

INSPECTION REPORT

CEDARS COMBINED SCHOOL

Newport Pagnell

LEA area: Milton Keynes

Unique reference number: 110399

Headteacher: Mr T Winter

Reporting inspector: Mr J G F Parsons
22546

Dates of inspection: 28th February to 3rd March 2000

Inspection number: 182417

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Combined
School category:	First and middle school
Age range of pupils:	3-12
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Bury Street Newport Pagnell Buckinghamshire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Mazzone
Date of previous inspection:	24/06/ 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
John G F Parsons	Registered inspector	Art	What sort of school is it?
		Modern foreign language, French	How high are standards? The school's results and pupils' achievements.
		Physical education	How well is the school led and managed?
John Baker	Lay inspector		How high are standards? Pupils attitudes values and personal development
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Gordon Longton	Team inspector	English	
		Geography	
		Music	
William Lowe	Team inspector	Mathematics	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
		Religious education	
Rashida Spencer	Team inspector	Under fives	How well are pupils taught?
		Science	
		English as an additional language	
David Pink		Equal opportunities	
		History	
		Special educational needs	
Edmond Morris	Team inspector	Information technology	How well does the school care for its pupils?
		Design and technology	Pupils attitudes values and personal development (assessment)

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

There are 427 boys and girls on roll from 3 to 12 years of age. The school is much bigger than other primary schools and includes two first year Key Stage 3 classes. The reduction in the size of the nursery since the last inspection means that numbers are lower overall, since the last inspection. It has a designated special educational needs unit for 10 nursery children. The school is neither under nor over-subscribed and has an estimated 8.25 per cent of pupils eligible for free school meals. This is in line with the national average and is based on the statistics available from the school, others available are unreliable. The majority of pupils who attend the main school live locally, 33 per cent come from two areas of Newport Pagnell, which includes local authority housing. There are 22.4 per cent of pupils on the register of special educational needs which is line with the national average, however many of these come into the school over the course of time, sometimes staying for short periods. The intake of the school has changed since the last inspection and the range of attainment in the school is greater with more pupils with special educational needs than during the last inspection. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups and with English as an additional language is low. Attainment on entry is below average, however employment in the area is high and the socio- economic circumstances of families is average, the incidence of vandalism is low.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Cedars Combined is a very good school, and has developed significantly since the last inspection in 1996. Standards have been improving from a below average base and pupils' achieve well because of the good teaching. The Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been effectively introduced and have contributed to an improvement in pupils' learning. The headteacher offers very high quality leadership and is well supported by the governing body. The management of the school is very effective and the close teamwork of all staff ensures that there is cohesive development taking place. Targets set for standards are demanding but achievable given the changing intake of the school with more pupils with special educational needs attending. The school has a strong caring ethos with a commitment to high standards. It offers very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The quality of teaching is good. Over three-quarters of lessons are good or very good and occasionally excellent. Teachers are well prepared and challenge pupils to achieve high standards in their work.
- The school is very well led and managed. The headteacher gives very good leadership, which ensures the school is continually developing, particularly the quality of teaching and literacy and numeracy.
- Information gained through both formal and informal assessment is used very effectively to change the curriculum so that it meets the needs of all pupils and it raises standards.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are well organised and have contributed to a significant improvement in the standard of teaching.
- The quality and range of learning opportunities are good at both key stages and also in Year 7. There is excellent provision for extra-curricular activities.
- The provision for the under fives is very effective and prepares children well for the National Curriculum.
- The Numeracy and Literacy strategies have been successfully introduced and have already had a positive impact on standards.
- There is excellent provision for the local education authority designated nursery special educational needs unit, which effectively uses individual education plans to ensure that these significantly disadvantaged children have the best possible start for their education.
- All staff in this large school take very good care of pupils, and good provision is made for pupils' spiritual and moral development, staff lead by example and are good role models.
- There is a very good partnership with parents, and two active parent teacher's associations. Parents' have a close involvement in the life of the school.

What could be improved

- Marking is not consistent and is not always used effectively to promote pupils' learning.
- Standards of pupils' handwriting, presentation and spelling, in some classes, are below those expected for their age.
- The use of information and communication technology to support learning in other subjects

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There has been a significant improvement in teaching and learning since the last inspection in June 1996. More than three-quarters of lessons seen were good or very good, occasionally excellent and never less than satisfactory. The monitoring of teaching and learning has significantly improved and has been instrumental in raising teaching to the current high levels. Assessment procedures are now much more effective. They now inform curriculum planning and enable the school to set appropriate targets for the school and pupils. There has been a significant improvement in the provision for design technology and information technology and the level of resources for both these subjects is very good. Standards have also improved in geography and the provision for multi-cultural education is sound and has improved since the last inspection. The roles of the co-ordinators are now well developed and they have been instrumental in developing policies and schemes of work, which have improved the quality of the curriculum.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
English	B	B	C	C*	well above A average above B average C below average D well below E average
Mathematics	B	B	C	C*	
Science	B	C	C	C*	

**based on statistics provided by the school*

The baseline assessment shows children enter the school with standards, which are similar to those expected for their age. However during the course of the year, the school admits pupils into all age groups and a significant number of these have standards below those expected for their age and some have special educational needs. Taking this into consideration, the overall standards on entry to the school are below those expected for pupils' age. Children under five make good progress in achieving the desirable learning outcomes and the school is using the newly produced early learning goals effectively. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 1, pupils achieve results, which are well above the national average in reading writing, mathematics and science. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 2 pupils achieved results which are in line with national standards. Taking into account the years 1996 to 1999 pupils standards taken overall remain in line with the national average. The variation in standards between Key Stage 1 and 2 is explained by pupils' mobility, a considerable number of pupils enter the school at Key Stage 2 with low attainment or special educational needs. Standards in the school overall, at both key stages and in Year 7, are in line with those expected for pupils' age. The exceptions are mathematics at Key Stage 1, speaking and listening, design and technology and physical education at both key stages, which are above, and reading which is well above.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have good attitudes to school, they are enthusiastic and keen to work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils are courteous and polite to adults and each other. Behaviour is good and there have been no exclusions.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils relate well to each other and have established good bonds with all adults in the school.
Attendance	Attendance, both authorised and unauthorised is broadly in line with the national average and is satisfactory.

Pupils have good attitudes to school. These stem from the good teaching. Pupils are well directed in most instances and given clear guidance about what behaviour is expected of them. Their behaviour is good both in the classroom and around the school and there have been no exclusions. Parents are pleased with the standards of their children's behaviour and attitudes and the majority have completed the behaviour contract with the school. Only very occasionally is there any inappropriate or challenging behaviour and that is invariably from pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Relationships are good both between the teachers and pupils and the pupils themselves. Teachers know pupils well as individuals. Attendance is satisfactory; pupils enjoy coming to school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	Aged 7-12 years
Lessons seen overall	good	good	good

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

Overall teaching is good and has improved significantly since the previous inspection. In the lessons seen, teaching was excellent in 1 per cent, very good in 21 per cent, good in 58 per cent and in the rest of lessons it was satisfactory. Good teaching was seen throughout the school, but the most effective teaching is in the early years, Key Stage 1 and the later years of key stage 2 and in Year 7. This pattern ensures that pupils have a good start to their education and the consistently good teaching at the top end of the school is making a significant impact on standards as pupils leave school. Most teachers have a secure knowledge of the subjects they teach and this enables them to explain new ideas clearly. Especially when the teachers are teaching subjects in which they have specific expertise, their expectations are often challenging. National Literacy and Numeracy recommendations are systematically implemented and these are impacting positively on the teaching of other subjects. Teaching is particularly strong when teachers use whole class teaching methods as in literacy and numeracy. The very good planning and consistent approach in developing skills and has a beneficial effect on pupils' learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	There are a good range of learning opportunities in the under fives and at Key Stage 1,2 and in Year 7. Excellent extra-curricular activities complement the curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is good. Individual needs are identified early and these form a basis for individual work planned by the teacher.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	This is good. These pupils are fully integrated in all classes and achieve to a similar standard to their peers.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes good provision for pupils' personal development. The spiritual and moral development of pupils is a good feature. The school has a strong moral code, which is supported by parents, for example, the high level of response to the home/school contract. The staff lead by example, setting a good standard for the pupils to aspire to. The provision of pupils' social and cultural development is sound.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Effective monitoring and assessment of pupils' performance means that teachers know their pupils well and the overall level of care is very good.
How well does the school work in partnership with parents	This is very good. The school has very effective links with parents, through meetings, information about the school and exemplary reports.

There is a very good partnership with parents, which is a strength of the school and supports pupils' successful learning. Parents are very satisfied with all aspects of the school, except the provision of homework in some instances. They are particularly satisfied with the fact that their children like school, the progress their children are making, the quality of teaching, the school's approachability, the expectation that their children should work hard to achieve their best and that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum covering all subjects of the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. As an addition to the normal curriculum, the school provides French lessons for pupils in Years 6 and 7. The school has placed the right degree of emphasis in terms of time allocation on the development of numeracy and literacy in accordance with national guidance. The range of extra-curricular provision is excellent and includes, sporting activities, dance, drama, drawing and a homework club. Music is well provided for in the form of instrumental tuition. Teachers carefully monitor the personal development of pupils in their care and include appropriate comments about their attitudes to learning, behaviour, independence, relationships, co-operation and perseverance in reports to parents. All procedures for child protection are in place and the school cares very well for its pupils.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	This is very good the headteacher provides a clear vision for the school and very effective leadership and is very well supported by other members of his management team and all staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	They are very effective at fulfilling their responsibilities and work closely with the school acting as a critical friend. All statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very effective systems have been put in place, and are used to evaluate performance and take action to raise standards.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are very well used to promote learning and careful husbandry ensures that they are used effectively to raise standards.
Staffing accommodation and learning resources	Accommodation is good and well maintained, teachers have a very good range of initial qualifications supported by in-service education and resources are good overall.

The school is very well led and managed. The quality of leadership makes a significant impact on pupils' achievement. This has enabled the school to adapt quickly to its changing situation regarding the intake of a significant number of pupils who are low attainers or have special educational needs. There are very effective systems in place to monitor and evaluate pupils' performance and effective self-evaluation takes place through the analysis of their work and the quality of teaching. The large staff means that it can call upon a wider range of expertise than many smaller schools. This level of expertise is improved by focused in-service training. Support staff play an important part in the life of the school they are well used by teachers and thoroughly briefed. The school's accommodation is good and provides some specialist facilities such as a computer suite and a number of outside work areas. Overall the level of resources is good benefiting from targeted expenditure since the last inspection.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

38 per cent of questionnaires were returned. 27 parents attended their meeting

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children like school.• Their children make good progress at school.• Their children's behaviour is good.• They get about the right amount of homework.• Teaching is good.• They are well informed about their children's progress.• They are comfortable approaching the school with questions and problems.• The school expects a lot of their children.• The school works closely with parents.• The school is well led and managed.• The school helps their children become mature and responsible.• The school offers a wide range of activities outside lessons.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some parents did not consider their children got the right amount of work at home.

