for the pupils to make more rapid progress in science and information and communication technology.
- The management of the pupils' behaviour in a few lessons.
- The standards of presentation are not consistently high enough.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

Since the last inspection in January 1998, the school has made satisfactory progress. In many areas there have been good improvements. The teaching accommodation has been divided up into classrooms from its previous open plan design. An outdoor area for use by the children in the Foundation Stage has been provided and there are now plans to build an entirely new Foundation Stage unit. The proportion of good, very good and excellent teaching has increased since the last inspection, but some unsatisfactory teaching remains where the behaviour of the pupils is not effectively managed.

The school now has Beacon status and a school achievement award.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
reading	A	C	B	C
writing	A	C	A	B
mathematics	A	C	A	A

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

In the Foundation Stage, the children make good progress and most are on course to attain the early learning goals set for them. Over recent years, the results of national tests at the end of Year 2 have been well above average except in 2001 where they were average. In 2002 the results in reading were above average and well above average in writing and mathematics with almost half of the pupils attaining higher levels. The results compare favourably with similar schools being well above average in mathematics, above average in writing and average in reading. By the end of Year 4, standards remain above average in mathematics. In English the pupils continue to make good progress, particularly in the content of their writing, although their handwriting and the general presentation of their work are not as good as they should be. Standards in science and information and communication technology are about average, but in both cases they should be higher. Standards in art and design, history, geography, music are above average. In design and technology they are in line with expectations. Overall, the pupils are achieving well and most are making good progress.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most children demonstrate positive attitudes to their work. They are enthusiastic, motivated and eager to learn. They are attentive to their teachers, willingly ask and answer questions, and freely offer their own ideas and opinions.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Most pupils behave well although there are occasions when a minority does not. In a few lessons, this results in the teacher having to spend a disproportionate amount of time managing their behaviour, which consequently disrupts the teaching and learning.
Personal development and relationships	The relationships in the school are good. Most pupils relate well to their teachers, to other adults and also to one another.
Attendance	The attendance rate at the school has improved since last year and is now broadly in line with the national average. However, each morning there are pupils who arrive late.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Satisfactory	Good

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

The teaching is good overall. In the Foundation Stage, the teacher engages the children in interesting and enjoyable tasks. In Year 2, the teaching is satisfactory, but there are occasions where the management of the pupils' behaviour is not good enough to ensure they give their full attention to the teacher and to their work. However, in most lessons in other year groups the teaching is good, and effectively promotes good learning and ensures the pupils make good progress. The teaching of English and mathematics is good overall. The teachers place an appropriate emphasis on the skills of literacy and numeracy.

The teachers carefully plan the deployment of the teaching assistants. Consequently, they are effective in their role and contribute significantly to the good progress made by many of the pupils, particularly those with special educational needs.

#### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	The Foundation Stage curriculum is well organised and carefully planned. In Years 1 to 4, a broad range of opportunities considerably enhances the curriculum, for example, in art and design and music.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for the pupils with special educational needs is good. The support they receive is wide ranging and generally well tailored to their different needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The small numbers of pupils who speak English as an additional language are doing well. They are being well supported, and those who have the potential for high attainment are being challenged and achieving very well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes good provision for the personal development of the pupils. Its values are widely reflected in its work and the pupils' spiritual development is a particularly strong feature.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a good level of care and support for its pupils. The monitoring of the pupils' progress is good, but the information the school collects is not always used to the full to guide the curriculum planning.

The school has focussed on improving links with parents. It is very successful in providing them with useful information about the work of the school, what the children will be learning and the progress they make. However, whilst some parents are involved and contribute positively to the pupils' learning others do not.

Some aspects of science are not given sufficient attention. The pupils are making increasing use of information and communication technology, but it is not yet fully integrated right across the curriculum.

#### **HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides good leadership and management. She is leading the school effectively and providing a clear direction. She has successfully enhanced the role of the subject co-ordinators who contribute well to the management of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors provide a good level of support for the school. They are taking on a more strategic role and increasingly challenging the school under the direction of the chair of governors.
The school's evaluation of its performance	A very good range of monitoring activities, including the planning, teaching and the pupils' work, is frequently undertaken and the results are well recorded. Although areas for development are clearly identified they are not yet used to provide a strategic overview for improvement. The school improvement plan is very comprehensive, but it is not sharply focussed on whole school issues.

The strategic use of resources	The school budgets systematically for curriculum development. For example, the grants for special needs are used appropriately.
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There are sufficient teachers and teaching assistants for the number of pupils on roll. The school has adequate teaching resources and generally good accommodation with the exception of the computer room. This room is very small and has too few computers to allow the teachers to provide any thing other than small group work.

The school satisfactorily applies the principles of best value. The governors compare the school's performance with others locally and nationally; they consult with outside agencies and are seeking the views of parents. However, there are no means by which the effectiveness of the current school improvement plan can be readily evaluated.

#### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The children like school and make good progress.</li> <li>• The good teaching.</li> <li>• The teachers are very approachable.</li> <li>• The children are expected to work hard and are encouraged to become mature and sensible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The pupils' behaviour, particularly in Year 2.</li> <li>• The provision of homework</li> <li>• The activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

The inspectors agree with the many positive views of the school expressed by the parents. They found the behaviour of pupils to be satisfactory overall, but agree that the conduct of a minority of pupils is occasionally unsatisfactory. They also found that in a few lessons in Year 2, the pupils' behaviour is not managed well enough.

The inspectors found that the homework arrangements were satisfactory overall. At present, the provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory, and the inspectors acknowledge that there is a wider range of opportunities in the summer term.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. In the Foundation Stage, the children make good progress and most are on course to attaining the early learning goals set for them. The children show good levels of concentration and perseverance whether working with adults or independently. Some write unaided, showing good skills of letter formation, and most can write their names independently. Their speaking and listening skills are developed well through role-play and most are able to count accurately up to 20 and beyond.
2. Over the last few years, the results of national tests at the end of Year 2 have been well above average except in 2001 where they were average. In 2002, the results were above average in reading and well above average in writing and mathematics. The results compare favourably with similar schools being well above average in mathematics, above average in writing and average in reading.
3. In the 2002 national tests in writing, the distribution of attainment is better than that found nationally, and in reading almost half of the pupils attained the higher levels. Similarly, in mathematics almost half of the pupils attained higher levels, but the results highlighted that their performance in shape, space and measures was not as strong as in other areas of mathematics. The inspection evidence confirms that standards are above average at the end of Year 2 in English and mathematics. It also shows that the pupils do not attain at higher levels in shape, space and measures. This weakness continues through Years 3 and 4, but progress in other areas of mathematics is good and standards remain above average. In English, the pupils continue to make good progress, particularly in the content of their writing, although the general levels of their handwriting and presentation are not as good as they should be. The school should take steps to improve the standard of the pupils' handwriting and presentation. **This is a key issue for action.**
4. There is little overall variation in the attainment of boys and girls. In reading, writing and mathematics the girls do marginally better than the boys, but there is annual fluctuation suggesting this is due generally to variations in ability from one cohort to another. The small numbers of pupils who speak English as an additional language are doing well. Where they have additional learning needs they are being well supported. Similarly, where they have the potential for high attainment they are challenged, achieve very well and attain high standards in both English and mathematics.
5. Standards in science and information and communication technology are about average, but in both cases they should be higher. The teacher assessment shows that there is variation in attainment in the different areas of science. This is reflected in the pupils' work because the school's curriculum for science is not organised in a way that ensures the pupils make systematic gains in their knowledge and skills. In information and communication technology, the teachers give the pupils adequate opportunities to develop their skills, but the computer room is too small and inadequately equipped to support rapid progress.
6. Standards are above average in art and design, history, geography, and music. They are in line with expectations in design and technology. Overall the pupils are achieving well and most are making good progress.
7. The majority of the pupils with special educational needs are making good progress and attaining the targets set in their individual education plans.

