

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST MICHAEL'S C of E (A) FIRST SCHOOL**

Penkridge, Stafford

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124343

Headteacher: Miss M-A Basketts

Lead inspector: Mr Sean O'Toole

Dates of inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> May 2004

Inspection number: 257871

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First School
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 – 9 Years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	128
School address:	Market Place Penkridge Stafford Staffordshire
Postcode:	ST19 5DJ
Telephone number:	01785 712344
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs E Burd
Date of previous inspection:	6 <sup>th</sup> July 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Located in Penkridge, St Michael's First School is smaller than most other primary schools. Almost all of the 128 pupils (66 girls and 62 boys) are from white British backgrounds. Socio-economically, the area in which pupils live is generally advantaged. Few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The percentages of pupils with special educational needs and those with statements are about average. Attainment on admission to the school varies but is now usually average overall; the admission process means that the youngest children have a short time in the reception class. Since the inspection in July 1998 several of the teaching staff have changed and teaching and learning have been disrupted by staff illness; the headteacher was appointed in January 2003. The school gained an achievement award in 2001.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20891	Sean O'Toole	Lead inspector	Mathematics; Information and communication technology; Art and design; Design and technology; Music; Physical education.
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20911	Judy Dawson	Team inspector	Foundation Stage; Special educational needs; English; Science; Personal, social and health education and citizenship; Geography; History.

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This school provides a sound quality of education.** The new headteacher has brought a sense of urgency to raising standards and more consistency to teaching and the curriculum. Recent results in national tests have been well below average in reading, writing and mathematics. This year there has been good improvement and achievement overall is now satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall and the school gives satisfactory value for money.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards in writing and some aspects of mathematics are not high enough especially for the more able
- There is good leadership by the headteacher and the governors are effective
- Teaching, learning and achievement in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 3 are good
- Some aspects of teaching and assessment are unsatisfactory
- Standards and provision for ICT are weak
- Pupils' behaviour and many aspects of their personal development are very good
- Parents contribute to their children's education and support the school very well
- The school provides very good standards of care for the pupils

Following the previous inspection in July 1998 the school's test results at the end of Year 2 began to decline and reached their lowest point in 2003. Inspection evidence shows some improvement in performance this year. Little headway was made initially in tackling the issues but, in the last year, there have been good improvements in teaching, planning and management and the provision for the Foundation Stage, although more remains to be done to raise the performance of more able pupils, especially in English and mathematics. Leadership and management have been strengthened through the work of the new headteacher, and the pivotal role played by governors. The school is in a good position to build upon these recent improvements.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	All schools			Similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
Reading	A	C	D	E
Writing	A	C	E	E
Mathematics	C	C	E	E*

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average  
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

Almost all pupils start school with average levels of skills, knowledge and understanding; they achieve well and by the end of the reception year almost all attain the goals expected for their age in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. Most are in advance of pupils of a similar age in their personal, social and emotional development. This success is due to changes in the provision and teaching this year.

Standards in the Year 2 national tests in reading, writing and mathematics declined up to 2003 but inspection evidence shows some improvement this year because of changes in teaching and more effective leadership. Standards in mathematics in Year 2 are close to average but remain below average in English, especially writing, mainly due to the lack of challenge for the more able. Standards in reading are average. By the end of Year 4 standards are close to average in mathematics and science but below average in English where there is insufficient challenge for the brighter pupils. Overall, progress is satisfactory for pupils of average ability and those with special educational needs, but more able pupils in Years 2 and 4 do not make sufficient progress. **Achievement is satisfactory overall** and good in Years 1 and 3, due to well focused and

challenging teaching. Inspection evidence shows that standards in science are average. There is some good work in design and technology and pupils show good prowess in musical performance. Girls are much more successful than boys in reading, writing and mathematics. Attainment in ICT is below average and pupils have limited skills in using computers to support work in other subjects; their achievement is affected by limited resources.

**The staff promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.** Pupils' behaviour is very good and there have been no exclusions. In lessons and at play the pupils get on well together, share equipment and show good relationships. They work effectively on practical topics. Pupils are prepared well for life in a culturally diverse society and develop positive and responsible attitudes. They enjoy coming to school; attendance and punctuality are good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The school provides a sound quality of education. Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory overall** and good in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 3. Teachers prepare and plan lessons well. They have very good relationships with the pupils and manage behaviour effectively. Support staff are involved in working with different groups but not always fully engaged in the lesson introductions. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and very good support is given to those with statements. Teaching in the Foundation Stage works well in motivating and challenging the pupils and stimulates good progress. Basic skills in English and mathematics are taught satisfactorily but the teaching of brighter pupils is not good enough in Years 2 and 4 because some lessons lack sufficient pace and not enough is expected of the pupils. Assessment procedures are satisfactory but there is not a close enough link between marking and target setting and pupils are not always clear about what they might do to improve. The school provides an appropriate curriculum which is enriched with good extra-curricular activities, trips, involvement in large scale events such as performances at Symphony Hall and opportunities for pupils to take part in a residential visit. The school provides well for pupils' personal, social and health education. There are good links with other schools, the wider community and very good links with parents.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The headteacher provides good leadership and has created a purposeful ethos in the school which is shared by staff and governors. She has made a significant contribution in improving consistency in teaching and raising standards. **Leadership and management are satisfactory.** The school runs smoothly and efficiently. The school's strategic plans are well focused and are now based on analysis of performance. The governance of the school is good. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities well and play a robust and incisive part in decision making based on a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Financial management is good. Funds are spent wisely but the effects of long term staff absence have had an impact on the funds available for development and resources. The principles of best value are used well when purchasing supplies and services.

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

The pupils enjoy school very much and find all staff helpful and kind. Almost all parents speak very well of the school, especially the improvements made recently.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Raise standards in writing and some aspects of mathematics, providing greater challenge especially for more able pupils
- Raise standards in ICT and provide better opportunities for pupils to use computers to support their work in other subjects
- Enhance the pace and challenge in some lessons by forging more effective links between assessment, marking and target setting

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Achievement is satisfactory overall and often good in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 3. After a significant fall, standards have begun to rise and are now average in reading, mathematics and science by the end of Years 2 and 4 but below average in writing. More able pupils do not achieve well enough. Trends since the previous inspection show a decline but inspection evidence points to recent improvement under the direction of the new headteacher.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils in the Foundation Stage achieve well
- More able pupils in Years 2 and 4 could do better in writing and some aspects of mathematics
- Standards in design and technology and art and design are above average
- Throughout the school, standards in ICT are weak

#### **Commentary**

1. Several factors have had an adverse impact on pupils' achievement at the school since the previous inspection. They include significant staff changes and long term illness, a time of instability without a permanent headteacher and a lack of incisive direction in maintaining and driving up standards. These factors have led to an overall decline in performance in national test results for several years and significant underachievement. Since the appointment of the headteacher this decline has been checked and standards are rising. Staff now have a cohesive commitment to school improvement. Measures such as allocating different responsibilities and classes have led to rapid improvements in some areas, notably the Foundation Stage, the development of reading skills and teaching and learning in mathematics. Nevertheless, more remains to be done to address the underachievement of more able pupils through better assessment and target setting. This process has begun.
2. Most pupils start school with average levels of skills, knowledge and understanding for their age. The school makes good provision for these pupils and they make good progress. By the end of their time in the reception class almost all exceed the expected goals for their age in personal, social and emotional development and attain the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. They are prepared well for the National Curriculum.

