

INSPECTION REPORT

Samuel Lucas School
Hitchin

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique Reference Number: 117337

Inspection Number: 187558

Headteacher: Mrs. S. Hardwick

Reporting inspector: Julian Sorsby
14042

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 26th November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 707433

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
Type of control:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Gaping Lane Hitchin Hertfordshire SG5 2JQ
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. M. Taylor
Date of previous inspection:	January 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Julian Sorsby, Rgl	Equality of opportunity	Attainment and progress
	Special educational needs	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
		Teaching
		Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
John Fletcher, Lay Inspector		Leadership and management
		Attendance
		Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
		Partnership with parents and the community
		Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
David Marshall	Mathematics	Curriculum
	Design and technology	
	Information technology	
	Geography	
	History	
	Physical education	
Marion Roberts	English	Assessment
	Science	
	Religious education	
	Art	
	Music	

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

Many aspects of this school are very good or excellent. Only those which are excellent or which are not mentioned elsewhere in this summary are listed below.

- Pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and physical education is much higher than expected for their age group, and in science and history it is higher than expected. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those whose attainment is above average, make good progress.
- Teaching is good, often very good and sometimes excellent. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. The curriculum is very good, provision for extra-curricular activities is good and the school's strategies for teaching both literacy and numeracy are exceptionally good.
- Pupils' attitudes to studying and their behaviour are very good, their personal development is excellent, and relationships between them and with all the adults in the school are excellent. All staff provide excellent role models for the pupils.
- Provision for pupils' moral and social development is excellent.
- Overall, the quality of information to parents, parental involvement in their children's learning and the schools links with the community are good.
- Financial control and school administration are very good.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. The leadership of the school by the governing body is unsatisfactory.
- II. Communications between a small group of parents and governors, and the headteacher are unsatisfactory. Because the governing body is failing to act corporately, it is failing to support the headteacher in these communications, despite her carrying out their policies.
- III. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are absent or insufficiently developed in some subjects, although the use made of all available data is good.

This school provides a very good quality of education, in which most pupils do well and many excel, regardless of their level of prior attainment.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

There have been significant improvements in a very wide range of aspects of the school since the last inspection. The most significant improvements are as follows:

Pupils' attainment, particularly in English and mathematics: pupils' progress in almost all subjects: the progress made by pupils with special educational needs, and the quality of the school's provision for them: the progress of higher attaining pupils and the quality of the school's provision for them: the quality of teaching: the curriculum, subject policies and schemes of work: assessment procedures in English, mathematics and physical education, and the use of assessment information in all subjects: the school's links with the community: the implementation of the school's aims, values and policies: development planning, monitoring and evaluation:

There has been deterioration in the work of the governing body and in resources in information technology. Despite appropriate levels of spending, information technology resources have not kept pace with developments. The many strengths of the school outweigh the few weaknesses and the school is well placed to make further improvements.

Standards in subjects

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds in 1999 based on the National Curriculum tests:

Performance in	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key <i>well above average</i> A <i>above average</i>
English	A	B	
Mathematics	A	B	
Science	C	E	

Inspection findings indicate that attainment in science at Key Stages 1 and 2 is good. It is much improved since last year because of better leadership and management of the subject, a greater emphasis being placed on its development by the school, and because pupils in the current Year 6 are generally attaining at a higher level than their predecessors. There is a very high proportion of pupils who achieve above the expected standards in all three subjects, particularly in mathematics.

Quality of teaching

Teaching in:	Under 5	5 - 7 years	7 - 11 years
English	Not seen	Good	Very good
Mathematics	Not seen	Good	Very good
Science		Good	Good
Information technology		Not seen	Good
Religious education		Good	Good
Other subjects	Not seen	Good	Very good

Teaching is good, often very good and sometimes excellent in both key stages. Of the lessons observed, 84 per cent of teaching was good or better, and 36 percent was very good or better. There were four excellent lessons and no unsatisfactory teaching

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Pupils' behaviour, both in school and at play, is very good.
Attendance	Pupils' attendance and punctuality are very good.
Ethos*	The schools' ethos is very good.
Leadership and management	The leadership and management of the school, provided by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and subject co-ordinators is very good. The staff are a hardworking, strong and unified team. The leadership and management of the school by the governing body are unsatisfactory as are communications between the governing body and the senior management team. The governing body does not act as a critical friend of the school, it is not acting corporately and its leadership and procedures are insufficiently rigorous. Some governors are new to the governing body, and overall, governors are not sufficiently informed about the school, their role or how to perform it.
Curriculum	The curriculum for children under five years old follows the desired learning outcomes and prepares children for Key Stage 1. The curriculum in Key Stages 1 and 2 is broad and balanced, and covers all subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education, sex education and drugs misuse education. Extra-curricular provision is good both at lunchtime and after school.
Pupils with special educational needs	Provision for lower attaining pupils is very good and is particularly well managed by the special educational needs co-ordinator. All teachers and the special needs assistant contribute significantly to this strength of the school. Provision for the higher attaining pupils, managed by the headteacher, is similarly very good, and is particularly well managed by the headteacher.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Provision for pupils' moral and social development is excellent, and that for their spiritual and cultural development is good. Provision for pupils' multi-cultural awareness is satisfactory.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	The school is well staffed and resources are good overall. The school's accommodation is satisfactory.
Value for money	The school provides good value for money.

* *Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<p>IV. That the school encourages them to participate in school life.</p> <p>V. That the school encourages a good standard of work.</p> <p>VI. That the school encourages participation in more than just daily lessons.</p> <p>VII. The homework set by the school.</p> <p>VIII. That the school engenders positive attitudes and values.</p> <p>IX. That pupils behave well.</p> <p>X. That pupils like coming to school.</p> <p>XI. Over 70 per cent* of parents feel that the school is approachable with problems.</p> <p>XII. Over 50 per cent* of parents feel that they know what their children are learning and the progress they are making.</p>	<p>XIII. 21 per cent* of respondents feel the problems and over 30 per cent* feel that the</p> <p>XIV. Approximately 20 per cent* of parent about what the school teaches their</p>

* Percentages shown represent percentages of all who responded to the parent's questionnaire. A total of 36 per cent of questionnaires were returned. In the case of parents feeling that the school is not approachable when they have problems and that complaints are not handled well, this was the view of 23 respondents from the 217 questionnaires distributed. Regarding concerns expressed about the sharing of information with parents, this was the view expressed by 16 respondents from the 217 questionnaires distributed.

Inspectors share the positive views expressed by parents. Inspectors acknowledge that a minority of families has experienced communications problems with the school. Despite the fact that the numbers concerned are relatively small, they are significant and the perception that communications are not always effective is a matter for concern. Inspection evidence demonstrates that the systems are in place to overcome these problems and that some progress has been made.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to further improve the very good quality of education, build on the many strengths of the school and rectifying the weaknesses identified in the inspection the headteacher, governors and staff should:

- ◆ Improve the quality of procedures for assessing pupils' attainment in science, design and technology, information technology, history, geography, art, music and religious education at both key stages and physical education at Key Stage 1, based on the good quality of assessment present throughout the school in English and mathematics, and in physical education in Key Stage 2. (see paragraph 70)
- ◆ Improve the leadership and management of the school by ensuring that each governor:
 - Undertakes training to better understand his or her role and the details of the school. (see paragraph 96)
 - Accepts that the governing body must act corporately, and does so. (see paragraph 101)

- While carrying out their legitimate role with parents, ensures that they do so in partnership and harmony with the school and in accordance with the school's procedures. (see paragraph 99)

- ◆. Improve the leadership and management of the school by ensuring that the governing body:
 - . Formalises its working, with decisions being made only in the context of formal meetings. (see paragraph 100)
 - . Acts as a critical friend to the school. (see paragraph 101)
 - . Keeps appropriate minutes of every meeting of the governing body and its committees that clearly state the precise decisions that have been taken. (see paragraph 100)
 - . Improves the quality of communications within and outside the school community. (see paragraph 98)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weakness should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- . Ensure that the school always applies its equal opportunities policy to the recruitment of staff. (see paragraph 110)
- . Improve the quality of provision for pupils' multi-cultural understanding. (see paragraph 73 and 77)

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1.The school is situated in the market town of Hitchin, North Hertfordshire and serves the community in the south west of the town. There are 218 pupils on roll between the ages of five and eleven with girls slightly outnumbering boys by 112 to 106. This is about the average size of primary schools nationally. Since the last inspection, there has been no significant change in the levels of attainment of pupils joining the school. The school has a full roll, is consistently over-subscribed and has a continued interest list of some length. Pupils are taught in seven classes (eight in the summer term). These are organised according to pupils' ages in Key Stage 2, and are mixed age at Key Stage 1. The average class size is 31.

2.Although two pupils under the age of five were on role, only one was present during the inspection, and was appropriately working at Key Stage 1 levels. It was not therefore possible to inspect the quality of teaching for this age group.

3.Most pupils come from very similar backgrounds. Seven per cent of pupils speak English as an additional language, and this is high compared to the national average. Most of these pupils are from Chinese and Afro-Caribbean origins. A smaller number are from the mainland of Europe. Sixteen pupils come from homes where English is not the first language.

4.The majority of pupils starting school have wide experiences and good social, learning and communication skills for their age, gained at pre-school level.

5.Less than four percent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well below the national average. There are currently no children with statements of special educational need, this being very much below the national average and only 16 children on the special needs register.

6.Pupils join the school at the start of the term in which they are five in accordance with the local education authority's policy on admissions.

7.The school set the following targets for seven-year-old pupils' attainment by the year 2001. Pupils gaining level two or above:

	ENGLISH	MATHS	SCIENCE
2000	100	100	100
2001	100	100	100

8.The school set the following targets for eleven-year-old pupils' attainment by the year 2001. Pupils gaining Level 4 or above:

	ENGLISH	MATHS	SCIENCE
2000	91	94	91
2001	91	94	91

9.These targets are realistic and are based on the ongoing assessment of the attainment of current Year 1 and 2 and Year 5 and 6 pupils. The targets are achievable.

10.The Schools published statement of aims is as follows:

- To encourage children to become independent learners whilst at the same time learning to work collaboratively.
- To develop in children an awareness and consideration for other people's needs and rights, an understanding of the world in which we live and a concern for the environment.
- To develop a sense of each person's own worth and a responsibility for one's own behaviour.
- To ensure that children have full and equal access through a variety of approaches to a broad based curriculum which includes a wide range of practical experiences that will enable them to take their place in the world and society in an informed, positive and active way.

1.Key Indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 1¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	13	23	36

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	Boys	12	12	12
	Girls	23	23	23
	Total	35	35	35
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	97 (91)	98 (79)	97 (94)
	National	82 (51)	83 (74)	87 (65)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	Boys	11	12	12
	Girls	23	23	23
	Total	34	35	35
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	97 (88)	97 (97)	97 (100)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

¹ Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attainment at Key Stage 2²

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2
for latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	22	13	35

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	19	19	19
	Girls	12	12	9
	Total	31	31	28
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	89 (77)	89 (74)	80 (77)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	19	19	19
	Girls	11	11	9
	Total	30	30	28
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	86 (86)	86 (74)	81 (89)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

² Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year			%
	Authorised Absence	School	4.5
		National comparative data	5.7
	Unauthorised Absence	School	0.2
National comparative data		0.5	

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:			Number
	Fixed period	0	
	Permanent	0	

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:			%
	Very good or better	36	
	Satisfactory or better	100	
	Less than satisfactory	0	

11. PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

11. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

11. Attainment and progress

2. Because of the stage of the academic year at which the inspection took place, only one child under the age of five was present for the duration of the inspection. It was not therefore possible to assess either the attainment or progress of children under five. However, past records demonstrate that most children under five years old are sufficiently competent to begin to follow the National Curriculum before their fifth birthdays, rather than at the start of the term following their birthday.