The inspection team agrees with the parents positive views that the school is effective in all the areas identified. The inspection team found the use of homework to promote learning to be good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

- 1 The baseline assessment shows children start school with standards, which are similar to those expected for their age. However during the course of the year the school admits pupils into all age groups and particularly at Key Stage 2 a significant number of these have standards below those expected for their age and some have special educational needs. This changing intake has affected pupils' standards since the last inspection, which were good overall, across the school. Standards are now sound overall at both key stages and in Year 7, although achievement is good, pupils progress well from their own level of attainment. The introduction of the national literacy and numeracy strategies have been effective across the school and are impacting positively on standards.
- 2 Children under five, make good progress in achieving the desirable learning outcomes and the school is already using the newly produced early learning goals effectively and standards are good in all areas.
- 3 In the 1999 national Curriculum tests at Key Stage 1 pupils achieve results which were well above the national average in reading writing, mathematics and science. This continues a trend between 1996 and 1999 when pupils' performance exceeded the national average. Although there is evidence that the influx of low attaining pupils is likely to adversely affect test results in the future. Mathematics is particularly strong at 100 per cent. Standards in reading are strong and above the upper quartile. At this key stage there was little difference in the performance of boys and girls.
- 4 In the 1999 National Curriculum tests pupils at Key Stage 2, results are in line with national standards in English, mathematics and science. Taking into account the years 1996 to 1999 pupils standards taken overall remain in line with the national average. Based on the school's calculations, it shows that English and science, whilst still average are slightly stronger than mathematics. The variation in standards compared to the national average between Key Stages 1 and 2 is explained by pupils' mobility, and a significant number of pupils who enter the school at Key Stage 2 have low standards or special educational needs. At this key stage there was little difference in the standards between boys and girls. In Year 7 attainment in English, mathematics and science is in line with those expected for pupils' age. Pupils standards in literacy and numeracy are good across the school.
- 5 Standards in information technology and religious education are in line with those expected for pupils' age across both key stages and in Year 7, however the strong provision in information technology through the newly opened computer suite means standards are rising in this subject. Gifted and talented pupils are well provided for, with extension work and they progress well in all subjects. Literacy and numeracy are set according to attainment to extend high attainers and ensures a more accurate pitch of work to the attainment of all pupils.

- 6 Standards in the school overall at both key stages and in Year 7 are in line with those expected for pupils' age. This is except for mathematics at Key Stage 1, speaking and listening, design and technology and physical education at both key stages, which are above, and reading which is well above.
- 7 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as they move through the school. They achieve standards appropriate to those on their individual educational plans at all stages. Pupils make good progress and none are disapplied from the national tests at the age of seven or eleven. Pupils are generally positive about their learning. Pupils with special educational needs integrate well into the school and those with social or behavioural difficulties achieve appropriate standards. Standards have been sustained since the last report. Those few pupils who have English as an additional language or are from minority ethnic groups are fully integrated and achieve comparable standards to their peers.
- 8 The school has set ambitious but achievable targets to raise standards and has revised them appropriately in light of the changing intake of the school. The inspectors agree with the Local Education Authority who praised the school for the effectiveness of its targets.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 9 Pupils like school and are keen to attend. Their attitudes to learning are good which is the result of the high percentage of good teaching and interesting lessons. Pupils are attentive, keen to answer questions, undertake tasks enthusiastically and enjoy lessons. For example, in a Year 5 English lesson the teacher's enthusiasm for the subject resulted in the pupils understanding and enjoying the cleverness and humour of the poem '*Hints on Pronunciation*'.
- 10 Pupils are very enthusiastic about the excellent range of extra-curricular activities offered by the school and a very high percentage take part in these activities which makes a positive contribution to both their academic and personal development.
- 11 Behaviour is good overall in the classroom, in assembly and when moving around the school. Pupils are aware of the high standards of behaviour expected and the vast majority respond well to discipline, which almost invariably creates an orderly environment conducive to learning. In both playgrounds behaviour is good overall with nearly all pupils playing harmoniously together. However, there is some boisterous behaviour and an isolated incident of aggressive behaviour was observed but there were no signs of bullying. Any incidents of bullying that do occur are dealt with immediately and very effectively. There have been no exclusions in the past year. Pupils are very courteous and polite to adults and show respect for other people's property and the school. For example, the school is litter free and there are no signs of graffiti.
- 12 Pupils' personal development is good, they mature as they progress through the school and willingly take on increasing responsibility. For example, reception pupils tidy up after themselves, Year 4 take on whole class responsibilities and Year 7 take on whole school responsibilities including helping younger pupils.

- 13 Relationships between pupils are good. They work well together in the classroom when in pairs or groups and play together harmoniously. Pupils also care for one another. For example, if someone falls and is hurt in the playground others comfort them, summon help and escort them to the medical room. Relationships between pupils and staff are also good and pupils feel secure in their relationships with other adults.
- 14 Staff give a very positive lead in engendering good relationships, for example, by greeting pupils cheerfully in the morning and by introducing humour into their teaching.
- 15 Pupils have a good understanding of the impact of their action on others and show good respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. All classes discuss and agree class rules and understand the reasons for having them. Awareness of the feelings, values and beliefs of others is developed through assemblies, religious education and personal, social and health education lessons. For example, pupils identified very closely with the feelings of Anne Frank in a Key Stage 2 assembly on forgiveness. The opportunities for pupils to show initiative and take responsibility are satisfactory. Pupils develop a sense of responsibility and grow in maturity as they progress through the school; older pupils help younger ones.
- 16 Levels of attendance are satisfactory and contribute positively to standards achieved. Pupils are punctual and enjoy coming to school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

- 17 Overall teaching is good and has improved significantly since the previous inspection. In the lessons seen teaching was excellent in 1 per cent, very good in 21 per cent and good in 58 per cent and in the rest of lessons it was satisfactory. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Good teaching was seen throughout the school but the most effective teaching is in the early years, Key Stage 1 and the later years of Key Stage 2 and in Year 7. This pattern ensures that pupils have a good start to their education and the consistently good teaching at the top end of the school is making a significant impact on standards as pupils leave school. Examples of good teaching were seen in most subjects with the best teaching seen in mathematics when over 92 per cent of the teaching seen was good or very good.
- 18 The teaching of children under five is never less than good overall and often it is very good. Teachers and the staff have a very secure knowledge and understanding of the particular needs of the age range. These are well met through the very carefully planned range of activities that support early learning which prepare children well for their next stage of education. The planning achieves a good balance between play and work which helps children to make significant gains in their personal and social development and encourages positive attitudes to work. The teaching of mathematics is of a high calibre. Children see much of the learning that takes place as fun; they enjoy their experiences in a caring and secure environment. Staff in the Nursery achieve a good balance between allowing the children to choose and intervening at the right moment to move learning on at a good pace. Teaching is particularly strong when teachers use whole class teaching methods as in literacy and numeracy.

- 19 Throughout the school, nearly all lessons are planned in detail and have specific and relevant learning objectives that are closely matched to the National Curriculum requirements and the levels of prior attainment. In one Year 5 science lesson on electricity, for example, as the teacher walked round the class she discovered a small group of pupils who were not tackling the activity she had set correctly. By drawing this group together and revisiting the planned learning she identified why there were difficulties and by teaching sections again, she ensured pupils' learning and understanding were consolidated. Most teachers have a secure knowledge of the subjects they teach and this enables them to explain new ideas clearly. Especially when the teachers are teaching subjects in which they have specific expertise, their expectations are often challenging. In a Year 7 gymnastics lesson pupils developed a complex series of routines which were effectively polished by the teacher's intervention. A significant strength through the school is that the teachers at the beginning of lessons review quickly what has been learnt and introduce their new learning objectives. Most effective teachers then return to these during the lesson to check whether the lesson is on course and to check that pupils' learning is increasing and consolidated. This was well exemplified in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, where pupils were converting figures up to three decimal points with fractions and percentages. Regular reminders from the teacher that they were looking at parts of one whole number prevented pupils from getting confused and kept them well focused. Generally most lessons have well defined structures, that is an introduction followed by activities and a final plenary is used to consolidate learning.
- 20 National Literacy and Numeracy recommendations are systematically implemented and these are impacting positively on the teaching of other subjects. The consistent approach in developing skills has a beneficial effect on pupils' learning. Pupils enjoy the introduction to mathematics lessons and teachers provide quick mental calculations to check on previous work and sharpen mental ability. Pupils are given time limits to complete short tests and they rise to the challenge and the rate of learning is good. This was well demonstrated in a Year 3 class when pupils had to show at least five approaches using multiplication and division to reach a target number. The learning of other pupils in this case was further enhanced when the teacher encouraged pupils to explain their methods of calculation.
- 21 There is a consistent approach to the teaching of reading and teachers follow the school's scheme appropriately. The school does not consistently follow a policy in the teaching of handwriting and insufficient attention is given to using the pupils' skills in other subjects sometimes resulting in careless presentation. Although spelling is taught regularly, insufficient attention is paid when new vocabulary is introduced in other subjects and often pupils' good written work is marred by incorrectly spelt words. The teaching of pupils in ability groups in English and mathematics has a positive impact on attainment. However, in other subjects, whilst the learning objectives are clear and well specified, the activities which are planned are not always well tailored to meet the needs of the wide range of abilities represented in the class. This shortcoming is particularly significant in this school, especially at Key Stages 2 and in Year 7 where a significant percentage of the new entrants have special educational needs.

- 22 Teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Individual needs are identified early and these form a basis for individual work planned by the teacher. Good support, from classroom assistants is given to pupils in literacy and numeracy. Pupils are challenged appropriately to their special need. Pupils' needs are identified early and appropriate and attainable targets are set for short-term success. Most teachers insist on high standards of behaviour and are experienced enough to challenge those pupils with behavioural difficulties. However, some teachers, especially in Year 4, lack a range of strategies for dealing with pupils with such difficulties. Classroom support assistants working with pupils with special educational needs are well briefed and contribute well to pupils learning. Careful and full assessments are made of the progress of pupils with special educational needs. The frequency of these assessments ensures that teaching aids pupils' development by being matched to individual needs.
- 23 Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. This results in high levels of trust and respect. Teachers have a good knowledge of pupils and consequently they are able to create evaluative dialogues which challenge opinions and ideas, encourage self-criticism and develop personal responsibility for self-improvement within a supportive learning environment. This is well illustrated by a comment in a pupil's science work in Year 4 who had achieved the desired outcome from an experiment but acknowledged in his written comment that he had found it difficult to reach his objective! Such honesty and self-evaluation can only be achieved in a very secure and supportive environment. Whilst most teachers management of pupils' behaviour is satisfactory and often good, there were some instances in a few classes when teachers did not have effective enough strategies for managing the emotional and behavioural needs of a small proportion of pupils in Years 3 and 4.
- 24 The marking of pupils' work is regular but varies in quality. Most comments are positive, even when not always merited. The absence of written comments suggesting ways that work could be improved sometimes impedes pupils' progress and it fails to inform parents, when they look at pupils' books, about the progress which pupils should have made subsequent to the comments. On the other hand, support in the class is good. Most teachers circulate as pupils work, check pupils know what they are doing and provide constructive advice when gaps in knowledge are identified. Very good teaching, as seen in a number of mathematics lessons, effectively regroups pupils to re-teach if some aspect of the teaching has not been clearly understood. Teachers show considerable skills in asking probing and challenging questions. Pupils enjoy these and are stimulated when questions are asked as was demonstrated in a Year 7 science lesson on static electricity.
- 25 The high quality of teaching overall, impacts positively of pupils' learning. Pupils' skills and knowledge are well developed and the understanding of what they have to do during lessons ensures that they are productive. In Key Stage 1 numeracy lessons, for example, pupils are rapidly developing their number skills and make good progress in their ability to apply these skills in problem solving. The good pace in the majority of lessons together with pupils' enthusiasm and good concentration ensures effective learning. By the time pupils leave the school pupils have a good experience of writing for a range of purposes and audiences using such writing approaches as poetry, plays stories and accounts of their own experiences, and they have well developed literacy skills. Parents expressed a concern about the consistency of the work pupils are given to do at home. Inspection evidence identifies a good range of homework opportunities, which are offered.