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

8. The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, have positive attitudes to the school. They arrive promptly each morning and are keen to start the day's activities. They quickly settle down in registrations, assemblies and in class. Most children demonstrate positive attitudes to their work. They are enthusiastic, motivated and eager to learn. They are attentive to their teachers, willingly ask and answer questions, and freely offer their own ideas and opinions. A large number of children

enthusiastically join in the range of extra-curricular activities that are offered to them. However, a minority of pupils lack enthusiasm for the school. Some arrive late and are slow to settle down in the classrooms. When they are insufficiently stimulated and challenged, they become restless and easily distracted from their lessons. However, nearly all parents agree that their children like school.

9. Overall, standards of behaviour are satisfactory. The majority of the children move around the school in a quiet and orderly manner and their behaviour in the classrooms is good. However, a minority of pupils, who have behavioural difficulties, can behave inappropriately when they perceive weaknesses in class control and management. Some of the pupils have poor social skills; for example, they call out answers and do not listen to either the teacher or each other. In a few lessons, this results in teachers having to spend a disproportionate amount of time managing their behaviour, which consequently disrupts the teaching and learning. The pupils' behaviour in the playgrounds at breaks and lunchtimes is satisfactory. There were no signs of either bullying or isolation of individual pupils. There has been one fixed-term exclusion in the current academic year. Some parents expressed concerns about behaviour, particularly in relation to Year 2. Although standards of behaviour are judged to be satisfactory overall, the inspectors agree that there are instances where behaviour is unsatisfactory and not managed effectively.
10. The relationships in the school are good. Most pupils relate well to their teachers, to other adults and also to one another. They are polite, well mannered and welcoming to visitors. Boys and girls of all ages work well together in the classrooms and play happily together in the playground. They are capable of collaborating well, sharing resources and taking turns. The children who have special educational needs are fully integrated and thus enabled to play a full part in all activities. During prayers, the pupils bow their heads reverently during moments of reflection and are respectful of the occasion.
11. The pupils' personal development is good. They are learning a good range of social skills that is helping them to develop into well-rounded individuals. In the classrooms, most children willingly take responsibility for their own work, and in lessons many were observed working independently. These children maintain their concentration and persevere with tasks given to them, but a minority experiences difficulty in maintaining concentration. Most pupils respond maturely and sensibly to the responsibilities given to them, for example, the Year 4 pupils help with the supervision of the younger children during lunchtime. The pupils raise funds for charities, and are learning to be aware of others less fortunate than themselves. The majority of parents agree that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible.
12. The attendance rate at the school has improved since last year and is now broadly in line with the national average. However, the rate of unauthorised absence is above the national average. This is partially due to parents extending the amount of time that they withdraw their children for annual holidays during term time, or keeping siblings at home if another child in the family is ill.

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

13. The teaching is good overall. The proportion of good, very good and excellent teaching has increased since the last inspection, but some unsatisfactory teaching remains where the behaviour of the pupils is not effectively managed.
14. In the Foundation Stage, the teacher engages the children in interesting and enjoyable tasks and as a result they respond positively and contribute well. The teacher plans the activities for the children thoroughly and ensures that all the resources they will need are readily accessible to them. With the good support of the teaching assistant, there is a very clear focus on the development of the children's skills. For example, they develop their counting and reading skills and their control and movement through well-chosen activities and good teaching.
15. In Key Stage 1, the teaching is satisfactory overall. In Year 1, it ranges from good to very good. The lessons have a brisk pace and the teachers question the pupils well. They set interesting tasks that are well matched to the pupils needs, particularly for those pupils with special educational needs. The pupils are making good progress in their lessons because the teachers have high expectations of behaviour and use a range of strategies to maintain their concentration and interest. In Year 2, the teaching is mainly satisfactory, but there are occasions when it is not. When the teaching is unsatisfactory the management

of the pupils' behaviour is not good enough to ensure they give their full attention, particularly when the teacher is speaking to the class. When a few pupils are inattentive and their behaviour is not checked the inattention spreads. This is particularly the case when the children are sitting on the floor in a small space for too long and the teacher does not adequately engage all ability groups. This was evident, for example, in a mathematics lesson. The lesson was well planned, but the introduction and the conclusion were not effective. However, the tasks set for the pupils were carefully modified for different groups and those for the higher attaining pupils were particularly demanding. In this part of the lesson, the pupils did well, but the overall effectiveness of the teaching was undermined because inattentive behaviour was unchecked.

16. In Key Stage 2, the teaching is good overall. In Year 3, it is generally good, but very occasionally time taken to manage the behaviour of the pupils detracts from the effectiveness of the lessons. In most lessons, however, the pupils' behaviour is well managed and the teacher is very clear about what the pupils are expected to learn. This was the case in a science lesson in which a range of well-structured activities developed the pupils understanding of the food chains to show the complex relationships between feeding and particular habitats. In Year 4, the teaching is consistently strong and successful because of the interesting range of activities the teacher plans and her rigorous approach to managing behaviour. This good class management ensures that a number of pupils with behavioural difficulties contribute fully to the lessons and concentrate well on the tasks they are set. In an excellent English lesson, for instance, the teacher encouraged and challenged the pupils to offer their opinions. She also helped them to concentrate on their improving their writing and consequently they achieved very well. The teaching is particularly successful.
17. Throughout the school, the teachers plan the deployment of the teaching assistants and consequently they are effective in their role and make a strong contribution, particularly to the good progress made by many of the pupils with special educational needs. As a result, the pupils who have special educational needs are well catered for and are achieving well.
18. Although the vast majority of lessons are successful the common factor in those that are not is a weakness in behaviour management. The school should take steps to ensure that all of the teachers have consistently high expectations of the pupils' behaviour. **This is a key issue for action.**