3. In English, attainment on entry to the school is above that expected nationally of five-year-olds. Pupils at Key Stage 1 make good progress overall in English. Progress in reading, handwriting and in speaking and listening is good. Pupils make good progress in writing for a range of purposes.

4. Results of national tests for 1999 for Key Stage 1 show that attainment in reading and writing is above that expected nationally of seven-year-olds. Attainment in English at Key Stage 1 has shown year on year improvement over the past three years.

5. Results of 1999 national tests for Key Stage 2 show attainment in English is well above that expected nationally of eleven-year-olds, with a significant number of pupils working at levels above those expected. Pupils' performance is well above the national average and above that of pupils from similar backgrounds. Pupils continue to make good progress during Key Stage 2 and performance has shown year on year improvement over the past three years.

6. Pupils in Key Stage 2 continue to extend their vocabulary and become confident speakers. They use their listening skills to good effect in the full range of school activities, such as music and physical education. By the end of Key Stage 2, all pupils are confident readers and derive great enjoyment from reading a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books. They write interesting and mature accounts of life in other times, and use their writing skills to write well for a range of purposes, such as letters, poems and their accounts of scientific experiments. Progress in handwriting is similarly good.

7. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress against prior attainment and targets set out in their individual education plans. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress as a result of the careful explanation of new vocabulary by all teachers.

8. In mathematics, attainment on entry to the school is above that expected nationally of five-year-olds. Results of national tests for 1999 for Key Stage 1 show that attainment in mathematics is above that expected nationally of seven-year-olds and also above that found in similar schools. Results of national tests indicate that attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is well above the national average and above that achieved by pupils from similar backgrounds. Performance has shown an overall increase over the past three years.

9. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have developed good mental strategies that they apply confidently. They quickly recognise number patterns and correctly use o'clock, past and to when telling the time. Pupils correctly name two-dimensional shapes and describe their properties. Pupils carefully produce block and picture graphs from data relating to their everyday life. They make use of their numeracy skills when sharing out resources in other subjects and correctly use terms such as taller, shorter when describing figures in pictures. They confidently use coins up to the value of one pound.

10. Pupils, including those with special educational needs make good progress. They approach new concepts with increased confidence.

11. At Key Stage 2, pupils continue to develop their mental skills, working with speed and confidence. They confidently work with large numbers and understand more complex concepts such as inverse functions. They know the properties of two and three dimensional shapes and estimate and measure accurately. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, continue to make good progress, especially towards the upper end of Key Stage 2. They learn new concepts quickly and consolidate their knowledge of mathematical ideas and skills.

12. The introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has been very well accomplished by the school and has had a significant effect on pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

13. The 1999 teacher assessment in science showed that at Key Stage 1, pupils' overall attainment is above the national average. The number of pupils who reached higher than expected standards is below the national average. At Key Stage 2, National Curriculum tests show pupils attainment is in line with the national average but well below that of pupils from similar backgrounds, with very few pupils achieving higher levels.

14. Although assessments and tests indicate a decline in standards since the last inspection, the below average attainment indicated is not reflected in inspection evidence. Improved standards of teaching and improved planning are contributing to a rise in standards throughout the school, and attainment in both key stages, as measured during the inspection is good. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in both key stages.

15. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have developed a good understanding of living things and the important factors affecting animal and plant life. They correctly identify a range of natural and man made materials. They construct simple electrical circuits and recognise a variety of sound sources. They understand that distance affects the sounds they hear.

16. At Key Stage 2, pupils confidently identify resources needed to conduct fair tests, and often quite accurately predict outcomes. They demonstrate knowledge of a good range of scientific terminology. Pupils understand the functions of the main parts of living things. They describe the properties of solids, liquids and gasses and the relationship between them. They develop more sophisticated methods of investigating ideas fairly, recording and evaluating their results. They develop a greater understanding of life cycles and the wide variety of life and materials to be found in the world around them. They extend their knowledge and understanding of scientific vocabulary as they move through the school.

17. In information technology, at the end of both key stages, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. Pupils at Key Stage 1 are familiar with the layout of the keyboard and can accurately control the computer mouse. They are able to explore programs and discuss their work.

18. At Key Stage 2 pupils' computer skills have developed in line with national expectations. They effectively use the keyboard and mouse. They confidently retrieve information and use word processing applications to enter and amend text. All pupils at both key stages practice programming a computerised mobile robot and older pupils make good use of sound and video recorders. Pupils use computers appropriately in studying other subjects of the curriculum. Progress in information technology is sound throughout the school, including pupils with special educational needs.

19. Standards in religious education at both key stages are in line with those expected of pupils of this age and when compared to the Hertfordshire locally agreed syllabus. Pupils, including those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in both key stages. They have a sound knowledge and awareness of Christianity and other major world faiths. Their knowledge of bible stories is similarly sound, for example, the stories of Adam and Eve and of the Prodigal Son. They are aware of the importance of holidays and festivals in several faiths, such as Christmas, Hanukah and Diwali. They are inquisitive about their own and other faiths, and show great respect for the beliefs of others.

20. Progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 is satisfactory in design and technology, geography and art and good in physical education. Progress in history and music is satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. Because of concerns expressed by a very few parents and one governor considerable care was taken to track the progress of each of the sixteen pupils who are on the register of special educational needs. The concerns expressed were judged to be unfounded, and pupils who have special educational needs attain appropriate standards in all subjects and make good progress in relation to the targets set for them. The school has been successful in the early identification of almost all pupils' needs, and this, coupled with careful monitoring and good levels of support are significant factors in the progress pupils make.

21. Since the last inspection report, pupils' attainment overall has improved from being satisfactory to being very good, while progress made by all pupils including those with special educational needs has improved from being satisfactory to being good overall. In information technology, design and technology and art at both key stages and history, music and religious education at key Stage 1, standards have been maintained. At Key Stage 1, standards in physical education have improved from being satisfactory to being good. At Key Stage 2, standards have improved in history from being satisfactory to being good, physical education from being satisfactory to being very good, music from unsatisfactory to satisfactory and religious education from being poor to being satisfactory. The most significant improvements have taken place in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. In all three subjects at Key Stage 1 and science at Key Stage 2, standards have improved from being satisfactory to being good. At Key Stage 2, standards in English and mathematics have improved from being satisfactory to being very good. These developments are a credit to the school and are precisely in line with the schools plans and aspirations over the past two years.

31. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

22. Because of the stage of the academic year at which the inspection took place, only one child under the age of five was present for the duration of the inspection. It was not therefore possible to assess the attitudes, behaviour or personal development of children under five. The following paragraphs relate to pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2.

23. Pupils' attitudes and their behaviour are very good and are strengths of the school. Relationships between pupils and with the staff and pupils' personal development in general are excellent and are a particularly significant strength of the school. These judgements apply to pupils of all ages, and to pupils of all levels of ability, including those with special needs and those who are higher attainers.

24. The majority of pupils have very good attitudes to learning. They enjoy their work, listen attentively and concentrate hard. This was clearly evident both in lessons and in other school activities. For example, whether swimming or participating in the school orchestra, pupils listen carefully to instructions and carry them out precisely. In assemblies, pupils listen with interest and amazement, as for example, the length of a millennium is explained to them in understandable terms. Pupils are confident, enthusiastic and very articulate, they ask interesting and thoughtful questions. Often, pupils were totally engrossed in their activities and strove hard to produce work of high quality. Pupils collaborate particularly well and have positive attitudes both when working in groups and independently. They listen to each other's

ideas and explanations, with great respect, and often spontaneously celebrate each other's achievements. Most pupils work at a good pace and use resources well. Pupils' very good attitudes have a positive effect on their attainment and progress.

25.The behaviour of the majority of pupils, both in class and at playtimes, is very good. They are polite and courteous. Around the school, pupils follow the school rules and show respect for property. Frequently pupils hold a door open for adults, ask if they can be of assistance and generally engage in conversations. There have been no exclusions. It is noticeable that procedures for ensuring good behaviour need only be administered in a very low-key fashion, because of the expectation among pupils that they will each behave responsibly. With the exception of one or two pupils who became particularly tired at the end of the afternoon, no misbehaviour was seen during the inspection. In discussions with many pupils it was clear that they understood the meaning of bullying, and that none of them were aware of any taking place. Not only was no bullying seen during the inspection, but even during play times no excesses of behaviour were witnessed.

26.Relationships in the school are excellent. There is an exemplary level of respect between adults and pupils and the school operates as a harmonious community. Support assistants and lunchtime supervisors have very good, caring relationships with children. Pupils, including those from different ethnic groups, relate well to one another and show respect for the feelings and beliefs of others. All adults in the school display interest and respect for pupils' thoughts and ideas and set high personal standards for pupils to emulate. All pupils feel valued.

27.Pupils' personal development is excellent. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, which they accept with pride. These encompass both the range of school activities, such as assemblies and looking after the school library, and also work activities. For example, in physical education and design and technology lessons, pupils are very conscious of the need to follow safe procedures and take responsibility for doing so. Older pupils frequently assume responsibility for looking after younger pupils through an unofficial but very effective buddy system. For example, older pupils were seen helping younger pupils carrying their tray at lunchtime, helping them to find a seat, and even helping to cut up their food when a younger pupil was having difficulties. Two pupils from each class are members of the school council, through which they very responsibly represent the views of their classmates in discussions with staff. One pupil, when asked what he would most like to change about the school, replied "nothing - we've done everything we needed to through the council". Even the youngest pupils in the school are encouraged to become responsible members of the school community, for example, by returning registers to the school office after registration, and by keeping their room tidy.

28.Pupils with special educational needs show sustained interest in their work, and develop good independent study skills. Their behaviour, and the quality of their relationships, are equally as good as those of other pupils. Some pupils with identified special educational needs require additional support in order to remain on task, and this was always forthcoming during the inspection.

29.Since the last inspection report, pupils' attitudes to learning have remained very good. Their behaviour has improved from being good to being very good, largely because of improvements in teaching. Relationships throughout the school, which were good, are now excellent. Pupils' personal development has improved from satisfactory to excellent, largely because of many more opportunities being provided for them to use their initiative and take responsibility.

39. **Attendance**

30. Because of the stage of the academic year at which the inspection took place, only one child under the age of five was present for the duration of the inspection. It was not therefore possible to assess the attendance rates or punctuality of children under five. The following paragraphs relate to pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2.

31. Pupils' attendance is very good and unauthorised absence is low. Typically, overall attendance is around 95% with each year group reflecting a similar pattern. This is one per cent better than the national average. Absences usually occur as a result of children's ailments and through holidays that are properly authorised. Pupils' punctuality to school at the beginning of the day is very good and individual teachers ensure that isolated incidents of lateness are appropriately followed up. In the lower school the practice of starting the day with parents and children enjoying shared reading ensures a punctual start and is a particularly effective way to begin the day. Throughout the day lessons begin on time and pupils settle to productive work quickly. The very good attendance and punctuality contribute positively to pupils' progress and the educational standards achieved.