- 26 The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Weaknesses identified in the teaching of science, information technology and design and technology have been identified and strengthened. Whilst teaching of information technology in the newly established suite is mostly good and at least satisfactory, the school has recognised that not sufficient evidence that information technology skills are applied effectively in other subjects and evidence of information technology in everyday situations in the classroom is limited. This lack of regular revisiting slows down pupils' progress.

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

- 27 The curriculum for children under five is very good. The staff plan thoroughly and cover all of the appropriate areas of learning. The planning is very detailed and effectively links different areas of skills and learning across each theme. Much emphasis is given to personal and social development. The teaching promotes spiritual, moral and social awareness very effectively. The curriculum is enriched through imaginative teaching and the provision of an extensive range of activities which provide a good balance between teacher-directed and child-selected tasks.
- 28 The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum at key stages 1,2 and 3, covering all subjects of the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. As an addition to the normal curriculum the school provides French lessons for pupils in Years 6 and 7. The school has placed the right degree of emphasis in terms of time allocation on the development of numeracy and literacy in accordance with national guidance. Science and information technology receive satisfactory cover. However the time allocated to religious education is slightly less than the national average. The range of extra-curricular provision is excellent and includes, a good range of sporting activities, dance, drama, drawing and a homework club. Music is well provided for in the form of instrumental tuition. Resources available to the school are used effectively to enrich the curriculum. These resources include links with the community, which are considered by the school to be an integral part of its curricular provision. For example, work in geography includes studies of the local environment. As part of their liaison work local police officers visit the school. Pupils from the school take part in local events; for example, the school choir has performed at Lathbury Manor and the local British Legion Club. The school provides pupils with the opportunity to take part in residential visits.
- 29 The school meets its statutory obligations outlined in the Code of Practice for special educational needs provision. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils with statements of special needs are very well supported and have good access to the curriculum. Individual education plans are well used by teachers, and support assistants, to ensure access. Links with agencies in the community are well established and there is effective liaison with the on site nursery and the feeder secondary schools when pupils with special educational needs transfer.

- 30 Pupils with special educational needs are monitored closely and effectively. Regular assessments are made against individual educational plans and used to modify pupils learning. Close records are kept of pupils' progress to ensure appropriate learning is taking place.
- 31 Parents are invited regularly to discuss pupil's progress against their individual educational plans. The schools provision for the few pupils who are learning English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic groups is effective and they make similar progress to their peers.
- 32 The school's approach to the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies is having a positive effect on standards. For example, the school's provision of staff training in literacy and numeracy and the teaching strategies used in the classrooms for these subjects have had a positive impact on the learning of the pupils. A particular strength is the very good level of teachers' lesson planning which includes clear statements of learning objectives, work well matched to the ability of the pupils and the effective use of support staff.
- 33 The school ensures that pupils have equal access to all areas of the curriculum regardless of their ethnic origins, ability or sex. Detailed planning and the matching of the learning opportunities provided to the ability of the pupils ensures that they make good progress in their acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding.
- 34 The school's provision for personal, social and health education is very good with a detailed scheme of work that includes sex education and drug awareness. The pupils are introduced to various aspects of citizenship, relationships and their rights and responsibilities. For example, they are given the opportunity to explore their responsibilities in the field of animal welfare. The spiritual and moral development of pupils is a good feature of the school's provision for all its pupils. Assemblies are a particular strength and demonstrate a high level of spirituality. Pupils are given time during assemblies to reflect on what has been said. The school has a strong moral code and parents support this, for example, the high level of response to the Home/School Contract. Pupils are very well adjusted to school from an early age and the strong discipline policy and very high expectations of teachers ensures that pupils social development is most effective. There were many examples of pupils working collaboratively and older pupils helping younger ones in the playground and around the school. The staff lead by example setting a good standard for the pupils to aspire to. Many opportunities are given for pupils to experience their own culture and others through visits and visitors. During the inspection for example there was a '*living historian*' visiting showing pupils the dress and artefacts from the Egyptian period.
- 35 The school is well integrated in to the local community and makes good use of local people to support studies in history work, for example, on the Victorians and Britain since the 1930's. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 received a visit from a local archaeologist. Sporting fixtures undertaken against local schools include football, netball athletics and cross-country running. There are links with local sporting clubs such as Newport Pagnell Tennis Club and Olney Rugby Football Club.

- 36 The school building is used regularly by local associations as a meeting place. Cultural links with the community are maintained by visitors to the school, for example, the visit by an African drumming group and dance teacher as part of the school's Ghana week and an author and story teller.
- 37 The school maintains close links to the local secondary school with transfer meetings and visits. The school is a member of the local cluster group of primaries that develops joint initiatives, the current one being a project looking at the underachievement of boys.
- 38 The last inspection identified the need to improve the provision for design and technology, information technology and multicultural development. The curriculum was seen as broad and balanced and as meeting statutory provision. It noted that the curriculum was enriched through the provision of French lessons, the school's involvement in the local community and the range of extra-curricular activities provided by it. The curriculum provision for the school has improved since the last inspection and the shortcomings identified have all been addressed.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 39 The school is very caring which makes very good provision to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety. Pastoral care is the responsibility of the class teachers who, together with senior members of staff, know their pupils very well, are sensitive to their needs and thus able to provide good personal support and guidance. For example, Year 3 pupils who have just transferred to the Key Stage 2 playground were being asked every day after lunch if they had had a good playtime. The good relationships between pupils and staff encourage pupils to discuss problems openly and personal, health and social education lessons offer good opportunities to discuss issues such as personal relationships.
- 40 Procedures for promoting positive behaviour are very good and include involving pupils in discussing and agreeing class rules, giving appropriate rewards for good behaviour and setting individual targets for pupils with behavioural problems. Pupils are aware of the standards of behaviour expected and generally conform to the, which creates an orderly environment conducive to learning. Procedures for dealing with bullying are also very good and all instances are carefully monitored which results in very few re-occurrences of oppressive behaviour. Procedures for monitoring and promoting regular attendance are good. Attendance is carefully monitored using the computerised registration system and absences followed up appropriately. Parents are given regular reminders about the importance of good attendance and there are awards for full attendance termly and at the end of the year.
- 41 Child Protection procedures are very good and all staff are familiar with them and aware of their importance. There is good liaison with other agencies.
- 42 Strong emphasis is placed on pupils' health and safety. Aspects such as healthy eating, personal hygiene and personal safety are delivered through the personal, health and social education programme which includes talks by the police on road and personal safety. Health and Safety procedures are very good and include termly inspections of the premises with all issues carefully documented and reported to the governing body.

- 43 Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs and appropriate targets are set both for those with learning difficulties and for those with behavioural problems. The school has very good procedures in place for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. These are particularly well developed in English and mathematics where the successful implementation of the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy in Key Stages 1 and 2 has led to a greater awareness of the need for regular assessment to guide planning. Assessments of pupils' attainment are also made in most other subjects when pupils complete a particular unit of work and, if appropriate, are linked to National Curriculum levels. In some subjects, such as information and communications technology, assessment procedures are not yet fully in place and this makes planning of future work at suitable levels more difficult. The results of the end of key stage tests and the optional tests in English and mathematics, which are used in Years 3 to 5, are very carefully analysed. These analyses are used most effectively to identify specific areas within English and mathematics that require more input as well as for setting realistic and attainable targets for individuals and for groups of pupils. The school is also using cognitive tests to identify pupils in Years 4 and 6 who are considered to be underachieving. These pupils are provided with extra support and guidance to help them reach their full potential. Effective child protection procedures are fully in place.
- 44 One very good feature of the school's assessment procedures is the '*paper week*', which is held each term. During this designated week the whole school is involved in formal assessments of pupils' attainment and the results of these assessments are used most effectively to monitor standards, set targets and to help teachers plan appropriate work for the following term. Teachers also annotate their planning sheets to show which areas of learning have been successful or otherwise. These notes are then shared with the subject co-ordinators to ensure that future work is planned as effectively as possible. This very good practice has a positive impact on pupils' progress as the curriculum is directly linked to what pupils know and can do. The use of assessment to guide planning is very good and shows a significant improvement since the last inspection when it was judged to be a weakness.
- 45 Teachers know their pupils very well. They carefully monitor the personal development of each child in their care and include appropriate comments about attitude to learning, behaviour, independence, relationships, co-operation and perseverance in reports to parents. Pupils are also encouraged to comment on their learning and identify areas for improvement. Targets are set for individual pupils in all subjects and are shared with them and their parents. These targets are clear, achievable and often challenging and they are monitored to measure their success.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 46 There is a very good partnership with parents, which is a strength of the school and supports pupils' successful learning. Parents are very satisfied with all aspects of the school, except the provision of homework. They are particularly satisfied with the fact that their children like school, the progress their children are making, the quality of teaching, the school's approachability, the expectation that their children should work hard to achieve their best and that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. The inspection team fully endorses these views. However the team does not support the views of a significant minority of parents who are not happy with homework provision. The team considers that good use is made of homework throughout the school and amounts set are appropriate.

- 47 Parents gain good information about the school through the prospectus, the governors' annual report and frequent newsletters. They are also very well informed about the curriculum through meetings, workshops, notes in the prospectus and detailed coverage in the Information to Parents leaflets outlining the work to be covered by each year group during the coming year.
- 48 Parents are very well informed about their children's progress through termly consultation evenings and excellent annual reports which grade pupils' attitudes to work and attainment levels, set targets and give full details of pupils' personal development. The excellent quality of the reports and their user-friendly format is the result of consultations with parents. Parents are also welcome to raise any concerns as they arise. Parents of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are well informed about their children's progress and fully involved in reviews.
- 49 Parents make a good contribution to their children's learning both at home and at school. The home-school agreement, which virtually all parents have signed, has a positive impact on learning since it includes supporting the school's behaviour policy and homework policy. Parents of Key Stage 1 pupils are advised on how to help their children with reading through the *'Information to Parents'* leaflet issued on a year group basis and the majority of parents support their children through the home-school reading scheme. Parents of all year groups are very well informed about the homework timetable and expectations which enable them to give their children good support at home. Parents also make a positive contribution to pupils' learning and development through providing good parental help in the classroom and on trips and visits as well as raising much appreciated funds for the school through the *'Friends' of Cedars Nursery* and *'Friends' of Cedars School'* associations.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 50 The headteacher is a very experienced manager who has been at the school a long time. He shows strong leadership skills and is highly respected by the staff and parents alike. He has clear aims and a commitment to high standards which is shared by all his staff. Effective management systems have been put in place which enable him to manage changing situations. For example, the intake of the school has changed over recent years with more pupils entering with low attainment or special educational needs, some of whom stay for only a short period. He has focussed the school on developing teaching expertise through thorough monitoring, and as a result it has significantly improved since the last inspection. This has enabled the school to maintain standards against the national average despite the changing intake, although not at the previously high level observed in the last inspection. However good achievement by pupils has been ensured and the school is well set to develop standards further. Since the last inspection assessment has been developed further in the school and is effectively used to inform planning and modify the curriculum. The provision for design and technology has been thoroughly reviewed and is now good, the computer suite being a particularly effective resource. A detailed programme of monitoring teaching and learning is in place and has been a significant factor in raising the standard and quality of teaching and learning in the school. It also identified the changing nature of the school. It has enabled the management of the school to make appropriate

adjustments to targets and curricular arrangements such as setting to enable teachers to be more effective with a wider ability range. Co-ordinators are fully involved in the monitoring process and play an important part in raising standards. The high quality management and leadership of the school ensures it meets its stated aims.