#### ***Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in2003***

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	15.0 (15.9)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	13.5 (14.6)	14.6 (14.4)
Mathematics	14.0 (16.5)	16.3 (16.5)

*There were 29 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

3. The results of national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2003 were among the worst on record at the school. Standards in reading were below the national average and well below in writing and mathematics. When compared with schools with similar intakes, standards were well below average in reading and writing and among the lowest five per cent of schools in mathematics. Boys were much less successful than girls. This group of pupils had an above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs (25%), and their education had been disrupted by staff absence and an unsteady start in the Foundation Stage. Currently, the Year 2 group are on course to attain average standards in reading, mathematics and science but standards in writing are below average. These improvements are due to variations in the

cohort, staff changes and a more focused curriculum especially in mathematics and reading. Nevertheless, more able pupils are not being stretched sufficiently and they are not performing at high enough levels in writing, data handling and some aspects of problem solving in mathematics. The school's results in tests at the end of Year 4 show that pupils attain average standards in English, mathematics and science on leaving school. Inspection evidence shows that this is the case in mathematics and science, but that writing remains an issue as standards are below average in this aspect of English, although reading skills are average. Brighter pupils would do better if the work was more challenging.

4. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. There have been recent improvements to the management and organisation of the provision for these pupils, although the targets could be sharper. Pupils with statements of special educational needs make very good progress because of skilful and expert support. Progress in the school is satisfactory and pupils make the most gains in learning in Years 1 and 3 because of the good quality of teaching. There is little significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. The headteacher has clearly identified the issues and, together with the governors and staff, has set suitably challenging targets for the next two years. Given the current rate of improvement the school is likely to meet them.
5. There have been improvements to the curriculum, including widening the use of literacy and numeracy skills in a range of subjects, but more needs to be done to accelerate pupils' progress in writing. A particular weakness is in ICT as the school has very limited resources and pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use computers in a range of subjects; consequently their ICT skills are below average. However, good teaching of design and technology and art and design promotes good progress and achievement in these subjects. Although standards in music are average overall, the pupils achieve well in performance and in developing skills in playing tuned instruments.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils respond well to the good Christian spiritual, moral, social and cultural values promoted by the school and, as a result, their attitudes to school are good. Their behaviour and many aspects of their personal development are very good. Pupils are punctual and attendance is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' good attitudes and often very good relationships help to create a positive ethos for learning
- Pupils relish opportunities to take responsibility
- Pupils clearly understand the difference between right and wrong and are consistently encouraged and praised for making the right choices
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to experience and learn about other cultures

### **Commentary**

6. The good provision for spiritual development has a significant impact on pupils' enthusiasm and interest in their learning. Good opportunities are created for pupils to explore the intangible. For example, their ideas on the nature of God displayed in the corridor show a growing awareness of a spiritual dimension. A Year 4 art lesson creating surreal insects provided pupils with an opportunity to use their imagination and many became absorbed in their weird creations. Pupils feel valued because teachers always listen to their responses and ideas in lessons and this encourages them to participate. Pupils enjoy the after school clubs and are particularly proud of their musical prowess. They are also proud of the new garden, eager to explain about the painted stones and keen to ensure that visitors smell all the aromatic plants. Because pupils with special educational needs receive support in lessons, they are able to take part in discussions and are involved in the activities. As a result, pupils have good attitudes to their learning and are well motivated to work hard. This has a good impact on their achievement.

7. Moral and social development is promoted very well and this ensures that pupils clearly understand the boundaries of acceptable behaviour within the school community. Most comply with the expectations of their teachers and become sensible and useful members of the community. Pupils are friendly, courteous and keen to help each other. Year 4 pupils are conscientious about their responsibility for the younger pupils in the dining hall. Staff consistently praise pupils' good work and behaviour and this motivates them to try to live up to their teachers' high expectations. In personal, social and health education lessons pupils have opportunities to discuss issues important to them and to share their ideas and solutions. They learn to respect and value each other's beliefs and ideas by listening quietly in class. Because of the often very good relationships between most pupils, there are few concerns about bullying and pupils trust the staff to deal with any unkind behaviour fairly and effectively. The recent residential visit undertaken by Year 4 pupils has been a great success, contributing to pupils' personal development as well as their academic achievement. Pupils helped to design the garden and, through the recently formed ECO committee, they are developing an awareness of the fragile nature of the environment. There have been no exclusions.
8. The provision for cultural development is satisfactory overall, although the provision for pupils to learn about and experience music and art is good and has a positive impact on their personal development. Pupils have taken part in performances at Symphony Hall and visit a good range of local amenities in support of their learning. They learn about the cultural and religious traditions of others through many of their lessons, although there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to gain an insight into the lives of non-Western cultures. A display of famous British people from all walks of life highlights good role models for pupils to strive to emulate. Visitors come to school to talk to the pupils about their lives and experiences. Overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved since the last inspection.
9. During their time in the Foundation Stage, the children exceed the levels expected for their age in personal, social and emotional development. They are encouraged to work and play constructively and happily together and learn to make sensible choices. They listen carefully to instructions and try hard to please their teachers and other adults who work with them. They behave well.
10. Pupils' good attitudes to school are reflected in the above average attendance rate, which is an improvement since the last inspection. They are rarely late to school and this enables the school day to start on time. There are very good formal and informal systems to monitor and improve attendance and parents understand the importance of regular attendance.

## Attendance

### *Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)*

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.3	School data	0.3
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

*The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory. The appropriate curriculum meets requirements and is enriched well. Staff take very good care of the pupils. The school has good links with parents and the wider community.

## Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers assess pupils' work accurately, but these assessments could be better used to meet the needs of the more able.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 3 is good
- The staff support pupils with statements of special educational needs very well
- More able pupils, especially in Years 2 and 4, are not challenged enough
- Marking and target setting are not sufficiently well focused to guide pupils on how to improve

## Commentary

11. In the majority of the lessons seen teaching and learning were good or better and no unsatisfactory lessons were observed. However, analysis of pupils' work shows that there are some inconsistencies in teaching, especially in challenging more able pupils. The work set for these pupils is not demanding enough and this results in a slow rate of progress, evident especially in writing and mathematics. More able pupils in Years 2 and 4 often are required to complete the same work as the average pupils and there are insufficient opportunities for the pupils to take the initiative and investigate problems and complex ideas. Other weaknesses in teaching include inconsistent use of assessment and marking to set precise targets for the pupils. Although marking is accurate and completed conscientiously, the teachers do not give the pupils sufficient guidance on how they might improve. Teachers also are hampered in their lessons by the school's inadequate resources for ICT and this limits opportunities for some aspects of investigative learning.
12. There are several positive aspects to teaching and learning throughout the school. Teachers set regular homework and this provides a good link with parents and extends pupils' learning well. Lessons are planned thoroughly and in many cases the teachers use resources effectively to stimulate the pupils' interest. This was seen to good effect in a science lesson in Year 2 when the teacher set up an investigation about the movement of snails and then gave the pupils good opportunities to observe the molluscs and to find out a range of information. The pupils were fascinated, maintained high levels of concentration and produced good quality work. All staff have very good relationships with the pupils and adopt a positive and friendly approach to behaviour management which results in a purposeful and orderly atmosphere. Pupils respond well to the encouragement given and work hard to please their teachers. This was seen to good effect in several lessons in mathematics where, during the mental arithmetic warm-ups, good natured and humorous banter inspired confidence in the pupils and stimulated them to have a go at difficult questions without nerves. The teaching of the orchestra is excellent and inspires the pupils.
13. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good and promotes effective and enthusiastic learning. The staff make good use of practical activities and a range of resources to help the pupils to understand new ideas. Careful explanations and very good assessment and recording of the pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding ensure that pupils' personal, social and emotional development improves rapidly. Lessons are planned thoroughly with much attention to detail and the use of visual aids, such as the spots on a ladybird, help the pupils to grasp basic concepts such as addition and subtraction. The teaching of basic skills is good. Reading and writing are practised regularly. Interesting story times and the use of poetry extend pupils' language skills and the consistent practice of the sounds that letters make equip the pupils well in early reading. Sessions move on at a good pace and there are times to review understanding. Careful observation of the pupils at work and skilful intervention at just the right point move learning on at a good pace. The staff are knowledgeable about how the pupils learn and are aware of their individual needs. They quickly identify any problems in learning and are on hand to offer support or, where needed, add further challenges.