32. Since the last inspection report, attendance and punctuality remain very good.

42. **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

Teaching

33. Since the last inspection report, teaching overall has improved from being satisfactory to being very good, and unsatisfactory teaching has reduced from 25 per cent to none. The quality of teaching of higher attaining pupils has improved from being described as resulting in significant underachievement and constituting a key issue for attention, to being very good and resulting in high achievement. The quality of teaching of pupils with special education needs was reported at the time of the last inspection to be lacking in several important respects. It is now very good. At the time of the last inspection, teachers planning, their management of pupils and their use of assessment data in their planning were all unsatisfactory. All are now good.

34. At Key Stage 1 teaching is good overall, often very good, and sometimes excellent with 15 per cent being satisfactory, 70 per cent being good and 15 per cent being very good or better. At Key Stage 2 teaching is very good overall and sometimes excellent, with 17 per cent being satisfactory, 33 per cent being good and 50 per cent being very good or better. There was no unsatisfactory teaching seen at either key stage.

35. Where teaching is good or better, lessons are well planned with an appropriate emphasis on literacy, numeracy and on encouraging and supporting the pupils to become independent learners. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subjects and appropriately high expectations of the pupils. They plan for the needs of all pupils, ensuring that the highest attainers are sufficiently challenged and the lowest attainers are well supported. Homework is used to reinforce learning in school. Teachers assess pupils' attainment regularly and record outcomes. Through assessment of all pupils, and a detailed knowledge of the needs of higher and lower attaining pupils, teachers' plans take account of the needs of all pupils. Pupil management is very good.

36. Of the fifty lessons observed, eight were graded as satisfactory. Three of the teaching staff had one or more satisfactory lessons, but the same teachers also had many more good, very good and sometimes excellent lessons observed. There is therefore no discernible trend of weaker teaching within the school. Neither is there any discernible trend in the grades for teaching of particular subjects, other than literacy and numeracy which were consistently good, very good or excellent. The most effective teaching occurs at the beginning of Key

Stage 1 and during the last two years of pupils' time at the school, when all teaching was good or better.

37. When teaching was satisfactory, the factors involved were unique to the particular lesson. For example, in a Key Stage 1 history lesson the teacher was unsure of some facts and expectations of some pupils were not sufficiently high. Other factors in the lesson were good, such as the planning, pupil management, the pace of the lesson and the teachers use of resources. In a Key Stage 2 science lesson in which pupils carried out an investigation to discern what happens to a shadow when the light source moves further away from the object casting the shadow, insufficient attention was given to the resources used. Many of the torches had very weak batteries and this made the task considerably more difficult for pupils. All other factors in the lesson were satisfactory. In a Key Stage 1 physical education lesson, insufficient use was made of demonstrations by the teacher to guide the pupils. All other factors in the lesson were satisfactory. In a Key Stage 2 religious education lesson too little assessment had taken place for the teacher's lesson plan to be influenced by pupils' prior attainment, and the lesson was insufficiently challenging for most pupils. However, the lesson was enjoyed by pupils, who derived a better understanding of the relevance of symbolism in religion, and pupils were well managed during a lesson of practical activities.

38. Teachers and a small number of additional staff provide specialist support for pupils with special educational needs and this enables them to make good progress and to attain well. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good and often very good. Teachers plan effectively, bearing in mind the differing needs of all pupils. Teachers and support staff make good use of assessment to monitor pupils' progress towards attaining their learning targets. Individual education plans are particularly good, with clear, sensible, agreed and achievable targets, which are known to all teachers and support staff dealing with the individual pupils concerned, and are reviewed each half term. The school is conscious of the needs of higher attaining pupils, and very effective extension work is provided for them. This includes separate group teaching of mathematics by the headteacher. Very careful and sensitive consideration is given to the needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language, and all teaching and non-teaching staff support them very well.

39. Good planning throughout the school is based very securely in a thorough knowledge of the National Curriculum. Teachers' planning is linked clearly to the medium and long-term plans within a subject and this assists pupils to work systematically through the curriculum. The management of behaviour is generally good and often very good and ensures that pupils are constantly redirected to learning. Time in most lessons is used very efficiently. Teachers generally prepare good materials and use resources very well to support learning. A key issue at the time of the last inspection was the need to increase the opportunities for pupils to explore, enquire, investigate and reflect upon their work. This has been very well dealt with and these elements are now a strength of teaching throughout the school and across the curriculum. The good quality of teaching is a major factor in the overall quality of education provided by the school. Homework is set regularly and this makes a significant contribution to the standards of all pupils.

40. The quality of teaching in literacy is at least good in all lessons and very good or better in almost 60 per cent of literacy lessons. Through the use of technical language, teachers support the teaching of literacy in all other subjects of the curriculum. The quality of teaching of numeracy is at least good in all lessons and very good or better in 50 per cent of numeracy lessons. Teachers support the teaching of numeracy in many subjects of the curriculum. Three of the four excellent lessons observed during the inspection were in literacy or numeracy.

41. Although parental views on the amount of homework set vary, inspection evidence indicated homework being used appropriately to further pupils' learning.

42.The quality of teaching of English at both key stages is always at least good, often very good, and sometimes excellent. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are confident in using the recently introduced national Literacy Strategy. In all subjects of the curriculum, teachers reinforce key English skills effectively, such as by the use of key vocabulary. Teachers explain new vocabulary, such as infinity, so that pupils recognise and understand words. Teachers encourage reading, such as of worksheets in a range of subjects. They reinforce speaking and listening skills, such as in discussions in religious education. Attractive, well labelled displays throughout the school celebrate pupils' achievements and support learning.

43.A minor weakness in teaching English is that not all learning support assistants are effectively used at all times. In the whole class and shared text portions of each literacy hour, some learning support assistants are inactive.

44.The quality of teaching of mathematics at both key stages is always at least good, often very good, and sometimes excellent. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and this, together with their enthusiasm makes a significant contribution to pupils' attainment and progress. Teachers consistently provide stimulating tasks and activities that are well planned to meet the needs of all their pupils.

45.In science, the quality of teaching is good at both key stages. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan appropriately challenges for their pupils. They encourage pupils to explore their own ideas and apply their knowledge to new situations. Teachers are successfully focusing on specific areas of the curriculum in order to raise pupils' standards of attainment, and improvements in teaching and planning are having a positive effect on pupils' attainment.

46.In information technology, insufficient lessons were observed to make an overall judgement on the standard of teaching. One lesson was observed in Key Stage 2 and this coupled with a scrutiny of teachers planning and pupils' work indicates that the quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 is good. Most teachers are confident and records demonstrate that the limited number of lessons taught have clear aims. Planned activities are appropriate to the age and experience of pupils. Access to the computers is well managed in all lessons, enabling the pupils, including those with special educational needs, to develop their skills. Teachers work hard to make good use of new software and provide the opportunities for pupils to use technology in other areas of the curriculum.

47.In religious education at Key Stage 1, the quality of teaching is good. At Key Stage 2, the quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good, and is good overall. Teachers succeed in making the subject relevant to pupils. They use guest speakers very effectively to reinforce knowledge and to raise pupils' awareness of other faiths. Work is consistently made interesting, such as in a discussion as to how ones life would change if one followed the Five Pillars of Faith of Islam, and wherever possible practical, such as in the making of a Christingle.

48.At both key stages the quality of teaching of design and technology is satisfactory and of history is good. In music and physical education, the quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2. In art the quality of teaching was satisfactory at Key Stage 1. In art at Key Stage 2 and geography at both key stages, insufficient evidence from direct observation or scrutiny of pupils' work was available to make a judgement on the quality of teaching.

49.Because of the stage of the academic year at which the inspection took place, only one child under the age of five was present for the duration of the inspection. It was not therefore possible to assess the quality of teaching of children under five.

59. **The curriculum and assessment**

50. For children under five years old, the school curriculum is based firmly on the desired learning outcomes. It provides very well for pupils' physical, personal and social development, their knowledge and understanding of the world and their early understanding of language and number. The curriculum links very well to the early stages of the National Curriculum.

51. At both key stages, the curriculum is broad and balanced and meets all the requirements for the National Curriculum and religious education. It is broadly based and balanced due to the care taken to implement all new initiatives and, in particular, over the planning of the cross-curriculum topics in the different year groups. The overall hours shown as the minimum teaching time in the timetable is in-line with the national average. The curriculum for children under five years old places appropriate emphasis on language and literacy, mathematics and numeracy, science and technology in the context of an understanding of the world around them, creativity and personal and physical development. It leads well to pupils beginning their Key Stage 1 studies in accord with the National Curriculum.

52. School policy documents are now in place for all subjects. The policies for English and mathematics are comprehensive and effective and have been agreed after full consultation with all members of staff. Other schemes of work are less comprehensive, but as many are based on the recent Qualifications and Curriculum Authority guidelines, they do offer sound guidance to teachers. Many of these documents have been rewritten since the last inspection. The new schemes of work provide for continuity and progression and are tailored to meet the specific needs of the school. There is no unnecessary duplication of information between the long and medium term plans and the schemes of work. The whole curriculum is based on the acquisition of essential skills, and meeting all requirements through cross-curricular focus, and is not just content driven. This has also had the effect of increasing the teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects.

53. In their weekly plans teachers include detail about what they want individuals, small groups or the whole class to have learned by the end of the lesson. There is then an outline of the actual activities in which groups of pupils will take part. Usually there is also an outline of how groups of differing ability will be enabled to work at their appropriate level. This is very good practice.

54. The introduction of policies and schemes of work for all subjects, with detailed plans for the special topics, represents a significant improvement since the last Ofsted inspection.

55. The co-ordinators for the core subjects of English and mathematics have been especially careful in their plans to take account of all possible cross-curricular opportunities in order to make the curriculum as balanced as possible despite time constraints. Good examples of cross-curriculum planning that were observed during the inspection were in information technology where pupils were putting pages of a "topic book" together for their World War 2 topic. A "topic" lesson in Year 2 included painting, modelling, science and batik work that taught essential skills, as well consolidating knowledge of electrical circuits. Pupils in Year 6, who were recording the results of an excellent visit from an outside visitor, were also completing complicated diet sheets, searching the Internet and completing historical autobiographies. Pupils reading about monsters in their literacy hour lessons were also writing stories of monsters from their imaginations in information technology time.

56. Non-contact time is available through the head teacher taking lessons and singing assemblies, to enable the monitoring of teaching and lesson plans by the curriculum co-ordinators. Co-ordinators also check whether core and foundation subject requirements are being met uniformly and in-line with the schemes of work by monitoring evaluations and collecting in a range of books.

57.The school promotes equality of opportunity very well by providing for all pupils regardless of ability. Careful attention is paid to the needs of those pupils of higher ability and there is always planning to meet their special needs in all parts of the school. Those pupils who have special educational needs due to learning difficulties make good progress and have appropriate access to individual help, as do pupils for whom English is an additional language. When withdrawn from class for special needs tuition or reading support the teaching is always good, and is as effective as the careful planning and assessment of the class teacher requires. Full systems are in place to meet the code of practice and pupils' individual education plans are relevant and being followed.