- 51 The governing body is a strong supporter of the school and fully involved in its development, there is a curriculum committee and governors are involved in monitoring standards regularly visiting the school. It is fully aware of the school's situation, and that the number of pupils who stay for short periods and are lower attainers is increasing in the school and impacting on standards. Governors fully shares the school's good commitment to continue to raise standards and to extend its capacity to improve. They act as a critical friend on many occasions, holding the school to account.
- 52 Governors monitor the provision for special educational needs through regular reports and involvement of the governor with special responsibility. The special educational needs co-ordinator, who has only recently taken responsibility for pupils across all key stages, provides sound leadership. Pupils are identified from an early age. This means that pupils move on and off the register in accordance with their needs. It also means that effective information is collected over a long period for those pupils who may need help from outside agencies. A lot of information is amassed by teachers, in different forms, on the progress of pupils on the register which leads to an over complicated administrative system and makes monitoring and targeting of resources less effective.
- 53 The school has regular visits from students on teaching practice and provides suitable support. New appointments to the school including newly qualified teachers are closely supported and mentored to ensure that they settle in quickly and are fully aware of the routines and procedures. The school does not use the Buckinghamshire appraisal system as the school is now part of the unitary authority of Milton Keynes. The school does however appraise staff through monitoring and the headteacher provides professional development through an interview process.
- 54 The school is strongly committed to raising standards and the close monitoring of staff performance and enhancement of skills through training has been most effective.
- 55 The school is constantly evaluating teacher performance through monitoring and analysing pupils' work and assessing their standards to better secure improvement and maintain high standards. The school has a development plan which, targets expenditure. For example, the majority of expenditure recently has been on literacy and numeracy resources and information and communication technology, which have been major areas of development. Financial resources are well used and the school has a wide range of computers in use both in the school and to support the school's administration. There are good financial systems in place to ensure that finances are kept in good order and the school accounts are regularly audited. The school carefully husbands its funds and through price comparisons with suppliers of goods and services ensures that best value is obtained.

- 56 There is a large staff, which gives the school a wide range of expertise upon which to call. Teachers skills are further enhanced, through a focused range of in-service courses. The school building is long and narrow with many doors, as it is two schools joined together. It is well maintained and offers good variety of accommodation including a computer suite and a various work areas outside classrooms. The school is well resourced through the careful and focused expenditure based on the school development plan and the school has a well stocked library with a good range of books. Resources have improved significantly since the last inspection when they were adequate. The school has taken effective action to reach its stated targets.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

57 The school should:

- **Raise standards of presentation and handwriting; paras: (24, 116, 123,145)**

Using the high quality of marking in English as a guide, implement the school's marking policy thoroughly in other subjects so that:-

- **Pupils know more accurately their strengths and weaknesses, and**
- **the consistency of spelling across the school is improved. Paras: (24,116,123,145)**

Use information and communication technology more widely across the curriculum. Paras: (26,108, 116, 123, 131)

THE DESIGNATED NURSERY SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS UNIT

- 58 A Unit for pupils with special educational needs is attached to the nursery at the school. This is one of two designated nursery centres in the local authority area for pupils with learning difficulties. There are placements for 10 statemented pupils and it is run by a teacher and an assistant and supported by assistants for individual children. Places in the unit are allocated as available and matched to need. There is a waiting list for places.
- 59 Standards in the unit are high, relative to their attainment and pupil's achievements are appropriate to their individual education programmes. Pupils are very well integrated into the nursery provision. Pupils, who are able to, join in play and learning activities with other children very well. Most children do not attend the under-fives provision in the school but transfer to special schools or units at the appropriate age. Opportunities do exist for pupils to enter into the mainstream school if appropriate. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.
- 60 Teaching in the unit is excellent. Teachers have very good knowledge of the pupils and their needs. This knowledge is used very well to match learning activities closely to the needs of the pupils. Teachers are attentive and offer suitable challenges to extend the physical, social and intellectual range of the pupils and to keep them interested in activities. Computers are used well. Joint planning between the nursery and the unit and shared teaching between staff helps the integration of children. Teachers and assistants are well and appropriately qualified and use their skills very effectively to enhance the learning off the pupils.
- 61 Pupils in the unit are very well integrated into the mainstream nursery. There is a high level of acceptance by other pupils and some of the special needs pupils move easily in and out of playing groups.
- 62 Pupils in the unit are very closely monitored and daily records kept of their progress.
- 63 There is close liaison with parents of pupils in the unit. The teacher in charge is also a home school liaison worker, with the local authority, for pupils with special needs approaching school age. A help group for parents with pupils in the unit has been set up and meets regularly.
- 64 The leadership of the unit is very good.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	104
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	108

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1%	21%	57%	21%	0%	0%	0%

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y7
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	32	388
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	N/A	27

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y7
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	10	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	12	94

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	33
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	28

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.2
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	25	25	50

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	24	24	25
	Girls	25	24	25
	Total	49	48	50
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	98 (92)	96 (92)	100 (96)
	National	82 (77)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	24	25	24
	Girls	24	24	25
	Total	48	49	49
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (96)	98 (96)	98 (99)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	34	26	60

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	27	28	29
	Girls	19	19	21
	Total	46	47	50
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	77 (76)	78 (73)	83(78)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	29	28	30
	Girls	19	19	21
	Total	48	47	51
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80 (76)	80 (73)	85 (72)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (73)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	4
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	4
White	354
Any other minority ethnic group	1

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y7

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.6:1
Average class size	24.5

Education support staff: YR – Y7

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	110

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25:1

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	94

Number of pupils per FTE adult	9.75:11
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	715555
Total expenditure	732612
Expenditure per pupil	1639
Balance brought forward from previous year	17057
Balance carried forward to next year	0

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	450
Number of questionnaires returned	171

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	52	44	4	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	47	49	3	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	67	5	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	48	16	1	6
The teaching is good.	50	46	1	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	47	8	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	52	46	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	40	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	36	58	5	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	53	42	3	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	56	1	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	50	43	3	0	4

Other issues raised by parents

Some parents at their meeting felt that whilst they were generally happy with the school's response, on a very few occasions the school did not communicate appropriately to their concerns regarding pupils' with special educational needs and the rare incidents of bullying.

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

- 65 The provision for the under-fives is very good. At the time of the inspection children under five were taught in the Nursery and Reception class. Children benefit from three terms part-time in the Nursery before transferring to the Reception class as rising fives. On admission to the Nursery most children have levels of experience and skills which are in line with those expected for their age. This is confirmed by the baseline assessment of children's achievements using the local education authority approved baseline assessment. Children make very good progress in mathematics and in personal and social development. Good progress is made in language and literacy, in knowledge and understanding of the world and in physical and creative development. Standards have been well maintained since the last report and show some improvement, particularly in areas of physical development. Children with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their previous learning. The staff focus well on their needs and provide effective individual support with skill and care. Most children will achieve well above the expected national levels in mathematics and personal and social development and above average in the other three areas in relation to the nationally agreed criteria set out as the Desirable Learning Outcomes for children by the age of five.
- 66 The personal and social development of the children is very effectively promoted. Young children have adapted well to school life. They settle quickly and eagerly into daily routines, such as registration and planning time. They move around in an orderly manner when going to the hall or out to play. They dress themselves after physical education lessons. Through skilful teaching, which provides an effective balance between free choice and structured activities, they are encouraged to make choices. For example, each morning they have to name one activity which is play and another which is structured. Having indicated their preference, they quickly organise themselves and are aware that at the end of the activities, they have to recall in correct sequence what they did and explain why. Children are keen to share their observations with adults who provide good role models. Adults listen carefully to children's accounts and ask probing questions to extend their understanding. Children follow instructions when asked to gather around as a class and respect the space each needs to sit comfortably on the carpet. They show particular sensitivity towards other children who have behavioural special educational needs. When these children are excited and interrupt their contributions, they show respect and growing maturity by not insisting on their turn.
- 67 Progress is very good as children increase their ability to work with others in their directed group work, for example when drawing, colouring and sticking resources are used. They focus on their tasks and levels of concentration are high. They increase in confidence in making choices independently and yet observe the class rules about how many can take part in a particular activity.

- 68 Children's speaking and listening skills are well developed. Children listen with increasing care and attention to adults and join readily in discussions and in reading familiar stories or rhymes, for instance in shared reading time they listen carefully and as a result are quickly able to assemble words to match text. Most children are beginning to express opinions about their likes and dislikes. Though some children with special educational needs have more limited vocabulary, patient, sensitive and skilful handling by the nursery nurses ensures that their contributions are valued.
- 69 Children enjoy listening to stories and rhymes and can comment knowledgeably on the sequence of pictures in a group book sharing activity. This is well exemplified in the Reception class where pupils were able to often accurately guess missing words in the paragraph in their reading books. Most understand the sequence of the story through pictures and recognise familiar words in the context. Many regular opportunities to sing and listen to songs and rhymes reinforce the children's love of words. Good opportunities are provided for developing the formal skills of letter formation. Most children recognise and write their names, copying from cards and independently attempting to write with letters and numbers in a sequence. More able children copy recognisable words and phrases and are beginning to write some simple words independently. Less able children copy letters with developing control. Overall, staff do not provide a wide enough range of opportunities for the more able to write independently and do not have high enough expectations of them.
- 70 Children make very good progress in mathematics. Most children recognise and order numbers to seven and count to ten and beyond. More able children can count to beyond 20 and record numbers up to 13. They correctly find the answer to adding two and three on dice. More able children in the Reception class can sort out five different ways to make ten. They know the names of square, circle, triangle and rectangle and can match these to three-dimensional shapes. More able children cut the shapes and accurately say how many sides each has, which are longer, and which two sides are shorter. One pupil explained that a six-sided figure was hexagonal and made a very determined effort to draw one. The very good teaching of numbers to ten and the skilful development of the children's understanding of mathematical terms helps them to become secure and confident in using numbers in many contexts and accurate language. This was well exemplified in a session when children had to arrange teddy bears in order of size, big, medium and little and terms such as thin and thick and narrow and wide were explored expertly by the Nursery Nurse. The concepts are well reinforced both by ensuring that children make use of external resources and by referring to these terms in other contexts, such as in a gymnastic activity where children had to stretch themselves as wide and as thin as possible. In both the Nursery and Reception the staff keep very good records of progress and use assessment to pinpoint the next steps in learning.
- 71 Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is well promoted. The majority develop a good understanding of changes through patterns in the weather and understand how to keep a weather chart. Reception age children have painted pictures of their environment. They are aware of the need to keep the area around them litter free. Nursery children have been to the local shops. The paintings of the shops from their trip show their observational skills are increasing as some of the paintings show an attempt to put details of articles seen in shop windows. They develop confidence to use a variety of materials, such as dough or paper cutting, sticky paper and glue for joining and folding. Good examples of their work are in the Nursery where children have cut and made owls using different materials and the reception age children have made attractive cardboard frames for photographs. In

science they accurately identify different parts of the body and they are now learning how their senses help them to recognise the strong smell of onions! Springtime is growing time and Nursery children are making a careful note of how many beans and cress seeds grow.