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

19. The curriculum satisfactorily meets the statutory requirements for the Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum, but the amount of teaching time is short of the recommended minimum in Key Stage 2. The Foundation Stage curriculum is well organised and carefully planned. In Years 1 to 4, a broad range of opportunities considerably enhances the curriculum, for example, in art and design and music. However, some aspects of science are not given sufficient attention. The pupils are making increasing use of information and communication technology, but it is not yet fully integrated into the curriculum. In their planning, the teachers increasingly make links between relevant curriculum areas. For example, elements of music have been used as a stimulus for the pupils' art work and studies in history extend the pupils' writing. For example, they included vivid details when writing a comparison of town and country life in Roman times.
20. The children in the Foundation Stage respond positively because the curriculum is interesting and provides them with a wide and well-managed range of experiences. Throughout the school, the curriculum promotes the pupils' personal development well through studies in healthy eating, "Circle Time" when they can talk about issues that are important to them, and through many activities that foster their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, poetry and music play an important part in developing the pupils' aesthetic awareness.
21. There is an appropriate emphasis on developing the pupils' skills in reading, writing and number work. The pupils have good opportunities to write and to practise number manipulations both orally and in writing. However, the school is aware that some skills in information and communication technology are not yet as advanced as they should be. Similarly, some aspects of the mathematics curriculum in the area of shape, space and measures are not yet fully included in the teachers' planning.

22. The curriculum is considerably enhanced through the occasional theme days that enable the pupils to participate in exciting activities linked to a range of topics such as India, America, the Victorian Age and life in Roman times. The school has a considerable commitment to these days based on the view that they greatly extend and enliven the pupils' learning. During this term, extra-curricular activities, many of which are held on Wednesday after school, have provided a welcome addition to the pupils' daily experiences. A few also attend a lunchtime French club. The pupils' musical performance benefits considerably from participation in a number of events that are held jointly with other schools. Curriculum planning has been an area of considerable focus among the Beacon Schools' partnership which the school leads. Through this initiative, the school has been able to share good practice in teaching and learning with other schools. Its links with the receiving middle schools are strong, and preparations are already in place for the change of status to a primary school. There are also some good links with the local community, for example, through church activities and participation by members of the community in the musical life of the school. A notable example is the support provided by a pianist who has acted as an accompanist over a long period of time. Overall, community links are satisfactory.
23. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. They have access to the full curriculum entitlement, including the extra-curricular clubs and activities. They are given good, often very good, support that is wide-ranging and generally well tailored to their different needs. This enables them to reach the targets of their individual education plans. However, there are instances where those with behavioural difficulties need more consistent guidance and more rigorous demand to help them to concentrate fully on their work. The qualified support assistants teach these pupils for well-focused work in literacy and mathematics.
24. The school has a strong corporate ethos that promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The school's values are reflected widely in its work and the pupils' spiritual development is a strong aspect of its broader provision. Prayer is a regular feature of each day, and displays around the school promote reflection. The adults consistently enhance the pupils' sense of well being and self-esteem. As a result, they show enthusiasm for their work.
25. Each class has a clear set of rules that underpin the fostering of the pupils' understanding of the difference between right and wrong. They are encouraged to be aware of the effect of their actions on others, and are consistently reminded of others less fortunate than themselves. They engage in a good range of charitable activities that recognise this fact. The pupils in Year 4 are also becoming very environmentally aware through learning about pollution and re-cycling. They have planted small plots to grow flowers and vegetables and their pride in watching their plants grow is very evident.
26. There are many activities to promote pupils' cultural development. The theme days provide intensive experiences of aspects of other countries. For example, Patrick's Day is celebrated with Irish dancing and cooking. The pupils also listen to music from Ireland, Hawaii, China and Japan. The older children use fax and email to communicate with countries such as Australia. However, the school recognises the need to develop further the pupils' awareness of the contribution that different cultures make to life in Britain today.

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

27. The school provides good and effective care for its pupils. The headteacher places a high priority on pastoral care and provides good leadership in this respect. All members of staff are very caring, dedicated and committed to the welfare of the children in their charge. They are very approachable and supportive. The members of the non-teaching staff are effectively deployed and give good support for both teachers and pupils, particularly those children who have special educational needs. This has a positive influence on the progress these children are making and the standards they achieve. The school makes appropriate use of external support agencies
28. The procedures for child protection and ensuring the pupils' welfare are securely in place and fully understood by all staff. The arrangements for first aid and dealing with minor injuries are very good. The governing body and the headteacher take their health and safety responsibilities seriously and all the required health and safety checks and inspections are systematically carried out. However, although the potential risks to the children are conscientiously and regularly considered, a full risk assessment of the

premises and grounds has not yet been formally recorded. Conscientious teachers and teaching assistants, who are alert and vigilant, supervise the pupils well at breaks. The standard of supervision by experienced midday supervisors at lunchtimes is satisfactory, but their deployment leaves them with too large an area to supervise.

29. The teachers take every opportunity to ensure that each pupil is fully included in all classroom activities. They frequently modify the tasks for different groups, and particularly for the pupils with special educational needs. Appropriate reviews of the individual education plans for the pupils with special educational needs are carried out and the support of outside agencies, such as the speech therapy unit, is acquired where necessary.
30. The school has satisfactory procedures for promoting and monitoring discipline and good behaviour. The positive behaviour policy is supplemented by a clear code of conduct and an anti-bullying policy. However, the management of the pupils' behaviour is not consistent throughout the school. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are good. The registers are completed accurately and unexplained absences and lateness are quickly and rigorously followed up. Unfortunately, some parents do not always support these efforts.
31. The headteacher, class teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils extremely well and have a very good understanding of their individual personal needs. All members of staff demonstrate an intimate knowledge of the children's personal circumstances and consequently every pupil in the school is treated as an individual and their personal needs are catered for well.
32. The assessment procedures are good. A range of assessments, including statutory and non-statutory tests, is used to discover what the pupils know, understand and can do. This information and the teacher assessments enable the school to track the progress of the pupils from year to year effectively. At present, the assessment data relates mainly to English and mathematics and is used to determine appropriate starting points for pupils of differing levels of ability. However, the co-ordinators in other subjects have begun to use information from their monitoring of attainment and progress in their subjects to identify the developments that are required to raise standards. The monitoring and support of the personal development of the pupils is good. Target setting for individuals and groups of pupils is well established across the school to raise their awareness of what they must do in order to improve. On-going assessment through the marking of pupils' work is good. The teachers comments include praise for good effort, an evaluation of how well the pupils have completed a task and what they need to do next.

