

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **NEW CHRIST CHURCH VA PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Reading

LEA area: Reading

Unique reference number: 132109

Headteacher: Ms Beverley Revie

Reporting inspector: Mrs Christine Nuttall  
31046

Dates of inspection: 4 - 6 November 2002

Inspection number: 248900

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 category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Milman Road Reading Berkshire
Postcode:	RG2 0AY
Telephone number:	0118 901 5437
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms Mary Harwood
Date of previous inspection:	None. This is a Fresh Start school.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
31046	Christine Nuttall	Registered inspector	Foundation Stage, mathematics, Information and Communication Technology, music and English as an additional language	The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9528	Derek Bowers	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
1353	Paul Canham	Team inspector	Science, design and technology, physical education and equal opportunities	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
30618	Paul Story	Team inspector	English, art, geography, history and special educational needs	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

New Christ Church is a Church of England School that opened as a Fresh Start school<sup>1</sup> in May 2000. It is smaller than average with 113 pupils aged between four and eleven. Year 6 pupils are taught in a single class and the remaining pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. The majority of pupils live in social housing adjoining the school with considerable turbulence for some families awaiting re-housing elsewhere. About 20 per cent of the pupils are on the school's register of special educational need, which is broadly in line with the national average. Four pupils have a statement of special educational need and this is above the national average. 37 per cent are entitled to free school meals, which is high. 34 per cent of pupils are from ethnic minorities, mainly Black Caribbean, Indian and Pakistani. Almost 19 per cent speak English as an additional language and this is higher than most schools. Children's attainment on entry to the reception class is below average. There has been a high turnover of staff since the Fresh Start.

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

New Christ Church is a very good school and everyone is fully committed to create a happy and purposeful community and provide the best for its pupils. The many good aspects include the positive ethos, Christian values, the good quality teaching and the very good leadership of the headteacher. As a result, the pupils gain maturity, behave very well and develop very good attitudes to their learning. Standards across the school are rising and they are already high at the end of Key Stage 1. The pupils in Key Stage 2 don't do as well yet, but they are making sound progress. The school provides good value for money.

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

- Standards are high in national tests in Year 2
- Teaching and learning are good and the committed staff team work very well together
- The headteacher provides very good leadership and management and she is well supported by the very good, proactive governing body
- There is a positive climate for learning created by the headteacher and fostered by the whole school community
- Provision in the Foundation Stage is very good
- There is a strong Christian ethos with a commitment to valuing and including all pupils
- The partnership with parents is very effective
- The personal development of pupils results in very good attitudes and relationships

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

- Standards in English, mathematics and science by the time the pupils reach the end of Year 6
- Use of planning and assessment in all subjects, apart from English and mathematics, so that pupils build consistently on previous skills, knowledge and understanding
- Standards in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) throughout the school are not high enough

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED**

New Christ Church opened in May 2000 as a Fresh Start school and this is its first inspection. It has made good progress since that time in the face of substantial difficulties. These include considerable turbulence in pupil numbers, difficulty in recruitment and retention of staff and immense behaviour difficulties when the school first opened. While dealing with these challenges the headteacher, staff and governors worked hard and systematically to establish a positive ethos

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<sup>1</sup>A school is given a "Fresh Start" when it is closed and reopened on the same site following an unsatisfactory Ofsted report

so that the school now functions very efficiently. Standards are rising, pupils are well behaved and have very positive attitudes and everyone involved with the school is committed to achieving the best for pupils. Monitoring reports by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), the local authority, the Diocese and the headteacher indicate that teaching has improved since the new start and is now good. The school is in a very good position to improve further.

## 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
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	n/a	E	D	B
Mathematics	n/a	E	E*	E
Science	n/a	E*	E	E

Key	
Well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
very low	E*

*(Similar schools are those with a similar percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals. Similar school grades on this table refer to those in the 35 – 50% band)*

In the 2002 statutory tests attainment in Year 6 was below average in English and well below average in mathematics and science. Pupils' results in mathematics were particularly low and in the bottom five per cent of all schools in England. There has been considerable pupil mobility in the school during the last two years, particularly in Year 6. Despite the school's best efforts, older pupils have had much lost ground to make up before they could move forward. However, in English, pupils at New Christ Church did better than their peers in similar schools indicating the success of the school's focus on improving English skills. A good number of Year 6 pupils achieved the higher Level 5 in English, however, higher attaining pupils did not do as well in mathematics and science. Standards in tests and assessments at the end of Year 2 have been particularly high for the last two years. At the time of the Fresh Start, standards were below average in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2. Standards are now above average in reading, well above in writing and very high in mathematics. Pupils in Year 2 did particularly well in mathematics last year and were in the top five per cent of all schools in England. When compared to similar schools, Year 2 pupils at New Christ Church achieved standards well above their peers and in the top five per cent for all three subjects.

Most children's achievements in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 are now good and pupils are moving forward at a rapid pace. By the end of Year 2 standards are above average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. They are broadly average in most other subjects although they are below average in most aspects of ICT. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 achieve satisfactorily and have made some progress this year. By the end of Year 6 pupils reach average standards in music and design and technology. Standards in English, mathematics, science, art, geography, history and ICT are improving quickly, but are below average overall. Pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language make the same progress as their peers.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are happy to come to school, work hard and enjoy their learning
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave sensibly in lessons and at playtimes. No unkind or aggressive behaviour occurs
Personal development and relationships	The school's ethos ensures that relationships at all levels are very good and pupils gain confidence and maturity

Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance is close to the national average
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### TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

A large majority of the teaching is either good or very good. It is better in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 than it is in Key Stage 2. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. This is an extremely positive picture. The good quality of teaching helps pupils to make satisfactory progress overall and to improve standards. The particular strengths are the good lesson planning, use of effective methods to teach new skills and knowledge and a brisk pace. These help pupils to learn quickly. Classroom assistants are well deployed and support pupils well, especially in group activities. Resources are used effectively to aid learning. Homework is making a positive contribution to learning especially in Year 6. The weaker elements in teaching include the lack of challenge for higher attaining pupils and some inconsistencies in marking and assessment. The teaching for reception children is consistently very good and, occasionally, excellent. The school makes a good assessment of children's language and other special needs when they enter school and uses this information particularly well to identify where pupils need additional support. As a result, pupils for whom English is an additional language and those with special educational needs are taught well and make good progress. One senior teacher has specific responsibility for community links and she uses home-visits very effectively to ensure all pupils and their families feel totally included in the life of the school. All teachers are committed to the inclusive policy of the school and pupils work well together respecting and learning about their different cultures and beliefs.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Sound overall. Planning for different subjects has improved and a good range of interesting activities outside lessons takes place
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. It is well organised and pupils who need help are identified well and extra support is given. Good progress is made towards the targets set in their individual education plans and they achieve well.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good support helps these pupils to make good progress and achieve well. Extra help is arranged for pupils at the early stages of learning English, which is very effective.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. This is a strong area, with a strong commitment to supporting the personal development of every pupil. Provision for spiritual development is at the core of everything that happens in the school. Provision for social and moral development is very good. Good provision is made for pupils' cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good care for personal development and health and safety. The monitoring of pupils' academic progress is unsatisfactory in some subjects.

The school has an effective partnership with parents, providing them with good information about its work and their children's progress. Parents regard the school highly and support it well.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The very good leadership and vision of the headteacher, together with the good teamwork she promotes, has produced a very positive climate for learning in which pupils thrive.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors are committed and supportive of the school. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and use their expertise to help it to progress further.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school is beginning to make better use of its evaluation of standards to move the school forward.
The strategic use of resources	Good use is made of all available resources, which are used effectively to bring about improvements in provision. The principles of best value are applied well.

The school is well staffed by appropriately qualified teachers and classroom assistants. They are supported well by the rest of the staff team. The accommodation has been improved and is now very good. The good quality and range of learning resources help support teaching and learning.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children are making good progress and that behaviour is good.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed and that teaching is good.</li> <li>• Their children like school, the school is helping them to become mature.</li> <li>• They would feel comfortable about approaching staff with questions or problems.</li> <li>• The school expects their children to work hard.</li> <li>• The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of homework.</li> <li>• Information about their children's progress.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the positive views that were expressed by a very high proportion of parents. The school's climate for learning and good provision help children to enjoy school. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's education and are supportive of the school's work. Leadership effectively promotes a shared commitment and teaching is good overall. However, inspectors did not find any evidence to substantiate parents' concerns about homework or information about progress. Homework set is appropriate for the age of the pupils and the quality of written information is good.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

##### ***Standards in the Foundation Stage (reception class)***

1. When children start school, their skills, knowledge and understanding are wide-ranging but below those expected for their age. Both the teaching and curriculum for children in the reception class are very good. This helps all children, including those with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, to achieve well. As a result, the majority of children currently in the reception class are in line to reach the early goals for learning<sup>2</sup> and attain standards in line with most children of their age in all areas of learning<sup>3</sup>.

##### ***Years 1 and 2***

##### ***Standards in national tests***

2. In the 2002 National Curriculum tests for pupils at the end of Year 2, the mathematics results were very high. These results are in the top five per cent of all schools, with higher attaining pupils doing particularly well. The results in English were above the national average in reading, and well above in writing. The mathematics results were the same as the previous year and confirm vastly improving standards in this subject. However, in both reading and writing, the results were not as good as the previous year but significantly higher than when the school first opened. Pupils at New Christ Church did much better than their peers in schools with similar socio-economic background, in reading, writing and mathematics. When compared to these similar schools, pupils at New Christ Church are well above average. In the teacher assessments in science, the school's results were in line with the national average. There is a slight difference in the attainment of boys and girls, with boys performing better than girls in reading and writing. However, girls performed slightly better than boys in mathematics. With only three years' data and very small cohorts, it is too early to identify trends.
3. The school has worked hard to improve its assessment procedures and now regular assessments take place in specific areas of English and mathematics. These strategies have helped teachers to plan better focused activities, which are helping to raise standards in English and to maintain the very high standards seen in mathematics.

##### ***Inspection findings***

4. Given their starting points, overall the pupils make good progress and achieve very well by the end of Key Stage 1. In Year 2, standards in English, mathematics and science are above the national average. In English, standards are above average in all aspects of the subject. In mathematics, standards are highest in number work, but lower in using and applying mathematics to solve problems. Standards in science are better than last year because of the good teaching.
5. By the end of Year 2, pupils attain average standards in geography and history. In ICT standards are not high enough and well below the expected level. In art standards are also currently below the expected level although the school continues to improve provision and standards are rising. Based on the limited work seen during the inspection, standards in

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<sup>2</sup> Early learning goals establish expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage

<sup>3</sup> The areas of learning are: personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development and creative development.

music, physical education and design and technology are in line with standards expected in Year 2.

## **Years 3 to 6**

### *Standards in national tests*

6. Only two years' data is available for pupils at the end of Year 6 and cohorts were very small. In small cohorts, one pupil's results can make a significant difference to the overall percentage achieving the expected levels. Care is, therefore, needed when drawing conclusion from results. In the national tests in 2002, standards were below the national average in English and well below in mathematics and science. In mathematics the results place the school in the bottom five per cent of all schools nationally. Results indicate that standards improved from the previous year in English and are slightly better in science. However, results in mathematics show a drop in standards from the previous year.
7. In English, pupils at New Christ Church performed better than pupils in similar schools. This is because more pupils reached the higher Level 5. However, their performance in mathematics and science was well below pupils in similar schools. There is a difference in the attainment of boys and girls, with boys under-performing in mathematics and girls under-performing in science. The school is aware of these differences and already has plans in place to address this. With only two years' data available it is too early to identify trends.

### *Inspection findings*

8. Given their capabilities, although the pupils do not make as much progress as those in Key Stage 1, their achievement is satisfactory. Standards this year are very similar to those last year in Year 6. In English, standards are below in all aspects of the subject. In mathematics, standards are well below but number work is the strongest area. As with Year 2, pupils' ability to use and apply their number skills to problem-solving and investigative work is under-developed. In science, standards are well below the expected levels.
9. There was limited evidence available to make accurate judgements about standards in music and design and technology. However, based on work seen, standards in these two subjects are in line with expected levels in Year 6. Standards in ICT are currently well below expected levels in Year 6 although they are beginning to rise now that the school has better resources for teaching and learning in the subject. Standards in art, geography and history are also below expected levels and weaknesses in literacy skills have an impact on the lower standards in geography and history. There was insufficient evidence during the inspection to make a judgement about standards in physical education.

### *Reasons for differences between Year 2 and Year 6*

10. The current difference in standards between Years 2 and 6 is due to a number of factors. One of the most significant is the high turbulence in pupil numbers, with many pupils moving from other schools. This has had more of an impact on older pupils as most of the movement has been in the upper part of the school. Last year, for example, 53 per cent of the pupils in Years 5 and 6 joined during the year. A high proportion of these pupils had special educational needs and were learning English as an additional language, thus lowering the overall performance of the group. Another factor is the changes in staffing, arising from the high cost of housing in Reading. This had a particular impact on older

pupils who lacked the continuity and stability they needed to address their specific difficulties. This year 50 per cent of the teachers are new to the school and all are teaching in Years 3 to 6. However, the staffing situation is now much more stable and as a result pupils are gaining ground.