- 72 Reception age children make significant progress in their first lesson on information technology in the information technology suite. Skilful teaching holds children's attention and, by the end of the lesson, all could log on to the computer and use the mouse, click and double click to select a program and play a simple game with the minimum of teacher interaction.
- 73 Children make good progress in their creative development. They sing tunefully and reinforce numeracy through counting, for example in the 'Three Little Pigs'. They like to play with musical instruments and happily follow the rhythm with instruments and making 'pig-like' sounds at the appropriate time. In painting, Nursery children use colours to make patterns on their socks and the reception age children mix and use colours to show gradation of colours. These are good examples of how children's skills are being developed incrementally. Children use their knowledge and imagination when taking part in role-play through their sense of fun and enjoyment. They gain much in understanding about how to take turns and how to show appreciation when others perform.
- 74 Through good provision children make good progress in their leaning in physical development. Children handle and use tools for writing, gluing and sticking with increasing confidence and control but some still have difficulty controlling movements when using crayons to illustrate their work. There are good resources to extend physical development. In the Nursery the children gain much from their outdoor play; they run, skip and hop and learn to pedal a variety of wheeled vehicles. When moving around in the hall the children balance on several body parts and show a growing control of their movements. They have a good awareness of space. This was promoted well through the clear teaching of the learning objectives, demonstration, praise and encouragement.
- 75 Teaching and learning are particularly well supported by the very effective use of the Nursery nurses and support staff who take responsibility for groups of children in all areas of the curriculum and are fully integrated into planning, teaching and assessing children. Their involvement assists and speeds these processes.

ENGLISH

- 76 The results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2 show that the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 or above was close to the national average. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 or above was also broadly in line with the national average. However, these results are not an accurate reflection of the school's performance in English at Key Stage 2 in recent years or of the overall levels of attainment amongst the oldest pupils at present in Key Stage 2 and Year 7. For the period 1996 to 1998 pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 achieved standards which were higher than the national average. The results were close to the national average and in line with the results of similar schools based on a revised calculation using statistics available from the school which increased the scores from well below average to in line with similar schools. Pupils who attend Cedars Combined School for the whole of their primary school education achieve good standards in literacy. Boys and girls have attained similar

levels in test results over recent years.

- 77 The present cohort of pupils in Year 6 is achieving standards that are at least in line with national expectations and are likely to meet the challenging targets for attainment in English that the school has agreed with the local authority for the year 2000. Sound standards in literacy are due to good teaching, the influence of the National Literacy Strategy and the pupils' enthusiasm and sustained levels of concentration in lessons. Pupils in Year 7 continue to make satisfactory progress and achieve levels in line with those expected for this age group.
- 78 At the end of Key Stage 1, the 1999 National Curriculum test results show that attainment in reading and writing was very high in comparison with the national average. For the period 1996 to 1999 standards in reading were well above the national average overall whilst those in writing varied from year to year but were still above the national average. Boys performed slightly better than girls in both reading and writing. The school performed at a much higher level than similar schools nationally in both reading and writing. The present cohort of pupils in Year 2 is achieving standards that are in line with national averages in both reading and writing. The standards of achievement in written work are not as high, due to the increasing number of pupils in the key stage with special educational needs and the significant number of pupils who enter for short periods of time due to the provision of emergency, short term housing nearby.
- 79 The inspection found no major differences between boys' and girls' achievements in either key stage. Different ability groups and pupils with special educational needs make good progress in their learning at both key stages. There has been satisfactory improvement overall in English since the last inspection.
- 80 In speaking and listening, pupils' attainment is above national expectations by the end of both key stages and in Year 7. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils answer questions accurately and articulately. They listen carefully to instructions and speak clearly, varying the tone of their voices in conversation. Year 1 pupils were able to discuss the dangers of electricity in the home with their teacher, expressing their ideas with confidence and understanding. Year 2 pupils discussed the differences between animals and plants in their science lesson.
- 81 By the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils talk confidently about matters related to their learning and can clearly express ideas and events. Average and low attaining pupils speak clearly in conversation. They talk confidently in class discussions. The more able pupils demonstrate the higher order skills of discussion well; for example, during the inspection a group of Year 6 pupils discussed a variety of topics with one of the inspectors expressing their opinions and ideas confidently in a very mature manner. In Year 7, pupils are given opportunities to plan and deliver a talk to the class about a subject of their choice. Excellent talks were given on subjects such as *'My collection of model cars'*, *'My interest in conjuring'* and *'My visit to Canada'*. One girl's talk about her first mountain climb in The Lake District was quite outstanding.

- 82 In reading, pupils' attainment is well above average by the end of both key stages and in Year 7. Most pupils by the age of seven are developing an enjoyment of a range of books. They are generally confident readers and the large majority read accurately and fluently, demonstrating secure skills of working out more difficult words and meanings. They use their knowledge of the alphabet well when searching for spellings or the meaning of words. The majority have a good understanding of how to use the contents and index pages in non-fiction books and can locate books in the school library.
- 83 By the end of Key Stage 2, many pupils are fluent readers from a wide variety of books. The proportion of pupils attaining Level 4 or above in reading is higher than the national average. Throughout the key stage and in Year 7, they read from a suitable range of fiction and non-fiction books, and when asked, are often able to express clearly the reasons for their choice of books. By the age of eleven and indeed in Year 7, pupils discuss the differences in characters in the stories they have read and are able to explain why and how events in a story occurred. They are confident in locating information from books and when given the opportunity, use the school library system effectively. The pupils who have difficulty with reading are supported well and make good progress.
- 84 The attainment of pupils in writing at the end of Key Stage 1 in the 1999 standardised tests was well above the national average. Inspection findings indicate that attainment overall is broadly in line, again due to the increasing number of pupils in the school entering the school with low attainment or with special educational needs. Discussion with pupils and completed work in books indicate a secure understanding and use of the more formal aspects of grammar. Punctuation receives appropriate attention and the teaching of spelling is satisfactory though some pupils find spelling rather difficult. Lower attaining pupils write imaginatively and express their ideas clearly. However pupils of average and high attainment write their ideas in interesting sequences of sentences often extending these sentences in different ways. For example pupils in one Year 2 class wrote very good descriptions of a fire after listening to a tape recording of fire and sounds made by a model fire, an excellent resource provided by their teacher.
- 85 By the end of Key Stage 2 and in Year 7, many pupils write well-structured and interesting stories and accounts. In one Year 6 class the pupils learn to link the type of writing to the audience for whom it is intended. By the time they leave the school, pupils have a good experience of writing for a range of purposes and audiences using such writing approaches as poetry, plays, stories and accounts of their own experiences. They are developing secure skills in drafting and redrafting their work although insufficient use is made of information and communication technology to improve and enhance the finished product. The school has plans to address this now that the new technology suite is in use but more use needs to be made of computers in the classrooms.
- 86 Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, respond well in English lessons. They enjoy the Literacy Hour and work well with the good quality and very interesting projects provided for them. They know the routines of the literacy hour well and organise themselves without disruption to the flow of the lesson. Many are developing good levels of independent learning when working in groups. Pupils respond positively in the plenary sessions and are keen to make contributions to discussions. Relationships within the classes are good and teachers have good rapport with their pupils. Although the quality of behaviour throughout the school is

very good overall, there are a small number of pupils in some classes who are not well behaved and do not respond quickly to their teachers' efforts to control them. However where additional help is available from classroom assistants, these pupils are well managed and make good progress.

- 87 Pupils of all levels of attainment make good progress in developing skills of literacy throughout the school. Progress in learning was good in many lessons observed during the inspection. This included pupils with special educational needs and those few pupils for whom English is an additional language and for pupils from minority ethnic groups. Pupils' skills in literacy are put to good effect in other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 3 match newspaper headlines with countries round the world and discover information from newspaper articles. Year 2 pupils write about the consequences of drought in Africa. Many other examples were noted during the analysis of pupils' work.
- 88 The quality of teaching is good overall in both key stages and is never less than satisfactory. In Key Stage 1 teaching was always good with one lesson, taught by the English Co-ordinator, being very good. In Key Stage 2 teaching was good in half of lessons, very good in a quarter and satisfactory in the remainder.
- 89 Teachers' knowledge and understanding of literacy are strong and their organisation of the literacy hour is very good. Teachers share lesson objectives with their pupils so that everyone knows what is to be learned. Targets are set, lessons move with good pace and work is usually finished on time. In each year group teachers plan very well together, ensuring that all areas of the English curriculum are covered. Careful preparation of lessons ensures a good level of learning for pupils of all levels of ability, including those with special educational needs. Teachers use questioning well, and give pupils of all abilities opportunities to contribute. Marking is completed conscientiously, with praise and encouragement often included in the teachers' remarks. Teachers use the plenary sessions at the end of each lesson well to assess the pupils' understanding of their learning.
- 90 The subject is well led. The governor directly linked to literacy in the school discussed in detail the progress made since the introduction of the Literacy Hour. She had spent considerable time in the classrooms and reported her findings to the head-teacher and the English co-ordinator. The co-ordinator has worked very effectively with the headteacher and all teaching and support staff to implement the Literacy Hour. Satisfactory assessment procedures are in place and is used to inform future planning. The co-ordinator works hard in her leadership of the subject and monitors planning, the quality of teaching and the pupils' work. Resources to support the National Literacy Strategy are of good quality and effectively used. The school library is well stocked with a good range of books. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and all National Curriculum requirements are met.

MATHEMATICS

- 91 In the end of Key Stage 1 national assessments in 1999, the proportion of pupils reaching Level 2 or above was well above the national average and well above the averages for similar schools. In Key Stage 2 tests in the same year, the results were above the national average for the proportion of pupils reaching Level 4 or above and were close to the national average for those reaching Level 5 or above. However, based on the average of all the levels, the results in Key Stage 2 were in line with national averages compared to all schools nationally and also with similar schools, although these scores were changed from below average to in line, due to revised statistics available from the school. The attainment of pupils in Year 7 is in line with that expected nationally for pupils of their age. There was no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. The school is very aware of the variation in the standards of attainment reached between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. This is demonstrated both in end of key stage tests, which are well above average at Key Stage 1 and in line with the national average at Key Stage 2. However, figures produced by the school indicate that where pupils are at the school long enough to complete both Key Stages, the majority, eighty-three percent, attain at least the national average. The results of Key Stage 2 tests in 1999 are an indication of the effect on overall standards that the high proportion of pupils entering the school during the key stage with low attainment or special educational needs is having. The school also has a number of pupils who enter for short periods of time due to the proximity of emergency, short term, housing.
- 92 By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment is in line with the standard expected for seven-year olds. Most pupils successfully distinguish odd and even numbers and are able to explain that they end in either two or zero. Pupils count accurately in twos, fives and tens and demonstrate a firm grasp of place value. Pupils collect data using tally charts and then present it in graph form. The majority of pupils can extract information from simple graphs. Pupils know the names of shapes such as rectangle, hexagon and octagon, identifying them by describing their properties. They use both standard and non-standard units to measure length. Using their knowledge of number, pupils carry out investigations, for example the work done in Year 1 on number problems to 20.
- 93 By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is above the standard expected nationally. In their number work pupils have developed personal strategies for solving problems and explain their approach. They work with all four rules of number in decimals to two places. Pupils have a sound grasp of the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages, for example, they know that $\frac{1}{2} = 50\% = 0.5$. Pupils understand the use of factors and prime numbers. In work on shape pupils use a protractor to draw angles and can name them, for example, right, obtuse and reflex. Pupils are aware of the properties of three-dimensional shapes and are able to draw nets to produce them. Pupils read and interpret information given in the form of a chart and understand the notion of probability. They collect data and communicate it through bar, pie and line graphs. The majority of pupils understand the concepts of mode, range and median. Pupils in Year 7 have a sound grasp of the four rules of number when applied to work in decimals and use these skills well in problem solving. They draw conclusions from given data and use the information to make decisions.