58.The school's plans provide exceptionally well for the moral and social development of the pupils. The curriculum provision for spiritual development is good. Overall opportunities in the curriculum for cultural development are satisfactory. There are sound policies in place for sex education, health education, drug awareness and equal opportunities. The school offers a good range of extra curricular activities - including choir, orchestra, football club, lacrosse, netball, country dancing and book club. The curriculum is extended appropriately by visits to the local library, museums, shopping areas and churches and many areas of the curriculum are enhanced by visitors to the school.

59.The school has made an exceptionally good start in implementing both the Literacy and Numeracy strategies. In both, pupils' progress has been carefully recorded, and assessment opportunities built into the plans have been closely analysed. The use of assessment and planning to make the numeracy provision even more effective is outstanding. Very effective use is made of resources such as the Big Books and the Internet. Good use is made of the home-school reading diaries to enable parents to help their children to practise their reading skills.

60.Assessment procedures were an issue at the time of the previous inspection. The school has made progress in dealing with the issues, and assessment procedures applied to English, mathematics and science now good. Procedures relating to other subjects are either at a very early stage of development or entirely informal. Overall, considering all subjects, procedures are satisfactory. The school makes good use of all the data derived from formal tests and from teachers' day to day assessment of pupils' attainment and progress.

61.The school assesses pupils on entry, using the Hertfordshire Baseline form. Good use is made of baseline assessment to inform planning in the early years. The school scrutinises the information gathered from the statutory tests at Years 2 and 6 along with the non-statutory tests for Years 3, 4 and 5. This has begun to inform and influence long and medium term planning, especially in English and mathematics. The school has recently begun to analyse the data in order to highlight any specific areas of either success or concern. Teachers routinely evaluate pupils' work and daily assessments are made relating to the class and individuals. The results are documented on teachers' planning sheets and, where appropriate, influence short-term plans.

62.Using this range of data, teachers compile a main assessment document that details a National Curriculum level for their pupils in each of the core subjects, English, mathematics and science. These are updated twice yearly and reviewed in July. Two weeks into the term, each pupil's attainment is assessed against National Curriculum levels. These results are recorded and long and medium term targets set which reflect a challenge for each child. These targets are shared with pupils and parents. Short term targets, where appropriate, are written in the back of pupils' exercise books. This record, along with pupils' yearly reports and a representative selection of work (which is added to yearly) form a record of achievement for each child. The school has just begun compiling a portfolio of assessed pupils' work, to act as samples against which to measure the levels achieved by all pupils. This is in a very early stage of development.

72. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

63. For pupils of all ages, including children who are under five years old, provision for their moral and social development is excellent and for their spiritual development it is very good. Overall, provision for cultural development is good, with that for the broad range of pupils' cultural development being very good, while provision for multi-cultural development is satisfactory.

64. All staff present an excellent role model for pupils, and work hard to ensure that all pupils are fully involved in lessons and in the life of the school. They value pupils' contributions, regardless of ability or special educational need. This has a positive effect on pupils' moral and social development. The school's aims and policies provide a firm basis for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. They promote self-esteem and self-confidence, an awareness of the needs of others and the concept of community and personal responsibility. Many opportunities arise naturally for pupils to express their feelings and reactions to what they are taught. For example, in religious education, pupils willingly express their feelings about their own and others' faiths. As need arises to talk to and with pupils about specific issues, circle time sessions are held. Moments of revelation occur naturally in the course of school activities, such as listening to the visiting vicar explain in meaningful, every-day terms how long a millennium is, and in Year 6 history, handling a broad array of artefacts from the Second World War. School, infant and junior assemblies encourage personal thought and reflection, and meet statutory requirements. Class rules are built on sound personal values of respect for oneself and others, and emphasise the fundamental values by which we should live. Pupils participate in discussions about these rules, which they understand and respect. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good.

65. The school makes excellent provision for pupils' moral development. This supports the view held by many parents. There is a strong moral code demonstrated by teachers through their actions. Class rules emphasise notions of fairness and justice, right and wrong, and address the consequences of unsatisfactory behaviour or actions. Moral attitudes and behaviour are explored through the curriculum. For example, learning about the environment in science and appreciating the need to preserve it, and in history, appreciating the horrors of war and their effect on ordinary people. The consequences of the school's provision for moral development are clearly visible in pupils' very good behaviour and attitudes to one another, and the excellent relationships that exist within the school community.

66. The school's prospectus explains what is expected of pupils, and with the behaviour policy it forms a firm foundation for social development. Pupils consider their own class rules, developing their sense of responsibility to themselves and others. Pupils have many opportunities to help with tasks around the school. For example, they help set up assemblies, classes have monitors for a range of tasks such as returning registers, there is a school choir and orchestra and a school council. The curriculum provides good opportunities for social development, through activities such as team building games in physical education. Teaching methods used in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies help pupils to develop as independent learners as they get older. Subjects such as science and history help pupils to develop their initiative and research skills, for example in devising their own methods of carrying out a fair tests in science or in Year 5, investigating and giving their views on why the marriages of Henry VIII failed. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to join in community life, for example, through participation in local musical and sporting events and through supporting a wide range of local, national and international charities.

67. The school's provision for the development of cultural education is good overall, being very good in general, but relatively weaker in relation to multi-culturalism. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about and participate in art, music and drama, and history contributes to an understanding of their own heritage. They learn about other cultures, for example through the visits by representatives of various faiths. In religious education, pupils study faiths other

than Christianity, for example Judaism and Islam, and were greatly interested when a visitor demonstrated the commonality of many prayers between the major faiths and recited one for them in Hebrew. There are few multi-racial images and artefacts on display around the school. Outside of the activities described pupils learn about other cultures in geography, giving the erroneous impression that other cultures mean something foreign. Pupils learn very little about the multi-cultural society in Britain, other than its variety of religions.

68. Pupils' own cultural heritage is promoted well in lessons, through visits to places such as the British School and Hitchin Museum and by working with visiting artists and musical performers. Many pupils learn to play musical instruments, and join in local festivals.

69. The school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils with special educational needs is of a similar quality to that for all other pupils. All pupils are encouraged to take part fully in all aspects of school life. Care is taken to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are not isolated within the class.

70. The only areas specifically reported upon in the last inspection report were the school provision for spiritual development which has improved from being barely satisfactory to being good and cultural development, which has remained good overall.

80. Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

71. The school's provision for pupils' support, welfare and guidance is very good and makes a positive contribution to the educational standards achieved. Pupils are happy, feel safe and secure and there is good evidence to show that the vast majority are enjoying and benefiting from the education provided at Samuel Lucas. Teaching and support staff enforce effectively the ethos of the school with the support and help they give to the pupils. The well being of the pupils is uppermost in the minds of staff at all times. Similarly very good provision exists for the support, guidance and welfare of children under five years old.

72. There are good procedures in place for monitoring individual pupils' academic progress and personal development. Class teachers formally report the attainment levels reached once a year but the monitoring and recording of academic progress is an on going process taking account of test results and day to day classroom achievement. Throughout the school there is good evidence of teachers using their knowledge of individual children to inform teaching; this is particularly evident in English and mathematics. The monitoring of personal development is less formal but no less effective with teachers demonstrating appropriate styles to help individual children with their personal development targets. Any pupils experiencing difficulties with academic issues or in terms of personal development are quickly identified and appropriate strategies are put in place to redress the problems. Pupils made clear to inspectors that they know who to speak to with a range of different types of problems.

73. The school has very good procedures in place for monitoring and promoting attendance, discipline and good behaviour. Attendance is closely monitored by class teachers on a pupil by pupil basis and overall school attendance is regularly checked by the headteacher. The school has good, clear behaviour expectations and effective procedures for promoting the code which are consistently applied by all adults in the school. It is an orderly community in which children value rewards and commendations greatly, show pride in their achievements, respect behaviour expectations and are well aware of sanctions. Contrary to the views of a small number of parents, the behaviour code and the sanctions policy are both appropriate and effective and clearly understood by pupils. The school is looking at ways in which the sanctions policy can be more clearly explained to parents. Two governors expressed considerable concern about the manner in which the school deals with incidents of bullying. The school has very good procedures in place to deal with bullying and all records examined demonstrated the procedures are followed. During the course of the inspection many pupils of all ages were engaged in conversation by inspectors on the matter of bullying. Not one pupil

thought that bullying is a problem at the school, and none was seen during the inspection.

74.Procedures to deal with child protection issues are very good and meet statutory requirements. The school is vigilant and sensitive in exercising its responsibilities. The school has very good procedures to ensure pupils' health and safety. There are half termly evacuation practices and appropriate records of independent fire prevention and electrical equipment inspections. All staff are trained first aiders and appropriate first aid supplies are available in all classrooms. The school has clear procedures relating to medicines on site and staff take great care to ensure that children needing inhalers have access to them at all times. In lessons observed during the inspection good care was taken to ensure pupils' safety. Careful practice was observed in physical education and in lessons where children were using tools and equipment. Staff and adults on site are vigilant in ensuring children follow safe procedures and practices. One minor accident that occurred at the swimming pool during the inspection was appropriately recorded and dealt with.

75.In response to parental concern, inspectors observed the arrangements for collection of pupils at the end of the school day. At issue was whether the recently erected railings around the school driveway, which prevent parents using the drive way as a turning point on the cul-de-sac on which the school is located, has created a hazard. It is the judgement of the inspectors that the railings are essential to comply with health and safety requirements and that without the railings, there would be a mixing of pupils and cars on the driveway. The new arrangement does, on occasions, present a hazard outside the school's area of responsibility, when adults and children walk between cars on the public highway. This hazard would be alleviated if all parents followed the good example of many, and parked their cars and walked to the school to collect their children. The preference of some parents to drive their cars as close to the school's gates as possible is endangering others.

76.Since the last inspection report, all aspects of the support, guidance and welfare of pupils have improved. Procedures for monitoring progress and personal development were unsatisfactory and are now good. Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour and procedures for child protection and promoting pupils' well-being, health and safety were satisfactory and are now very good. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance were good and are now very good.

86. Partnership with parents and the community

77.The school enjoys a good and supportive partnership with the vast majority of parents. Good systems are in place to enable communication between school and home and the information provided by the school for parents is widely valued. Details of academic progress are appropriately communicated through the annual academic report and parents have good opportunities to discuss issues with teachers at parents meetings and on many other occasions. Some parents would appreciate a more detailed explanation of National Curriculum levels for core subjects and more detailed information on what children need to do to improve. The school is developing ways of extending the understanding of National Curriculum grades. Attendance at official parents' meetings and support for school events and functions is good. Some parents seem to be under a misapprehension as to what is available for them through the school. For example, a widely supported view expressed at the meeting of parents with the Registered Inspector was that the school had failed to hold a parents' meeting to teach them about literacy and numeracy. Evidence demonstrates that the evening dedicated to literacy was particularly well supported by parents, and a similar event concerning numeracy is planned.

78.The school publishes a well-produced and helpful prospectus, regular informative and helpful newsletters, and an annual report from the governing body. A compliant home-school agreement has been produced and signed appropriately on behalf of parents and the school.