14. The teaching of English in Years 1 to 4 is satisfactory, with some good work in Years 1 and 3 where there is more pace and challenge. Teachers have a secure grasp of the basic elements of the literacy strategy and adapt lessons to include the interesting use of different styles of reading and writing. Basic skills such as handwriting and spelling are taught well, but opportunities for more able pupils to write creatively and imaginatively in a variety of styles are not sufficiently broad and in some cases the teachers do not have high enough expectations, so that pupils' work is not as good as it should be. Similarly, in mathematics there is satisfactory teaching overall but good practice in Years 1 and 3 where lessons are brisk and purposeful. In Years 2 and 4 there is an over reliance on text books and pupils of all abilities often complete the same work so that there is some lack of challenge. Science is taught well throughout the school because much of the work is practical and teachers insist in good standards of presentation and promote scientific enquiry and discovery through interesting activities. The teachers have good subject knowledge of art and design and design and technology and use this well to stimulate pupils' interest. Lessons in these subjects have good pace, include opportunities to learn and apply new skills and times to review and evaluate what has been achieved.
15. Pupils respond very well in practical lessons and work hard. They are proud of their achievements and also cooperate effectively with others. Good examples of collaboration were seen in several lessons and the teacher fostered this through promoting opportunities for purposeful discussion and role play, as in a lesson in Year 3 about friendship. Pupils with special educational needs are identified correctly and have satisfactory individual education plans which are used to plan lessons. They are taught satisfactorily. The teaching of statemented pupils is very effective because the staff have a keen knowledge of the pupils' needs and provide well focused support and also allow opportunities for the pupils to learn independently or alongside others.

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 30 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (3%)	6 (20%)	19 (63%)	4 (13%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

**The curriculum**

The pupils benefit from a suitably broad and balanced curriculum, which is enriched through good extra-curricular activities and visits. There are satisfactory levels of staffing, the accommodation is good and resources are mostly adequate.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is good
- The school makes good provision for personal, social and health education
- The school is short of resources for ICT, reading books for more able pupils and facilities for outdoor play for the Foundation Stage
- Turbulence in staffing and some long term staff absence have slowed curriculum development

**Commentary**

16. The curriculum is inclusive and meets statutory requirements. It prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education. It has improved under the new leadership and management and staff are establishing greater consistency in developing pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. The school also meets requirements for teaching religious education and collective worship. Many of the subjects rely on national guidance as the basis of planning, and this works well. Subject leaders take their responsibilities seriously and keep a check through

pupils' work and teachers' plans that subjects are covered in sufficient depth. Planning has improved and the staff are now looking at ways of linking the different skills from the subjects to create a cohesive curriculum. An area for development is in reviewing the structure of the school day, as some lessons go on too long and the momentum of learning slows in these circumstances. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is good and has improved much since the previous inspection. The pupils benefit from good planning and organisation, which provides them with opportunities to make good progress in all of the areas of learning. However, the limited resources for outdoor play may impact on the standards in physical development.

17. The school makes satisfactory provision for special educational needs and this has improved recently under the guidance of the headteacher. There are satisfactory individual education plans and the policy for special educational needs provides suitable guidance for staff. Teaching assistants are involved in planning and work with teachers, pupils and parents to ensure there is consistency and continuity in provision. This is especially successful with pupils with statements of special educational needs as the support staff have very good skills and meet the needs of these pupils very well. An excellent example was the involvement of a pupil with severe learning difficulties in the orchestra. This illustrates the school's commitment to provide equal opportunities for all.
18. The school's good provision for personal, social and health education makes an effective contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The trust evident between adults and pupils has a very good impact on pupils' attitudes. The provision includes drugs awareness and sex and relationships education. These aspects are included in the science curriculum and good use is made of circle times (discussions) and drama to enliven pupils' learning.
19. The school has clear curriculum objectives in the school development plan and they are linked to raising standards. To this effect, the subject leaders are involved in reviewing subjects regularly and devising ways of broadening the curriculum. This has been partially successful in encouraging the use of literacy and numeracy skills in a range of subjects but not enough has yet been done to extend the use of computers to support teaching and learning. The staff work hard to provide enrichment activities and they contribute well to pupils' academic, personal, social and emotional development. A variety of extra-curricular activities, including sport, French and music, enhance pupils' experiences and the pupils speak highly of their enjoyment. Year 4 is particularly proud of its achievements on the residential visit. Involvement of the local community and a professional football club in training the youngsters encourages friendly and purposeful competition. Good resources are used well to support teaching and learning.
20. The accommodation is good quality and staff work hard to display pupils' work to motivate, reward and enthuse. The good links with a local bank have brought very good improvements to the play area and the pupils are very proud of the school garden. The building is well cared for, clean and tidy, and provides a safe and secure environment. Although resources for most subjects are satisfactory, there is poor provision for ICT and insufficient books to challenge more able readers. The school staff work together well and report that morale has risen under the new leadership and management. Staff are valued and all participate in decision making. There are good opportunities for training for both teaching and support staff. However, long term staff absence and changes in leadership and management have affected stability and curriculum development.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The school makes very good provision for the care, welfare and health and safety of all pupils. The strong relationships in school ensure that pupils receive good quality support and guidance. Pupils' involvement in school life is good. The quality of this provision has improved significantly since the last inspection.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The kindness and commitment of all staff ensures that parents and pupils feel confident that any problems will be handled fairly and effectively
- The personal support and guidance for each individual are very good
- Pupils trust their teachers and know that they will help them if they are unhappy
- Marking and target setting do not always give pupils a clear idea of what they have to do to improve

## **Commentary**

21. Awareness of health and safety issues is good. Fire drills are carried out regularly and there is good provision for first aid. Regular checks of the premises are carried out which ensure that the school is a safe and healthy environment. Good procedures are used to check potential hazards prior to visits out of school. The headteacher is responsible for child protection issues and has undergone appropriate training. All staff are aware of their duty of care in this aspect of pupils' welfare. Pupils learn about the benefits of a healthy diet through their science lessons and older pupils are given appropriate information about sex and drugs. Through their personal, social and health education lessons pupils learn strategies to keep themselves safe and teachers emphasise the safe use of resources in lessons.
22. Because there are very good relationships between most pupils and the adults who work with them, pupils are confident that someone will help them if they are unhappy or worried about something. Close communication with parents ensures that they trust the school to take care of their children. Personal, social and health education lessons provide good opportunities for teachers to informally monitor and support pupils' personal development and to identify any specific issues that may be troubling them. Educational support and guidance for the children in the Foundation Stage are good and this contributes well to the good start they make. In Years 1 to 4, however, pupils do not always clearly understand how they can improve their work. The good induction arrangements for new arrivals ensures that parents are confident that their children will be cared for and they are particularly pleased with the welcome they receive in the school.