- 94 The number skills of pupils are developed effectively through the National Numeracy Strategy which is having a beneficial effect on standards which are good across the school. These skills are applied in a number of subjects. For example, in science, Year 7 pupils use line graphs to record their findings. Pupils in Year 3 have drawn the nets of boxes as part of their work in design and technology. The school is working to strengthen the link between information technology and number work, for example, the use of computers to produce spreadsheets and scatter graphs. Throughout the school, pupils develop their literacy skills through discussion and the use of the correct mathematical vocabulary.
- 95 The achievement of pupils in both key stages and Year 7 is good overall, with examples of very good, it is never less than satisfactory. This good level of achievement overall, is the result of teaching that is good and sometimes very good. The significant features of this good teaching include detailed lesson planning which identifies clear lesson objectives, the techniques used during lessons, the care taken to match activities to the ability of the pupils and the enthusiasm for the subject demonstrated by teachers. The provision of staff training in numeracy and the strong lead given by the subject co-ordinator also contribute to the good progress made by pupils in this area of their work. During Key Stage 1, pupils develop their number skills and knowledge of the other areas of mathematics. For example, pupils in Year 1 make very good progress in their ability to recognise number patterns. In Year 2 pupils improved their knowledge of the multiples of five and ten. In Key Stage 2, pupils in Year 3 make good progress in their ability to recognise number relationships. In Year 6 pupils use correct mathematical language, numerator and denominator understand the concept of recurring numbers and use them accurately in their work. In Year 7 pupils make good progress in their ability to apply their knowledge of mathematics to problem solving. Across both key stages, pupils make progress in their ability to calculate mentally and in applying their knowledge of mathematics to problem solving. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in this area of their work.
- 96 Pupils' attitudes to their work are good overall with a significant number demonstrating very good attitudes in Key Stage 2. The attitude of pupils in Year 7 to the work is good. Pupils in both key stages respond well to questioning and take an enthusiastic part in whole class work. They clearly enjoy their work in mathematics which reflects the enthusiasm of the teachers for the subject.
- 97 The teaching of mathematics is good overall, and is often very good; it is never less than satisfactory. The standard of lesson planning is very good with clear statements of objectives and the methods to be used to attain them. In a year 6 class, for example, after a brisk start the teacher shares the learning objectives with pupils, so that they are secure about their knowledge of percentages and what is expected. Teachers demonstrate a firm grasp of the subject and are able to communicate this to the pupils by providing activities that keep their interest and are focussed on the objectives of the lesson. In a Year 2 lesson the teacher uses a game called *Fizz-Buzz* to enable pupils to count in fives. Teachers use the resources available to them well and adult classroom support is used very effectively. Lessons have a brisk pace and questioning is well used to probe for knowledge and understanding. Teachers make good use of mental arithmetic sessions to develop pupils' reasoning skills and to encourage them to explain their thinking processes. Across the school teachers demonstrate a good knowledge of the abilities of individual children and ensure that the work set is suitable for them. In a Year 5 lower set for mathematics, for example the teacher encourages pupils to

use suitable units to measure area through effective discussion. At both key stages the quality of marking varies, but there is generally a lack of good feedback to pupils to help them make progress.

- 98 The subject is well managed by the co-ordinator who has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school's provision in mathematics. The curriculum, which meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, is well organised and has clearly stated assessment criteria. In Key Stage 2 pupils are set by their levels of attainment and this arrangement has a positive impact on their work and progress. Teachers receive good support from the co-ordinator and have been given training in the implementation of the numeracy project. The resources provided for the subject are satisfactory and are used effectively.

SCIENCE

- 99 In the 1999 National Curriculum teacher assessments for pupils at the end of Key Stage 1, overall attainment was well above the national average. The percentage of pupils who attained the higher level (Level 3) was also well above the national average. Inspection evidence places standards in line with the national average. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2, attainment was in line with both the national average and with the average of similar schools. Teacher assessments were above the national averages at both Level 4 and the higher Level 5. Pupils in Year 7, age 12, are also attaining in line with expected National Curriculum levels for this age group. Results had been higher in the previous report. However, the school intake has been changing steadily and there is now a significantly higher percentage of pupils who are lower attainers or with special educational needs. This is likely, in part, explain lower level attainment. There are no significant differences between boys' and girls' performance. Analysis of trends from 1996 to 1999 shows a steady improvement in standards. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are in line with the national average and improving due to an effective scheme of work and well-focused and purposeful teaching.
- 100 By the age of seven, most pupils have a sound understanding of the need for a fair test when carrying out investigations. For example, when trying to discover what would happen to a range of liquids if put in a freezer, they make sure that the same amount of liquid is used; they predict the outcomes and explain what changes would take place. Their written responses demonstrate that they are beginning to link cause and effect. Year 1 pupils are good at sorting materials that are shiny, hard, soft or smooth. They are encouraged to write their observations in their own words. Pupils in Year 6 have a good understanding of the relationships between pressure and force when they conduct an experiment to determine whether the weight of an object can be changed and whether air resistance slows down a moving object. Pupils carry out a range of interesting and relevant investigations. They are encouraged to draw their own conclusions from their initial observations. These are important learning factors because pupils are not afraid to make mistakes and the enquiry, which subsequently follows, helps to clarify and consolidate learning. A Year 6 lesson on electricity was based on a number of challenging activities using parallel and series circuits. Pupils tackled the tasks enthusiastically even though sometimes appropriate resources were not at hand. They were not afraid to explore different methods and approaches. At the plenary, they were encouraged to evaluate their activities and explain difficulties they faced. Outcomes of experiments are recorded using a wide range of format and approaches. Pupils

show increasing confidence in using, interpreting and applying data. This is well exemplified in Year 4 classes where pupils have been testing the temperature of water in different locations and measuring loss of heat.

- 101 Year 7 pupils cover a wide range of work adhering closely to the requirements of the National Curriculum for Year 7. For example, their work on geological changes shows they know about the formation of rocks by processes that take place over different time scales; their notes show an understanding of how igneous and other rocks are formed. Scientific experiments assist them to discover hardness and softness. They learn how to carry out investigations of such matter. They record their findings using correct measurements but cannot always spell new technical words correctly.
- 102 Overall, pupils make steady progress in science. Learning in Year 1 is effective but slows down in a Year 2 and a Year 3 class. The rate of learning increases in Year 4 and one Year 5 class and progress accelerates in Year 6, where it is consistently good, and this is maintained in Year 7 classes. Despite these inconsistencies, the Qualification and Curriculum Authority schemes of work and the school's medium-term plans, support teachers in planning so that incremental learning can take place. This is well exemplified by tracking work done on materials and forces of electricity from Years 1 to 7. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to all other pupils and where there is additional support they advance well.
- 103 Attitudes to the subject are good in the majority of classes. There is a mature and sensible approach to investigative work with older pupils at Key Stages 2 and 3 and this has a marked impact on the good progress pupils make. During practical work they co-operate, share resources, help each other and engage enthusiastically in discussions. A small core of pupils in a Year 3 and a Year 5 class do not demonstrate such positive attitudes when they are not stimulated by the teaching.
- 104 Teaching was good or very good in over half the lessons seen and satisfactory in the rest. The quality of teaching is good overall across the school and particularly at Key Stage 1 and Years 6 and 7. Lessons are well planned and appropriate resources are identified. In most classes the learning objectives are clear and linked to the scheme of work. This is a particular strength. The learning objectives are shared with the pupils and nearly always written on the board so that pupils can see and refer to them. Where teaching is very effective, as was seen in a Year 5 session on evaporation and condensation and in a Year 6 lesson on electricity, the teachers return to the learning objectives when appropriate. This was very skilfully done by the Year 5 teacher who, as she walked around, discovered a small group of pupils who were not tackling the activity she had set correctly. By drawing this group together and revisiting the learning objective, she identified why there were difficulties and by teaching sections again, she ensured that pupils' learning and understanding was consolidated. Regular testing when each unit is completed provides useful indications of where there are gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding and this approach further consolidates learning. The pace in most lessons is brisk and the teaching is lively and interesting and holds pupils' attention. Questioning is rapid and usually searching. This was well illustrated in a Year 6 lesson on electricity where the teacher was asking what 'conductor' meant. Pupils offered many suggestions but she persevered until accurate scientific language was used. The shape of the lesson is well planned ensuring at the beginning of each session that the previous work is reviewed, new objectives introduced, followed by activities and a plenary.

- 105 The weaknesses in some classes stem from the fact that often the activities are the same for all the pupils. This results in some higher attaining pupils in Years 3 and 5 not receiving sufficient challenge and the less able struggling to compete. Lessons, which were less effective, had a recurring characteristic. There was a lack of clarity about the level of requirements and appropriateness of content. Pupils' learning was not increased because they were unable to follow logically the sequence of the lesson, for example whilst it is important that pupils know different sources of light, young pupils' concept of spiritual light may be difficult to comprehend in a science lesson. Overall, teachers' marking is regular but not informative, except in Years 6 and 7 classes. Except for a small number of classes which are exemplary, expectations are not sufficiently high for the presentation of work, spelling or handwriting.
- 106 The subject is very effectively managed by two enthusiastic co-ordinators who have worked hard to effect improvements in recent years. The Qualification and Curriculum Authority's scheme of work is carefully applied to match the school's needs. The medium-term plans are detailed and give good support to the non-specialists and planning is carefully monitored; key stage test papers and data are analysed and the information gained is used to make changes as necessary. Co-ordinators are aware of the need to carry out more moderation activities. Resources are well organised and used. The school is well placed to further increase attainment.

ART

- 107 Standards in art are in line with those expected for pupils' age at both key stages and in Year 7 and are similar to the last inspection. In Year 1 pupils work well with paper and straws, they handle these materials effectively and cut and paste well showing dexterity with scissors, after discussing different types of houses they are going to draw. The literacy element of this lesson is effective pupils developing their understanding of different types of houses, they discuss semi-detached and decide that like a semi-circle is '*half a circle*', a semi-detached house is '*half a house*'. In a Year 2 class pupils show perceptive observational skills in a lesson linked with science, they draw and paint pictures of live plants. They show well developed pencil and brush control and mix colours effectively. After discussion pupils identify the characteristics of the plant, '*it has round leaves*' or '*the leaves are spiky*' and reflect this in their drawings. In a Year 3 class pupils draw pictures of Roman buildings to support a history project and surmise that it might be a temple or a building from Pompeii. They show fine pencil control and the buildings are recognisable although some have quite complex shapes. This work on the Romans is followed up with making clay mosaics and pots in clay in Year 4 which are decorated. Older pupils in Year 5 make an effective start at learning perspective using a work by the artist Hobemba showing trees on a road. They use a basic template provided by the teacher and make good judgements as to the size of the trees and the people in their drawings and understand the concept of the *vanishing point* and the *horizon* in pictures.