79.There is widespread agreement amongst the parent body that the school is welcoming and that staff are willing to discuss problems and queries at any time but there is a significant minority who disagree and feel the school does not handle complaints and problems well. There is evidence that for a small minority of parents, the negative views expressed reflect first hand experiences of communication with the school and the headteacher and are valid. Overall the school has good systems in place to keep parents well-informed and entirely appropriate procedures to deal with complaints and problems. The negative and damaging perception held by some parents of how the school deals with difficulties needs to be addressed jointly and corporately by the school and the governing body to avert the risk of serious damage being done to what is a very good and successful school.

80.Despite a few of the parents of the 16 pupils with special educational needs stating to the contrary, evidence demonstrates that the school maintains good communications with the parents of pupils who have special needs, and that it fulfils all its obligations under the Code of Practice. A recently produced and distributed parent leaflet "Information about Special Educational Needs", will further enhance these communications. It is not a requirement and neither is it usual for schools to inform parents of any initial concerns they may have about a particular pupil (Stage 1 of the Code of Practice). Contact is made when the school decides that their initial monitoring of a pupil indicates that there is a problem that requires planning to take place in a more structured way (Stage 2 of the Code of Practice). Only four pupils in the school have reached this level, and only three have passed it. Evidence demonstrates that appropriate communications are being maintained with the parents concerned.

81.A significant number of parents contribute directly to pupils' education by helping in school; they make a very positive contribution to the standards achieved. The shared reading session at the start of the day in the infants department is a particularly good example of parents being directly involved in learning. Equally a number of parents contribute directly through running and helping with after school clubs and sports teams. The school works hard to promote the partnership with parents and provides good guidance on how they can assist in the learning programmes through the homework grid and termly details of the programmes of study. There is good evidence to show that the vast majority are involved in their children's learning. Fund raising activities and social events organised by the Parents Association make a significant contribution to the school and to the development of the partnership between school and home. The strong partnership with the Parents Association, which is not constituted to be a parent teacher association, is somewhat weakened by its restricted composition. Few assemblies offer the opportunity for parents to attend, and this detracts from parents' participation in the school.

82.The school has good links with the community, which positively enrich the education provided. There are very good contributions to pupils' personal, social and cultural development through visiting community figures, participation in sporting and musical events, interaction with local community organisations and representatives, trips and outings to local places of interest in support of curriculum teaching, residential visits for older pupils and charity fund raising. One particularly good example of community links supporting the teaching of the curriculum was the visit to the school during the inspection of a lecturer from a local museum to support the teaching of history. The school has developing relations with a number of local and national business organisations, which are starting to positively contribute to the teaching of the curriculum.

83.Since the last inspection report, parental involvement in their children's learning has remained good. The quality of information provided to parents was unsatisfactory, largely because reports failed to inform about the ability of pupils. While there are some aspects of

information provided remaining to be improved, overall, the quality of information provided to parents is now good. Links with the community have been strengthened and have improved from being satisfactory to being good.

93. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

93. Leadership and management

84.While there are both strengths and weaknesses in the leadership and management of the school, overall it is unsatisfactory. The school has a very competent head teacher and senior management team, but there are serious weaknesses in the governing body and in their communications with the senior management team.

85.There is considerable evidence of friction between a small group of parents together with a small number of governors and the headteacher. This problem has been present for some time, and despite serious effort having been made by the headteacher and other governors, the root causes have not been tackled and the problem remains.

86.It is impossible in the context of the inspection to verify when and how things began to go wrong. What is clear is that intransigence has replaced dialogue, and that this is interfering in the governance of the school, detracting the headteacher and senior management from their daily responsibilities. Despite some training having been carried out, some governors do not fully understand their role or how best to carry it out.

87.The governor with responsibility for special needs has participated in a number of relevant training courses. However, a lack of communications with the senior staff and the special educational needs co-ordinator has resulted in a lack of understanding of the circumstances of the school itself and of the needs of those pupils who have special needs and resultant unrealistic expectations of the school and its professional staff.

88.Communications between the school and some parents, and the school and some governors have occasionally been less than satisfactory. It is not possible or desirable to apportion responsibility, but it needs to be recognised that recent history has resulted in a lack of trust and confidence, and this continues to escalate. As a consequence, a very good headteacher and a small group of parents are now sceptical of each other. Some governors avoid visiting the school, and some governors and parents consider the headteacher to be abrupt and dismissive of them and their ideas. The headteacher's style of communications is sometimes perceived as lacking diplomacy and sensitivity, often reflecting her feelings of being unsupported by some governors and under constant attack from a small number of parents.

89.Some parents, rather than being encouraged by individual governors to enter into an appropriate dialogue with the professional staff of the school to resolve their concerns, do not follow proper procedures, resulting in significant time-consuming issues for the management of the school. Evidence exists of a governor entering into a dialogue with the headteacher about a particular pupil at a time when the parent concerned was fully satisfied with the manner in which the school had already dealt with the problem. Governors do have a responsibility to bring issues of concern about which they become aware to the attention of the headteacher and governing body, but this should be done in accordance with the appropriate working practices of the governing body. If such issues are not resolved between the parent and the school, then the parent should resort to the schools complaints procedure.

90.Evidence exists of different parties to discussions having different recollections of their outcome, minutes of meetings not being trusted and correspondence from and between governors being assumed to be decisions of the governing body. There is some evidence of a lack of clarity in meetings when decisions are made. For example, there has been some

discussion in meetings about the setting up of parent surgeries to be manned by governors. A decision was taken to establish a working party. As recorded, the decision did not make clear if the working party was to establish surgeries, or to report back to the governing body with a recommendation. This lack of clarity resulted in further friction between the headteacher and the small group of governors, who proceeded to act in isolation of the senior staff but within what they thought was their brief.

91.Sometimes through a lack of knowledge and sometimes through a lack of appropriate involvement, the governing body fails to effectively carry out a number of its responsibilities. It does not have a sufficiently comprehensive strategic view of the schools' development to contribute meaningfully to discussions and to make secure decisions. It does not have a sufficient understanding of pupils' attainment and progress and has therefore not played a meaningful role in target setting. It does not write its own annual report to parents. Most significantly, because of the opposing camps that have come into existence within the governing body and the lack of knowledge of some members, it is not able to corporately act as a critical friend to the headteacher.

92.At the time of the last inspection report, governors were specifically criticised for not having developed closer links with staff to ensure greater unity of aim and purpose. Further criticism involved their very limited involvement in strategic planning and insufficient involvement in the monitoring of the school's performance and effectiveness. They were also criticised for having no means to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the changes they introduced. While almost every other aspect of the school has improved since the last inspection, all these matters remain problem areas.

93.The headteacher, very ably supported by her deputy, provides clear and purposeful direction to the school and has the trust and support of the staff. Since her appointment she has effectively managed the day to day work of the school, often in difficult and demanding circumstances, and has succeeded in moving the school forwards to greater achievements such as the significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection.

94.The headteacher is very effective in the management of pupils and staff. Job descriptions exist for each member of staff, although these are often generic. They are, however, clear and realistic, and staff understand their roles and are committed to them.

95.Staff manage their responsibilities effectively in relation to the time and opportunities made available to them, including the monitoring role of subject co-ordinators. The headteacher and subject co-ordinators, particularly in English, mathematics, science, information technology, religious education and physical education effectively provide support and monitoring of teaching. As a result, the senior management is fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of individual teachers and staff are supported and encouraged to build on good work and remedy any weaknesses through participation in appropriate courses.

96.Staff have a shared sense of purpose and are fully involved in formulating the school's aims, values and policies. The school has clear, published aims, which receive the full support of parents. They express high expectations of what the pupils can achieve.

97.School development planning is carried out very effectively by the staff and the current plan is very good. All appropriate members of staff are fully consulted in the writing of the plan, the timetable for its production blends well with the budget cycle, and the link with both the school's budget and staff appraisal are secure. Some governors are not sufficiently well informed about the circumstances within the school to participate effectively in discussions about the plan. The senior management team monitors the outcomes of the school's work, taking account of its own assessment of pupils' attainment and progress, particularly in the core subjects of the curriculum and of the results of national tests. Again, lack of expertise precludes some governors from participating meaningfully in such monitoring. Staff use this

information to review, plan and implement changes to their practices. The governing body does not have strategies for measuring the value for money being achieved by the school in terms of the investment being made to improve pupil attainment.

98.Despite the difficulties with the relationships between some governors, the school and some parents, the school's ethos is very good. Staff are committed to the high achievement of pupils and the school provides a very effective learning environment. Relationships between pupils and staff and pupils themselves are excellent.

99.The school takes very seriously the provision of equality of opportunity for all pupils and places great emphasis on the need of pupils with learning difficulties and those whose attainment is higher than average. There is a well-written special educational needs policy that fully follows the guidelines in the Code of Practice, and a special educational needs register which is regularly updated by the special educational needs co-ordinator. Staffing and funding are carefully monitored and evaluated in order to provide the most effective support for pupils. Indeed, given the relatively low number of pupils who have special needs, and the relative lack of seriousness of their problems (there are no pupils with statements of special needs entitlement), the school is particularly generous in the staffing levels available to support the pupils concerned. Support staff are very experienced and provide a positive contribution to the way in which the school meets the needs of individual pupils. The special educational needs co-ordinator is well trained and experienced and very effective. She uses the time available to her away from her classroom extremely well – for example, to monitor, support, evaluate, test, organise reviews and liase with other schools. She provides dedicated, experienced and sympathetic leadership. Regular meetings are held to ensure all staff are fully informed and that all strategies and planning are understood and implemented consistently.

100.The well-developed culture of equal opportunity is reflected in other aspects of the school. Library books have been checked for suitability. All staff present an excellent role model for pupils, and the lack of male teaching staff is not an issue. There are many male visitors who meet the pupils and the caretaker is well liked and respected by pupils. There is, however, evidence that on one recent isolated occasion, in order to ensure the rapid recruitment of a member of support staff, a vacancy was not advertised and the equal opportunities policy was not therefore appropriately applied.

101.Since the last inspection report, the overall efficacy of the governing body has deteriorated and it is now unsatisfactory. The monitoring of teaching and curriculum development has improved largely as a result of the development of the role of subject co-ordinators and it is now good. The school's success at implementing its aims, values and policies was satisfactory and is now good. Development planning, monitoring and evaluation were unsatisfactory and are now good. The school's ethos was good and is now very good.

111. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

102.The school is well staffed and all teachers are suitably qualified and experienced for the subjects and ages of pupils that they teach. The pupil to teacher ratio has increased since the last inspection and is above the national average for schools of a similar type. The school employs a part time special educational needs support assistant who works very effectively with individuals and small groups of children across the school. There are four other learning support assistants who are appropriately qualified and provide effective support for the teaching staff particularly during the group and individual work sessions within literacy and numeracy lessons where the relatively large class sizes are a disadvantage. There is a sufficient number of mid-day supervisors whose conscientiousness and good relationships with pupils ensure effective supervision during lunchtime. Staffing arrangements support pupils' attainment and progress.