## **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school has maintained the very good partnership with parents reported in the last inspection. There are good links with the community and other schools.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents have very positive views about the work of the school
- They feel welcome in the school and are confident that any concerns will be dealt with effectively
- The hard work of the parents' association is a significant factor in the high quality of the partnership

## **Commentary**

23. The parents who took part in the consultation before and during the inspection express very positive views about the work of the school. They comment that they always feel welcome in the school and are confident that the school listens to them. They are provided with good information through the prospectus, the annual governors' report and the regular newsletters. The annual reports on the progress of children are satisfactory. They give good information about what children have been doing, but do not always give a clear indication of how well nor is there sufficient focus on targets for improvement. Consultation evenings are well attended and give parents a clear picture of their children's progress. The school provides an overview of what children will be learning in each class during the year and the recent introduction of

workshops on specific subjects is proving popular. Parents encourage their children to complete their homework and are keen to support the personal and educational opportunities provided. The reading diaries and Year 3 and 4 journals show that many parents are actively involved in helping their children at home. A number of parents regularly help in school, and many parents help with visits. Large numbers attend the performances and celebrations held in school. The parents' and friends' organisation raises significant funds through a range of activities and events, which are very well supported by both parents and the village community. Because of the very good communication systems between home and school, any concerns parents may have are quickly and effectively identified and dealt with. There are good informal systems through which to monitor parents' views and the parent governors have a good impact on the decision making process.

24. The school has good links with the local community and, in particular, with the church. Several local businesses have sponsored story sacks and funding from a banking organisation has helped to create the delightful garden. They are also very generous in their support of the functions organised by the parents' organisation. There are good links with pre-school providers and effective systems facilitate transfer to the next stage of education. Links with other schools are well developed and effective.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are satisfactory and governance of the school is good. The recently appointed headteacher provides focused and effective leadership and has been responsible for building staff confidence and securing an improvement in standards.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher shows determination and ambition for the pupils and is building a committed team
- The use of data to set targets and evaluate performance requires further improvement
- Governors play a pivotal role in school improvement
- The school's financial management is good

### **Commentary**

25. The specific barriers to learning which existed in this school are now being dealt with effectively. The school has been through a difficult time of change and staff turbulence which have caused a decline in standards and the lack of consistent and purposeful leadership and management. Under the strong direction of the governors and the new headteacher the school is making rapid improvements, although more remains to be done in ensuring consistency in the progress of all groups of pupils. There is now a common sense of purpose and a vision for school improvement, which is backed fully by all staff and governors, although issues of long term staff illness still remain. There was little initial headway made in tackling the issues raised in the previous inspection report but new systems of management, organisation and leadership are making an impact and standards are rising.
26. The good governing body makes an important contribution and is involved well in shaping the vision and direction of the school. It has made sure that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities by approving good policies and practices for equal opportunities, disability and racial equality and monitoring how well the school is following these guidelines. Their understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses is very good and they are fully supportive of the headteacher in bringing about change.
27. The headteacher is clear about what needs to be done to secure improvement and is backed fully by the staff. She successfully balances a large teaching commitment with leadership and management responsibilities and provides a good role model for other staff and pupils. Her open and friendly style has won the approval and support of all, and parents are impressed with the way in which the school has become a more open establishment. This has been achieved through improved information, informal and formal meetings and consultation. Senior staff share the headteacher's ambition for the pupils and recognise the need for change. Good

progress has been made in improving the provision of several areas including mathematics, special educational needs and the Foundation Stage. These areas are led well, resulting in rising standards and improved provision. However, the main area for development in subject leadership is to ensure that there is sufficient challenge for the more able.

28. The headteacher and governors have clearly identified the school's weaknesses and are addressing them systematically. Through analysis of available data and the use of a good system of performance management the governors have set challenging targets for the headteacher and staff linked to raising standards and improving pupils' achievement. There has been little information available to governors in the past and this has hampered their ability to challenge the school. It is a mark of their determination for the success of the school that they have sought advice, training and guidance from a variety of sources. The sharing of strengths and weaknesses by the headteacher has opened up opportunities for staff and governors to take responsibility for school improvement and they have seized upon this to positive effect. Good procedures and paperwork support the school's initiatives and all are clear about the way ahead. The management of important areas such as the Foundation Stage, special educational needs and the Foundation subjects has improved and staff have clear job specifications. They report that they feel more confident in moving the subjects forward because of the support they receive. Regular opportunities for staff training are linked to the schools' priorities in the school development plan and all show a commitment to training and development. Induction procedures and support for staff new to the school, either permanent or temporary is good, and this helps to provide continuity in the learning.
29. The school has a small deficit caused by the funding of long term absence and this has hampered the plans for improved resources and staffing. Nevertheless, financial management and procedures are robust. Finances are linked to the priorities in the school development plan and governors are rigorous in checking up on spending. They take good account of the principles of best value when purchasing supplies and services although their role in checking on the curriculum is an area for further development.

### Financial information

#### *Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003*

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	327,844
Total expenditure	335,221
Expenditure per pupil	2,601

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	2
Balance carried forward to the next	-7,375

## PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING,

### SUBJECTS AND COURSES

#### AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

30. The provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good. The school admits children at the beginning of the term after their fourth birthday. Most have attended a nursery or a playgroup before starting school. The youngest children work together with the nursery nurse for part of the day, giving them a very good start to their life in school. The teacher, who has a teaching assistant to support her in addition to the nursery nurse, has created an effective team and all adults have a good understanding of the way young children learn, as well as the Foundation Stage curriculum. The teacher was new to the Foundation Stage for this academic year and has rapidly established a rich learning environment and a good range of learning opportunities for the children. She uses a good combination of direct teaching and focussed play activities and links the different areas of learning very effectively. This provides the children with a cohesive education where they are well prepared for the rigours of Year 1. Children make at least satisfactory progress, and in speaking and listening, reading and personal and social development their progress is good. Boys' progress is particularly good as some enter school with below average speaking and listening skills. The children are on track to achieve the early learning goals in all areas of learning by the end of the Reception Year and many will exceed them in personal and social development. The teaching was at least good, and sometimes very good, in the lessons observed during the inspection. The children's work, and the very good assessment and tracking systems, show that the tasks are well matched to the needs of individual children. Very good links between school and home provide seamless learning and help to add relevance to the children's learning. There are no children with special educational needs in the Reception class.
31. The children's physical and creative development were sampled rather than inspected. The teacher's plans shows that the curriculum for these aspects of learning is appropriate. In **physical development** all the children manipulate tools accurately and cut out text and pictures with care. Their control of writing tools is good and almost all hold writing tools accurately. The older children draw figures and animals and write letters and words that are well formed and accurate. Although no observations of the children's prowess in physical education or using large climbing equipment were made, the display of photographs of the children's sponsored bike ride show they have no trouble pedalling and steering. In **creative development** children sing well in assemblies and hymn practices, but no other music was observed during the inspection. The classroom displays and photographs show a good range of opportunities for the children to experiment with materials and to make models. The many "spiders" in the classroom, for example, some teacher-generated designs and some child initiated, should dispel any tendencies towards arachnophobia in later life! Children have many opportunities to play together and the develop role-play effectively.

#### PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The provision for the children's personal, social and emotional development is **good**.

##### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children and adults have very good relationships
- The adults teach children to take turns, share and care for each other very well
- There are many opportunities for children to investigate, cooperate and to take responsibility for their actions

## Commentary

32. The children quickly settle into the school routine because they are well supported by all adults. The children form friendships and some show a pleasing care for others. They work amicably alongside each other, share equipment and listen to their classmates in whole class discussions. Older children work and play cooperatively, negotiating roles and showing a pleasing willingness to allow others to lead. The adults encourage independence. Children register themselves when they arrive in school, for example, and individuals are asked to calculate the number present and absent. The children's suggestions are taken seriously throughout the day, and often acted upon. They have a strong sense of community and the children understand that they are part of the village and the wider community. The teacher, nursery nurse and teaching assistant regularly ask children how others might feel, whether it be another person or the mini-beasts in their stories and topics, helping children to empathise with the feelings of others. There are good links with religious education and children are encouraged to use the life and teachings of Jesus as a model for their own lives. The children have a secure understanding of right and wrong. Provision for personal, social and emotional development is carefully planned, but also permeates throughout all aspects of school life. The teaching is good and children make good progress, enabling them to meet, and for many to exceed, the early learning goals for personal and social development.

## COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision for communication, language and literacy is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Reading and writing are taught well and children are making good progress
- There are many opportunities for children to write independently for practical purposes
- Technical vocabulary is taught well and accurate speech is modelled conscientiously

## Commentary

33. Most children start school with a good vocabulary but some, especially boys, have below average conversational skills. The accurate assessments of the children's needs and the many opportunities for speech soon address these weaknesses. The older children, including the boys, are confident speakers and all happily sustain a conversation with a stranger. The teacher is conscientious when teaching the children new words, especially technical vocabulary such as "author" and "illustrator", "introduction" and "phoneme". Children use this vocabulary with appropriate accuracy and understanding. Most children use complete sentences when speaking. When tenses or other grammatical errors occur adults give the correct sentence so children acquire accurate speech. All adults insist that children listen carefully to themselves and each other although several children prefer to speak than to listen! Role-play and cooperative work and play help to establish conversational skills. Almost all children achieve the early learning goal for speech and communication and several exceed them.
34. Focussed reading sessions with the teacher and teaching assistant or nursery nurse are effective and the older children recognise many familiar words. Children are taught to recognise letters and the sounds they make. In the class literacy lessons the children listen attentively to the stories and volunteer information about the pictures or events. Several children apply their skills of decoding words and tell the teacher when they spot words within words or letter clusters such as "sh". Their readiness to volunteer this information, unprompted, shows the delight they have in learning and their eagerness to practise their skills. Children take books home regularly and parents are very supportive, helping to consolidate their child's skills. Children read well and several have skills well within Level 1 of the National Curriculum. The teaching of writing is equally effective. Children learn to form letters correctly and are encouraged to write their names, labels and captions from the time they start school.

Independent writing is actively encouraged and children often write to support role-play as well as within literacy and to record their knowledge and understanding of the world. There is a good blend of the teaching of skills and independent writing and at all times children are encouraged to “have a go” at spelling independently, based on their knowledge of letter sounds. As a result, almost all the older children produce phonetically feasible spelling and some spell familiar words accurately. Communication, language and literacy provision is well integrated so children use all their skills to support writing. During one lesson, for example, one child remembered that a word he needed was in a book he had read. He found this book and copied the word, totally independently. The teaching and learning of communication, language and literacy are good overall and children make good progress so most will achieve the early learning goals by the end of their reception year.

## **MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Provision for mathematical development is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Mathematical skills are taught well and are applied across the curriculum
- The interesting environment encourages children to engage in mathematical activities
- Children are acquiring a good understanding of mathematical terms

### **Commentary**

35. The planning for mathematical development is very flexible, enabling a mix of whole class teaching, group teaching with the nursery nurse and independent learning through directed activities or play. The very good assessment, with records updated weekly, facilitates a very good match of teaching and learning to the children’s needs. Several younger children count accurately to 10 and all accurately count up to four ladybirds in their story. Older children count accurately to beyond 20 and several record number “stories” accurately, including addition and subtraction within 10, well within Level 1 of the National Curriculum. Although children’s work shows that aspects of mathematics are consolidated formally in workbooks or on worksheets, much of the work is linked to other aspects of learning. Very good resources about ladybirds, including games, soft toys and books formed the basis of the inspection week’s mathematics. The lesson about length, where children found ways to compare the length of strips of material made of contrasting cloth, evoked a lot of discussion about touch and texture. The teacher’s skill was very apparent as she encouraged the children to explain how they compared the length, leading to proportion. One boy, for example, suggested using straws to measure and compare, while another cleverly used the lace pattern on one to establish a unit of measurement on the other, making an accurate comparison. It is the children, not the teacher, who work out how to solve problems.
36. Almost all children use the language of position, shape, weight and size accurately. They have an appropriate understanding of the language of time, discussing today, yesterday and tomorrow with ease. Some pre-empt the morning registration by establishing the day of the week before they are asked. Children enjoy mathematics, are well taught and most are achieving the early learning goals in all aspects of their mathematical development.

## **KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD**

Provision for knowledge and understanding of the world is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Planning for this area of learning permeates the curriculum, giving coherence to learning

- The attractive environment and educational visits effectively encourage exploration and investigation
- The adults build on the children's own knowledge very effectively

### Commentary

37. Children have a secure understanding of their place in their own family and know that young animals need care. They are encouraged to have a lively curiosity about the world around them. Their topic about mini-beasts, for example, and their trip to Pendeford Mill, stimulated much discussion and a good understanding of the habits and habitats of insects, small reptiles, spiders, slugs and snails. Children are encouraged to empathise with and personify these creatures, developing their imaginations and making a good contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The readily available range of materials enables children to learn about shape, texture, structure and malleability. They know the difference between different types of homes. Parents are very supportive and often continue the topics outside school. One child who had returned from holiday brought a range of plastic mini-beasts he had collected while away. As with other areas of learning, the teacher ensures that the children investigate and solve problems themselves. When establishing whether they had seen animals on their list of what they might see, made before their trip, the children decided how to record the outcomes when only half the class had spotted an animal.
38. Children regularly use the computer to support their learning. They use the mouse accurately and explain "the rules" confidently. The good teaching, building on the children's experiences and understanding ensures that most will meet the early learning goals by the end of the reception class.