- 108 Although only a small amount was seen, the quality of teaching in all lessons is good, teachers have clear objectives about what they are going to teach and the development of basic skills is effective. Subject knowledge is good and the scheme of work which they work to is effective. There are some good examples of the use of literacy in use in art with valuable discussions taking place prior to the activities. There are examples of well produced geometrical drawings displayed in Year 7 linking art to mathematics. Pupils reflect on the wonders of nature in their life drawings and this contributes to their spiritual development. There are some good displays of art-work around the school which lift the spirits and also contribute to pupils' spirituality. There are some examples of very highly skilled work prominently displayed in the hall way of portraits and pictures produced by talented pupils. The resources for art are good and pupils have the opportunity to work using a variety of media and techniques including, clay, wax resist, printing using various materials and modelling. However, information and communication technology is insufficiently used in this subject.
- 109 The subject is effectively managed and co-ordinated, there has been a significant improvement since the last inspection when teaching was generally sound. The subject knowledge of teachers is stronger and the teaching of specific skills and techniques has improved and the range of resources available is good.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 110 Standards achieved in design and technology are above those expected in Key Stage 1 and 2 and also in Year 7. This is a very good improvement since the last inspection when attainment was judged to be variable and pupils rarely evaluated their own work. Pupils in Key Stage 1 successfully evaluate commercial products such as toys and can make informed comments on the materials used, their use and know how the toys were made. They can design and make their own products, taking great care with the construction and evaluating the effectiveness of the finished article. For example, Year 2 pupils made good quality glasses to fit a model giant in their classroom, which was part of a literacy display about the book they had been reading, entitled Jim and the Beanstalk. In Key Stage 2, Year 3 pupils, following a scrutiny of packaging, designed their own attractive boxes. They planned their work on design sheets, drew a net of their box and made it out of suitable materials. Pupils in Year 4 have well developed design skills as was seen in their work on food technology where they made pizzas. They conducted a survey to ascertain the most popular toppings, made *mouth-watering pizzas* the conclusion they came to when they evaluated the results. Older pupils in Key Stage 2 make useful articles, such as sandals and beads, from recycled materials linked to their work in geography and environmental issues. In Year 7, pupils learn new techniques as well as using skills they learn through the school to successfully complete a variety of challenges. They can solder electronic components to make badges with flashing lights, design and make belt bags from textiles and bake their own unique biscuits after making modifications to a basic recipe. Pupils then design and make boxes for their biscuits and decorate them attractively.

- 111 The teaching of design and technology is good. Pupils learn new skills and the correct design stages as they move through the school thanks to the good subject knowledge of their teachers. The good organisation of pupils and the clear instructions given by teachers have a significant positive impact on the good progress made by pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs. Pupils respond well to the good teaching and work very hard to produce good quality products of which they are justifiably proud. Teachers have good control and discipline, which enables pupils to work safely and at a good pace. Finished products are highly valued by both teachers and pupils and are displayed prominently in classrooms and around the school.
- 112 The co-ordinator gives very good leadership in the subject. He has audited all teaching staff to identify areas of strength and weakness and has organised training to raise expertise and confidence. Evening workshops have been run for parents and their children to explain the nature of the subject and raise its profile in the school. The co-ordinator monitors planning, has introduced a new and appropriate scheme of work and has made sure that the school has sufficient good quality resources to deliver the full curriculum. It is commendable that the school is able to teach all aspects of design and technology despite the recent national focus on literacy and numeracy.

GEOGRAPHY

- 113 Pupils throughout the school attain the standards expected for their ages and are similar to those found in the last inspection.
- 114 Pupils at Key Stage 1 develop an understanding of place and human activity. Year 1 pupils use the story of The Three Little Pigs, using features they find in the story to include in drawing their own maps. Year 2 pupils recognise maps of the world, Europe and Britain using Barnaby Bear and holiday postcards of places he would like to visit as well as places they themselves have visited on holiday. Pupils work with books to complete independent learning contrasting schools, farming, homes and travel in Africa with that in Newport Pagnell. Key Stage 1 pupils walk around the immediate area observing key features. They carry out a traffic survey, making a tally and producing graphs and mapping charts.
- 115 Pupils in Key Stage 2 and in Year 7 build on the firm foundations prepared in Key Stage 1. Year 3 pupils answer the question, "What can we learn about places throughout the world from information in Newspapers?" Year 4 pupils study land use in Newport Pagnell, creating their own key and recognising significant features on their maps. Year 5 pupils study drought and its effect of the lives of people in other countries, considering the help given by aid agencies. Year 6 pupils study the differences between a hill and a mountain. They draw a mountain and label the characteristics from independent studies of books and drawings. They redraft their work in rough before transferring it into their geography books. Year 7 pupils use Ordnance Survey maps of Newport Pagnell and the surrounding area to incorporate most of the mapping skills taught earlier in the school. Pupils use six figure references to identify the location of various features. From an analysis of pupils' work, Year 7 pupils have reached a high standard, especially in their research into the composition of the earth. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

- 116 Pupils throughout the school make steady progression in their acquisition of knowledge and understanding of the world about them. They have a good attitude to their work. They listen to their teachers and express opinions with increasing confidence as they progress through the school. The majority of pupils behave well in class, sustain their concentration and are eager to learn. Those pupils capable of higher attainment are given opportunities to extend their studies through additional work that is prepared for them. More use could be made of computers to help pupils' individual studies. Presentation of work is variable and in some classes work is not effectively marked and spellings corrected.
- 117 In the lessons seen teaching was good overall with 57 per cent of lessons being good and 43 per cent very good. Teachers have very good rapport with their pupils; they capture their interest at the beginning of lessons with exciting introductions. Lessons are well planned and move with good pace sustaining pupils' interest throughout the lesson. Teachers display good subject knowledge, which promotes effective learning. This was particularly good in Year 7. Good use is made of questioning and teachers challenge pupils well having high expectations of both behaviour and work.
- 118 There is a clear policy and scheme of work in geography, which ensures a wide and balanced curriculum. Visits to places of interest are arranged and residential visits are available making a valuable contribution to the pupils' understanding of the world around them. The subject is well led by the co-ordinator, who ensures that teachers cover the programmes of study and that pupils develop their skills, knowledge and understanding at the appropriate rate within and between year groups. A satisfactory range of maps, atlases, aerial photographs and globes enhance pupils' learning. Staff and pupils use these effectively handling them carefully and with respect.

HISTORY

- 119 By the time pupils reach the age of 7 they reach standards which are above national expectations. However, by the age of eleven although pupils broaden their knowledge they reach standards, which are in line with national expectations. Pupils, by the age of 11, have a sound grasp of the interpretation of written sources of evidence. By the age of 12, pupils also achieve in line with national expectations. The good features from the last inspection have been sustained.
- 120 Pupils in Year 1 learn about the past by studying relationships within their families. In Year 2 they know about the main events of the great fire of London. They understand that the fire had a cause and can indicate some of the effects of the fire. They understand that our knowledge of events comes from first hand accounts written by diarists. They develop their historical imagination describing and then writing eyewitness accounts.
- 121 Pupils in Year 3 study the Romans in Britain. They understand that different people, at time had different styles of dress and that the lives of the wealthy and poorer Romans were very different, In Year 4 pupils report on the events at the Battle of Thermopylae. Understand that these events in Ancient Greece took place over a period of time. They know that historical knowledge is based on the evidence found by archaeologists. In Year 5 pupils have a broad knowledge of life in ancient Egypt and begin to understand some of the beliefs held by people living at that time. They gain understanding by handling and discussing replica artefacts and again relate

these artefacts to the acquisition of historical knowledge. In Year 6 pupils understand some of the changes that have taken place in Britain during the last 70 years. They understand some of the changes which took place between the 1930s and 1940s and can indicate some of the reasons for the start of World War 2. They use a variety of written activities to illustrate their knowledge.

- 122 Pupils in Year 7 build upon their knowledge of medieval cathedrals to understand the world of the Benedictine monks. They understand the religious ideas behind this order of monks but also recognise their significance of the monasteries in the economic and social life of the period.
- 123 Teaching is good overall. The teaching has a good impact of the standards of pupils' learning. Careful planning ensures that pupils are given a broad consistent course, in which there are many opportunities to extend and develop their writing and language skills. Teachers emphasise the importance of developing imaginative responses to historical events. These responses come from the teachers developing the written and spoken language skills of the pupils. Teachers make very effective use of visits – the Imperial War Museum in Year 6 and visitors – a “living historian” in Year 5 to capture pupils' interest and expand their knowledge and skills. The high expectations of behaviour ensure that pupils are confident in lessons and feel that they can contribute. The teachers' expectations of skills is high in Key Stage 1 where first hand historical accounts are used to fire pupils' imagination. This development of skills, whilst in evidence in Key Stage 2, is inconsistently developed. This is due to the pitch of work not always being appropriate for particular groups in some classes. Teaching in Year 7 is good. Music is used effectively to help pupils imagine their history. The planning and expectations of the teaching are good and have an effective impact on the learning of the pupils. Information technology as a technique to develop this subject is under-utilised. Occasionally presentation in some classes is untidy, work is not effectively marked and spellings are not corrected.
- 124 Pupils are keen and eager to take part in their lessons. In Year 2 pupils expand their language skills by describing and this helps to extend their imaginative responses. Pupils in Year 5 respond very well to visiting speakers, who introduce them to the life and ideas and manufacturing techniques of the Ancient Egyptians. During this activity pupils demonstrate a wide knowledge of the subject and show themselves to be confident at asking questions. Pupils in year 7 are able to use a range of non-fiction texts to gather information on the medieval monasteries. They also relate their learning to historical and modern fictional accounts.
- 125 Good, effective co-ordination, within the school, is achieved by the monitoring of teachers planning. The co-ordinator has clear ideas about the future development of the subject. Close contact is kept with the local authority-wide history group, to ensure that there is consistency in topics in all schools across the authority.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 126 Attainment in information technology is in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages and Year 7. This is a great improvement since the last inspection when attainment was judged to be below national expectations and progress was inconsistent. One of the main factors in the improvement in standards is the new computer suite and which enables all pupils to have regular access to up-to-date computers and attractive educational software. Pupils have made rapid progress in the subject since the suite opened and there is very good capacity for attainment to exceed national expectations, as pupils build on the knowledge and skills they are acquiring every week. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils can log on and off and access a variety of programs. They use a computer for word processing and have a good knowledge of the keyboard and toolbar functions which they use effectively when writing their own work such as poetry. Pupils use a CD ROM for research linked to work in other subject areas such as history where pupils found out about the Egyptian pyramids. They can program and control a 'roamer', a programmable robotic device to follow a given route, understanding the need to input instructions in a logical order. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils work confidently with a variety of programs. They can use spreadsheets, inputting data and formulae and displaying the information in a variety of graphs and charts for monitoring external events. They have a good understanding of how to use information technology in research work and how it is used in the wider world to communicate ideas and share knowledge. Pupils can merge text and graphics and manipulate pictures they have imported to create very effective patterns. In Year 7, pupils use information and communications technology with increasing confidence and independence. Their progress has been hampered in the past by not having access to suitable resources but, as with other pupils, the improved provision has enabled them to reach standards expected for their age. More able pupils have made exceptional progress and are very willing to share their expertise with other pupils. The well-attended computer club gives pupils of all abilities further good opportunities to improve their knowledge and understanding including using the Internet to search for information.
- 127 The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, and never less than satisfactory. Teachers have a good understanding of the subject and have also made rapid progress in their own expertise since the computer suite opened. They plan work carefully and ensure that it is closely matched to pupils' prior attainment to enable them to learn new skills by building on their existing knowledge. Teachers are enthusiastic and this is transmitted to pupils who want to learn more and thoroughly enjoy all the opportunities, which are presented to them. Teachers manage their pupils well and create a calm working atmosphere which enables pupils to concentrate on their work and learn effectively. Teachers use the computer suite and adjacent study area well. This was particularly evident in a Year 3 class where the teacher split the class into three groups known as pilots, co-pilots and passengers. The groups took turns working on the computer, supporting each other and being engaged in linked activities in the study area. This ensured they all had equal access to the computers, could learn from each other and benefit from the teacher giving them good support throughout the lesson. Teachers have a satisfactory knowledge of what individual pupils can do but do not regularly assess pupils to know the exact standards they have reached compared to National Curriculum levels. Pupils have very good attitudes to the subject and are keen and eager to work. There is a constant buzz of interest and excitement as they work and they are very enthusiastic. In a Year 2 lesson using the 'roamer', the pupils