103.The staff handbook clearly describes the daily school routines and staff roles and

responsibilities, for the benefit of new and existing teachers, and is a useful document for supply teachers and visitors to the school. Appraisal is well established for teaching staff and is used to identify the strengths and professional needs of individuals. Learning support assistants are not yet included in the appraisal process but do have access to appropriate training opportunities. The staff training programme is linked effectively to the school development plan and balances well the school's and individual teachers' needs. Teachers generally have good levels of subject knowledge which is supported through external courses and internal training provided by subject co-ordinators. In literacy and numeracy, for example, there is evidence of good quality, school based in-service training that is having a positive effect on attainment and progress. There are good arrangements for inducting new staff to the school and an effective mentoring scheme for newly qualified teachers.

104. The school occupies an attractive site incorporating hard and soft play areas for both infant and junior children. The main school building, despite being at the end of its official scheduled life, is in reasonable condition and offers spacious classrooms with appropriate facilities, a well used dining and small group teaching area, a good sized and recently re-floored hall and an attractive library. The facility is kept clean, benefits from a rolling programme of redecoration and is enhanced by displays, many of which celebrate pupils' work and achievements. The twenty-five year old building does suffer problems with leaking roofs and tired doors and windows. A recent condition survey of the site and buildings has identified problems and enabled a prioritised maintenance and improvement programme to be established. The two temporary classrooms separated from the main block are small for the large class groups using them and do not offer the facilities necessary to effectively deliver the curriculum. This is overcome by pupils using the main school building as required. The construction of a new classroom for Key Stage 1 and a new reception and administration area have recently enhanced the accommodation. Site safety has been significantly improved by the erection of barriers between the infant soft play area and the main entrance and car park. Overall, the accommodation and the arrangements made to overcome its deficiencies, support the delivery of the curriculum and hence pupils' attainment and progress.

105. Resources are good overall and enable effective delivery of the curriculum. Mathematics and PE are very well equipped and there is no area of the curriculum with inadequate resources. Curriculum co-ordinators maintain inventories of subject resources and in most cases have clearly identified and prioritised needs for replacement and additional items. The school effectively supplements its own resources in some curricular areas with artefacts from museums, with the help of parents and the local community and as a result of developing relationships with other local schools. The library is well stocked with a good range of appropriate fiction, non-fiction and reference books for pupils of all ages and capabilities. Each classroom has access to at least one computer and there is a new Internet link established in the library. Whilst new computer equipment has recently been acquired with the help of the Parents Association, the overall number of machines is relatively low and some old and out of date stock remains in use.

106. Since the last inspection report, the match of the number, qualifications and experience of teachers to the demands of the curriculum have improved from being satisfactory to being good, as have the arrangements for the professional development of staff. Resources have improved in all subjects of the curriculum except information technology, where they have not kept pace with developments in technology or the needs of the greatly enhanced curriculum. In almost all other subjects resources were previously unsatisfactory, and overall they are now good.

116. The efficiency of the school

107. Overall the school's efficiency is good. The allocation of the budget is closely linked to educational priorities, supported by efficient systems and prudent planning.

108. The school plans very carefully and thoughtfully for the future. Few governors have high levels of financial expertise and experience, and there is a tendency to leave financial matters in the hands of the senior management team and a consultant whose services are purchased from the local education department. Mainly through the activities of these staff, financial planning is satisfactory and is suitably supported through research and longer-term strategic planning. Staff are fully involved, and their views are actively sought. The headteacher supported by the consultant competently prepares draft budgets in consultation with staff and the senior management team, and these are submitted to the finance committee and the governing body. The school development plan contains criteria by which to judge the success of spending decisions, as well as defining individual responsibilities and dates for achievement of targets. The budget is driven by the school development plan. Although the school's financial planning is very effective, the relative lack of governor understanding and involvement results in it being judged to be satisfactory.

109. All funds received for specific purposes, such as funds to support staff training, are efficiently managed and used. Despite there being no pupils who have a statement of special needs entitlement and the relative lack of seriousness of the problems of those pupils who are on the register of special needs, the special needs co-ordinator does all that is possible to secure further funding for pupil support.

110. The school operates on a carefully managed budget, and through competent financial planning and strategic management, it does so very effectively. In recent years it has succeeded in gaining investment in the fabric of the building, such as building the new attractive reception area. The school is now involved in a programme of reducing its reserves through sensible spending, and it is estimated that reserves will reduce from seven per cent of budget in 1998/9 to just under three per cent in 1999/2000. This is within recommended guidelines. Finance staff are competent, conscientious and efficient, and there are very good internal systems for the safety of funds, and the checking and balancing of day to day transactions. Ongoing expenditure is carefully monitored, and spending patterns are suitably explored. The governing body receives regular financial reports of a high quality and carefully monitors ongoing expenditure. Subject co-ordinators do not have individual budgets, but jointly make decisions on priority spending in support of individual subjects. This system works well and has the support of all co-ordinators because of the built in assurance that the normal teaching supplies will be purchased. The school also seeks to obtain good value for money when making purchases of supplies and equipment or employing services. The school has dealt appropriately with the few items identified for improvement in the most recent auditor's report. Overall, financial control and school administration are very good.

111. The deployment of teachers, and of the specialist member of staff for pupils with special educational needs is good. Generally, the deployment of non-specialist classroom assistants is also good, although inefficient use is made of them during some teaching sessions, such as the whole class teaching time at the beginning of literacy and numeracy hours. Support staff are particularly competent when used to support group teaching. The school has developed specialists in literacy and numeracy in Years 5 and 6. The Year 5 teacher teaches numeracy to both year groups, and the Year 6 teacher teaches literacy to both. This has proven to be very effective in raising pupils' attainment.

112. Caretaking and cleaning staff keep the school well maintained and in good order. Administrative staff ensure that the school runs smoothly and that their activities are supportive to teachers and unobtrusive. All available space is used effectively, and no subjects are inhibited by the accommodation. The school grounds are used well, and give pupils a variety of activities to enhance the quality of play. Learning resources are used efficiently.

113. Since the last inspection report, efficiency has remained unchanged except for the use of teaching and support staff, which has improved from being satisfactory to being good.

114. Pupils' attainment on entry is above average. The quality of teaching is good overall, with many examples of very good teaching and excellent teaching. In consequence, pupils make good progress as they move through the school, particularly in Key Stage 2. The pupils also have very good attitudes to their work and behave very well. Pupils' personal development is excellent. The school uses its resources well. The unit cost per pupil is well above the national average for similar schools. Bearing all these factors in mind, the school provides good value for money, which is an improvement on the satisfactory value for money reported previously.

124. PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

124. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

124. English

115. Attainment in English is above the national average at Key Stage 1 and well above average at Key Stage 2. This shows a considerable improvement since the last inspection, when attainment was in line at Key Stage 2. Unlike the previous inspection, no evidence of under achievement was found.

116. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment in speaking and listening is good. Frequent opportunities are made during the literacy hour, for example, for pupils to answer questions, express opinions and tell stories. Pupils talk about their work describing how they have obtained certain effects. In art, for example, they can explain which colours they mixed in order to achieve a particular colour. Pupils listen very well to their teachers and also to each other. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils speaking and listening skills are very good. They listen very respectfully to everyone and, as appropriate, make critical appraisals of each other's work. Pupils accept the challenge of finding evidence to support their answers. Pupils are very comfortable when talking to the whole class, a group, or in a one to one situation with either pupils or adults. This is again a considerable improvement on the previous report.

117. Pupils enjoy reading and are able to express opinions about books, stating their likes and dislike. Reading has a very high profile in the school. The early morning parent and child reading session is excellent. Parents enjoy the opportunity to bring their child into school, and together explore books for 25 minutes at the start of the day. At Key Stage 1, pupils are able to talk about the books they have read and they know the difference between fiction and non-fiction. They make references to other books they have read – for example, when reading "Each Peach, Pear, Plum" they were able to name other books written by the same author. They use more than one strategy when reading unfamiliar words. The most frequently used strategy is building words phonetically. At Key Stage 2, pupils read a wide range of text. They refer to the text when explaining their ideas about the plot or characters, and they make deductions based on their reading. When reading plays in particular, they add considerable expression and appreciate some of the feelings of the character they are taking on. Older pupils are able to use the computer system to track down a specific book in the school library. Attainment in reading at both key stages is above national average.

118. Standards of writing at both key stages are above national averages overall. At Key Stage 2, however, a significant number of pupils achieve well above. All pupils write for a variety of purposes and audiences, and present their work in a range of different formats. These include letters, autobiographies, play scripts, stories, newspapers, instructions, accounts and poetry. Some very interesting writing was seen at Key Stage 2, which included some sensitive phrases such as 'on we walked, the trees whistling and whispering encouragement into my ears' and 'the lethal wire grinned at us as one by one we climbed through the jungle of spikes'. Work is well presented, with pupils showing real pride. At both key stages, good use is made of the planning and drafting process. At Key Stage 2 this is extended to include full character descriptions along with setting, main section and resolution. This again shows improvement since the last inspection.

119. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' work is well structured with paragraphs, appropriate grammar, and increased interest through the use of some exciting vocabulary. The marking of work positively supports learning, with teachers' comments clearly indicating ways for improvement. Pupils are fully aware of the marking system, and respond to comments and suggestions. Standards of handwriting are good with pupils learning the main conventions of joined writing right from the beginning. Spelling across the school is good and carried out

systematically according to the literacy strategy. The very successful implementation of the National Literacy Strategy by the school has had a significant effect on pupils' attainment and progress.

120. Pupils' progress at both key stages is good. Throughout the school, pupils learn with increasing independence and are developing their skills and knowledge. They show a good understanding of interesting writing forms and ways of engaging the reader. Reading skills develop well as does their spelling. Progress in comprehension is good, with pupils showing a growing understanding of characters, events and language, and an ability to refer back to the text to confirm their statements.

121. The progress of pupils who have special educational needs, those for whom English is an additional language, and pupils whose attainment is characteristically well above average is similarly good. This is because of the special provision and support given to each group.

122. Pupils' response in English at both key stages is very good. Pupils show a high level of interest and are able to sustain concentration for long periods of time. Behaviour is very good, pupils are courteous and work well together, showing a high level of involvement in their tasks. They are keen to answer questions and are also willing to say when they are unsure of something. Relationships are very good between all. Pupils display initiative and are eager to present their thoughts and ideas.

123. The quality of teaching is good overall, with some very good and some excellent teaching at Key Stage 2. This shows a very great improvement since the last inspection. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are fully implementing the literacy strategy. Teachers display appropriately high expectations with a good level of challenge for pupils. Many teachers display very good questioning techniques that encourage pupils to think in depth and to persevere with their response. Lessons are well planned, taking into account the needs of all pupils. Good teaching is characterised by teachers having high expectations for behaviour, clear learning objectives that are shared with pupils, good use of time and resources along with appropriate praise to encourage and motivate.

124. The curriculum is planned very well, using the literacy strategy. Long and medium term plans are monitored and very specific weekly plans written. Lesson plans indicate clearly the aims and objectives of the lesson and include work matched to pupils' varying abilities. The curriculum is enhanced through extra curricular activities, one of which is a Book Club. The club focuses on a variety of aspects and this term pupils are investigating magazines, with a view to creating a school magazine. The club is an excellent opportunity for pupils to enjoy language in a less formal setting. The Book Weeks held in school also contribute greatly to the English curriculum. Pupils have the opportunity to listen to a wide variety of people who have an interest in language; these include poets, writers, actors and politicians. Along with a major emphasis on books and writing, pupils also go on special visits which have a language focus, such as to a local printers and the British School in Hitchin.