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

### ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in writing are below average in Years 2 and 4
- Standards in reading have improved and are now average in Years 2 and 4
- More able pupils are not challenged enough
- Pupils with statements of special educational needs make very good progress due to high quality support

### Commentary

39. Although standards in English had fallen significantly since the last inspection and were well below average in reading and low in writing in the Year 2 national tests in 2003, the inspection shows that standards are improving, although they remain below average in writing. There have, until recently, been few systems for tracking pupils' progress. The new subject leader and headteacher are establishing more effective assessment systems, but there is not yet enough data to enable teachers to set pertinent targets for individual pupils. The good teaching in the present Foundation Stage and Year 1 is already having a positive impact on standards and pupils in Year 1 are achieving average standards for their age. Although most children in Year 2 are working within Level 2 of the National Curriculum for writing, few are achieving the higher Level 3. Several pupils, especially boys, are not attaining level 3 of the National Curriculum in Year 4 and boys' achievements in writing are not as good as the girls throughout the school.
40. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are similar to those of other pupils nationally. Technical vocabulary is taught well and in most classes pupils are encouraged to use complete

sentences when contributing to discussion or answering questions. In all classes, discussion is encouraged and pupils are expected to listen to each other, volunteer opinions and empathise with others. For example, in Year 2, pupils, as the Troll or one of the Three Billy Goats Gruff, when questioned by their peers, showed some understanding of the points of view and personalities of the different characters.

41. There has been an improvement in the teaching of reading and pupils make good progress in relation to their abilities. The new reading scheme is popular with the pupils, and the systematic teaching of new words and letter sounds is helping the pupils to improve their skills. The additional provision, including the Story Sacks provided by the Parent Teacher Association, local industry and organisations and the school have established an enthusiasm for reading. Pupils read for research and to support learning in other subjects. In the best lessons, the teachers match the text to work in other subjects or use "Hot Seating" techniques or drama to enrich the text. Pupils are expected to read at home very regularly. Teachers have a good dialogue with the parents, although more specific learning targets would make this even more effective. Occasionally, pupils' books are not sufficiently challenging.
42. All teachers teach the elements of the National Literacy Strategy thoroughly. Pupils have a sound understanding of grammatical structures. Spelling is taught systematically and pupils learn their spellings for homework. In all classes, pupils write for different purposes and in different styles. Handwriting skills are practised regularly. The teaching was good in almost all lessons observed during the inspection. The teachers generate interest, plan carefully and have very good relationships with their pupils. However, although teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously and accurately, they rarely identify, with clear targets, what pupils need to do to improve their work. Pupils do not know, for example, what they need to do to achieve higher levels and, too often, teachers do not expect enough of the quality or quantity of the pupils' writing. In one lesson, for example, the use of worksheets prevented the pupils extending their writing because there was not enough space. Some finished their work and had nothing to do for some time. It was to the pupils' credit that they sat quietly and patiently waiting for their next task. In other lessons, the pupils' over reliance on rubbers and wordbooks slowed the pace of the work and few achieved their task. The teaching of English is satisfactory.
43. Pupils with statements of special educational needs make very good progress due to the very good support and accurate match of work to the pupils' needs. Their inclusion is impressive. Where it is not possible for a pupil to work with the class, the individual work relates directly to the theme of the lesson. Other pupils with special educational needs have identified targets, but, as with all pupils, the tracking systems are not yet secure enough to provide short, sharp achievable targets that enable pupils to identify the progress they make and understand what they need to do next. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall.
44. Subject management is satisfactory. Initiatives like improving the reading scheme have been successful and the recently appointed subject leader has a good understanding of the need to raise standards. Although standards are rising, there is still not enough challenge for more able pupils. Assessment systems are not yet secure enough to enable teachers to match work accurately to individual pupil's needs to improve the rate of progress and raise standards further.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

45. Technical vocabulary is promoted effectively in all subjects. A strength of the teachers' planning and teaching is the way that skills learnt in the literacy lessons are applied to the work in other subjects. In Year 2, for example, pupils use labelling skills to support their work in science and geography. They have made thesauri of seaside words. Year 4 pupils have written accounts to support their work about insulation in science and their residential trip to Coven. In Year 1 pupils make notes, lists, write accounts and label diagrams for history geography, science and design and technology. Pupils make good use of books and other sources for research. Displays show accounts of important events and the lives of famous

people written by Year 2. Pupils who attended the 2003 music festival wrote letters of thanks. Speaking and listening, reading and writing have a high priority across the curriculum and the school is well placed, with an improvement in the challenge for all pupils and higher expectations from the teachers, to enable pupils to achieve well.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- More able pupils are not challenged enough in Years 2 and 4
- The subject leader has a good grasp of how to improve standards

### **Commentary**

46. Standards are now rising following a decline since the previous inspection. The reasons for the improvement this year have been better use of analysis of pupils' work to identify strengths and weaknesses in the teaching and learning, more effective leadership and management and changes in the teaching staff. Nevertheless, the work set for more able pupils requires improvement as currently much of the work set, especially in Years 2 and 4, is at a similar level to that of other groups of pupils and there is an over reliance on completing examples from the text book without consideration for the ability of the pupils. This means that brighter pupils do not receive sufficient challenge. The situation is being tackled by the subject leader and headteacher through a review of pupils' work and support and training for the staff. Subject leadership is good and the recent developments in assessing pupils and in tracking their progress are beginning to take effect. Girls are slightly more successful in national tests than boys, although in the work seen there is little variation in performance. One success of the subject leadership has been in analysing previous tests papers; as a result of this the school identified the need to develop the teaching of subtraction and this has been tackled well.
47. At the end of Years 2 and 4 pupils have secure skills in working with number and benefit from brisk and well focused sessions at the start of lessons to sharpen up their mental agility. Regular practice of times tables at home and school as well as opportunities to use a variety of strategies for calculating are having a beneficial impact of pupils' understanding of number. Pupils with statements of special educational needs make good progress as they receive good support and are able to grasp simple concepts by using practical resources as aids. Other pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Pupils have appropriate knowledge of shape, space and measure and this aspect of work has improved with the use of better resources, rather than relying on worksheets. In a good lesson in Year 3, the pupils made good gains in using a variety of scales and improved their accuracy in reading them after first making reasonable estimates. Data handling skills are a little below average; although pupils make graphs and most older pupils tally correctly, many find difficulty in drawing conclusions from the available evidence. Good strides have been made in developing pupils' use and application of mathematics through the use of the guidance in the National Numeracy Strategy. Pupils' skills in using correct mathematical vocabulary are average and most have appropriate skills in using a variety of strategies. Pupils' skills in solving complex problems are relatively weaker.
48. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, although several good lessons were seen. Lessons are planned well and include opportunities to practise mental arithmetic. Homework is a regular and effective feature and the pupils respond well to it. Relationships and discipline in lessons are very good and pupils work cooperatively. In some lessons the pace is rather slow and not enough is expected of more able pupils who underachieve. Some teachers make very good use of resources and this brings learning to life. In a good lesson in Year 2 the teacher used a counting stick to promote speed and accuracy in recalling multiplication facts. The pupils responded enthusiastically and made good gains in learning number patterns involving multiplication by 2, 5, 10 and 100. Lessons are most successful when time limits are set and pupils are clear about what to do next. In some lessons the teachers intervene to check on understanding and to point out any successful work, and this acts as a spur to other

pupils. Marking is an area for development as teachers do not link targets with their comments and this leaves some lack of clarity for pupils in knowing what they need to do to improve. Although computers are used in some lessons, the limited resources hamper opportunities to make use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

49. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to use mathematics in their work in other subjects. In art and design the pupils create sequences of patterns and use these skills to identify geometric shapes. Some work in data handling links to pupils' observations in science and pupils also record using tally charts. In design and technology the pupils' work includes accurate measurements using standard units.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision for science is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The pupils have a good range of opportunities to investigate and experiment
- The teachers engage the pupils in interesting activities
- Standards are improving

### **Commentary**

50. Standards are average in Years 2 and 4. The teacher assessments carried out at the end of Year 2 in 2003 identified particular weaknesses in pupils' knowledge of materials and their skills of scientific enquiry. The pupils' work and the lessons observed during the inspection show that these weaknesses have been addressed. In Years 1 and 2 pupils demonstrated a secure understanding of scientific enquiry. The good or very good teaching in these lessons and an impressive range of resources, snails in Year 2 and a range of material and equipment to find material suitable for an umbrella in Year 1, enabled the pupils to observe and experiment for themselves. In both classes pupils have a good understanding of the principles of fair testing. Their work shows a sound knowledge of forces, aspects of human growth and light and dark in Year 1 and appropriate progress in Year 2 as pupils study plants and animals, forces, including electricity, and keeping safe in greater depth. Pupils make good progress in Year 1. The teacher gives advice on how to improve their work in pupils' books and almost all work is approached through scientific enquiry. There is no difference in the standards of boys and girls, and pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress throughout the school.
51. No lessons were observed in Year 3 but pupils' work is well presented, supported by helpful marking and orientated towards scientific enquiry. The books show good progress and standards have improved significantly since last summer's teacher assessments. A pupil with a statement of special educational needs made good progress and he has access to the full curriculum, very effectively supported by his welfare assistant. This investigative and exploratory approach continues in Year 4. The teacher has good subject knowledge and builds on pupils' previous learning. She made good use of the recent educational visit to Coven. Research skills in this lesson about habitats were used well. Pupils with special educational needs worked alongside their peers and were fully included in all aspects of the lesson. Pupils organise their work systematically and work hard. Pupils' books and other evidence show a sound understanding of all the features of the science curriculum and appropriate use of the Internet to support learning. However, some less able pupils do not finish all their work and some tasks for the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenging. The teaching in the lessons is good overall. Most pupils learn well because they are set a good range of interesting tasks that are increasingly linked to other areas of the curriculum. The pupils respond well and display responsible attitudes and a good degree of independence in their work. The school has done well to improve standards this year.

52. Subject leadership is well focused and is contributing to rising standards through careful analysis of data and identification of what needs to be done next. There is a helpful scheme of work which has recently been improved to allow for more reinforcement of key scientific skills. Assessment is accurate and records of progress kept up to date but more needs to be done to use this information to set challenges, especially for more able pupils.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils have limited skills and understanding and achievement is unsatisfactory
- There has been insufficient improvement since the previous inspection
- ICT is not used well enough to support the work in a range of subjects
- The school's resources are poor

### **Commentary**

53. Although teachers plan for the use of ICT in some lessons the poor quality of some of the hardware and limited range of software hinder consistent progress. There is an inadequate number of computers and most classes only have one, so that the teaching of new skills and opportunities for pupils to practise are extremely limited. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory and teachers have a secure grasp of the programmes of study but their teaching is hampered by the equipment.
54. Standards are low and progress for pupils of all abilities is unsatisfactory. However, pupils have average skills in some areas of ICT. Year 3 pupils were involved in a pilot project on making and editing short films, linked to their literacy work on traditional tales, and produced some good work. They also have secure knowledge of using email and most access the Internet for basic research. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to use word processing to develop their English skills and standards are below average. In a lesson in Year 1 the pupils used a programmable toy satisfactorily to move the robot around some objects, and this helped to improve their mathematical vocabulary of direction words.
55. Limited resources have hampered effective subject leadership. The staff and governors have a good plan for development but this has been held back by problems with finances. The school has an appropriate system to record pupils' attainment.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

56. This is a weak aspect of the school's provision. Staff provide some opportunities for pupils to use computers in subjects such as science when pupils use a CD to research information and in mathematics where pupils solve money problems. In art and design there are opportunities to create simple pictures. However, the limitations of equipment hamper the use of technology to support English.

## **HUMANITIES**

No history or geography lessons were observed during the inspection. Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work, examined teachers' planning and talked with the subject leaders and pupils about the school's work in humanities. Analysis of pupils' work, teachers' planning and discussions with pupils show that **geography** receives sufficient coverage and that pupils make satisfactory gains in knowledge of key geographical skills. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 study a village in Mexico and compare it with their own locality. They are developing an understanding of commerce and have been shopping. They identify key features within their community and also talk about their route to school and to the nearest main towns. In Years 3 and 4 the work is linked well to local studies with a focus on rivers, weather and environmental issues, including ways to improve the school. This links well with the school's focus on the "Eco-School" initiative. Mapping skills are developed throughout the school and the work builds on previous learning. Learning is brought to life through visits to places such as Coven where pupils study the Carding Hill Valley and the river. Numeracy skills are used well. Pupils measure the width of the river and, throughout the school, record data on charts.

Literacy skills are applied well in Year 2 where pupils make thesauri of seaside words. The use of information and communication technology is limited, apart from the use of the Internet for research.

In **history**, pupils in Years 1 and 2 compare costume through the ages and famous people and events, including the fire of London. They have a satisfactory knowledge of their personal history and that of their families. In Years 3 and 4 the pupils study the Aztecs and Tudor periods and have visited the Ancient High House in Stafford to support their studies. The teachers emphasise the use of different types of historical evidence and pupils have good opportunities to learn through research using computers, artefacts and books and their work shows some empathy with the people and periods they study. There are few examples of extended writing in pupils' books.

### **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

Inspectors observed two lessons in design and technology and art and design and four in music, one of which was with the orchestra. Discussions with pupils and analysis of their work as well as teachers' planning provided other evidence. No lessons in physical education were seen.

Timetables and plans show that pupils have suitable opportunities to take part in a good range of **physical education** activities. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have regular swimming lessons and records show that most are confident in water. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities including football and tennis. Pupils say they enjoy these activities and the sessions are well attended by large groups.

#### **Art and design**

Provision in art and design is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well and standards are better than those expected
- Teaching and learning are good

#### **Commentary**

57. The school has improved the provision for art and design since the previous inspection. Pupils have good opportunities to experiment, investigate and create using a good range of skills and techniques. They make good progress through the school in learning about different styles and techniques of famous artists and work hard to improve their work. Pupils are successful because the teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons which include guidance about techniques and provide opportunities for the pupils to practise and refine what they have learned. This was seen to good effect in a Year 2 lesson where the pupils studied patterns in wallpaper and were asked to create a repeating pattern. The task was brought to life through observational drawing of plants and the boys and girls worked with great focus using magnifying glasses to find intricate detail. They maintained high levels of concentration and produced work of a good standard. The lessons also included observational drawings of the grain in wood. Pupils used these drawings as a basis for making a block for printing and they worked with painstaking care. This lesson contributed well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as they marvelled at the intricacies found in the natural world. Pupils in Year 4 are good at observational work and their portraits completed using memory and mirrors are of good quality. The teacher successfully extends this work to further studies in portraits and pupils produce good work in the style of Picasso. The teacher uses her subject knowledge well to explain Surrealism and the pupils respond well by producing well crafted examples of their own. Pupils competently use a variety of techniques and work with care and imagination. They take care of tools and equipment and are careful in their selection of materials and fabrics when planning.
58. Teachers encourage the pupils to think and plan thoroughly before committing their ideas to paper. Lessons are planned effectively and resources used well. There are some good links with literacy as pupils use reference books to study famous works and artists and the strong emphasis on pattern helps the pupils in their understanding of mathematical sequences. Teachers provide satisfactory opportunities for pupils to use computers for a variety of art activities. The subject is led and managed well and the school makes good use of the policy

and scheme of work to provide continuity in developing skills, knowledge and understanding. Assessment is satisfactory with records kept of pupils' achievements. The teachers use their knowledge of individuals to provide additional support and encouragement when needed.