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

33. The headteacher and her staff are very welcoming and approachable, and make every effort to promote positive links with the parents. However, this meets with a varied response. Some parents are involved and contribute positively to the pupils' learning, but others do not. Some are fully involved in their child's work in school and at home, but others give too little support for homework and consequently not all pupils complete and return it. The school has difficulty in recruiting parents to help in the classrooms and to accompany the children on out of school trips. The Parents and Friends Association, run by a small group of interested parents, receives little support in its efforts to raise funds for the school. The school has recently sought parents' views about the school to help in formulating an improvement plan, but this met with a very poor response. In spite of the school's efforts, its partnership with the parents is not particularly productive.
34. The majority of parents expressed a high level of satisfaction with most aspects of the school. A significant number of parents consider that their children do not get the right amount of work to do at home and think that the school does not provide an interesting range of activities outside lessons. The inspection evidence does not support these parents' views; the use of homework throughout the school and the provision of extra-curricular activities were judged to be satisfactory.
35. The information provided for parents is wide ranging and of very good quality. The school sends out weekly, informative newsletters and letters about specific events and activities. The class teachers regularly notify the parents about the various topics of study. They are also kept well informed about

how their child is getting on. The annual progress reports clearly state what pupils can do, what they understand and the progress they have made. Each child is given specific targets for improvement. The parents are offered the opportunity to attend appropriate consultation meetings to discuss their children's work and progress with their teachers which are generally well attended. They also have easy access to the staff for informal exchanges at the start and end of each school day. The school publishes an attractive, comprehensive and informative prospectus. The governors hold an annual meeting with the parents and publish a very detailed annual report. However, the latest prospectus and report omit some statutorily required information, for example, the rates of authorised and unauthorised absence, parents' right to withdraw their child from religious education and collective worship, and descriptions of the arrangements for admission of pupils with disabilities.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

36. The recently appointed headteacher is leading the school very effectively. She has been very successful in establishing a clear vision for the school and in ensuring that its aims and values are fully reflected in all aspects of its work. Although at an early stage of implementation, she has made significant and positive changes to the way the co-ordinators work and to the involvement of the whole school community in improvement planning.
37. The headteacher has enabled the subject co-ordinators to take a greater role in managing the curriculum and to contribute to the overall management of the school. Through the headteacher's successful efforts to motivate and influence the co-ordinators, they are beginning to use the knowledge they gain from their monitoring activities to generate improvement plans and to implement changes that will enhance provision and contribute to the raising of standards.
38. The good management of the school by the headteacher is based on thorough, frequent and very well recorded monitoring of the teachers' planning, the teaching and the quality of the children's work. This is generating very useful information and providing the headteacher with a very clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, it is not yet sufficiently linked to the setting of priorities for improvement. The headteacher has taken account of the views of governors and parents in putting together the current school improvement plan. At the moment, however, it is neither precise enough to address known weaknesses, nor sufficiently clear to provide the governors with criteria against which they can evaluate the effect of the improvement activities. The school should now utilise the information from its very good monitoring procedures to determine focussed priorities for whole school improvement and to ensure that there are clear criteria against which the governors can evaluate any changes in standards and provision. **This is a key issue for action.**
39. The governors provide a good level of support for the school. They are moving from a predominantly supportive role to being more challenging of the school. The chair of governors has a strong working relationship with the headteacher and is particularly influential in the move to steer the work of the school. The governors use the sub-committees well to manage their work. All meetings are fully recorded and key decisions are discussed at the full meetings of the governing body. For example, the finance committee make sure the all governors are fully aware of key spending decisions. They are effective in their role, but neither the school prospectus nor their annual report to parents fully meets requirements.
40. The school budgets systematically for curriculum development and applies the principles of best value satisfactorily to its spending decisions. Grants for special needs, for example, are used appropriately. The governors compare the school's performance with others locally and nationally. They consult with outside agencies and are seeking the views of parents. However, the current school improvement plan does not lend itself easily to the evaluation of the impact of its various initiatives.
41. The leadership and management of special educational needs are good. The co-ordinator knows the pupils and their parents well and discusses needs, support and progress regularly with her colleagues. The records are well maintained and updated regularly so that she has a good oversight of the pupils' achievements and progress. The teaching assistants are used very effectively across the school and work closely with the class teachers to support learning in all subjects, but particularly in literacy and numeracy. Through its financial management, the governing body gives good support to the provision of

pupils with special educational needs. There is a governor with responsibility for special educational needs, who takes a strong interest in the success of the school's provision.

42. There are sufficient teachers and teaching assistants for the number of pupils on roll. The school has adequate resources and the subject co-ordinators are now managing and maintaining them effectively. The school has successfully addressed the key issue raised in the last report by significantly improving the teaching accommodation. All children are now taught in enclosed classrooms of adequate size and without restriction to the delivery of the curriculum. There is good size hall suitable for physical education lessons, assemblies and dining purposes. The computer room is very small and has too few computers to allow the teachers to provide any thing other than small group work. Access for disabled people into and throughout the school is restricted and there is currently no appropriate toilet provision for them. The school is aware of this. A comprehensive audit has been carried out, and full provision for disabled people has been included in the plans for the new building. The accommodation is kept very clean and well maintained, and the learning environment is considerably enhanced by attractive display of the pupils' work.

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

The governors, headteacher and teachers should:

- (1) utilise the information from the monitoring activities to determine clearer priorities for school improvement with precise criteria against which the effect of the activities can be evaluated (*paragraph 38*)
- (2) ensure that the management of the pupils' behaviour is improved so that the teaching and learning is effective in all lessons (*paragraph 15,18*)
- (3) improve the range and frequency of the opportunities for the pupils to make more rapid progress in science and information and communication technology (*paragraph 19, 65, 79*)
- (4) improve standards of handwriting and presentation so that they are consistently of a high standard (*paragraph 3*)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	26
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	23

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	4	14	4	2	1	0
Percentage	4	15	54	15	8	4	0

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

### *Information about the school's pupils*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	YR - Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	108
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

<b>Special educational needs</b>	YR - Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	34

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

### *Attendance*

#### **Authorised absence**

	%
School data	5.6
National comparative data	5.4

#### **Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	0.8
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2002	10	13	23

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	9	9
	Girls	11	12	13
	Total	20	21	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	87 (84)	91 (84)	96 (100)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	10	10
	Girls	11	12	12
	Total	20	22	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	87 (92)	96 (80)	96 (92)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

**Ethnic background of pupils**

**Exclusions in the last school year**

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

No of pupils on roll
74
7
0
3
0
0
2
0
0
0
0
0
0
0
0
1
6

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR - Y4**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.4
Average class size	21.6

#### **Education support staff: YR - Y4**

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	97

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

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2002/03
	£
Total income	328 620
Total expenditure	317 446
Expenditure per pupil	2 560
Balance brought forward from previous year	20 577
Balance carried forward to next year	31 751

FTE means full-time equivalent.