125. The school makes very good use of the results of the key stage tests and also the non-statutory year tests as a means of assessing pupils' ability. These, along with the daily assessments recorded by teachers, form the main systems for assessment. The school has begun to analyse all available data in detail to ascertain any areas of specific common concern. Teachers maintain reading records and observation comments related to individual pupils. Individual pupils' National Curriculum level are recorded twice yearly and individual targets are set. These are shared with pupils and parents. These along with some examples of each pupil's work form an individual portfolio for each child. The school is in the process of establishing a school portfolio of assessed work.

126. Leadership in English is very good. The co-ordinator has worked very hard to implement the literacy strategy successfully throughout the school. She has delivered training to inform staff and develop good practice. Considerable effort has gone into the purchasing of resources that are appropriate to meet the needs of the project. Opportunity has been made for the co-ordinator to monitor all teaching and learning, and along with class teachers she has analysed findings and set appropriate targets. The co-ordinator has worked on developing good practice and as a result the school's targets for English have been raised.

127. Overall, very good use is made of classroom assistants and also parent helpers. Because of this, pupils can receive quality support during group work that provides excellent opportunity – for example, to clarify work and extend challenge, at times on a one to one basis. The only exception to this good use of support and volunteers is the lack of use of support staff during the whole class sections of literacy hours, who could, for example, be keeping records of pupils responses for assessment purposes.

128. Resources are good and appropriately used. The school has a good range of texts to meet a wide variety of needs and genres. The library is welcoming with appropriate books, both fiction and non-fiction. Year 6 pupils take responsibility for the library and are well able to use the computer system now in place. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

138. **Mathematics**

129. Inspection evidence shows that pupils' attainment in mathematics is above the national average at the end of Key Stage 1 and well above average by the end of Key Stage 2. In the 1998 national tests at Key Stage 1, 94% of pupils' achieved Level 2 or above compared with a national figure of 85%. In the 1999 tests this figure had improved again to 97%. In the 1998 national tests at Key Stage 2, 74% of pupils' achieved Level 4 or above compared with a national figure of 58%. In the 1999 tests this figure had improved again to 89%. There is no significant difference in attainment between boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs achieve good standards in relation to their prior ability, as do pupils for whom English is their second language.

130. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are able to discuss their work using appropriate mathematical language. They can recognise basic sequences and groups of numbers with similar characteristics. Many can order numbers up to 1000. All pupils are beginning to use standard written notation for addition and subtraction including the use of carrying figures. Pupils are able to use mental recall of two, three, four and five and ten times tables in simple multiplication and division problems, and this is given special emphasis in many lessons. In the area of shape, space and measures pupils confidently recognise regular two-dimensional shapes, describing their properties including the number of sides and corners. The more able pupils recognise right angles and estimate and calculate area in squares. In data handling pupils gain some experience from recording length in tabular form, sorting shapes through various characteristics and illustrating their findings in diagrams.

131. By the end of Key Stage 2, the majority of pupils are secure in all basic number processes including decimal notation. Pupils have developed a wide mathematical vocabulary, making good use of mathematical symbols and diagrams. They can use a variety of mental and written skills, including recall of all tables to ten, when solving number problems involving division and multiplication. They understand the relationship between percentages and fractions and can complete complex calculations. The way that the higher attaining pupils were able, in a complex algebraic formula, to identify by looking, that the final value of 'x' would be a minus quantity was astounding. In space, shape and measure pupils confidently find perimeters and areas of regular shapes by using calculations as well as by counting squares and work confidently with angles such as acute, obtuse and reflex. In discussion they are able to clearly identify three-dimensional shapes and the properties of rotational symmetry. Pupils are able to use a whole variety of bar, line and scatter graphs - some of

which were begun well at Key Stage 1.

132. Pupils routinely make good use of their numeracy skills in other subjects, such as science, geography and design technology. They are used to collecting recording and interpreting information. Frequent good use is made of information technology to present, save and print data in a number of different forms.

133. Pupils make good progress in mathematics throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support in class and also make good progress towards those mathematical targets set for them. The national numeracy strategy has been fully implemented and is having a beneficial impact on both attainment and progress. The strategy emphasises mental mathematics and the pupils are making especially good progress in this aspect of their work. In Key Stage 1, pupils develop understanding of number through working with numbers first up to 20 and then up to 100 and often up to 1000. They use this good understanding to investigate simple patterns such as odd and even numbers, sequences and arrays. In Key Stage 2, pupils gain confidence in using increasingly large numbers and they develop high level skills in the standard processes of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. In Years 4, 5 and 6 they work on increasingly difficult fractions, decimals, percentages and estimates. Their understanding of shape, space and measurement develops as they move from descriptions of simple three-dimensional shapes to more complex concepts such as area, perimeter and volume using all shapes such as rhombus and parallelogram.

134. Pupils show a very high level of motivation and real sense of enjoyment in mathematics lessons throughout the school. Their attitudes to work are very good and they show high levels of sustained concentration, care over recorded work and perseverance to make sure their work is correct. Behaviour in class is invariably very good. Relationships between pupils and with their teachers are excellent. Pupils show a high level of care and respect for each other, listening carefully to the views and answers of others and always helping if someone is struggling to understand a new idea. The national numeracy strategy places a great emphasis on the development of independent work. Pupils respond very positively to this, and older pupils become increasingly able to work on their own initiative and sustain concentration for long periods of time. Pupils' very good attitudes and excellent relationships are a significant factor in the purposeful and highly productive lessons seen throughout the school and in the progress pupils make in the subject.

135. The overall quality of teaching is at least good in both key stages. Teaching observed during the inspection was good in 50 per cent of the lessons and very good or excellent in the other 50 per cent of the lessons. Teaching was never less than good. The teachers all have very good class control and achieve very good discipline in their classrooms with quiet authority and good humour. Warm, supportive relationships with their pupils contribute effectively to pupils' very good responses and their very positive attitudes to the subject. The encouragement the head teacher gave to the higher attainment groups was an excellent example for all other teachers and a role model of the use of humour to focus and motivate pupils. All the teachers have shown a high level of commitment to the numeracy strategy and have acquired an understanding of this to go with their already high level of subject knowledge and understanding. Teachers use the correct technical vocabulary at all times. A good example of this was in the Year 6 lesson when the special qualities of a variety of shapes was discussed, at all times with the correct difficult terms. All teachers make very good use of questions so that all pupils are helped to test and develop their understanding. These questions are almost always used both to highlight progress appropriate to each individual pupils' ability, and as open questions to challenge the thinking of all pupils and so raise attainment. In the very good lessons the pace and challenge of all group and class activities are very high. The teacher who takes both Years 5 and 6 valued every pupil's response to her rapid questions and raised their self-esteem well as a result. Planning for all lessons is very good and resources are well organised so that there are a variety of activities in each lesson. There is good evidence to show that on-going assessment is used well to modify the

curriculum to make each lesson appropriate regardless of the overall level of attainment of the pupils concerned. Pupils with special educational needs are always well supported in class. The teachers set relevant homework that includes pupils learning their times tables.

136. The curriculum is very well organised around a number of parts of different commercial schemes as well as resources made by the teachers. The curriculum provides very good continuity of learning for pupils throughout the school. Assessment is now secure and is very effective in identifying pupils' individual attainment and areas of the curriculum that require review in planning. Analysis of baseline and end of key stage assessments are being used to track pupils' progress, but the use of a portfolio of assessed work to identify areas of provision is still to be completed. Day to day assessments through the use of targeted questions is effective and the use of marking, especially in the later years of Key Stage 2, is used to give targets for pupils' improvement. Overall, the quality of both the curriculum and assessment have greatly improved since the last inspection.

137. The role of the co-ordinator is now well established and is currently being undertaken by the head teacher. Her very effective leadership and management in developing and evaluating the whole curriculum and the implementation of the numeracy strategy is evident in the good progress pupils are making. Monitoring of teaching and the curriculum is now established and this has developed well since the last inspection. The decision to use the specialist expertise of the two teachers in year 5 and 6, which enhances provision in two core subjects including mathematics, is a good example of the benefit of careful monitoring and discussion. The subject has good resources that are effectively deployed and are easily accessible to both staff and pupils.

147. **Science**

138. The results of the 1999 standard assessment tasks show pupils' attainment at Key Stage 2 to be average when compared nationally, and well below average when compared with similar schools. However, the inspectors' judgement based on lesson observations and a scrutiny of pupils' work is that attainment in science is good across both key stages. Last year, the school placed very great emphasis on the delivery of the literacy project and the preparation for the numeracy project. Teachers were also, appropriately, working to maintain cross-curricular links, which are a strength of the school, such as the "stranded on a desert island" project in which all subjects participated. As a result, science teaching was not sufficiently focussed, and results suffered. Having successfully established both the literacy and numeracy projects, the school has redressed the balance, and this is now reflected in the levels of attainment and progress observed during the inspection. Progress at both key stages is good. This is an overall improvement on the previous report.

139. The progress of pupils who have special educational needs, those for whom English is an additional language, and pupils whose attainment is characteristically well above average is similarly good. This is because of the special provision and support given to each group.

140. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are using their skills of investigation, observation and recording to conduct simple experiments. In a project on sound, pupils understand sound is made in a variety of ways and they can carry out an analysis of the sounds they hear. They are able to construct lengthy sentences to describe what they are doing. Working on the topic of senses, pupils categorised foods into the four areas of taste. They also carried out observations concerning the changes that light and dark made to their eyes.

141. At Key Stage 2, pupils understand more about investigation, fair testing and the recording of their findings. They plan their experiments using a set format. Year 3 pupils working on electricity understood series and parallel circuits, and are able to construct both, incorporating switches, buzzers and lights. Pupils apply their very good knowledge and skill to create Christmas cards that light up. They are able to explain what they are doing and why their circuit works. Pupils have a good subject vocabulary and use it when describing scientific investigations. Pupils in Year 6 are able to put forward suggestions as to why the size of a shadow can alter, and follow this with plans to carry out an experiment to prove their idea. They appreciate the need for testing to be fair and are able to determine how they can ensure this is so. Higher attaining pupils use their initiative very well, for example, in setting up apparatus to measure the relative size of the shadow and compare it to the distance of the light source from the object casting a shadow.

142. Pupils across both key stages make good progress. At Key Stage 1 they are beginning to use scientific vocabulary and understand the principles of what they are investigating, such as sounds are made in many ways and have many sources. At Key Stage 2, pupils apply their skills in a more systematic way to experiments. They understand that they must maintain certain items of equipment at a constant level for investigation to be fair. Consequently, their predictions are more accurate and in line with the findings. This is an improvement upon the previous inspection.

143. Pupils' response in science at both key stages is good. They display very good attitudes to their work, listening well, asking questions and making suggestions. They try to explain their ideas using scientific language. Relationships between teachers and pupils, and between pupils are very good. Mutual respect is shown and high levels of co-operation observed. Pupils frequently work together, and the level of collaboration is very good. Pupils sustain concentration and show obvious enjoyment in their work. In a Key Stage 1 class, when the teacher indicated it was 'time for our jobs now', meaning time now to "work", a reply was heard 'Oh, I love doing our jobs'. Pupils display initiative by collecting their apparatus, working on it, and many times discovering much for themselves. Pupils have regard for safety and this is well reinforced by teachers.