## **Design and technology**

Provision in design and technology is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils of all abilities make good progress, achieve well and attain good standards
- Teaching and learning are good
- Computers are not used sufficiently to support the teaching of design and technology

### **Commentary**

59. Pupils of all abilities achieve well because the tasks set are carefully planned to stretch their thinking and to allow individuals or small groups to use their imagination. The school makes good use of national guidance for design and technology and the subject leader has provided staff with good advice, a suitable range of resources and a programme of study to develop skills, knowledge and understanding consistently. Leadership of the subject is good. The subject leader checks on teachers' plans and the pupils' work. All staff keep satisfactory records of pupils' progress and attainment.
60. The work covered is interesting and motivates the pupils who say they enjoy design and technology. In the lessons seen the pupils worked hard and maintained good levels of concentration. They responded to the challenging work set and came up with good ideas to solve problems because the teachers had carefully explained a variety of skills and techniques. In a Year 1 lesson, the pupils made a freestanding "House for Sale" sign. They explored a variety of ways of making their sign rigid and eye catching and worked effectively with a variety of fixing techniques. The teacher gave considered guidance when necessary, but many of the pupils used their own ideas, working collaboratively and effectively because they had practised a variety of skills in earlier lessons. Other strengths in the teaching were seen in Year 3 as pupils designed their own sandwiches. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs was especially effective in this session as the support staff had a very good knowledge of the pupils and their needs and intervened at just the right point to move learning on. Good links were made with literacy in each of these lessons and the teachers insisted on accurate and well presented work. The pupils responded very well to the challenge. Mathematical skills are encouraged through accurate measuring, although there are insufficient opportunities for the pupils to use computers in design and technology.
61. The subject is used well to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The Eco design day provided pupils with good opportunities to find out about humankind's impact on the world and to think carefully about recycling. The pupils designed, made and evaluated their monster recycling bins and created attractive and useful items. One of the strengths in the provision is the way in which teachers challenge the pupils to evaluate their work and to refine and improve it.

## **Music**

Provision for music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Provision for instrumental music is very good and pupils perform very well
- Singing skills are taught well and the quality of singing is good
- Pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of music

## Commentary

62. The school is justifiably proud of its musical traditions. The thriving voluntary orchestra, over 40 strong and containing most of Years 3 and 4 is a tribute to the very good provision for performance in school. Pupils participate in the Staffordshire Schools' Prom and the recorder festival. There are weekly clubs for recorders, choir and orchestra and the excellent teaching in the orchestra practice ensured that pupils really enjoy themselves while rapidly building on their skills and further improving their already good performance. The quality of the recorder playing is impressive and the pupils in Year 3 are already producing pleasing phrases, many using the more difficult notes in the higher register. Several pupils have violin lessons taught by a peripatetic teacher. The orchestra is very inclusive. Some older boys, some with special educational needs, form the percussion section and their faces reflect their commitment to and enjoyment of their music. A pupil with a statement of special educational needs plays the glockenspiel. He achieves very well, demonstrating accurate rhythm and, with the support of his welfare assistant, playing the correct notes. In this excellent lesson the teacher had impeccable management skills and was able to tutor two violinists while the rest of the orchestra quietly waited for their turn to play. The level of difficulty was accurately pitched for these pupils. The standard of performance, with pupils playing a round that included a harmony played by the violins and a drum ostinato, was well above that expected of Year 3 and 4 pupils nationally. Pupils sing well in assemblies and the pupils in Year 1 and 2 are already showing good control and clear diction. The subject is led and managed very well by the talented coordinator.
63. Including the orchestra lesson and an infant singing lesson, four music lessons were observed during the inspection. Pupils in Year 1 are developing an understanding that sound can be used to illustrate objects and pictures. They respond accurately to picture prompts to play their instrument although, at the end of a long hot day, they found it difficult to keep their instruments still when not required to play. They made satisfactory progress in this lesson. The teaching was sound and the teacher's subject knowledge secure but more would have been achieved through a more active approach. The theme continued in a Year 3 lesson where pupils designed symbols to represent sound. Pupils worked well at their task but had difficulty explaining their selection. Towards the end of the lesson, pupils sang well to a taped accompaniment. Their timing was very good in the silences for making sounds of characters and there was some lively discussion about instruments to represent the character's actions. It was very apparent in this good lesson that the pupils' performing skills outstrip their knowledge of music. The subject is led well and is consistently building upon the school's musical tradition. Appropriate records of progress and attainment are kept and the subject leader provides good support for her colleagues.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

One lesson was seen in **personal, social and health education**. The school's has a positive approach to personal, social and health education and is keen to involve pupils' in its decision making processes. The pupils' views are sought actively and staff encourage them to take responsibility, use their initiative and to develop positive attitudes to themselves and others. Health education is promoted well through science lessons and in design and technology, where pupils design healthy sandwiches and develop an awareness of the benefits of a balanced diet and exercise. Older pupils are taught effectively about sex and relationships, and parents are kept well informed of these lessons. Through their work on medicine, tobacco and alcohol in science the pupils gain appreciation of the benefits and dangers of drugs. The school provides regular opportunities for the pupils to discuss and consider personal issues, such as friendship and relationships, and are taught well how to cope with conflicting emotions and feelings. This was seen to good effect in a lesson on friendship in Year 3, where the pupils acted out short plays to illustrate emotions and to identify reactions and responses. The teacher moved the learning on well by skilfully challenging the pupils to find solutions to areas of conflict. This work was especially effective with a group of pupils with special educational needs because of the timely intervention and support of the classroom assistant. Other initiatives such as the extra-curricular activities for football and tennis encourage pupils to take part in an active lifestyle.

Pupils develop their social awareness well in class, particularly in 'circle times' when they take turns, listen to others and share their ideas and concerns. Staff are sympathetic listeners and they provide a good example for the pupils. Concerns about the environment and the impact of humankind on the locality are discussed in geography and history and the pupils come to a good appreciation of their role in the community through such opportunities. The school's involvement in environmental education through the ECO design day enables pupils to explore issues such as waste and recycling and they produce good models from recyclable materials. This work links well with the very attractive garden and play area which promote an awareness of the wonders of nature and humankind's responsibility for it. The opportunity for older pupils to take part in a residential visit also contributes to their understanding of living together. The school has worked hard to improve the provision since the previous inspection.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>4</b>
Pupils' achievement	4
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>3</b>
Attendance	3
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>4</b>
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

*Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).*