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2.6
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

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

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	107
Number of questionnaires returned	57

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	56	37	7	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	39	51	7	4	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	49	11	7	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	47	16	11	5
The teaching is good.	37	54	4	5	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	40	9	7	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	23	5	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	39	9	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	40	42	7	7	4
The school is well led and managed.	35	54	5	5	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	60	2	5	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	21	39	26	7	7

## **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**

43. The children start in the reception class in the September of the year in which they are five. Although most children have had experience of a nursery, the attainment of the majority on entry to the school is below average. The present inspection evidence shows that the most children are making good progress and many are already reaching the learning goals set for them in all the six areas of learning. This is due to a well-planned curriculum and good teaching. There are good systems of assessment so that the teacher is aware of the next stage of learning for all the children. This results in learning that is productive and of a good pace, promoting concentration and independence. The children contribute well and respond positively because the teacher engages them in interesting and enjoyable tasks. The teacher has successfully introduced elements of the literacy and numeracy hours. The new Foundation Stage Profiles recording the progress of the children are already well established.

#### **Personal, social and emotional development**

44. The teaching in this area is good and the children make good progress in developing their self-confidence and independence. They are aware of the routines of the classroom and behave very well. On entry each morning, the children separate confidently from their parents and sit on the carpet, sharing a book, while they wait for the teacher to call the register. All the children are encouraged to listen to what others have to say and to take turns so that they develop an awareness of right and wrong. When asked to say something kind about the 'golden boy/girl of the week', all the children were positive and thoughtful, making comments like, 'He's my friend because he helped me make my biscuit'. All the adults have clear expectations of the children's behaviour and this helps to create a calm, working atmosphere. The contributions of all the children are praised, no matter how great or small, and this raises their self-esteem and confidence. The children show good levels of concentration and perseverance in their activities either working with adults or independently. They have made Diwali lights and learned about the customs of other people. Most children play amicably together during outdoor activities and take turns fairly. The majority of the children are likely to meet the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Reception class.

#### **Communication, language and literacy**

45. Most children are already attaining the goals for this area of learning because of good teaching by all adults involved. There are well-established elements of the national literacy hour evident. The children are encouraged at all opportunities to speak and listen carefully. Very good use is made of 'Big Books' to develop the children's reading skills. During a lesson using the story of 'The Rainbow Fish', for instance, the teacher made good use of the book by carefully targeting her questions so that all the children could play an effective part. For example, the children with special educational needs and those with English as a second language were carefully and sensitively drawn into the lesson. All the children have a good awareness of books and know how to handle them properly. They know that print carries meaning and words are read from left to right. Most of the children can write their names by themselves, and the higher attaining children write independently and with good skills of letter formation. Scrutiny of their previous work shows that more able and average children can use sound cards to help their writing and most children are getting more confident in their recognition of rhyming words such as 'pot, cot, not and hot'. The speaking and listening skills of the children are further developed by the ways in which adults engage with them in role-play. A particularly good example occurred when a well-briefed classroom assistant gave support by playing alongside the children in the 'Pirate ship' corner.

#### **Mathematical development**

46. The teaching in this area is good and scrutiny of the children's previous work shows that all groups are likely to reach the goals expected of them. Many of the higher and average attaining children already do so. These children are making good progress in their mathematical development. They are able to count accurately up to 20 and beyond, recognise simple shapes and use them successfully to create patterns and pictures. They can recognise o'clock times and are beginning to use a tape measure accurately to

measure the height of a sunflower. The lower attaining children make satisfactory progress. They have made their own repeating patterns using a peg-board and can use language of comparison, such as shorter, longer, the same as, when comparing the length of some ties. All groups enjoy joining in number rhymes and songs, which are daily features of their activities. These help greatly to reinforce number patterns and develop the children's understanding. Each day, for example, registration is used to reinforce their understanding of time and number. The teacher uses question like 'What day is it today?', 'What day will it be tomorrow?', 'How many children are here today?' and 'How many are away? The activities are appropriately practical and good use is made of a wide range of resources. The children are aware of the equipment and know how to use it. For instance, two boys were observed recording numbers up to twenty on a white board and then going to the class number line to check they were correct.

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

47. All groups of children are making good progress in this area of learning because the teaching is good. The well-planned activities provide experiences that help to develop their sense of not only of their own immediate surroundings, but also the wider world. After a walk around the local park, for example, the children made leaf rubbings and compared the different textures of the objects they had found. They have been on 'a colour-walk' around the school and identified different colours in the environment. The children work with sand, water and freely explore properties of malleable materials, such as play dough. They mix paint and can name basic colours correctly. They use different materials, such as paper and textiles, to develop folding cutting and joining skills. They have extended their knowledge and understanding of the properties of materials and have discovered, for example, that some things are magnetic and others are not. A visit by the grandmothers of one child helped the others to develop an awareness of change over time and led them to compare photographs of themselves as babies with their appearance at five years of age. The great majority of the children contribute well and respond positively because the teacher engages them in interesting and enjoyable tasks. Most are well on course to achieve the learning goals by the end of their time in the reception class.

### **Physical development**

48. Nearly all of the children are likely to meet their expectations of Early Learning Goals in this area because of the good teaching and support. The outdoor activities enable them to use a good range of large and small resources. This provision has been improved since the last inspection and enhances children's skills in controlling their body movements when using small apparatus such as hoops, beanbags and small balls. In the lesson seen, the teacher had a good range of activities planned that effectively built on what the children had done before and challenged them to improve their skills. Most of the children showed a good awareness of the need for safety. The comments of the more able children, for example 'I'm a lot warmer now', showed that they were clear about the effect of exercise on their bodies...The children showed good levels of concentration and tried hard. Good direct teaching of skills and techniques enabled all groups of the children to make good progress.

### **Creative development**

49. The teaching is good and all the children make good progress. A scrutiny of teachers' planning shows that the children get good opportunities to develop an awareness of music and to respond through movement. For instance, the children enjoy singing simple rhyming songs and have explored how different sounds are made. The children have made other attractive displays using a wide range of materials. A colourful and attractive autumn display was created after a visit to the local park that developed their understanding of the different textures of materials. Moreover, mudroc snowballs, colour mixing for Bonfire Night pictures, Elmer the elephant displays have all shown the children how materials can be used expressively. The children's observations are valued and this generates confidence and encourages them to record their ideas. As a result, most of the children make good progress in their social and emotional skills as well as developing their awareness of the world about them. Many pupils use the role-play area for imaginative play and benefit from the direct guidance and stimulus given by adults. These purposeful interventions not only extend the range of the play, but also enhance the children's language skills. The children sing and clap nursery rhymes and express enjoyment when doing so. When engaged in water or sand play they play well alongside each other and share the resources fairly. The

majority of the children are on course to attain the goals in this area of learning by the end of the reception class.