#### *Target setting*

11. The school has set suitably challenging targets for pupils' performance in Year 6 tests in English and mathematics this year. Because of the turbulence in pupil numbers, and the consequent changes in the overall ability of the year group, it is unlikely to meet these targets. Statutory target setting has been a difficult activity since the Fresh Start because of the high proportion of pupils joining and leaving the school after targets have been set.

#### *Achievements of pupils with special educational needs*

12. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements, make good progress because of the support they receive from their teachers and the well-briefed and caring support staff. This is particularly true in English and mathematics where work for their ability group is matched well to their learning needs and to the targets in their individual action plans. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make the same progress as pupils overall.

#### *Achievements of pupils learning English as an additional language*

13. Sixteen per cent of pupils are learning English as an additional language. Of these, six pupils are at the early stages and receive additional support. The school has just started to analyse their progress as a separate group. All are achieving well because of the sensitive support they receive.

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

#### *A new beginning*

14. The school's Fresh Start provided an opportunity to draw a line successfully under the previous problems with behaviour and pupils' attitudes. The clear breakdown in relationships between pupils and adults was adversely reflected in pupils' learning. In the past two years much progress has clearly been made and pupils' behaviour and attitudes now reflect very favourably on the efforts of all concerned.

#### *Starting out*

15. Good routines are quickly established as pupils begin their school life. They settle quickly, responding to the calm and encouraging manner of the staff, and develop good attitudes to work and an ability to concentrate. Older pupils who are new to the school quickly respond to staff and the calm and ordered atmosphere.

#### *Pupils' attitudes*

16. Pupils' positive attitudes are undoubtedly a strength of the school. They are proud of the new school and eager to take part in lessons. All are aware of the community's efforts to keep the school open and many describe the conscious choice their parents have made in sending them to the school. They talk easily to visitors about their school and show strong interest in assemblies and lessons. The very good relationships throughout the school mean that pupils and adults work well together with mutual respect and in an atmosphere of trust. Pupils say that "the best thing about the school is the teachers". They are well taught and respond very well to the very good expectations that are a clear part of the school's Christian values. Visitors cannot fail to be impressed by the sense of community and the genuine appreciation shown by pupils as, for example, when they thank you for hearing them read.

17. Both the good and the very good teaching in many lessons spark pupils' interest and they respond by being enthusiastic and eager to learn. Pupils are eager to join in their lessons and hands shoot up in response to teachers' questions. This enthusiasm fires their learning and they make good progress as a result. Within their assemblies they take obvious delight in joining in the modern hymns and songs, raising their voices with enthusiasm and evident enjoyment.

#### *Pupils' behaviour*

18. Behaviour in lessons, assemblies and around the school is almost always either good or better. Time is not lost in lessons correcting behaviour as most pupils are attentive and well on task. On the odd occasion where there is some inattention it is very quickly corrected by a word from the teacher. Pupils are well managed by teachers and respond well to their high expectations. They respond equally well to other adults in the school including teaching assistants, administrative staff and lunchtime supervisors. Those with special educational needs are well supported in both whole class and group activities. Resources and equipment are carefully handled by pupils, used for their intended purpose and quickly and efficiently cleared at the end of sessions. In assemblies and lessons the pupils maintain concentration for extended periods of time and listen carefully to what others say. Around the school they are polite and show a good degree of self-discipline, for example, as they wait for others to pass or move between activities in class.
19. In discussions with pupils they report that bullying or oppressive behaviour is not a problem. All are clear that they would trust older pupils or adults to help them sort out problems. Classroom 'circle time' provides opportunities for pupils to explore ways of coping with problems that may naturally occur as a result of living and learning together. Parents' views certainly echo this with almost universal agreement that behaviour is good.
20. There have been no exclusions this year and those last year related to two pupils with very specific learning problems, neither of which could be fully dealt with in a mainstream setting.

#### *Pupils' personal development*

21. The very good relationships throughout the school have a significant impact on the quality of learning because pupils feel valued, secure and well supported. Almost all parents feel that the school is helping their child to become more mature. Pupils get on well together in lessons, support one another in activities and are polite to staff, visitors and each other. They listen attentively to what others have to say and value their responses and views. Pupils are aware of the effects of their actions and mindful of the feelings of others. They contribute to the formulation of class rules and are looking forward to the setting up of a School Council. When errors occur or mistakes are made no one finds it amusing. This creates a secure environment in which pupils are prepared to risk exploring ideas or venturing opinions consequently lifting the quality of learning. A strong Personal, Social and Health Education programme is very influential in enabling pupils to gain in confidence and self-esteem. All pupils relate well to one another in a climate of racial harmony. They show respect for one another's beliefs and backgrounds and, as a result, there are no racist incidents. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated and respectfully treated by their peers.
22. Pupils are actively encouraged to take responsibility for themselves, remembering to take their reading books and diaries home or complete homework tasks. They learn to make sensible meal choices from dishes on offer at the lunchtime cafeteria. Within class they take responsibility for setting out and clearing away resources and materials in lessons and take turns in collecting and delivering the class registers. Older pupils prepare the hall for assemblies and escort younger pupils to and from the field. Through sales and other enterprises pupils raise money for those less fortunate than themselves. In their lessons

pupils are often encouraged to work independently and in numeracy and literacy sessions they often work on a set task without direct support from their teacher.

23. The school's commitment to the development of its pupils is well demonstrated by the recent residential visit of pupils from Years 5 and 6 to Rhos y Gwaliau. It involved outdoor and adventurous activities that both developed team and individual qualities in addition to the valuable experience of caring for themselves when away from home. It further cemented the quality of relationships and was a useful vehicle for encouraging reflections on personal values and feelings. This was very well demonstrated as Year 6 pupils recounted their feelings during a 'circle time' session.

#### *Attendance*

24. Attendance has improved considerably since the opening of the school two years ago and it is now at a level comparable with the average for primary schools nationally. Unauthorised attendances have dropped during this period and punctuality has improved. These improvements owe much to the very positive atmosphere which has been created and to the close monitoring of absences by staff and rapid follow up, including home visits and discussions with parents.

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

25. The overall quality of teaching is good, with either good or better teaching occurring in nearly three-quarters of the lessons observed. In over two fifths of the lessons the teaching is at least very good. In one lesson it was excellent. No teaching is unsatisfactory. This is very good improvement since the last HMI monitoring report in June 2001 where all teaching was at least sound and three-fifths of the teaching was good but no higher. Parents also agree that teaching is good. Across the school, the good teaching helps pupils to make good progress in their learning and to achieve well. Good teaching occurs in English, art, music and PSHE throughout the school. Mathematics is especially well taught in Years 1 and 2. However, although it is satisfactorily taught in Years 3 to 6, some teachers' subject knowledge is less secure. The teaching of science for pupils in Years 1 and 2 is very good, and for pupils in Years 3 to 6, it is satisfactory overall with a good example observed in the Year 4/5 class. In all other subjects, teaching is satisfactory overall with individual elements of both good and very good teaching.

#### *Teaching of literacy*

26. The teaching of literacy is consistently good throughout the school. This is having an increasing impact on improving standards. Due to the good initiatives, introduced over the last two years since the Fresh Start, pupils make good progress in acquiring reading skills, especially in building new words from sounds. This is particularly supportive of the less able pupils and those who have special educational needs. Great emphasis has been given to developing the skills of writing over the last two years. As a result, writing has now improved, with pupils making better progress in this element. Speaking and listening skills are well taught and form the foundation of much of the learning that takes place in literacy. This good focus on the basic skills is also contributing to learning in other subjects such as history and geography.

#### *Teaching of numeracy*

27. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory throughout the school although it is stronger in Years 1 and 2 than it is in Years 3 to 6. The standards achieved by pupils in their number work are high in Key Stage 1. Teachers are focusing on improving other aspects of pupils' learning in mathematics to match this success in number.

#### *Teaching in the Foundation Stage*

28. The teaching for children in the reception class is consistently very good and, in one lesson observed, it was excellent. This is because the Foundation Stage teacher has an especially good understanding of the needs of young children. She plans enjoyable activities that make the learning relevant to the children's experiences. Teaching is also very good because the basic skills of speaking, listening and counting are given a high priority, and are part of every activity, even when the main focus might be on creating a collage picture. For example, as a group of children cut up strips of paper to create Elmer the Elephant, the staff talked to them about the shapes and colours of the strips. They asked questions, encouraging the children to look closely and describe the paper, in order to extend their vocabulary. Children are encouraged to clear up and to help each other to put things away tidily at the end of an activity. Ongoing assessment is used well. Staff record the progress children are making in all areas of their development and consider the outcomes carefully when planning the next steps in learning. The teacher also evaluates the effectiveness of lessons, so that she can make adjustments when necessary. The classroom assistant contributes well to the ongoing assessments, for example by noting children's contributions in discussions, showing understanding of a particular concept being taught.
29. Both adults work effectively as a team, ensuring a consistent approach. This is revealed in the effective management and the high expectations for all aspects of children's learning and behaviour. Careful preparation ensures no time is wasted when children come into the classroom or change activities. There is a very good balance of teacher-directed and child-initiated activities, using a variety of approaches that are very effective in promoting children's interests and concentration. This was clearly seen in a literacy lesson where, following the introductory session, children were fired with enthusiasm and eager to start their group task. When challenged to think about attributes and personality of Elmer the elephant, children demonstrated a very high level of independence, interest and concentration.

#### *Teaching in Years 1 to 6*

30. The majority of teaching in Years 1 to 6 is good, with three-quarters of that occurring in Years 1 and 2 being very good. The teaching in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory overall with examples of good and very good teaching observed during the inspection. Except in mathematics, teachers have a secure knowledge of the different subjects they teach. In Years 1 and 2 it is very good. This helps teachers to introduce new topics confidently and respond well to the questions pupils ask. For example, in a very good Year 2 science lesson, the teacher's skilful question and answer session gave pupils good opportunities to discuss the problem of moving a heavy bag of clay across the classroom floor. Similarly, a very good explanation of how to build a collage using texture, in an art lesson, helped Year 5 pupils to easily apply their skills, make good progress and achieve well.

#### *Strengths in teaching*

31. An effective feature of much of the teaching is the quality of lesson planning, which is mainly very good. An example of this was seen in a very good Year 1 mathematics lesson. Here, the detailed planning set out clear learning objectives and identified the resources to be used. This helped to build up pupils' skills and knowledge well as the lesson progressed. In the majority of lessons, especially in English and mathematics, teachers provide a variety of activities, which cater for most pupils of different ability well. However, on some occasions, the activities set for pupils who are working at a higher level are not sufficiently challenging. This limits their progress and achievement and therefore the standards they reach are not as high as they could be.
32. Teachers use effective methods to introduce new work and clearly explain the learning objective for each lesson. This helps pupils to acquire new skills and knowledge easily in most lessons. For example, in a very good geography lesson seen for Year 5, pupils gained a very good understanding of geographical vocabulary and features from secondary

sources. This helped them to acquire good skills and produce work of a high quality. Teachers are skilled at leading whole-class discussions, probing and questioning pupils to help their understanding. This was effective in a Year 2 history lesson where pupils gained good understanding of what life was like for people living in Victorian times. The interesting activities provided and the way teachers develop and explore learning throughout lessons help pupils to develop good attitudes and, especially in the younger classes, a good knowledge of their learning. For example, Year 2 pupils showed very good interest in an ICT lesson on controlling the roamer and gained especially good knowledge of the instructions they needed to give. These good attitudes and understanding of their learning help pupils to make progress and achieve well.

33. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and this results in teachers' management of behaviour in the classroom being very good, despite the number of pupils who found it difficult to concentrate and work hard when the school first opened. This is largely due to the particularly good promotion of this aspect, very effectively fostered and supported by the headteacher. Together with the good pace maintained throughout the school, the quality of relationships helps pupils to work hard and remain on task throughout lessons. Classroom assistants are well deployed and have good expertise, so they play a significant part in helping pupils learn. This is particularly so for those pupils who have special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language. There is good use of resources in many lessons, for example in helping pupils in their mental and oral skills in mathematics. However, teachers do not make sufficient use of ICT to help pupils learn in a wide variety of subjects, and as a result, opportunities to extend knowledge and understanding across the curriculum are missed.

#### *Teaching of pupils with special educational needs*

34. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs ensures that they make good progress and achieve well. As a result of the very good support they receive these pupils learn very well in their lessons. Experienced assistants give very good support in class so pupils are fully able to complete tasks successfully. They carefully ensure pupils maintain focus on the specified task and record what they achieve on their individual education plans. They are well deployed and briefed by teachers to very good effect. Teachers take very good account of pupils' targets from their individual education plans in planning their lessons and provide good support for pupils in lessons when assistance is not available. They take good account of pupils' limitations and often prepare tasks that do not require the same level of recording. A very inclusive approach ensures that pupils with special educational needs are educated in classes alongside their peers. Occasionally pupils are withdrawn for short, targeted sessions to address specific needs as for example the Year 6 literacy booster group.