were fascinated by what it could do and suggested how it could be used in practical situations. One pupil said he would like it to, *'bring him his tea at home!'*.

- 128 The co-ordinator has worked hard to improve the provision and has introduced a new and appropriate scheme of work to ensure that all aspects of the subject are taught in a well-structured way and to maximise the learning opportunities for all pupils. Whilst he is able to monitor pupils' progress by the outcome of pupils' work, there are few other assessment procedures in place. He does, however, have plans to address this in the near future. The computers that are in classrooms and shared areas are not used as effectively as those in the suite to support learning and their use is not well planned. The school is fully committed to raising standards to the highest possible level and the provision meets statutory requirements.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

- 129 French is taught to Year 6 and 7 by a specialist teacher. Standards are good in both years and pupils are given an effective grounding mostly in oral French which prepares them well for secondary school. In Year 6 pupils are introduced to the language and taught basic functional French to enable them to order a meal in a restaurant or find their way around a supermarket. All pupils make a good attempt at pronunciation, particularly those high attaining pupils who are secure and more confident in their own language. Pupils learn quickly through the oral and practical approach to this subject. Low attaining pupils especially those with special educational needs or whose own language skills are not secure find the subject difficult especially the concentration required in extended French question and answer sessions. After the intensive oral sessions pupils write using a commercial scheme which enables them to write meaningful sentences. Higher attaining pupils in Year 7 write short stories, which are usually meaningful and correctly punctuated. The subject has been well developed since the last inspection, particularly the written aspect.
- 130 The teaching seen was good overall, in the majority of lessons seen it was good and never less than satisfactory. The teacher has excellent subject knowledge which enables her to maintain a lesson orally mostly in French. The use of this oral approach is most effective with the majority of pupils only occasionally do those pupils who find the work to challenging become somewhat restless and inattentive, especially in Year 6 where the subject is introduced.
- 131 The subject is well managed and the teacher is constantly looking for ways to make the work more interesting, including finding a suitable web-site on the Internet. Although information and communication technology is under-utilised in this subject during lessons. There are some good French displays on the walls and older pupils produce a personal notebook in French to record what they do.

MUSIC

- 132 Only two class lessons could be observed during the inspection because of timetable restrictions, but discussion with the co-ordinator, class teachers and a scrutiny of documents indicate that pupils attain standards expected for pupils of their age. In the lessons observed provided by the peripatetic music service in brass and violin playing, pupils were making good progress in their learning. The four boys in the brass ensemble, preparing for the music festival and helped by the co-ordinator and the peripatetic music teacher produced music playing of a high standard. A video of the 1999 Christmas Concert included recorder playing of a satisfactory standard.
- 133 By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils perform musical patterns using tuned and untuned percussion instruments. Pupils are aware that music can evoke different moods and feelings and are given opportunities to respond to music in a variety of ways, through appraising and recording. Pupils recognise that instruments make different sounds. They distinguish between high and low notes understand tempo.
- 134 In Key Stage 2, Year 3 pupils listen to sounds made by the different instruments of the orchestra. Using excellent large pictures of an orchestra they learn where each section is placed and know the reasons why. Year 6 pupils experiment with sound. Sitting back to back and blindfolded they recognise the sounds made by instruments played by their partners even when their partner changes place and can reproduce the rhythms played on their own instruments.
- 135 The majority of pupils enjoy music. The singing in assemblies is satisfactory and most pupils join in well. Pupils behave sensibly and concentrate well on what their teachers tell them and are very positive in their response. Pupils learning to play the violin and brass instruments concentrate hard and show very good attitudes to their work.
- 136 The quality of teaching in the two lessons observed was good. The lessons were well planned with instruments of good quality readily available. Teachers have good control of the pupils, planning exciting activities to sustain the pupils' interest. The co-ordinator and the peripatetic music teachers have high levels of musical knowledge and expertise, which help their pupils reach good standards of music making.
- 137 The co-ordinator has been responsible for music since September 1999. Many staff paid tribute to the help and encouragement she has given to them since her appointment. There is a sound policy and a scheme of work that is due to be reviewed this year. Assessment is in place; in fact it was used to change the curriculum for Year 3 and Year 7 this year. Resources are good and well stored, being readily available to all classes on trolleys. They are well looked after by staff and pupils. The provision in music would be improved by the formation of a choir on a regular basis.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 138 Standards in physical education are above those expected for pupils' age at both key stages, which is similar to the last inspection. Even though the time available is restricted due to pressures on the timetable from Literacy and Numeracy, the school offers a wide range of physical activities. These are very effectively extended through extra-curricular sporting clubs. The majority of lessons seen were at Key Stage 2. No swimming was seen during the inspection but the specialist teaching that takes place and the high number of pupils who gain various certificates for proficiency would indicate high standards. All the lessons seen were in gymnastics, dance and games.
- 139 In Year 1 gymnastics lesson pupils move around the hall showing good co-ordination and spatial awareness. They can curl and stretch in different ways, they use large apparatus well and can move over, under and around without touching it. In a very good dance lesson in Year 4 pupils move to the rhythm of jungle drums and show a very good understanding of moving at different levels and different speeds. Pupils develop their movements very effectively and are thoroughly engaged in the role play as hunters for the entire lesson, which is very well supported by discussion enhancing pupils literacy skills. In a very well organised, carefully planned, Year 4 games lesson the pupils learned the fine control of a racket and ball through a variety of small games which were most effective. In another good lesson, with the same age group pupils learn throwing and catching skills in a variety of ways. In all these lessons appropriate warm up sessions and attention to safety are evident. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils explore their bodies in a gymnastics lesson, they jump and balance using different parts of the body and learn a sequence of movements and a finishing off movement. Year 7 lesson pupils use athletic style stretching and circulation movements to warm up, during a very creative gymnastics lesson. They develop a series of routines on the large apparatus which involves not only a variety of movements, but strong collaborative work. They are also developing the skills necessary to play rugby in mixed games lessons.
- 140 Teaching in physical education in the majority of lessons is good, sometimes very good and never less than satisfactory. In the good or very good teaching, teachers plan their lessons thoroughly and have good subject knowledge, they use demonstration well and quick question and answer sessions to keep the lesson in track. Where teaching is less effective in a lesson or part of a lesson, the teacher is over ambitious with the large apparatus at Key Stage 1 and it takes too long to put it out, slowing the pace of the lesson. Occasionally introductions are over long and pupils are not kept sufficiently active during the course of the lesson and some pupils become restless.
- 141 The subject is well co-ordinated by a very enthusiastic co-ordinator who has developed the subject well, including recently receiving national Lottery funding to improve resources. The resources for physical education are very good and include equipment from the Top Sports Scheme as well as a wide range of large and small apparatus which have been purchased since the last inspection and have improved provision.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 142 Only a small number of lessons were seen in religious education. From this evidence, a scrutiny of planning and pupils' work, attainment in religious education is in line with the expected standards as defined by the locally agreed syllabus.
- 143 By the age of seven, pupils are aware of special relationships such as those within their families and understand the concept of "belonging". They are able to discuss special occasions such as birthdays and weddings and could identify some meals as being more important than others are, for example, Christmas lunch. Pupils are aware that some places are special to different people, such as; the mosque to Muslims the church to Christians and the temple to Hindus.
- 144 By the age of twelve pupils are familiar with some of the Bible stories such as that of the Creation. They are aware that different belief systems have explanations for the same event and are able to compare them, for example, Year 3 work on the different creation stories of the Christian, Buddhist and Muslim religious traditions. Pupils in Year 3 investigate the festivals and religious celebrations of different religions, for example, the Jewish festival of Hanukah and the use of the Menorah lamp. Year 5 pupils are aware of the ceremonies for celebrating birth and naming children practised by different religions, for example by Sikhs, Jews and Buddhists. They understand the meaning of faith in Jesus and were able to define it as '*Living with God in Heaven*'. In Year 6, pupils are aware of the importance of religious leaders such as Abraham, Muhammad and John the Baptist. They understand the role of modern leaders such as Gandhi and Mother Teresa. Pupils in Year 7 understand the importance of certain places to people of different religions, for example, the work they have been doing on pilgrimages. Pupils across the key stage are familiar with Bible stories, for example, the life of Moses and the story of the lost sheep. Pupils over both key stages and those in Year 7 make satisfactory progress in this subject. Those pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.
- 145 Teaching in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory and at Key Stage 2 it is good. Teaching in Year 7 is satisfactory. Good teaching is characterised by a good use of revision at the start of lessons, and a brisk pace for activities that kept the interest of pupils. Teachers use visual aids well to illustrate lessons and good end of lesson summaries of what have been covered. The methods used had a positive impact on the development of the literacy skills of pupils, for example, a Year 3 lesson where pupils describe a fable. In Year 6 pupils were encouraged to discuss moral questions and the lesson provided a good link between religious education and speaking and listening. However, the marking of pupils' work particularly in Key Stage 1 is inconsistent and the school's marking policy needs to be more rigorously applied to improve spelling and raise pupils' standards of presentation.
- 146 The attitudes adopted by pupils towards their work in the subject were good across the key stages and sometimes very good. Pupils are willing to ask and answer question, behave well; listening quietly to what is being said. They take a very active part in lessons and show a willingness to put forward their own ideas and listen to those offered by their peers.

- 147 The subject is well managed and the co-ordinator has a firm grasp on the strengths and weaknesses of the school's provision. Planning is checked regularly to ensure that what is being taught fits into the scheme of work. The support material provided includes suggestions for how assessment can be done and evaluation is carried out on a termly basis.
- 148 The subject is reasonably well resourced but there is a need, identified by the co-ordinator, to obtain more information dealing with the Buddhist religion. At the present time there is no monitoring being done by the co-ordinator of pupils' work, as literacy and numeracy take priority.