## ENGLISH

50. Over the last few years, the test results at the end of Year 2 have been generally above and sometimes well above average. Standards in writing are above average overall because the school has been successful in ensuring that its strategy for promoting writing skills has been thoroughly thought out and consistently implemented. In particular, the teachers have ensured that there is sufficient time for writing and that the tasks are extended in others areas of the curriculum. This is especially the case in Years 3 and 4. As a result, the pupils respond well to some of the interesting writing activities planned for them. A strong feature of the writing is the way that the teachers encourage the pupils to be discriminating and selective in their choice of vocabulary. They are able to do so because speaking skills are carefully fostered as a basis for language enrichment. The teachers respond to what the pupils say by introducing more interesting vocabulary, which the pupils can then imitate. This was evident in Year 2 during a discussion preparing for the writing of a story about a lighthouse keeper. Most of these younger pupils listen well to the teachers and to each other, but a significant minority is not yet able to sustain good listening skills. Some interrupt their teacher and their classmates during discussions. The enthusiasm of the older pupils was evident when they engaged in a discussion about the meaning of “personification.” In the words of one pupil, “We looked at this mouse and then we wrote about it as if it was a human being”. In this very good lesson, the pupils’ speaking skills were considerably enhanced as they and the teacher engaged in creating a poem which demonstrated personification.
51. Reading is rightly regarded as a core activity during each school day. The pupils know that at set times of the day they have to read quietly. Some pupils, whose reading skills fall below the average expected, receive additional help to boost their skills. A good proportion of the children are above-average readers who read very expressively and accurately for their age. However, there remains a group of pupils in each class who still need further encouragement to read more and with greater meaning. Some of the less proficient readers are not sufficiently confident to break down the more difficult words into their component parts. This partly because they do not read sufficiently outside the classroom to develop a good sight vocabulary. Nevertheless, the pupils have positive attitudes to reading and appreciate the improvements to the school's book stocks.
52. Writing skills are above average because the school has adopted a very successful strategy for encouraging the pupils to write and to extend the range and quality of their writing. In discussion, the pupils claimed that writing was one of their favourite activities. The key to this success is the fact that the tasks are interesting and thoroughly discussed. There is good adult support for all the pupils during the writing process and the teachers' marking is generally of a high quality. The pupils are, therefore, very clear about what they do well and are helped to focus on the improvements they need to make. The marking is closely linked to the targets that are set for pupils to achieve. The pupils in Key Stage 1 write imaginatively and most use full stops and speech marks confidently. By the end of Year 4, the quality of the pupils' descriptive writing is very high. Literary text, such as “The Lord of the Rings”, are often used as a model for narrative and descriptive writing. The pupils make good progress to improve the complexity of their sentence structures.
53. The weakness in most classes is the quality of handwriting and the overall presentation of work. By the end of Year 4, many of the pupils join their letters, but the letter size is often inconsistent. Too few of the younger pupils learn to form letters with ascending and descending features correctly. The teachers are aware of this and there was growing evidence during the inspection that the issue is being more consistently addressed.
54. Overall, the teaching is of good, and some of it is of very high quality. The pupils are developing a good awareness of the characteristics of different types of writing because the teachers give careful explanations, provide examples and make helpful comments about the pupils’ work. However, information and communication technology is too little used to record writing and at times the younger pupils are too dependent upon adults to provide spellings for them.
55. The headteacher, who co-ordinates English, provides a good role model for subject leadership. She is very clear about what is going well and seeking to bring about further and on-going improvement.

## MATHEMATICS

56. Overall, standards are similar to those found at the time of the last inspection. At Year 2, they are generally above average and are particularly strong in number work. However, standards are below what they should be in shape, space and measures, particularly for higher attaining pupils. A similar picture emerges from the inspection evidence with the pupils at the end of Year 4. There is good progress by all groups in building up their knowledge and understanding of number, but overall their progress in space, shape and measures much slower. Attainment in this area of mathematics is weak, because the provision is limited, particularly for higher attaining pupils.
57. Overall, the quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 2 and satisfactory in Key Stage 1. The better lessons are characterised by the teaching of basic skills in number, particularly in the mental sessions that start all lessons. Good, sharp questioning aimed at specific pupils results in learning that is productive and involves all groups. For example, in a Year 1 lesson the teacher skilfully built on the pupils' previous learning to develop their confidence and enthusiasm. They remained focused on their number games, responding with interest and commitment so that by the end of the session, all groups had consolidated their number skills well. Similar sharply focused teaching in Year 4 developed the pupils' knowledge and understanding of how number patterns can be used in multiplication problems. The teacher demonstrated the methods very effectively and made good use of an overhead projector so that all the pupils could clearly see and hear on what she was saying. This ensured that all the pupils were actively engaged by the lesson and learnt well. Furthermore, good use was made of time at the end of the lesson to review what had been learned.
58. Most lessons are well planned with an appropriate range of activities that are usually well matched to the different levels of abilities in each class. The teachers make good use of assessment to set targets for groups and individuals. This results in good, sometimes very good, support for the lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. The learning support assistants work closely with all the teachers so that these pupils are enabled to contribute well to the lesson and develop their confidence for the rest of the activities. Scrutiny of their work and the latest test results shows that these groups of pupils are making very good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of number. Most teachers manage the lessons well and have developed a good range of techniques to cope with some difficult and challenging behaviour. The pupils' behaviour is satisfactory when they are managed well and the activities are matched to their levels of ability and concentration. This does not happen consistently in all classes. Occasionally, unsatisfactory management of the pupils leads to them making much less progress than they would if they listened carefully to the teacher and concentrated fully throughout the lesson.
59. Scrutiny of their previous work shows that the pupils in Year 1 are making good progress in number. All can read and write numbers accurately and recognise odd and even number patterns. The higher attaining pupils know the number bonds of 20 and can use them in their calculations. By the end of Year 2, many pupils are using their knowledge of the 2, 5 and 10 multiplication tables in their calculations and have an understanding of the place value of numbers up to 100. However, no pupils have extended this to numbers up to 1000 and there is no evidence of higher level work on angles and symmetry. The good progress in number work continues in Years 3 and 4 and the pupils move to written recording in addition and subtraction. The higher attaining pupils have begun to record multiplication sums but are not yet secure in recording division. They can use simple fractions to divide shapes and whole numbers and can produce simple block graphs to record data. By the end of Year 4, the majority of the pupils show a good knowledge of alternative strategies for problem solving. Overall, the teaching of basic skills in number is good and pupils are making good use of their skills in other areas of the curriculum, such as geography and history.
60. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The temporary co-ordinator has realistic awareness of standards and of the progress of pupils across the school. The assessment systems are good and the resulting information is used well to set targets for all groups of pupils. However, better use could be made of it to plan future changes to the curriculum, for instance, to develop the work on space, shape and measure. The marking of the pupils' work is good, with a good balance of directive as well as supportive comments that help pupils to know how well they have done and what they could do better.