#### *Areas for development*

35. The weakest element of the otherwise good overall quality of the teaching is that there are inconsistencies in the quality of marking and ongoing assessment of pupils' work. This limits the use of day-to-day assessment in helping to promote the progress of individual pupils and to ensure that future lessons can effectively build on the skills and knowledge pupils have already acquired. At its best, marking clearly identifies the stage at which the pupils are working and gives advice on how to improve. This was seen mainly in English and mathematics. The unsatisfactory marking merely ticks accurate work and there is no evidence that pupils have to correct their errors. The school has already made a good start on developing a system of assessment in science and the foundation subjects. However, this is at an early stage of implementation due to the high staff turnover. The school recognises this needs further improvement in order to effectively identify where there are weaknesses in standards.

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

36. The quality and range of the curriculum is satisfactory, with some strengths and some aspects needing further development. By necessity, the school's priorities have focused on raising achievement in English and mathematics, and this emphasis is reflected in the significant allocation of curriculum time given to these subjects. However, the school also places an emphasis on the development of pupils' expressive skills through the promotion of art and music. Religious education is one of the school's strengths and pupils benefit significantly from a nurturing and positive learning environment based on Christian values.

### *Development of the curriculum*

37. The curriculum meets statutory requirements; policies and schemes of work are in place for almost all subjects. In general, this guidance ensures that the required curriculum is covered, but in some subjects, such as science, physical education and design and technology there is not enough supporting guidance to help teachers develop specific skills. However, schemes of work for physical education and design and technology are under review, and subject guidance for science is being revised for pupils in Years 3 to 6. National guidance is used to support teachers' planning in most subjects, but record keeping and assessments are not used effectively to plan for the systematic development of skills as pupils move from one year group to the next.

38. The school has effectively introduced the national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy. The provision for ICT has improved substantially because the school has a new computer suite, but the subject has yet to feature regularly in supporting other subjects and this means that pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

39. Pupils benefit from a very good programme of personal, social and health education, and citizenship. The school places an emphasis on strengthening pupils' self-esteem and developing an understanding of each other's feelings. To fulfil this aim, much of the planning is underpinned by a caring and supportive approach, which meets the wide range of pupils' needs. There are appropriate arrangements for sex education and education in drugs awareness.

40. The provision for the children in the reception class (Foundation Stage) is very good. A good range of stimulating activities are planned to promote each area well, adding richness to children's learning. All areas are well resourced. The curriculum for these young children is planned according to new national guidance with regular opportunities for the children to develop physically during inside sessions in the school hall and outside sessions in the early years area. The impact of this very good provision is that children make good progress and soon achieve the expected standards for their age.

### *Provision for pupils with special educational needs*

41. The overall provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Throughout the school pupils on the special educational needs register have good individual education plans that have been well written by their teachers and fully shared with the assistants who work with them. Teachers have been well supported in compiling these by the advice they receive from the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) and school based training. Since September they have received specific guidance and support on the requirements of the new code of practice and the drafting of individual education plans to meet them. These plans are used well, particularly in literacy and numeracy, to match activities to pupils' specific needs and capabilities. In all classes pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The good links with a range of outside agencies are used well to support this process and to provide support in addressing specific needs as, for example, the speech therapist who advises on targets for several pupils with

statements, or the art therapist who works with specific pupils. Similarly, pupils from minority ethnic groups and those for whom English is a second language, have full access to the curriculum.

#### *Equal opportunities*

42. The school strongly promotes the principles of equal opportunities, although it has yet to identify gifted and talented pupils to ensure that their needs can be fully met. With the exception of those in Year 6, pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. To accommodate this organisation, the school is currently establishing planning for each subject which ensures that knowledge, understanding and skills are systematically developed as pupils move through the school. This is working well and most pupils are beginning to make better progress as a result of improved planning.

#### *Activities outside lessons*

43. There is an unusually good range of extra-curricular activities for a school of this size. Activities include various sporting and music clubs, as well as French and drama. A residential trip is provided for pupils in Years 5 and 6. The choir, observed during the inspection, was an example of very good quality provision.

#### *Community links*

44. Links with the community, including the parish church, are very good. Liaison with partner institutions is good, and makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning experiences. Strong links with secondary schools ensure that pupils are confident about changing schools at the end of Year 6.

#### *Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development*

45. Provision is very good for pupils' personal, spiritual, social, moral development, and good for cultural development.

#### *Spiritual development*

46. Pupils' spiritual development is strongly promoted. The overall provision reflects the school's Christian foundation and nurturing environment, and places pupils at the heart of the school's work. Throughout the school, areas are set aside for pupils and adults to place personal artefacts of particular interest. These areas create opportunities for reflection and are respected and valued by all pupils. The school's clear mission statement is displayed in the hall in the form of a quilt to which pupils contributed. An unusual feature of the school's commitment to developing pupils' spiritual awareness is the use of a book intended to help pupils understand the meaning of being human. Pupils were encouraged to make individual contributions, in the form of written comments and photographs, and share these with others.
47. Acts of worship are central to the school day. They generate a strong feeling of corporate identity through shared beliefs and invoke strong feelings and thoughts about moral and social issues. Spirituality underpins all of the school's work. In lessons, there are elements of appreciation of the beauty of creation in such subjects as art and music. The caring ethos helps pupils to feel valued and to accept the ideas and values of others.

#### *Moral development*

48. Moral development is fostered very well, with consistent guidance and example from adults about good behaviour and principles of right and wrong. Expectations for pupils' moral development pervade much of the teaching and pupils know what is expected of them. As a result, they have a well-developed sense of right and wrong, which is consistently reinforced through support and encouragement. Throughout the school, pupils' strong sense of self-discipline can be seen in the way they conduct themselves as they move around the school without close supervision. The very few who experience difficulty in behaving themselves are helped by their teachers and by the very good example set by their peers.

### *Social development*

49. A particularly strong feature of the school's work is the way it fosters very good relationships and social development. It offers pupils of all ages many opportunities to take responsibility and show initiative within a setting where a very strong sense of community has developed. This is closely linked to the caring ethos promoted by the staff and governors, where teamwork, co-operation and a supportive working environment are valued. As a result, pupils' social development is fostered very well by the school's daily routines, where pupils are treated with respect, and within subjects such as physical education, where they willingly work in partnership. Pupils get on very well with each other. They respect one another's ideas and are not afraid to express contrary views
50. Lunchtime is a social occasion. Noise levels are reasonable, allowing conversation. There is little direct intervention from lunch supervisors, because the pupils demonstrate a very good level of self-discipline. Personal, social and health education give a good focus for discussion about moral and social issues. Pupils work together sensibly on tasks in lessons and show that they value the strength of collaboration. They are encouraged to take responsibility for routine tasks in their class and around the school, and they do this willingly.

### *Cultural development*

51. Cultural development is promoted well. Through the curriculum and extra-curricular activities and visits, the school teaches pupils to appreciate their own cultural traditions and the rich diversity of other cultures. Displays around the school celebrate art and music from a wide range of world faiths and cultures, including Sikhism, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. The Kalama wall hanging, displayed in the hall, depicts the scene from a Hindu epic. In history, work is linked to learning about the Romans and Aztecs and in music pupils listen to music from other cultures and traditions.

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

52. The very good care for the pupils is a considerable strength and is underpinned well by comprehensive, clear policies and procedures. All of the staff have worked very hard to create a very positive climate for learning and consequently the pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and secure and enjoy warm relationships with all staff. The backgrounds, strengths and needs of all of the children are known and shared by all staff.
53. The very good policies for behaviour and bullying set out in good detail the positive 'no blame' approach with a good range of rewards and appropriate sanctions. The staff provide very good role models in their interactions with the pupils and they collaborate to ensure very consistent behaviour management. Careful consideration has been given to the introduction of additional activities to develop and maintain the pupils' interest in lessons and breaktimes. Very good use has been made of the expertise of the local behaviour support team to improve attitudes and behaviour and the school is currently working closely with another in the area on the introduction of peer mediation.
54. The imaginative appointment of an additional teacher has enabled close working with children and families at risk of disaffection. She has also been able to work with the few pupils who have patterns of absences and unsatisfactory punctuality. This initiative complements well the very close monitoring of attendance and lateness and the very good support of the educational welfare officer. Children and their parents know the importance the school attaches to good attendance and that unexplained absences are followed up promptly and rigorously. These initiatives have helped to improve attendance and punctuality considerably.

### *Child protection*

55. All staff are familiar with the child protection procedures which are based on the most recent local authority guidelines. There are good links with the local social services department. Wider aspects of health and safety are covered comprehensively in the health and safety policy. Again, all staff are familiar with the procedures and are vigilant throughout the day. Arrangements for supervision at breaktimes and lunchtimes are very good. All staff have had emergency first aid training. There are very good routines to manage illnesses and accidents. The headteacher, caretaker and governors do regular health and safety inspections and record and report their findings. All electrical, safety and P.E. equipment is inspected annually under commercial contracts. The school's strong sense of community is used well to manage carefully pupils' health, safety and welfare. A policy for Race Equality is in place and this is effectively demonstrated by the lack of racial incidents and the way in which everyone co-operates with and respects one another irrespective of ethnic background.

### *Assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress*

56. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are good in English and mathematics but unsatisfactory in other subjects. Similarly, assessment information is not yet used to fully support the planning of work, in science and foundation subjects, to meet pupil's needs. Assessment is one of the priorities in the school's Raising Achievement Plan (RAP), and the deputy has a clear action plan for its development.

57. Currently, children's attainment on entry to the reception class is assessed by means of the local education authority's chosen initial tests. Children's progress is monitored in order to identify their needs and to ensure that they make a smooth transition into the national curriculum. Thereafter, pupils are entered for statutory national tests and assessments in English, mathematics, and science at age seven and eleven. The school draws many conclusions from the published results allowing it to highlight areas for development. For example, the school has used its analysis to provide additional support for pupils in Year 3 to ensure they maintain good gains in their learning.

58. The school's best practice has been developed in English and mathematics where there are a good range of assessment procedures. The information derived from these procedures is used in the setting of targets for individuals and classes. For example, a regular pattern of testing has been introduced in English, with optional nationally recognised tests in Years 3, 4 and 5. Pupils are also given spelling and reading tests. All results are analysed by a commercial software programme and information can then be used to plan future work. In addition, writing tasks are set every half term and moderated work is held in portfolios. This has resulted in an overall improvement in standards in English as teachers plan more accurately to address identified weaknesses. Pupils are also regularly tested in mathematics, and portfolios of work are beginning to be compiled. A similar strategy, for use in science and other subjects, is at an early stage of implementation.

59. Target setting for groups and individual pupils is in the early stages of development in all subjects apart from English and mathematics. Targets set in English have had an impact on raising standards, however, they are not regularly referred to during lessons or when marking pupils' work. Assessment procedures are under review in science, but there are no formal procedures for monitoring the performance in other subjects. Teachers regularly assess informally their own teaching or the progress made by pupils in lessons but this is not documented and, therefore, not as effective as it might be.

60. Assessment procedures in reception are good. They give detailed information for all areas of the curriculum, and this is used effectively to plan the next steps of learning for each child. There are also regular checks and written assessments of pupils' attainment during topics.

### *Support for pupils with special educational needs*

61. The early identification of those children with special educational needs gets off to a good start in reception class, and close and careful assessments of their attainment and progress maintain effective support. There are good procedures in place for tracking attainment and progress for pupils with special educational needs in other classes. Individual education plans are regularly reviewed and contain suitably specific targets. Learning support assistants and class teachers make regular notes of pupils' progress towards their targets, and this yields sufficient information to allow new targets to be set where appropriate.
62. Regular assessments and ongoing records of progress are used well by class teachers to plan for the next steps in the learning of pupils with special educational needs. Good use is made of them in the drafting and revision of pupils' individual education plans and to inform the regular discussions when targets and action plans are reviewed with parents and pupils. Specialist advice and assessment is provided as necessary by outside agencies. Specific provision identified in those pupils' with statements of special educational need is in place.

### *Support for pupils learning English as an additional language*

63. The school makes appropriate arrangements to support pupils learning English as an additional language. When pupils are at the early stages of learning English, for example, local authority support is arranged, which is very effective.

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

### *Parents' views of the school*

64. The partnership with parents is very good as a result of the great efforts by staff and governors to strengthen this very important aspect of school life. At the parents' meeting and in the questionnaires very high proportions of parents felt that their children like school, their children are making good progress and becoming more mature, teaching is good, the children are expected to work hard and they feel comfortable about approaching the school. Many stressed how much their children had grown in confidence since they joined the school. Improving further the links with parents is a continuing priority in the 'Raising Achievement Plan'. Parents have been sent a questionnaire and the staff, parents and governors are exploring additional procedures to enable parents' views to be taken into account more regularly.
65. A minority of parents were dissatisfied with the consistency and amount of homework. However, during the inspection this was judged by the inspectors not to be a significant problem.

### *The information provided by the school*

66. Another priority has been to improve the quality and quantity of information given to parents. General information is of good quality. Parents are sent a weekly newsletter and the school has recently introduced 'curriculum news' which will be sent home termly. The brochure is very attractively presented and is supported by a smaller summary leaflet of similar quality. The information is clear and covers all key aspects of school organisation in loose-leaf pages of good quality. This offers the flexibility to make amendments each year for results of tests, financial, staffing and attendance information. The school has run courses on 'Keeping up with the children' and plans a series of curriculum information evenings. Parents are given advice on helping their children at home and some of the teachers give information on writing styles. A few parents would like additional advice on supporting mathematics.
67. The annual pupil records of achievement are lengthy and are written for each individual with targets set in literacy and numeracy. Some parents would like clearer indications of areas

for development. Parents are given the results of the national tests at the end of each key stage. A minority of parents (17%) would like more information on progress because they are not routinely given the results of intermediate tests. The school has made it clear to parents that staff are very willing to discuss progress and standards with them at any time during the year.

#### *Parents' support*

68. Parental support for their children has grown significantly since the formation of the new school two years ago. The appointment of an additional teacher has provided opportunities to increase the direct contact with parents and helped to improve attendance and reduce the alienation of some children and parents following the closure of the original school. Parents consult teachers freely and have indicated in last year's school survey that they are comfortable about consulting the school if they have a problem. These views were confirmed during the inspection. Great efforts have been made to involve parents more in school activities. For example, the latest meeting of the Friends' Association attracted almost 20 parents. Several parents are now helping in classrooms in various ways and the attendances at Sports' Day, Christmas productions and fund-raising events are very good. A majority of parents help their children at home, particularly with their reading.

#### *Partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs*

69. Parents are fully involved, through regular review meetings, in discussions with teachers about how pupils with special educational needs are progressing towards their targets and the provision that is being made for them through their individual education plans. Full annual reviews of statements of special educational need are carried out and the school is moving towards establishing a rolling timetable for these.

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

#### *Clear vision and aims*

70. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and she has successfully created an ethos that reflects it. She is committed to the school aims, which centre on the school as a 'family' and striving for excellence in all that it does. The headteacher has provided a nurturing environment, from a particularly difficult start, where everyone is treated with respect and equality. She has developed an effective staff team who share her vision and, with the governors, she has appointed very talented staff who provide many different skills. Her leadership has ensured that a constructive climate for learning has continued to develop and be maintained even during a high turnover of staff since the school made its Fresh Start two years ago. The positive learning environment ensures that the school is a very happy place in which the attitudes of pupils and the quality of relationships are very good. This is a major reason why most pupils are making good progress and achieving well.

#### *Management structure*

71. Management of the school since its Fresh Start required the headteacher to develop rapidly a comprehensive grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and to make important decisions about priorities in order to move the school forward. The headteacher, working closely with the governors, appointed a team specifically with experienced staff as senior managers. Although the number of senior teachers is much higher than normally found in a school this size, it has, nevertheless, proved an effective decision in bringing about the rapid improvement since the school opened. The working relationship with the deputy headteacher is well developed and the headteacher is using the deputy headteacher's skills to particularly good effect. Other senior managers have equally important roles and ensure that their delegated responsibilities are fulfilled and that they communicate their findings to the headteacher.

#### *Leadership of the deputy headteacher*

72. The deputy headteacher is now in her second year and is very effective in her overall responsibility for the curriculum and assessment as well as managing mathematics and other subject areas. Whilst fulfilling her teaching commitment particularly well, she has also developed a very good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses within the school. She is aware of what needs to be improved and makes an important contribution to the management of the school's priorities.

#### *Strategic planning*

73. As a Fresh Start school, the requirement to produce a 'Raising Achievement Plan' (RAP) has been carefully and conscientiously undertaken. The headteacher, staff and governors received effective support, soon after the school opened, in order to produce the plan. As a result, the RAP identifies priorities and provides a very good working document to ensure the school continues to improve. Comprehensive literacy and numeracy plans supplement the RAP and key tasks are focused on raising standards. The headteacher's written evaluations of the strategic plans shows a comprehensive grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses in all aspects of its work.

#### *Management strengths*

74. In addition to these strengths, there are other important areas of the leadership and management of the school that have ensured very good progress since the school opened. In particular, the careful identification of the training needs of staff has led to regular placements on courses as well as the provision of effective support within school. This has ensured that pupils are served as well as possible and that staff receive all the support and training available. The drive to improve the attitudes and behaviour of the pupils has meant that staff have received consistently good training so that everyone approaches this priority in the same way. The impact of this management decision has been the dramatic improvement in pupils' attitudes, values and personal development over the last two years. The monitoring of teaching and learning has been a priority for the headteacher, and she has used support from attached advisors, and from colleagues in a linked Beacon school, to maximum effect. Unfortunately, the high turnover of teaching staff since the school opened has meant that the headteacher has to revisit her monitoring more often than would normally be necessary. The turbulent staff situation has been particularly well managed by the headteacher as she has ensured that pupils' education has not been compromised in any way.

#### *Role of subject co-ordinators*

75. Subject co-ordinators are committed and hard working. The co-ordinators for English and mathematics show particularly good leadership of their respective subjects, maintaining high standards or helping to raise them. However, last year, the high staff turnover resulted in the temporary loss of an appropriate system of co-ordinators for other subjects. The headteacher has an appropriate rolling programme of priority subjects that is ensuring better continuity now new staff have taken on subject responsibilities. Once co-ordinators begin to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning, they should soon gain an overview of both provision and standards in their subjects. The fact that there is little formal assessment, apart from in English and mathematics, limits the effectiveness of subject co-ordinators and means that they cannot readily identify some of the strengths and weaknesses within their subjects.

#### *Leadership and management of work with pupils who have special educational needs*

76. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is seen as a central part of the school's work and is a reflection both of its mission statement and the Christian values that underpin it. The new, enthusiastic and very capable SENCO has only been in post since September but has already had a significant impact on provision for this area. A well designed development plan for special needs features as part of the school's plan for raising achievement and ensures provision for this area is a central part of the school's work. Good use is being made of her release time to support teachers and ensure that administrative

procedures are up to date and meet the requirements of the new code of practice. As a result individual education plans are well drafted and matched to the needs of each pupil and processes are in place to meet the requirements of the new code of practice.

#### *The promotion of equal opportunities*

77. The school's aim to provide equality of opportunity in an inclusive environment is well reflected in its work and the care it takes of its pupils. It is careful to ensure that pupils, including those from other backgrounds or for whom English is not the first language, transferring into the school during the year are well supported and quickly assimilated. Where individual circumstances create a specific need the school is quick to respond in a supportive manner. For example, the school quickly gained LEA support to develop the English of a Portuguese pupil and also established very good links with the pupil's family.
78. The governor with responsibility for special educational needs is both well informed and in the advantageous position of seeing this area from a number of perspectives, as he is also the parent of a pupil with a statement of special educational need. He and the SENCO work closely together in reviewing the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs and his view has already helped the school to improve IEP writing by making targets clearer and more user friendly. Annual reports on provision are part of the governors' annual report to parents but regular reports to governors of visits and developments in special educational needs are not yet a feature.

#### *Governing body*

79. Aply led by the chair, the governing body now has a better understanding of its role than at the time the school first opened. All governors were new to the school and most had no experience of being a governor at that time. They have undertaken rigorous training in order to fulfil their statutory responsibilities and to serve the school community well. All governors are committed and conscientious. They use their talents well in the best interests of the school and all aspire to the school's Mission statement, having been involved in its formation. The chair has a very good working relationship with the headteacher and they meet regularly. A range of committees has been established and much of the work is undertaken in these and then reported to the full governing body. The governors now take a proactive role in monitoring the school's performance and they have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses within the school. All statutory requirements related to the work of governors are met.

#### *Financial planning*

80. Financial planning is very good and has ensured a smooth growth from the Fresh Start two years ago. Staffing levels and resources have been put in place to match the increase in pupil numbers. The school currently has a large reserve due to the accumulation of Fresh Start grants but at the end of the period of expansion this is planned to reduce to a level close to the recommended 5 per cent of annual income. This is demonstrated well in the five year budget plan which provides good flexibility and should enable the school to reach its full size with a close match of income and expenditure during the final year. The staff and governors have used the early Fresh Start money wisely and imaginatively to help to create a very good ethos and climate for learning. The skilful use of responsibility allowances has enabled the school to recruit good quality teachers at a difficult time in Southern England. The employment of an additional teacher has had many positive benefits for pupil development by helping to build confidence and trust through close contacts with the families. These staffing initiatives are examples of very efficient use of resources and very good value for money. Budget plans support closely the priorities which are outlined and costed in the Raising Achievement Plan. For example, the level of support in lessons has contributed to raising standards.

#### *Principles of best value*

81. The principles of best value are applied well. The purchase of good service and support contracts ensures good value for money. There is wide consultation and participation by all staff and governors in planning and decision-making. Close liaison with other local schools, much at the initiative of the headteacher, has resulted in benefits to all of the schools involved, including some shared training costs. The headteacher has been very active in seeking additional sources of funding from local and national government. This has enabled extensive improvement and refurbishment of the premises and the establishment of a very good, well equipped ICT suite. A current initiative is likely to result in substantial additional funds for the local schools for social development. The staff make sound use of comparative data on academic standards in primary schools. However, the nature of the funding of a Fresh Start school makes it difficult to compare costs.

#### *Financial management and control*

82. Financial management and control are good with staff and governors monitoring expenditure in detail regularly. The school makes very good use of its resources including specific grants. The staff development budget is allocated to ensure that training is linked to school improvement. The school also accounts properly for the earmarked expenditure for special needs and the standards fund. The report of the most recent internal audit last year was positive about the procedures in place and the relatively minor recommendations have been implemented. The administration has good records, procedures and routines in place to provide effective support for staff, pupils, governors and parents.

#### *Value for money*

83. Overall the attainment of the pupils on entry to the school and the socio-economic circumstances of their families are below average and there has been considerable turbulence in pupil numbers, particularly in the older age groups. In spite of the high unit costs due to the Fresh Start grants, the school is giving good value for money because of the very good progress and climate for learning, the good teaching and the very good spiritual, moral and social provision.

#### *Staffing*

84. The school has a sufficient number of appropriately qualified teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum and promote effective learning. The good ratio of teachers to pupils mean that classes are small and all have an attached learning support assistant for at least part of the day. An additional teacher without full time class responsibility provides good additional support by working alongside other teachers, releasing teachers such as the SENCO for managerial tasks or taking small groups such as the Year 6 literacy booster group. Teachers work well together as part of a team forming a supportive and enthusiastic partnership committed to the welfare and education of their pupils. In the past two years there have been a number of changes of staff and this term half the teachers, although experienced, are new to the school. Good recruitment procedures have ensured that as vacancies arose they were quickly filled.

85. Teachers new to the school are well supported and quickly assimilated into its routines and expectations through an ongoing programme of meetings and training. Newly qualified teachers receive good induction through the local education authority's programme and the school's support. Performance management has been successfully introduced. The process is well used to monitor progress and set objectives that will support school improvement. It also supports identification of areas for professional development and augments the priorities of the school plan for raising achievement. Teachers have attended a very full range of courses arranged both by the local authority and the school in support of this.

86. There is a strong and experienced team of learning support assistants and welfare assistants who are included fully in the life of the school and staff professional development.

Knowledgeable, they work closely with class teachers who are responsible for planning and are well briefed. They are deployed well and give good support to pupils, including those with learning difficulties, both individually and in small groups.

87. Efficient administrative and caretaking staff contribute well to the smooth running of the school. Lunchtime supervisors, kitchen staff and cleaners all work hard to provide and maintain a pleasant learning environment.

#### *Accommodation*

88. The bright, attractive, good quality refurbishment of the Victorian buildings now provides a good environment for learning and delivery of the curriculum. Making good use of Fresh Start funding and professional advice the school and governors have worked closely together to develop a phased programme of building improvement which is still ongoing.
89. Within the constraints of the old building, teaching areas that maximise available space have been created. Imaginative use of décor and enhancement of architectural features create visual impact and interest. New co-ordinated furniture, fixtures and fittings further enhance the overall appearance. The new library and ICT suite provide additional good quality teaching areas and the new administrative offices have meant that space released will be used to create a music room and a resources area.
90. Although rooms vary in size none are inadequate for their current usage and any restrictions to further expansion lie in the constraints of the building. Although visually attractive, the hall has proportions that restrict physical education for older pupils.
91. The school is well cared for both internally and externally. The small outside hard play areas are well used with attractive beds of plants, a shaded seating area and sufficient space for football at playtimes. A small secure play area has been created outside the Foundation Stage classroom and there are plans to develop the 'walled garden' as a quiet area. The large fenced field is a good resource and provides scope for further development in the future. Disabled access to parts of the school is a problem because of stairs and different internal levels. Access has been improved at one entrance by the construction of a ramp and governors are now considering what other improvements within the building are practical.

#### *Resources*

92. Resources are good overall. Fresh Start funding has provided the opportunity for updating and in most areas stock is new, in good condition and well used. There is a good range of musical instruments, all classes have computers and sufficient central resources for history, geography, science and design technology. Resources for literacy and numeracy are good. An already wide range of big books and sets of readers have just been augmented by the purchase of a new reading scheme. The new well-stocked library and the well equipped ICT suite provide excellent resources to enhance the curriculum. Class book corners contain sufficient books but are not always attractive areas for this important feature. The current central resource area is crowded and not easily accessible, its planned move will address this.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to build on the strengths of the school the headteacher, staff and governors need to:

- **Raise standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 by:**
  - Using assessment and target setting more systematically to help pupils to move forward;
  - Monitoring the teaching and learning in these subjects from Year 3 to Year 6 in order to identify areas needing development;
  - Develop investigative and problem-solving work in mathematics and science to improve pupils' independent study skills;
  - Challenging higher-attaining pupils more effectively.