The present resources are adequate and are used well by teachers to support a wide range of interesting tasks for the pupils.

## SCIENCE

61. The pupils are attaining standards in this subject that are not quite high as those shown in the last report. At present, standards are about average and the pupils are making satisfactory progress. However, they could make more rapid progress if the science curriculum was better organised in the form of weekly lessons. There are times in the year where some groups of pupils have no science lessons. An inspection of their completed work shows bursts of activity followed several weeks in which no work is recorded. The pupils' work also highlights an inconsistent approach to recording scientific investigation and varying expectations in regard to its presentation.
62. In some classes, for example Year 3, the pupils' investigative skills are being well developed. The pupils become increasingly independent in the recording of the investigations they carry out and are beginning to make predictions and draw simple conclusions. In Year 4, these skills are consolidated, but not built upon through a continuing and progressive programme of activities.
63. The quality of the teachers' marking is good. In the best examples in Year 4, the teacher identified one pupil's partial understanding of how the rotation of the earth creates night and day. As a result of a discussion to clarify the pupils' misunderstanding, the teacher noted his responses in a very useful record of his achievement. The teachers also keep comprehensive records of the pupils' attainment. They plan some use of information and communication technology, for example to create annotated diagrams of the parts of a plant and graphs of how shadows lengthen, but there is scope for the pupils to make much greater use of a range of software. In some cases there is too heavy an emphasis on the use of worksheets that restrict the opportunities that the pupils have to develop and practice their literacy skills.
64. During the course of the inspection, two science lessons were taught. In one lesson in Year 3, the teacher gradually introduced the complexities of the relationships within the food chain. The teaching was good and the pupils made good gains in their learning. In discussion some of the more able pupils were able to talk about the impact of, for example, the use of pesticides, on food chains. In a well structured lesson in Year 1 the good pace and the enthusiasm of the teacher helped the pupils to categorise living and non-living things. In this lesson good use was made of information and communication technology to support the pupils' learning.
65. The co-ordinator has already begun to reorganise the science curriculum. Although she has only held the post for a few months her monitoring has identified the need to ensure that science is taught every week through a programme of activities which develop the pupils' skills and knowledge systematically. The school should support and implement this development with some urgency. **It is a key issue for action.**

## ART AND DESIGN AND DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

66. Two lessons in art and design were scheduled during the inspection, but there were no lessons in design and technology. However, a good range of past work in class portfolios, photographic records and displays around the school was made available for scrutiny. The pupils' attainment in art and design is above expectations and is often very high in Year 4. In Key Stage 2, the pupils' sketchbooks contain a good range and quantity of trial drawings and plans of good quality. On the evidence seen, standards are in line with expectations in design and technology and are steadily improving. An after-school club was also visited and provided clear evidence of the pupils' enthusiasm for art.
67. The school has maintained the good standards in art and design that was seen at the last inspection. Standards in painting have improved further. This is because the units of work are planned to ensure that the pupils' experiences build on their previous learning, the activities are inviting and participation levels are high. Standards in design and technology show improvements in the pupils' planning of products.
68. In art and design, the pupils in Key Stage 1 work in a variety of media and use a range of techniques, such as painting, printing, drawing, collage and batik. Their skills of observation progress well because the

teachers focus their attention on the methods used by professional artists to achieve various effects. For example, they have observed how Seurat built up his work using dots (pointillism) and have observed that Warhol has a completely different approach. They have produced effective crayon drawings on the theme of "Dark is Beautiful" and linked this to work in English. A collage composed of block prints was very well designed and imaginatively assembled as the result of an art theme day that allowed the pupils to concentrate in depth upon a particular aspect of art and design. In design and technology, the younger pupils have discussed, planned and produced vehicles to learn about the inter-relationship between wheels and axles. This project provided a sound basis for the "Moving Monsters" unit of work in Year 3. The resulting models provide evidence of the pupils' growing skills in arranging and assembling components to produce imaginative end products.

69. The pupils consolidate their skills in Years 3 and 4, and learn a new range of techniques. The skills of painting on paper taught in Key Stage 1 are developed in Key Stage 2. After looking at Aboriginal work, the pupils very effectively used predominantly baked earth colours to paint on hessian to imitate the style of rock and cave paintings. An excellent batik wall panel of African masks was the outcome of a special art day. This is also the time when the pupils in Key Stage 2 encounter more exacting challenges to use their observational skills. They progress from sketching plants, such as daffodils, to draw the quite complex shapes of musical instruments, for example cellos. Some themes, such as "Daffodils" inspired by Wordsworth's poem, are developed in different media such as crayons, pastels and paint. At all levels, there is a good range of three-dimensional work, but it is particularly good in Key Stage 2. The pupils have produced large junk models of robots and also used clay, building on their experiences in Key Stage 1. The pupils' work in design and technology is improving as the older ones build upon their understanding of the processes involved in planning, making and evaluating products such as their models requiring pneumatic pressure to activate moving parts. The pupils in Year 3 extend their understanding of how to produce healthy food having learned the basics of healthy food in Year 1.
70. The planning for work in art and design and design and technology is imaginative. It makes good use of both national and local guidelines. The teaching overall is secure and coherent because the co-ordinators are knowledgeable and supportive of other members of staff. However, in the two art lessons seen, one, in Year 4, was very successful because of the teacher's very good knowledge and classroom management but the other, in Year 2, was not because of the poor management of the pupils' behaviour. Nevertheless, the teachers are growing in confidence and now have a better understanding of how to encourage the pupils to generate ideas and how to help them to evaluate the success of products, such as box models of buildings, photograph frames, pencil cases and torches. Increasingly, useful assessment records are kept and passed on from one year to the next. They are not yet very refined in either subject, but there is now a useful framework for broad levelling of attainment. Information and communication technology is also used increasingly as the pupils access the Internet, for example, to find information about a wide range of artists and their work. The pupils' use of the Internet and their observation of reproductions of prints make good contributions to the pupils' cultural development.