*(Reference paragraphs: 31, 42, 122, 143, 145, 148, 152)*

- **Raise standards in ICT by:**
  - Providing more opportunities for pupils to develop skills in all aspects of ICT;
  - Ensuring staff receive appropriate training to maximise the use of the new computer suite;
  - Developing an accurate and manageable assessment system;
  - Ensuring regular monitoring of provision;
  - Developing the use of ICT to consolidate and extend learning in all subjects.

*(Reference paragraphs: 33, 38, 137, 153, 171, 177, 180, 181, 182)*

- **Develop further the planning and assessment in all subjects, apart from English and mathematics, so that pupils build consistently on previous skills, knowledge and understanding by:**
  - Ensuring that the assessment framework in these subjects is used systematically in all classes to match the good practice in English and mathematics;
  - Taking steps to increase expertise in assessment in the school, particularly for staff new this term;
  - Focusing more on evaluating the achievements of different groups of pupils such as the higher-attainers to help provide them with more challenging work;
  - Keeping comprehensive records of assessments so that pupils' progress can be monitored more effectively.

*(Reference paragraphs: 37, 56, 58, 59, 75, 153, 161, 163, 171, 185, 190)*

## **Minor issues**

The headteacher, staff and governors might consider including the following in its action plan:

- **Improve the marking of pupils' work by:**
  - Ensuring that there is a consistency in marking so that it matches the best seen in the school, serves as accurate assessment information, and helps the pupils to know what they have to do to improve

*(Reference paragraphs: 35, 128, 135, 145)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	31
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	29

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	12	9	9	0	0	0
Percentage	3	39	29	29	0	0	0

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

### 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)	0	113
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	37

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	22

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	18

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	45
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	19

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.2

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.9

National comparative data	5.4
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National comparative data	0.5
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*th 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	4	12	16

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	3	4	4
	Girls	11	11	12
	Total	14	15	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (100)	94 (100)	100 (100)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	4	4	4
	Girls	11	11	11
	Total	15	15	15
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (100)	94 (100)	94 (100)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2002	8	11	19

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	5	3	6
	Girls	8	3	7
	Total	13	6	13
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	65 (63)	30 (44)	65 (69)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	3	4	4
	Girls	3	6	6
	Total	6	10	10
Percentage of pupils	School	30 (38)	50 (44)	50 (60)

at NC level 4 or above	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)
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*Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	11
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	1
Indian	6
Pakistani	4
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	67
Any other minority ethnic group	5

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

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	4	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes:YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23
Average class size	23

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

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	115

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2001-2002
	£
Total income	362922
Total expenditure	313948
Expenditure per pupil	2934
Balance brought forward from previous year	154696
Balance carried forward to next year	203670

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

115

Number of questionnaires returned

73

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	60	36	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	63	36	1	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	52	47	0	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	37	23	3	3
The teaching is good.	64	33	1	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	44	14	3	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	71	25	4	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	26	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	41	47	8	0	4
The school is well led and managed.	70	27	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	64	32	1	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	60	30	5	0	4

Percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest whole number and may therefore not total exactly 100

## **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**

93. There are currently nine children in the reception year, all attending full time, and they are in a mixed year class with some pupils from Year one. Additional reception year children will join the class at the start of next term. They come from a rich variety of cultural backgrounds. Most have already experienced the early steps of the Foundation Stage curriculum in local nurseries. Very few children are advanced in their attainment when they start and the majority enter at below average levels in all areas of learning. By the end of the Foundation Stage, most children are likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals in all areas of learning.
94. Very good improvement has been made in the provision for children in the Foundation Stage since the school opened in May 2000. Teaching is consistently good and often very good and the curriculum is well planned to meet the children's needs. Marking and assessment are very good and provide detailed information about the level at which individual children are working. This information is then used effectively to help children of all abilities and needs to make good progress in building up their skills, knowledge and understanding. As a result, all children, including those with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, achieve very well.
95. The reception class is taught by two members of staff who plan and communicate well together. The teacher and support assistant are very well versed in meeting the needs of young children. They form a highly effective and caring partnership and know the children's individual personalities well. Three children in the foundation stage speak English as an additional language. They receive very good additional language support each week and are making very good progress. Very good systems are in place for early identification of children with special educational needs and careful targets are set to address their additional requirements. The staff work hard to make the learning environment a happy and exciting experience and children are very responsive. There is an excellent balance between structured, formal activities and independent learning through play.
96. Very good day-to-day links with parents are established and parents are regularly told about their children's progress. Both members of staff liaise with parents and meet with them at the start and end of each day. Parents value these regular links and appreciate all that the school achieves with their children. The class teacher is also the Foundation Stage co-ordinator and she is a very positive role model for early years teaching. Her organisation and planning to meet the needs of the Foundation Stage curriculum are exemplary. Resources are very good and recently the enclosed outdoor reception play area has been improved with plans in hand to develop further this area to provide even more opportunities for regular outdoor learning.

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

97. The school places strong emphasis on this area of learning and a conducive ethos is well established in the reception class. The teaching here is very good and the children make good progress in learning to share, take turns and caring for one another. Children are provided with many opportunities to work co-operatively together as a whole class, and in small groups, for example in their role-play as travel agents. This helps them to work as members of a group, and to develop self-esteem, self-confidence and independence. Children make suitable independent learning choices when given the opportunity. Even where they are still at an early level in their English language development, most children will

'have a go' at contributing to discussions, confident that their efforts and ideas will be warmly received and respected.

98. The teacher and her assistant make a very good contribution to this area of learning. They are sensitive to individual needs and try hard to make sure all the children feel unique. One particularly good example of this was during a registration period when the teacher encouraged a child in the early stages of learning English as an additional language to count in his mother tongue. The rest of the children then tried to say each number in the same way resulting in the individual child feeling valued and fully accepted. Children have positive attitudes to learning, and take part in all the activities with enthusiasm and enjoyment. They are learning to be polite and courteous, because of the good example set by the adults who work with them. Certain activities, such as 'circle-time' and assemblies, specifically focus on personal development, and help children to consider the consequences of their actions on others. The use of a 'persona doll' called Buljeet during 'circle time', gives the children an ideal opportunity to offer suggestions to help Buljeet who is very unhappy at his school. The children immediately want to help as they listen to their teacher describing how other children are making Buljeet unhappy by snatching his toys and not letting him play with them.
99. A majority of children are already achieving some of the Early Learning Goals set for the Foundation Stage in their personal and social development and many are likely to exceed them by the end of the reception year.

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

101. Provision for language development is given a high priority and the teaching of this area of learning is very good, with one session being excellent. A strong emphasis is placed on speaking and listening in this and other areas of learning. The teacher makes sure children understand instructions and uses whole-class sessions at the end of activities to check what children have learnt, giving them opportunities to comment on what they have done. Effective questioning is used to help children to give detailed descriptions of what they are doing. The patient approach, and often individual help, encourages children with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language to increase their vocabulary and understanding. A variety of independent role-play activities are well designed to promote sociable conversation.
102. Knowledge and understanding of language and literacy are given good emphasis through the daily literacy sessions. These are suitably short and carefully structured to engage the children's interest and children join in well with 'guided reading' sessions led by their teacher or the early years assistant. Through the introduction of an interesting programme, children are learning to sound out words and recognise letter sounds. All the children enjoy books and can talk about the story and characters. Most can read familiar words and about a third are already confident early readers. All children are able to write their names, and many use capital letters appropriately. They were quick to notice that their teacher had written all the letters the same size when she deliberately wrote the name of one of the children on the whiteboard. The teacher praised their observation and encouraged their help in order to write the name 'properly'. There is good support for writing, not only through focused teaching, but also by the many opportunities for practising writing skills in other activities. For example, the children write tickets for the Travel Agents, and they write their names on a rota for using the trikes in the outdoor area. Following a highly successful session when the children heard the story of 'Elmer the Elephant', several wrote characteristics of Elmer especially noting the many different colours illustrated in the story. The higher attainers completed this activity very well, although those with special educational needs still needed adult support. The children regularly practise accurate letter formation with the letter 'e' being the focus during the Elmer literacy session.

103. As a result of these rich communication, language and literacy experiences, children achieve very well at the foundation stage and most are likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals at the end of their reception year.

### **Mathematical development**

104. Children make good progress and achieve well, with the majority likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals for this area of learning by the end of the Foundation Stage. They are involved in effective mathematical learning through independent play as well as more formal class and group activities. Children experience a good range of counting games and practical activities to develop their mathematical skills, such as sorting and matching objects according to colour and number. The careful teaching of relevant mathematical language is the key to the children's successful learning. Counting rhymes are a regular, cheerful feature of whole class activities. During their focused numeracy session all children participate actively in counting to 20, forwards and backwards. They also count one more and one less than given numbers before progressing to two more and so on. Some children are involved in a problem solving activity such as when they sort cut shapes to make a complete elephant picture, thus linking this work to the earlier literacy input.
105. Children make good progress because the teaching is good. Staff make use of a wide range of activities to provide opportunities to develop and reinforce mathematical concepts. For example, in the 'travel agents', children role-play the travel agent or customer, working out prices and giving change. In this way they become more familiar with the appearance, function and value of coins. Through well-chosen, independent learning activities with water play, children gain a meaningful early understanding of capacity. The resources available for mathematical learning are good and very well used.

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

106. A range of very good opportunities is provided to develop children's understanding of the world around them. The interesting activities help children to make good progress. Children achieve well and most are likely to reach the Early Learning Goals in all aspects of the work. Teaching is good and often very good owing to the very effective use of questions and good support during activities. The teacher recognises the children's high level of interest, which is enabling them to acquire new knowledge quickly. Through their role play in the 'travel agents', children learn about different countries and gain some understanding of the world as a whole. They are aware of the many forms of transport to assist people travelling within this country and further afield.
107. Children confidently operate audio machines to listen to their chosen stories and music. Two children consolidated their phonic work by playing a word game using a cassette player and tape through headphones. Equally confidently, some children activate programmes on the computers, using the mouse proficiently to move the cursor around the screen and to select items by clicking. They have the opportunity to learn about the growth of plants as they plant bulbs in the small garden area around the outside play space.

### **Physical development**

108. Most children are likely to meet the Early Learning Goals for this area of their development. The teaching is of good quality.
109. The outdoor play area is safe and secure, with direct access from the classroom, and this is an improvement since the Fresh Start. Although the area is small, it provides sufficient space to operate the full outdoor curriculum. Wheeled toys, large apparatus, sand and

water trays are used outside regularly. The outdoor play space enables children to gain physical confidence and control on a developing range of outdoor play equipment.

110. There are two weekly physical education lessons for purposeful energetic activity. In a lesson observed, children were learning independence in dressing. They knew the importance of a warm-up and could feel their hearts beating faster. They enjoyed the vigorous part of the lesson and moved freely and confidently around the hall. They took turns safely and respected each other's space during a game of 'tag' and learnt important aspects of control. At the end of the lesson children were aware of the need to cool down and lay very still with mature self-discipline during this activity.
111. Children experience daily a wide range of activities designed effectively to improve their eye and hand coordination and their manipulative skills and to enhance learning through physical engagement as well as mental activity. They use tools such as pencils and crayons regularly. For example, progress in developing controlled letter formation, for most children is evident over time. Most manage to use such tools as scissors, glue sticks and brushes adequately to construct models to their satisfaction.

### **Creative development**

112. The programme for creative development is effectively linked to all areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Teaching in this area is very good. Hands-on creativity effectively raises children's sense of wellbeing and pride in achievement. By the time children reach the end of their reception year, most are likely to achieve the Early Learning Goals for creative development.
113. Children engage in picture-making activities using a wide range of media, such as paint, pastels and collage. They create images of 'Elmer the Elephant' using strips of coloured paper, pastels and felt pens. They experiment with colours to capture their interpretation of Elmer and feel proud of the high quality pictures they achieve.
114. Children have regular and informal access to musical instruments and greatly enjoy creating sounds with them. They experience a weekly music session with the Berkshire Young Musicians' Trust. In a very well managed lesson, children confidently, and with great pleasure, took turns to select a musical instrument. They then rhythmically shook, banged, or beat appropriately as the rest of the class sang along.

#### ***Strengths include:***

- *very good partnership between teacher and assistant*
- *planning which incorporates fully the early learning goals*
- *regular role-play to aid children's understanding as well as their creativity*
- *very good early years ethos and practice of learning through play*
- *good progress in learning at a rapid pace*

#### ***Areas for development:***

- *further develop the use of computers to improve children's ability to recognise the use of technology in their learning*

## ENGLISH

115. Since the school's Fresh Start reopening two years ago Year 2 pupils have achieved standards in speaking and listening, reading and writing above the national average. Standards in Year 6 have been steadily improving and although below those of Key Stage 1 are above average in comparison with similar schools. The Year 6 pupils have made good progress since they were in Year 2. There is a pattern of improving attainment that is steadily rippling up the school. There is no significant difference in attainment between boys and girls. All groups including those with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language achieve well because of the effective and well-structured teaching that is in place.
116. On entry to the school many pupils lack confidence in speaking and have limited listening skills. Their reading skills are often poorly developed and few have sufficient pencil control for writing. Effective teaching quickly addresses these limitations and by Year 2 pupils are achieving well. Older pupils have often not had the benefit of such focused and sustained development and although most are now confident speakers and attentive listeners many in the current Year 6 only have knowledge of a limited working vocabulary. This often does not lead to good oral or written description. Their experience of fiction and authors is more limited than expected and this adds to the problem.
117. Given their low starting point all pupils achieve well. That older pupils are not attaining so well as the younger ones is largely explained by the school's recent history. Since stability and a structured approach to the subject has been restored standards have risen. However, despite all the school's best efforts older pupils have had much lost ground to make up before they could move forward. Consequently although they have made good progress they have not yet caught up with pupils of their age in other schools. A further problem for the school has been the high mobility of many of its pupils which has meant that by Year 6 around a third of pupils are new to the school.
118. The school is working hard to improve standards in English and is currently focusing on reading, which it sees as the key to the rest of the curriculum. The new library and recently purchased reading scheme will support this well. The strong focus, in ability groups, on the development of phonic skills and grammar in the National Literacy Strategy units is helping to improve spelling, reading and writing. Analysis of assessment data is being well used to identify specific areas needing attention.
119. Regular opportunities are planned by teachers to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. As pupils move up the school they show an increasing confidence in speaking and an increasing regard for the needs of the listener. Their answers are appropriate, show awareness of the topic under discussion and an enthusiasm for participation. Year 2 pupils performed with gusto the poem 'If you should see a crocodile' linking actions to the words. Pupils are involved well in question and answer sessions during introductions to the literacy hour and other lessons. They contribute confidently to these although the more limited vocabulary of the older pupils often restricts their descriptive ability. In a Year 6 'circle time' session, pupils confidently related their experiences at the slate quarry during their recent residential visit to Rhos y Gwaliau. Their brief descriptions contained pleasant touches of humour but largely lacked the lustre that a more descriptive use of language would have contributed.
120. Pupils also work collaboratively in pairs or small groups during the activity part of the literacy hour and also in other lessons, such as the very successful geography lesson observed in a Year 1/ 2 class. There are also opportunities for pupils to speak to larger audiences in assembly as for example when leading prayers or contributing views. The school actively

works to improve its pupils' oral skills and although drama is not currently featured on class timetables the school plans to re-introduce it shortly as part of a drive for greater creativity.

121. By Year 2 pupils are making good use of the phonic skills they have been taught when reading. Many are beginning to read with fluency and some expression. Most show accuracy and the few who find difficulty make good use of picture clues, sounding out and breaking down words to achieve success. They talk about books they have read identifying key characters and some recognise the names of authors they have heard before. Texts used in the literacy hour further extends this knowledge and adds to their enthusiasm for the written word. Their reading diaries show that most pupils are regularly heard to read at home by their parents who comment supportively on their progress.
122. Standards in reading in Key Stage 2 are more variable and are just below average in Year 6 although better in the younger classes. The culture of reading in the older classes is not so strong and although pupils are introduced to a range of authors during the literacy hour, those in the upper half of the key stage do not readily identify favourite authors or books. By early in Key Stage 2 many have completed the graded reading scheme and some choose books that do not provide sufficient challenge or interest. Although all have reading diaries many are not regularly heard to read at home. This often includes pupils who would benefit most since they have some difficulty with reading. By Year 6 most are technically competent but their reading often lacks expression as they concentrate on the avoidance of errors. They recognise how characters in the story interact, contribute to the plot and are beginning to use this knowledge to suggest possible outcomes. Few are regular users of the local public library. Most can explain the differences between fiction and non-fiction, know how to use a glossary or index and how to locate specific books.
123. Now in full use, the new, well-stocked and equipped school library, provides an excellent resource for addressing this and raising the profile of reading in the school. This resource is supported by the introduction of the newly purchased reading scheme to provide a more structured approach to reading development and the ongoing assessment of pupils. Although all classrooms have reading corners they vary considerably in the quality of stock and layout. Few provide a stimulating environment with most having just a shelf of books and a few cushions. All classes have cassette recorder and headphone sets with story tapes but none were seen in use during the inspection.
124. The reading skills of the average pupils are sufficiently developed to allow them to cope with most texts. The reading skills of pupils with special educational needs is weak and this causes difficulties when learning in other subjects is dependent on reading.
125. Writing is better in Key Stage 1, where it is largely good. Overall in Key Stage 2 writing is below average although in Years 3, 4 & 5 there is evidence of more exciting use of language and gradual improvement. However, the work of eleven year old pupils shows evidence of problems with grammar, punctuation and spelling and the quantity of the work is largely below average.
126. Most Year 2 pupils write well. In a recent writing assessment pupils recounted their version of the story of 'Mog the Cat'. The examples of extended writing based on this showed properly constructed sentences, good use of descriptive language and an ability to plan and sequence events. Pupils' written work, including recording news, developing a story and writing instructions confirm these skills.
127. In Year 6 pupils' writing is largely competent but not exciting. Examples include writing for a range of audiences with examples of Autumn poems, newspaper articles and an introduction to a story about a talking toy. Pupils do not readily recognise the purpose of descriptive language, for example, they could not see why Ted Hughes had chosen to

compare the 'Iron Man's' eye to a clam or his hand to a crab. There are few examples of more imaginative writing or the level of technical competence expected for this age. The one extended piece of writing on a 'Desert Disaster' showed few pupils employed the expected levels of punctuation and grammar or used interesting vocabulary or unusual images. In contrast, pupils in Years 4 and 5 had written lengthy letters to Anne Frank asking details about her confinement and aspects of her life. Above average pupils have most of the writing skills they need but this is not always the case for most average pupils or for those with special educational needs. Poor literacy skills in Year 6, in particular, restrict work in other subject areas as for example recording in science or history. Work on display and in books often contained uncorrected errors suggesting that drafting and redrafting of work is not a common feature of pupils' experience.

128. Pupils' handwriting is variable in quality. Although younger pupils practise forming their letters in their handwriting books, many find difficulty in keeping them of even size on plain paper. It is better in Year 6 where pupils have begun to develop a more personal style. The standard of handwriting in books also varies between subjects. Spelling is not strong and pupils often make phonetic guesses at words such as in Year 2 'haus' for 'house'. It is particularly weak in Year 6 with pupils spelling words such as 'nervous' and 'decided' phonetically and confusing 'to' and 'two'. Although dictionaries are available to pupils, they do not make regular use of them.
129. In all the lessons seen teaching is either good or better. It is very good in almost half the lessons seen. Common strong features are the thorough preparation and planning of lessons and the good use made of resources. Teachers draw well on the National Literacy Strategy to plan their lessons and follow the format of word, sentence and text work closely. Examples are carefully chosen to support this, for example, work on the long 'i' sound in a Year 3/ 4 lesson and on main and subordinate clauses in Year 6. All teachers introduce the correct terms to pupils and insist that they are used as for example 'vowel and consonant' in work on words with a silent 'e' in Year 2. The success of this emphasis on the technicalities of spelling and grammar is clearly reflected in the improving quality of writing as pupils move up the school.
130. Texts are well chosen to capture pupils' interest and develop their understanding. Good examples of this are 'The Ghost Train' in a Year R/1 lesson and 'The Tunnel' in a Year 4/5 lesson, where skilful questioning by the teacher about the shared text quickly extended pupils' understanding and appreciation. Sessions like this fire pupils with the enjoyment of reading and create a positive climate for learning.
131. In the most successful lessons, the teachers' enthusiasm captures their pupils' interest and they ensure tasks have a clear purpose. This holds pupils' interest and encourages them to try their best. In a Year 3/ 4 lesson pupils asked to draw up the information for a school brochure so as to satisfy parents' questions and concerns really entered into the spirit of the task.
132. At the start of lessons teachers often refer back to previous work so pupils see how understanding develops and that learning is a continuing process that builds on experience. In a Year 6 lesson the teacher reminded pupils of work on similes and complex sentences. The plenary session is well used to revisit the purpose of the learning and in the best lessons teachers refer back to the outset when they shared the learning intentions with pupils and involve pupils in checking whether these have been met. They often share the next stages with their pupils so that they understand how their learning is progressing and take the opportunity to set refinement or further reinforcement for homework. As, for example, in Year 2 where pupils were asked to practice their poems.

133. In all lessons teachers manage pupils well. The brisk pace to learning, their high expectations and well established routines create a good climate for learning. Pupils respond well to this. They are attentive to their teachers and one another, move quickly from whole class conferencing to working groups and back to plenary sessions. Little time is lost and learning moves forward well.
134. Literacy skills are often reinforced through other areas of the curriculum as, for example, speaking and listening during circle time or discussions in science as for example a Year 2 session on pushes and pulls. Teachers make good use of these opportunities to reinforce skills.
135. Marking of pupils work is not consistent and whilst it always encourages pupils it does not always indicate how they could improve, show errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar and varies in approach from class to class. No examples were seen of pupils responding to it.
136. Pupils with special educational needs have detailed IEPs. They are well followed and the targets are referred to in teachers' planning, resulting in good and well focused teaching. Teaching assistants are well briefed and provide good support to these pupils and those for whom English is an additional language so that all achieve well in relation to their ability. Booster classes are being well used to lift the attainment of pupils who find difficulty in Year 6. As a result of the sensitive and experienced input they receive, they are becoming much more confident and adventurous in their use of language. As for example 'my eyes was (sic) glimmering with excitement'.
137. English is managed well with the headteacher currently caretaking the subject. A current action plan is looking to improve attitudes to reading and pupils' ability through a number of well thought out initiatives. The school intends to revisit writing when this work is completed. Regular ongoing assessments and test results are carefully analysed to identify areas for development. A good example of this was concern over differences in attainment between boys and girls and its subsequent investigation. Inservice training has been held on target setting and the setting of individual pupil targets is now a regular feature. Teaching and learning are regularly monitored through lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning. Resources are good with a wide selection of Big Books and guided reading sets. The new library will provide an excellent resource and the development of reading will be well supported by the new reading scheme. However, class book corners would benefit from improvement and the use of ICT in the subject is undeveloped.

### **Strengths**

- *improvements in attainment at both KS1 and KS2*
- *current focus on reading and identification of writing as an area for development*
- *pupils confidence in speaking and listening*
- *implementation of national literacy strategy as basis for planning in the subject*
- *pupils very good attitudes and behaviour*
- *quality of teaching and learning*
- *new library*

### **Areas for development**

- *inconsistencies in marking*
- *handwriting*
- *imaginative writing and use of descriptive language*
- *use of literacy across the curriculum*
- *use of ICT to support learning in the subject*
- *drafting and redrafting*
- *basic literacy skills for older pupils particularly in Years 5 and 6.*

## MATHEMATICS

138. The school's performance in national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2002 was well above the national average and also well above results in similar schools. Higher attainers did very well with 81 per cent gaining the higher Level 3. These results are the same as last year's and show a significant improvement since the Fresh Start in 2000 when results were well below the expected level. The number of pupils taking the tests is significantly small; however, these results are a good indication of the work the school has done over the last two years.
139. National test results in Year 6 in 2002 represent a very different picture. They are well below the national average and also well below results in similar schools. Only five per cent gained the higher Level 5, which is well below results in similar schools. There has been a slight drop in results when compared to 2001 and this compares unfavourably with the national trend and the success in Year 2. Again the number of pupils these results represent is small and there are other very significant reasons why standards are not high enough in Year 6.
140. There are several factors contributing to the improvements in Year 2. They include very good use of the National Numeracy Strategy and improved planning. In particular, planning for the range of ability, in order to provide specific teaching and support where it is most needed, is having a positive effect on learning. The majority of pupils in Years 1 and 2, including those with special educational needs and with English as an additional language, achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Although there has been some turbulence in numbers of younger pupils, both leaving the school and arriving, over the last two years, attainment overall has remained the same. This has meant that teachers have been able to continue with planned focused support without having to regularly review and adapt as the year groups change.
141. In Year 6 the situation over the last two years has changed significantly and there are several factors contributing to the apparent lack of progress with older pupils. Teachers' planning continues to be a strength, however, plans have had to be dramatically adapted as the turbulence in pupil numbers regularly changes the overall ability of the cohort of pupils. For example, in 2001, 40 pupils joined the school in Years 3 to 6. Of these new pupils, 38 per cent had special educational needs including many with low attainment in mathematics. There were also a similar number of pupils leaving the school in the same year; however, their mathematical ability level was far higher than the pupils new to the school. In addition to this contributing factor, the school has also experienced considerable turbulence in staffing particularly losing experienced teachers of older pupils. The school has worked hard to improve standards in Year 6 and most pupils have made some progress from a particularly low start despite the results suggesting otherwise.
142. Standards in number are rising. By the time they are in Year 2, most pupils demonstrate a secure knowledge of place value in numbers to 99. They are confident when adding and subtracting numbers to 20 and beyond, although a minority are still working with single digit numbers and require additional support. Work in number is revisited and new concepts introduced regularly although there are too few opportunities for pupils to apply mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding. Investigative and problem-solving work is covered each week, however, pupils have difficulty relating their work in number to new situations. In a Year 2 lesson seen, whilst working on recognising odd and even numbers up to 100, most pupils used the correct vocabulary to describe their work and could explain why a particular number was odd or even. Year 1 pupils successfully write numbers from 1 to 20 and add one more or one less with great confidence. These examples reflect the pupils' sound understanding of number. Work scrutiny shows that pupils have some difficulty in their

ability to use numbers in problem solving and when investigating patterns. This is an area identified in the numeracy action plan as needing further attention.