## **GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY**

71. These subjects are taught through a series of topics that successfully address all the requirements of the National Curriculum. One geography lesson and three history lessons were seen during the inspection. The following judgements in both subjects are based on these lessons, a scrutiny of the pupils' previous work, the teachers' planning and discussions with the curriculum co-ordinator and the pupils.
72. The above-average standards found in history at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. Standards in geography are now above the levels expected by the end of Year 2 and Year 4. This is an improvement since the last inspection. All groups of pupils have continued to make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding in both subjects and the school has given more emphasis to the development of skills this year.
73. Scrutiny of the pupils' previous work, for example, shows that the pupils have developed good skills in mapping their classrooms and are able to use a simple key to identify features on a map. The Year 1 pupils have made their own model village after a visit to Westlodge Farm. By the end of Year 2, most pupils can plot features on an imaginary map, have explored the immediate area of the school and plotted the best route from their home. Year 4 pupils have visited the village of Yardley Hastings looking at buildings, old

records and talking to local people. They have surveyed the school and the local area for noise and litter pollution and suggested sensible ways in which it might be improved. As the pupils move through the school, they develop a good sense of 'times now and times past'. They compare toys and holidays at the seaside in different eras and can readily identify how things have changed.

74. The teachers are careful to allow the pupils to express and develop their own ideas and opinions both verbally and in written form. In the best lessons, the teachers' well directed and sensitive questioning enable all the pupils to play an effective part. Good use is made of the support staff so that the different groups of the pupils have the help they need. Where the lessons and the tasks offer only a low level of challenge, some pupils become distracted and less engaged in what they have been asked to do. Nevertheless, both subjects contribute well to personal development of all pupils, as they are able to compare their own lives with those of other people and cultures.
75. The school makes very good use of the local area in both subjects to develop a sense of place and time. The pupils have studied the local park as well as comparing their environment with that of other places such as a Scottish island. Recently purchased globes and atlases have been used well to raise awareness of other countries around the world. This is also considerably enhanced by the 'Theme days' of different countries, such as India and USA, which raise the pupils' awareness of different cultures, values and beliefs. A scrutiny of the teacher's planning shows that the lessons have a clear focus on what it is that the pupils are expected to learn and the activities are well organised and resourced. Most lessons seen were characterised by perseverance and effort, and learning was good.
76. Visits and visitors to school make valuable contributions to the teaching of both subjects. For example, the pupils have visited a local museum to experience first hand how life has changed over the years since Victorian times. Both subjects are well led by an enthusiastic co-ordinator who has a good awareness of the need to raise standards further.

#### **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

77. At the end of Years 2 and 4, standards in information and communication technology are in line with those expected. The pupils are making satisfactory progress, but could be doing much better if they had more opportunities to use and practice their skills in a range of contexts right across the curriculum. Currently, the accommodation and the distribution of resources make it difficult for the teachers to make maximum use of them. The computer room is too small for a class of children. Consequently, when the Year 2 pupils were being taught how to use a CD Rom to find information they were squashed into a very small space and many had a poor viewing angle of a small monitor. Furthermore, there are only enough computers in the room for small groups to work with a teaching assistant. Fortunately, the school is being re-organised as a primary school and new building work will provide more space for a larger computer facilities. The school will also receive additional information and communication technology equipment.
78. In spite of these restrictions, the teachers create some good opportunities for the pupils to develop their skills and to use information and communication technology in other subjects. In Year 1, for example, the pupils worked in small groups with the support of a teaching assistant to identify living and non-living things as part of their work in science. In Year 2 they used the Internet to find information to help them to answer questions about Christopher Columbus. In Year 3, the pupils have used the digital microscope to produce annotated images of insects and in Year 4 they have explored virtual galleries on the Internet to find out about artists and their work.
79. The co-ordinator has a clear action plan to move things forward. Better facilities and easier access to resources will give the teachers a golden opportunity to make more extensive use of information and communication technology. It should take steps to make sure that they are used more effectively and to the fullest possible extent across the curriculum. **This is a key issue for action.**

#### **MUSIC**

80. One lesson in music was scheduled and seen during the inspection, but examples of recorded work were heard and a discussion was held with the co-ordinator. On the basis of the evidence available, it appears that standards in the pupils' singing and in their ability to hear and imitate a variety of rhythms were

above average. Those with special educational needs also succeed well because care is taken to include them fully in all the activities. Consequently, they enjoy singing and using percussion instruments. By the time they leave the school at the end of Year 4, the pupils can sing in parts and show a good awareness of note values as they do so. There was no evidence by which the pupils' attainment in composition work could be evaluated, but the curriculum planning includes all the elements required by the National Curriculum.

81. The pupils in Key Stage 1 learn to play and sing together at an early stage. For instance, they have enjoyed learning to play the ocarina and have performed in front of other pupils. They make a very good contribution to the singing during collective worship and enjoy listening to a good range of music. They are provided with the relevant background information about these pieces on a large panel outside the school hall. Many children spoke about their enjoyment of traditional Irish music to accompany dancing. During Year 1, the pupils develop a secure sense of pitch, singing high and low notes accurately and responding expressively to the mood of music they hear.
82. The pupils' musical experiences are enhanced by opportunities to join other schools to sing in public venues in Northampton. They clearly prepare well for these occasions and enjoy collaborating with other pupils. Similarly, they participate eagerly in school productions that contain a strong musical element.
83. The co-ordinator for music is very enthusiastic and provides good leadership, recognising that not all teachers are confident about planning music lessons. Through her leadership at key stage singing practices, she provides a good role model on how to enthuse boys and girls and how to develop their singing technique. She has monitored other lessons and also organised a range of public performances where the pupils perform to various audiences, for example, at the Derngate Festival. Choirs and instrumental groups do not currently meet regularly, but the school intends to address this issue from September, 2003. As things stand, the school has just started to make use of National Guidelines, but intends to do so more thoroughly as it updates the scheme of work for music.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

84. When the school was last inspected, standards in dance were above average and they remain so. During the course of this inspection no gymnastics or games lessons were taught so it is not possible to make a judgement about overall standards in physical education.
85. In both of the two dance lessons observed, the teaching was of good quality. In Year 1, good preparation in the classroom allowed the pupils to move to the hall and set to work without delay. The teacher skilfully managed the pupils and their learning by gradually increasing the sophistication of each phase of dance they were asked to perform. Using the stimulus of 'Handa's Surprise', the pupils showed good levels of control and co-ordination to reflect both graceful and powerful movements of the animals in the story. In Year 4 the teacher is similarly very clear about what she wants the pupils to gain from the lesson. Making good use of music the teacher motivated the pupils very well and as a result a number of boys with behaviour difficulties achieved very well. They put together interesting and lively dance sequences that were based initially on formal Tudor music and then on modern electronic sounds.
86. In both lessons, the behaviour of the class was well managed by the teachers and as a result the pupils responded well.
87. The subject is well organised by the co-ordinator, who is seeking to extend the range of activities available to the pupils. Currently, the school provides a typical range of additional activities to supplement the curriculum. There are netball and football clubs, and the older pupils participate in local competitions. A basketball coach has also visited the school. The school has adequate facilities in the form of a multi-purpose hall and a grass area.