143. As they move through the school, pupils continue to build effectively on their knowledge and skills, particularly in their number work, and overall progress in number is good. By Year 6, many pupils are confidently working with numbers. Most have acquired a range of strategies to add, subtract and multiply and show a sound understanding of the relationships between these operations. Understanding of division is less secure and many pupils struggle with effective strategies to complete this operation. Pupils are enthusiastic about their work and communicate their knowledge effectively, organising their work well and showing satisfactory knowledge of mathematical language. In the Year 6 lesson observed, pupils consolidated their knowledge and understanding of metric measures by choosing the appropriate method of calculation required to solve a problem about distance. Learning in this lesson was enhanced by differentiated tasks for lower attaining pupils. Years 3 and 4 pupils learn to multiply by 10 by shifting the position of digits one place to the left. Understanding of place value is consolidated as the pupils describe the value of each digit after the multiplication has taken place. In Year 5, pupils learn the correct mathematical names of 2-D shapes and improve their knowledge of the properties of these shapes. In Years 3 to 6, generally, pupils' ability to use and apply their mathematical knowledge and understanding to problem solving and investigative work is currently underdeveloped. Use of mathematical vocabulary is another area requiring greater focus.
144. Teaching throughout the school is good overall, including some very good teaching, particularly in Years 1 and 2. Teachers make mathematics interesting and practical for pupils by sharing their enthusiasm with them. As a result, pupils respond enthusiastically and work hard. In all classes, teachers use 'mathematical aerobics' to encourage rapid recall of number facts and they participate with great energy alongside their pupils. On occasions it was difficult to determine who enjoyed the sessions most, the pupils or the teacher! Relationships between teachers and pupils are very effective and pupils make good progress to achieve well because they are well taught. Pupils behave extremely well, concentrate on what teachers explain and organise themselves for work quickly and quietly. Very little time is wasted in lessons.
145. Teachers' planning is thorough and based on the National Framework for Numeracy. It takes account of pupils' needs, and work is well differentiated according to these needs. However, the identification of more able pupils, and subsequent lack of challenge, is an area requiring greater focus. All teachers make clear what pupils are to learn at the start of each session so that all understand its purpose. The focus is then returned to at the end of the lesson to ensure pupils have understood what they have been taught. Activities are carefully planned to encourage group and individual work, and usually include some homework connected to the lesson. In the Year 6 lesson on metric measures, the teacher asked the higher attaining pupils to continue with the problems they were solving for homework so that she could move them on to their next stage of their learning in the next lesson. This was an effective use of homework and enabled a more rapid pace to be maintained for these pupils. A wealth of new resources has been purchased over the last two years and these are effectively used to enhance pupils' progress. The use of counting sticks and digi-cards in the mental and oral sessions are particularly effective in helping pupils to recall number facts quickly and accurately. Results in national tests have been effectively evaluated and action taken to improve standards further. Marking of pupils' work is variable and whilst it consistently praises pupils' efforts, it does not always tell pupils what they have achieved or what they should do to improve.
146. The subject co-ordinator leads the subject particularly well throughout the school. She is a leading numeracy teacher and uses her expertise to assess the strengths and weaknesses in the subject very effectively. She has identified what needs to be addressed to improve

standards further and has both been observed and observed her colleagues' teaching in order to support and improve teaching further. This strong leadership puts the school in a very good position to improve attainment even further.

**Strengths:**

- *very high standards in Key Stage One*
- *strong leadership and subject expertise*
- *teachers' careful planning*
- *effective use of differentiated tasks for less-able pupils*
- *very good use of resources and practical activities to enhance learning*

**Areas for development:**

- *improve standards at the end of Year 6*
- *identification of and challenge for more able pupils*
- *increase use of mathematical vocabulary*
- *opportunities for investigative work to enable pupils to improve their ability to use and apply their number skills*

## SCIENCE

147. In the 2002 national tests, the proportion of pupils in Year 6 reaching the expected level and above in science was very low (the bottom 5 per cent of schools nationally) when compared to all schools, and well below average when compared to other similar schools. In the 2002 teacher assessments for seven year olds, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level and above in science was very high and in the top 5 per cent of schools nationally. Teachers assessed significant strengths in all aspects of science. Standards were also very high when compared to other similar schools. However, the proportion of pupils reaching standards above those expected (Level 3) was well below the national average.
148. Evidence from the inspection indicates that the work of pupils currently in Year 6 is well below average, a picture which reflects those standards gained by pupils in the 2002 national tests. During lessons, pupils showed that they had significant gaps in their knowledge and understanding of science. Pupils spoke confidently about their work, although their explanations were limited by having only a narrow range of scientific vocabulary. The limited amount of written work in pupils' books is poorly presented and includes very few explanations; much of the work is also unfinished. The work of the small proportion of higher attaining pupils, which includes written tasks, diagrams and recordings of scientific enquiries, is completed to an average standard. The recorded work of average and lower attainers includes unconvincing explanations owing largely to the small amount of written work and the use of limited vocabulary. Misspellings of scientific words are present in much of the work. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls.
149. In lessons, the standard of work seen in Year 6 shows that pupils' knowledge and understanding of science have not been developed systematically. The small proportion of higher attaining pupils predict with some certainty, measure, record results, and draw conclusions while carrying out an investigation. In Years 4, 5 and 6 all pupils are keen to learn, and their interest is captured by well-planned activities that illustrate the presence of science in every-day life. However, their understanding is inhibited by the lack of a sufficiently broad range of scientific knowledge appropriate for their age. An example of this weakness was seen in their limited understanding of elements of the water cycle.
150. In contrast to the work seen in Year 6, the work of pupils currently in Year 2 is above average. Literacy and numeracy skills are used effectively to support pupils' work, reflecting

the richness of the curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning. With a strong emphasis on investigative work, pupils benefit from a wide range of tasks which provide good coverage of the curriculum. For example, pupils learn that seeds need water to grow and develop. Pupils identify the differences in human development according to age and begin to present information in simple charts. They correctly identify animals and their young and effectively sort animals into families. A very good lesson focused on the type of force that can be used to move a heavy object. All pupils made good progress in their recognition of forces as seen in everyday life because the tasks were open to discussion and influenced by pupils' own ideas. Higher attaining pupils predict with certainty, and talk confidently about their work with the help of some scientific vocabulary.

151. Subject guidance in Years 1 and 2 helps teachers to plan for and maintain a good balance between all aspects of the science curriculum. Pupils are given some good opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of life processes and living things, materials and their properties, and physical processes. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve very well through Years 1 and 2. Subject guidance for Years 3 to 6 is poorly developed and is under review.
152. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, although pupils in Years 1 and 2 benefited from a very good lesson. Features of the very good lesson were the pace of learning and the high quality of the use of incisive questions to extend pupils' thinking. Teachers in Years 1 and 2 have a sound subject knowledge and planning is generally good. A striking feature of their teaching is the consistency with regard to expectations and the positive approach to behaviour management. Pupils respond well and are eager to participate. The strength in relationships between teachers and pupils is reflected in the good attitudes to learning and the pupils' willingness to contribute during lessons. In Years 3 to 6, teachers' planning is weaker and this means that different ability groups are not well catered for in lessons. More-able pupils are not effectively challenged in order to improve the standards they achieve. Teachers have developed good relationships with pupils and pupils respond well in lessons.
153. The recently appointed subject co-ordinator has a clear understanding of how to develop the subject. Some good work has been undertaken in reviewing the curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 2. Assessment procedures are not in place, and information from tests and assessments have yet to be evaluated in order to identify areas that may need further development. Information and communication technology is not used enough to support the teaching of science.

### **Strengths**

- *the breadth and depth of pupils' learning experiences in Years 1 and 2*
- *teaching in Years 1 and 2*

### **Areas for development**

- *standards in Key Stage 2*
- *curriculum planning in Years 3 to 6*
- *assessment procedures*

## **ART AND DESIGN**

154. Overall attainment by seven and eleven year olds is below that expected. Only one lesson was timetabled in each key stage during the inspection. A limited range of work was seen on display, in pupils' records of achievement and in some of their sketch books covering drawing, painting and collage assembly. There is no significant difference in the achievement of different groups of pupils with boys, girls, pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language all doing equally well.

155. Because of the school's recent reopening with new staff and leadership not all pupils have enjoyed the same quality of experience. Younger pupils have received a more consistent introduction to the subject and are building on this foundation as they develop ideas in their sketchbooks. Older pupils have had more varied experience and Year 6 pupils, for example, are not yet regularly using sketchbooks. Pupils' achievement is not yet consistent across the school and is largely dependent on the knowledge and expertise of their teacher.
156. Year 2 pupils careful observational drawings of shells and the church show sound use of line and a developing sense of proportion and their charcoal sketches of Victorian artefacts show good use of the medium to convey shape and form. In a Year 1/2 lesson the teacher's thorough preparation and good explanation introduced pupils to a selection of Mondrian's pictures with a commentary on the feelings, moods and ideas. They then attempted their own versions but did not achieve more because they did not select their own medium nor have the opportunity to evaluate their work.
157. Good use is being made of famous artists' work as the starting point for exploring different methods and styles. Year 1 pupils produced their own versions of a Kandinsky picture and had collectively produced a larger version for the headteacher that had been hung in her office. In assembly the headteacher showed this picture and explained that she valued it because it evoked the happiness and laughter of the pupils who had worked on it.
158. Pupils achieve well in the lessons seen and in the work on display when teachers research the topics, prepare thoroughly and then give good explanations and demonstrations of principles and techniques. Year 6 pupils' seascape watercolours on display by the school office show good accomplishment and understanding in the mixing of prime colours and application of colour washes.
159. In a Year 4/5 lesson pupils quickly settled to producing collages in the style of Paul Klee using cellophane, tissue and card. Their teacher's very good introduction, based on her own good subject knowledge, had fired their imaginations and given them an insight into the ways in which the materials could be combined and overlapped to show texture and create colour variation. They were encouraged well to use the correct terminology and imaginatively chose different materials from the wide range available.
160. Pupils enjoy their art lessons and use materials and equipment carefully. They work well with others and appreciate links to other subjects such as history through sketching artefacts and numeracy through shape.
161. The new, enthusiastic and knowledgeable subject manager has recognised the need to develop teachers' subject knowledge and ensure that skills are progressively developed. National guidance provides a good basis for supporting teachers in what should be taught, how and when. There is at present no systematic monitoring of pupils' work and teachers' planning to ensure coverage of the full curriculum. Good quality materials are well organised, stored and available to pupils. Resources include a good range of prints of famous artists and a number of artefacts that are displayed around the school. These include textiles and wooden objects from around the world and the Mission quilt in the hall.

### **Strengths**

- *good quality materials and resources*
- *paintings in Year 1, drawings in Year 2, collages in Year 5 and watercolours in Year 6*
- *good use of work from recognised artists for exploring styles and techniques*
- *pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour*

### **Areas for development**

- *use of a wider range of materials and techniques*
- *compiling an annotated collection of pupils' work in different strands to support teachers in planning future work*
- *monitoring of teaching and learning and recording of pupils' progress and experience.*

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

162. Owing to timetabling arrangements, just one lesson was seen and very few examples of pupils' work were made available during the inspection. It is not possible to make overall judgements about standards or the quality of teaching and learning. However, where seen, attainment was broadly similar to that expected of pupils of a similar age.
163. The subject is not yet a priority for development, although the coordinator is currently reviewing the planning and its overall provision. The limited evidence shows that pupils are beginning to have an understanding of how to plan and evaluate their work using clear criteria guided by a design sheet. The school recognises the gaps in pupils' learning and the need for a systematic approach to the teaching of skills.
164. In a Year 3/4 lesson pupils were enthusiastic in their learning about a healthy diet. Their teacher's sound introduction enabled pupils to understand what they were expected to learn during the lesson. Resources were well prepared and gave pupils the opportunity to discuss a wide variety of sandwich fillings to ascertain which provided the healthier options. Pupils co-operated very well in their groups and enjoyed the practical tasks set for them. Poorly developed writing skills resulted in the less-able pupils having difficulty recording their findings, although the teacher and learning support assistant were very supportive and reassured these pupils by suggesting they drew diagrams as an alternative. A good link to work in mathematics was evident in this lesson as several pupils presented their results in the form of a bar chart. Good use was made of the plenary session when the teacher summarised the pupils' findings and linked it to their knowledge and understanding of a healthy diet.
165. The subject coordinator has a clear vision for the development of the subject which includes seeking advice and support from the local education authority. The subject is well resourced.

### ***Areas for development***

- *curriculum planning*
- *teachers' subject knowledge*
- *assessment procedures*

## **GEOGRAPHY**

166. Three lessons were seen and only a limited range of pupils' work was available. Evidence was also drawn from talking to teachers and pupils and viewing planning and displays. Under present arrangements the subject is taught in a two year cycle and it is often alternated on the timetable with history. For these reasons it is not possible to make secure judgements about standards. Younger pupils, who have consistently experienced a systematic approach since the school's Fresh Start, are making greater progress than older pupils who have had a more limited range of geographical experience because of the reorganisation. Standards are as expected in Years 1 and 2. Further up the school, whilst oral work showed expected levels, written work was more limited. Teaching was very good in two lessons seen and satisfactory in the other. All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, achieve equally well.

167. Younger pupils are developing their geographical skills and understanding well and beginning to identify and appreciate the difference between human and physical features. Teachers introduce lessons well and relate the learning to previous work so pupils are clear about its purpose. In a Year 1/2 lesson work on the Scottish Island of Struay was very well developed from a 'Katie Morag' story. Pupils identified it on a map of the British Isles and compared life on an island with that in Reading. Resources like the Internet pictures of Struay are well used by teachers to support learning. Pupils appreciated the disadvantages of island life and how they might be overcome, for example by building a jetty.
168. Teachers are careful to use the correct terminology in explanations and encourage pupils to use it in their answers. They make good use of questioning to extend pupils' thinking and choose tasks that will develop and reinforce their understanding. In a Year 3/ 4 lesson pupils showed good recall of the features of mild, dry and tropical climates and identified these regions on a world map, drawing conclusions about climate and seasons. In this and other lessons pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are well supported by their teachers, the well briefed and deployed support assistants and the suitably modified tasks.
169. By Year 4/5 pupils are beginning to appreciate man's effect on the environment. The teacher made very good use of a book looking at changes over time through a 'Window' using it as an introduction to photographs comparing the Reading of 80 years ago with now. Pupils recognised the way areas such as the Oracle and Madjetski Stadium had changed. However, although pupils are orally very competent their recorded work does not show the same standard and this limits overall achievement.
170. The displays of the Year 5/ 6 residential visit to Wales made good use of photographs to highlight the different features of the countryside, the activities possible in a mountainous region and the industrial slate quarry. The few examples of recorded work in Year 6 show pupils ability to record is limited for many pupils by their below average literacy skills.
171. The subject manager, new to the school this term, is enthusiastic about developing the subject. Pupils' work is monitored to gain an overview and the subject action plan envisages extending this to teachers' planning and lessons. Recent national guidance forms the basis of planning in the subject and the need to develop assessment arrangements is recognised. Addressing this will help to ensure that all pupils, especially in mixed age classes, experience the expected subject curriculum in a systematic manner that builds on previous learning. Resources which include aerial photographs and maps, are in good condition and sufficient for current usage. However, the use of ICT to support learning in the subject is undeveloped.

**Strengths**

- *very good quality teaching in most lessons*
- *good foundations for subject being laid lower down the school and improving standards at Key Stage 2.*
- *good use made of well chosen resources to support activities and teaching points*
- *pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour*

**Areas for development**

- *lack of assessment procedures*
- *need to develop monitoring to form an overview of learning*
- *use of ICT is undeveloped*
- *poor literacy skills limit the work of older pupils*
- *standards of attainment at end of Key Stage 2.*

**HISTORY**

172. History is currently taught on a two year cycle and is often alternated on the timetable with geography. Based on the limited evidence of two lessons, discussions with pupils, the work on display and the teachers' planning standards are average in Year 2 and for much of Key Stage 2 but below in Year 6. Since the school's Fresh Start, younger pupils have been taught in a more ordered way, and are therefore making greater progress than older pupils who have not had similar continuous experiences. Teaching is satisfactory overall.
173. Pupils in Year 2 know that Samuel Pepys is famous for keeping a diary and that Guy Fawkes was part of a group who tried to blow up Parliament. On being shown a picture of Florence Nightingale by their teacher they quickly identified her. Their teacher's skilful questioning guided them well to recognising differences between her clothes and those of present day nurses. This was linked well to previous work on Victorian homes and as pupils were encouraged to use descriptive language in their answers this improved their literacy skills as well. Careful research, thorough preparation and the good use made of resources captured pupils' interest and moved learning forward well.
174. A Year 4/5 class had just completed a study of World War II and a display in their classroom included examples of ration books, together with contemporary posters and magazine articles. They had learnt about Anne Frank and her diary and there were well planned and executed letters on display which showed that they had some understanding of the ordeal of her confinement. They knew about the evacuation of children and had written letters in their books from imaginary evacuees to their families.
175. Year 6 pupils who were just beginning a study of World War II did not unfortunately have the opportunity to see the artefacts used by the Year 4 /5 as they had been returned to the museum loan service. A brainstorm activity revealed some prior knowledge of key events and people from the period and was used to phrase questions for research. Pupils' literacy skills were often limited and although they managed in oral sessions they were less adept at recording ideas. Formulated questions did not often reveal the expected depth of historical knowledge or understanding.
176. Good expectations of pupils by their teachers and a variety of well planned activities capture pupils' attention and maintain their interest. Teachers' plan the work to match pupils' capabilities so that all pupils achieve equally well. More able pupils are challenged by the way they record information and their teachers' questions. Those for whom English is an additional language and those with special educational needs, who are well supported by teachers and the well-briefed teaching assistants, gain as much from lessons as other pupils succeeding at their own level of ability.
177. The subject manager, who is new to the school this term, has an appropriate action plan for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and introducing assessment arrangements. Recently published national guidance provides a good framework for planning. However, expectations for different groups of pupils in mixed age classes are not always appropriate to the systematic development of enquiry skills, knowledge and understanding. There is a good range of resources supplemented by the loan service but the use of ICT in the subject is undeveloped.

### **Strengths**

- *good use of artefacts to support learning*
- *range of resources*
- *interesting and well prepared lessons*
- *good start to the subject in Key Stage 1 and improving standards in Key Stage 2*
- *pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour*

### **Areas for development**

- *standards in current Year 6 undermined by poor literacy skills*
- *use of ICT to support learning is undeveloped*
- *lack of assessment arrangements*
- *need for regular monitoring of teaching and learning*

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

178. The standards the pupils achieve are much lower than typically seen largely because the subject has not received the same emphasis as in other schools. Standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are well below the expected levels. This is the same as at the time the school made its Fresh Start although standards are beginning to improve as a result of recently improved resources and training for teachers. The school now provides opportunities for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language, to develop confidence in their computer skills. Very few pupils have access to computers at home so they are unable to practise the skills they are taught apart from designated opportunities at school. The use of word-processing is the strongest aspect of teaching and learning and the use of control technology is improving. A new computer suite has been opened and resources have been updated and improved. Only two lessons were observed so judgements are also based on samples of work, teachers' planning and discussions with pupils and teachers.
179. From an early age, pupils are taught to use the mouse and keyboard and acquire key basic skills. At the time of the Fresh Start, access to computers was limited to the single machine available in classrooms, and pupils' progress was limited as a result of this. However, with the establishing of the computer suite, pupils now have more regular opportunities to extend and apply their skills. In one lesson observed in a Year 1 and 2 class, the pupils were introduced to control-technology using roamers. Pupils learnt how to give simple instructions to the roamer, affectionately known as 'Fred', in order to move it in different directions. They were able to see how the device responded to signals and how they could adapt their instructions to move the roamer accurately around the room. The quality of teaching and learning in this lesson was very good and pupils concentrated well and showed great enthusiasm in their learning. Pupils can talk about their use of ICT and they know how to load and open simple programs and how to shut down a computer correctly. They are beginning to understand about how computers can be used as a tool.
180. In Years 3 to 6 pupils are beginning to make satisfactory gains in their learning. They are learning and consolidating new skills more rapidly because of access for full classes to the new computer suite. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils consolidated their learning about devices that can be controlled through direct instruction, either a single instruction or a sequence. They used their knowledge of how ICT is used outside school to generate a list of everyday devices that function through instructions. Learning was satisfactory in this lesson and planning indicated that the pupils would progress to using ICT systems to control events and to sense physical data. In discussions with older pupils, it is clear that links with other subjects are underdeveloped and that few pupils, as yet, go to use computers independently, as a matter of course. Pupils could talk about the use of the Internet to find information and they knew how to send an e-mail. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop ideas, exchange and share information particularly using the Internet and e-mail facility. The school is aware of this and appropriate plans are in hand to improve this aspect of learning.
181. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with some very good features particularly for younger pupils. The teachers have an agreed policy and have adopted a scheme of work to ensure a progression of skills is taught. All but one teacher have completed their training using the New Opportunities Fund and this has increased confidence. Laptop computers are available for all teachers and these enable new skills to be practised and improved.

Teachers have a good understanding of what needs to be taught in order to improve standards and they are aware of the need to develop assessment records of pupils' progress. Planning is clear although opportunities to use ICT in other subjects is underdeveloped. Classroom computers are not yet used fully and this is an area that needs further development.

182. The subject co-ordinator is new to the school. She is enthusiastic about the subject and aware of what needs to be done in order to improve standards. Plans have already been made to improve the use of the ICT suite and to support staff in their training needs. Resources are now very good although some classroom computers require attention. There are currently no formal assessment procedures for assessing pupils' progress that are aimed at matching work more accurately to their individual needs. The subject co-ordinator is aware of this and has made a positive start on improving assessment. The school is well placed to make further progress.

**Strengths:**

- *teachers' commitment to improving their own expertise and raising standards*
- *the well equipped computer suite*
- *pupils' enthusiasm for learning*

**Areas for development:**

- *standards throughout the school*
- *developing an accurate and manageable assessment system*
- *providing opportunities for pupils to develop skills in all aspects of ICT*
- *develop the use of ICT to consolidate and extend learning in all subjects*

## MUSIC

183. Based on the one lesson observed and the quality of singing in assemblies, pupils' attainment in singing and performing is good. It was not possible to judge standards in music overall at the end of either key stage, as lessons and club activities during the inspection focused mainly on singing. However, discussions with teachers and pupils, together with a perusal of planning documents, show that the school is making good progress in improving the quality of provision in music and raising the profile of the subject since the Fresh Start initiative. The development of a scheme of work following county guidelines and the provision of training teachers has improved staff confidence. Teachers ensure that all pupils, whatever their ability, are included well in all activities. This means those pupils who are musically talented, as well as those who have special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language, also achieve well.
184. In one Year 6 lesson, the pupils showed a good sense of rhythm and pulse, and could repeat short patterns and sing tunefully. They knew the names and values of different notes and sang a round in three parts. During the lesson pupils selected different instruments and composed an accompaniment for their singing. Teaching and learning in this lesson was good and the pupils enjoyed the session whilst participating enthusiastically.
185. Younger pupils currently have a session each week with Berkshire Young Musicians Trust and this is proving a very successful teaching resource. Planning indicates that teachers make good use of the purchased scheme of work and use the extensive resources particularly well. Teachers give music a high profile in the school and see it as an opportunity to develop pupils' creativity. This ensures there are very good attitudes to the subject. This was especially apparent in a singing assembly led by the headteacher and accompanied by the talented chair of governors. All took part enthusiastically, whilst ensuring that their singing was tuneful and thoughtful. The lack of formal assessment procedures means that little evaluation of pupils' achievements takes place.

186. A very successful choir meets each week, led by the chair of governors, and there is a good balance of boys and girls in attendance. Christmas concerts and other performances provide opportunities for pupils to perform in public. The music curriculum is also enriched by visits to local theatres and by visitors to the school. Resources are good with a good range of ethnic instruments. The co-ordinator is new to the school and has yet to form a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses within the subject. However, she is very enthusiastic about leading the subject and is keen to introduce assessment procedures to further improve provision.

**Strengths:**

- *teachers' commitment to subject*
- *quality of singing throughout the school*
- *range of resources*

**Areas of development:**

- *developing an assessment system*

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

187. Owing to timetabling arrangements, on the evidence of just two lessons it is not possible to make an overall judgement on standards or the quality of teaching and learning.
188. Evidence from the lessons indicates that the subject makes a strong contribution to pupils' social development. Pupils in Year 1 worked well together, paying attention to the tasks and approaching the games activities with enthusiasm. Pupils were aware of the importance of preparing the body for exercise. Good links were made with work in science, which included blood circulation and body temperature after exercise. In the other lesson seen, pupils in Years 3 and 4 worked well together whilst developing a sequence of linked movements. However, the quality of the movement skills was below that expected of pupils of this age and they were unable to evaluate the quality of their work and refine the sequences.
189. Teaching and learning were good in one lesson at Key Stage 1, and satisfactory in the one at Key Stage 2. The lessons were carefully planned to provide a good balance between instruction and practical activity. Lessons began with warm-up activities, followed by an explanation of the learning objectives so that pupils knew what was expected of them. Pupils benefited most when teachers used detailed explanations and careful demonstrations of technique to explain the learning objectives. Activities were firmly controlled with the help of praise and support. Good relationships were used effectively in helping pupils organise themselves and work successfully in groups. Pupils with special educational needs were well integrated and made similar gains to other pupils.
190. The recently engaged subject coordinator has yet to review the curriculum and develop the schemes of work. Assessment procedures are not in place. Pupils who wish to develop their skills further have access to a good range of after-school clubs and activities. The small hall provides the school with the only indoor practical area for physical education. The storage of equipment and display of artefacts around the perimeter of the hall significantly reduces space for safe practical teaching and learning.

***Areas for development***

- *curriculum planning*
- *assessment procedures*