144. The quality of teaching at both key stages is good. This is an improvement since the last inspection and has had a positive effect on pupils' progress and attainment. Teachers display good subject knowledge. They have high expectations of both work and behaviour. Planning appropriately supports the lesson objectives. Pupil management and the organisation of resources is good. Teachers make good use of questioning to assess pupils' understanding and they use pupils' answers to clarify or expand the discussion. They frequently use questions to challenge the higher attaining pupils. Assessments made during lessons are written on the planning sheet and where relevant used to inform future planning and in turn support the twice-yearly judgements made on individual pupils' record sheets.

145. The school uses the Local Education Authority science scheme. The school acknowledges that further focus is desirable on extending pupils' investigational skills and this is planned for next year. The results of the national tests are not systematically analysed in order to find the focus for future development. In general, however, leadership of the department is good and the co-operation of all staff in teaching science has contributed to this term's improvement. Resources are satisfactory.

155. OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

155. Information and communication technology

146. The majority of pupils' standards of achievement are at least in line with the nationally expected levels by the time they leave the school. There are many pupils in years 5 and 6 who are now acquiring both a knowledge and understanding of the uses of information technology that is above the national average. This is due to the acquisition of some new machines, a relevant scheme of work, the well-focused attention of the curriculum co-ordinator and the number of pupils who have access to sophisticated computers at home.

147. Progress through Key Stage 1 is satisfactory, and sometimes good by the end of Key Stage 2. Printed work from the previous year and observation of pupils using information technology in other subjects of the curriculum demonstrates them handling different kinds of information in a progressively more complicated manner. In the reception class pupils have already begun to learn how to use the shift and return keys. This experience is built on in Year 1 where pupils begin to write in their own words through using different software. The accent on information technology skills is bringing good progress and teachers are also aware of the content of the programs they are asking pupils to use.

148. By the end of Year 2, pupils know and can name different parts of the equipment. Most pupils can use the mouse with confidence to load and select various functions such as to draw different patterns with colour in an art package. They are all able not only to use simple software to enhance their numeracy curriculum, but to input text into a word-processor and draw using different software packages, and then add text to their drawings. Many can store data gained from analysing information gathered from other pupils and present that information in the form of a graph.

149. Most pupils in Year 6 have a good grasp of LOGO/Turtle Graphics and many showed that they are also able to add graphics to pages of text and to change text colours. Year 6 pupils are able to extend their previous learning in data handling and use this skill to collect their own data to compile and use sophisticated databases. Their use of the Internet at home to supplement their work on World War Two was very effective. Texts are being produced at a satisfactory level in English and humanities with text, labels, pictures and poetry being input to computers for printing for presentations or displays. There is good evidence of redrafting, and desk top publishing, where text is copied, deleted, moved, indented, paragraphed and spell-checked. The English curriculum is being enhanced by the use of a range of programs. These programs allow pupils to consolidate their existing learning as well as gaining insights into the technology. In Year 3 and 4 classes pupils are able to amend and extend a database and use the information to print out graphs and pie charts. The front-covers of storybooks produced by the older pupils in the past show that some have a sophisticated understanding of what computer graphics are capable of achieving. Year 5 and 6 pupils also have a good understanding of how information technology is used in society generally, pursuing a number of these ideas when using databases.

150. There is evidence from the scrutiny of work that pupils use other information technology equipment, such as videos and tape recorders on their outside visits and when compiling their topic folders. However, these opportunities are limited in the work the pupils attempt in school.

151. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in the examples seen of information technology in use are very good. They are keen to participate, often using their own initiative to take their lessons further. For instance, a great deal of interest and sustained concentration was shown by the pairs using the Internet for research in Year 6, and a programmable robotic toy in Year 1. Pupils are always happy to share their use of the keyboard and mouse. Older pupils acknowledge the high level skills that some of their peer group possess without being envious. Great care and respect for the machines and software was obvious when observing pupils

shutting down their computers at the end of a session.

152.The direct teaching of information technology was only seen in a good Year 4 lesson during the inspection and, therefore, no overall judgement on teaching can be made. Teachers have sufficient knowledge to load programs from the beginning and get pupils underway. They also have the understanding to make pupils' use of information technology enjoyable and meaningful. Opportunities for information technology are identified at the long-term planning stage where the emphasis on skills is highlighted. Short-term planning includes the use of programs across the curriculum where appropriate. There is a good policy for information technology and the school's scheme of work has recently been enhanced by consideration of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority guidelines. A variety of different target sheets are used to monitor pupils' progress in all classes. There is good evidence to suggest that the good levels of skills the pupils have in information technology are being used to enhance the curriculum in maths, science and humanities.

153.The co-ordinator has already given a great deal of thought, energy and planning to the anticipated outcomes of the use of information technology, and has made noticeable improvements. She is now involved in refocusing her, and the school's attention on the required in-service training and overall re-organisation necessary to make the most of the arrival of the Internet and the possibility of a computer suite.

154.There is an adequate number of computers in the school, each with a printer, and although many are quite old, they are, with the school's sensible and focused use, more than adequate to deliver the requirements of the National Curriculum.

164. Religious education

155.Pupils' attainment at the end of both key stages is in line with the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout both key stages.

156.By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils know that people of different religions have times of celebration. They know what happens in Christening ceremonies and some bring evidence of their own christening to share in school. They show some understanding of the symbolic nature of a Christingle and can describe all the components and their meaning. Pupils know that Christmas is the celebration of Christ's birth and that it happened 2000 years ago. Pupils explore the school environment and show awareness of the beauty in the world. Some very careful leaf printing highlighted this beauty.

157.Key Stage 2 pupils have extended their knowledge of festivals. They know about Diwali and can associate this with other festivals of light such as Hanukkah. Pupils can describe the happenings at festivals such as Holi and Sukkoth. Pupils have a good knowledge of the main features of Islam and can describe the five pillars and their importance. They understand fasting and the discipline involved. They compare these to the two Christian commandments. Pupils recognise that the world would benefit from following laws and they understand the need for rules in life.

158.Pupils know the main ideas of the main world faiths. They look at stories from the Christian, Hindu and Buddhist religions and can draw out the main features. They show an understanding of the use of picture language to describe some events. They recognise that difficult ideas can be expressed through creative arts. They recognise the symbols associated with the main world faiths.

159. Pupils at Key Stage 1 and 2, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make satisfactory progress. Assemblies contribute to pupils' religious education. Pupils show a growing knowledge of stories from the Bible, including many parables. As pupils move through the school, they display growing knowledge and understanding of the main world faiths and they show great respect for each. Pupils show progress across the key stages as they develop their capacity to explore and appreciate other people's experiences which may be very different from their own. Pupils show their ability to reflect upon things – for example, when looking at prayers from the different faiths.

160. Pupils' attitudes to religious education are very good. They listen and participate with great interest, and concentrate and work hard. They co-operate well together, helping each other. Relationships between all are very good; teachers and pupils show great respect for each other. This is also reflected in the very responsible manner in which pupils discuss their work on world faiths.

161. Teaching in religious education at both key stages is good. Teachers display satisfactory subject knowledge overall and are confident in their teaching of the subject. Planning follows very closely the Locally Agreed Syllabus and the learning objectives set for each lesson. Pupils and resources are well managed. Teachers pose some very challenging questions, supporting and encouraging pupils to respond and share their ideas. They provide good explanations of difficult ideas such as symbolism in religion. The good quality of teaching supports pupils' satisfactory attainment and progress.

162. The school uses the scheme of work that is planned to accompany the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Assessments at present are made informally.

163. Religious Education makes a very positive contribution to the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils develop respect for other people's religious beliefs and the way beliefs affect their lives. They compare and contrast the world's main religions and appreciate some of the common factors and laws found in them.

164. The co-ordinator has done much to raise the profile of religious education since the last inspection. She has worked hard, introducing and implementing the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Her enthusiasm has contributed to the good level of improvement found since the last inspection. Improvement is very evident in a range of areas including planning, teaching methods, pupil management and use of resources. The co-ordinator supports teachers in the planning and resourcing of their lessons and in keeping up-to-date through attendance at relevant courses.

165. Resources for the subject have improved. The school is gradually increasing its range of religious artefacts along with suitable pictures, videos and books.

175. **Art**

166. Only two art lessons were observed during the inspection and these were both at Key Stage 1. Judgements are based on these lessons, and on scrutinising pupils' work from both key stages, discussion with pupils and from the school's photographic record.

167. At both key stages, standards achieved in art are satisfactory for the pupils' age. This shows maintenance of standard since the last inspection.

168. At Key Stage 1, pupils work in a wide range of media, which include paint, pencil, printing and 3D work. They develop practical skills such as colour mixing and use of the correct size of brush to achieve certain effects. They use technical language such as 'shading' and learn to hold their pencils appropriately to get an even shade. Pupils in Year 2 drew pictures of Victorian artefacts. These showed good observation skills and pupils produced some very

good detailed drawings. Pupils' paintings of Victorian people showed good use of appropriate colours and an awareness of details found on the clothes.

169. At Key Stage 2, pupils study the work of a wide variety of artists including Picasso, Monet and Seurat. Pupils in Year 3 produced some sensitive work based on the style of Paul Klee. Year 6 pupils used Andy Warhol to inspire some good work using drink cans. Across the key stage, pupils work in a variety of techniques and media including monochrome, collage, paint, clay, pastel, chalk, charcoal and wool. Some beautiful plaster shells were created which appeared quite realistic. Wool winding was effectively used to create a landscape for a book cover. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, made satisfactory progress across both key stages. They gain skills in observational drawing, in the mixing of paint to make very subtle differences in shade. They gain confidence in using a wide range of materials.

170. Pupils enjoy art lessons. They share resources and ideas and work very well together. At times, due to lack of space, older pupils carry out their artwork away from the classroom, showing considerable personal responsibility. They maintain very good behaviour and show sustained concentration. Pupils display a pride in their work and are keen to talk about it. Relationships are very good. Pupils and staff show great respect for each other.

171. Teaching at Key Stage 1 is satisfactory overall. Teachers show a good understanding of the needs of young people. Planning is satisfactory and there is opportunity for individual expression through art. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

172. No teaching at Key Stage 2 was observed, and no judgement can be made on the quality of teaching at this key stage. There is, at the moment, no art co-ordinator, and the headteacher is overseeing the subject. Resources for art are satisfactory. At present, no formal assessment procedures are in place.

182. **Design and technology**

173. Pupils' attainment in design and technology have improved since the last inspection and there is sufficient evidence to show that older pupils are on course to meet appropriate targets.

174. Reception pupils are already able to use table knives for spreading and cutting. They can measure and mix ingredients and have begun to discuss their work with increasing fluency. They have also begun to acquire a basic vocabulary of taste and colour and the rules of basic personal hygiene.

175. In Key Stage 1 pupils make sound progress and can manipulate simple tools and use both pictures and words when communicating designs. They learn basic cutting and joining skills and lesson plans show that they are encouraged to evaluate their designs. Pupils apply their knowledge and understanding of size, shape and simple levers to design and make a number of different models, and their knowledge and understanding of materials to design and make a variety of simple textile products using running and cross-stitch. They all learn to use scissors and needles safely.

176. In Key Stage 2 pupils make satisfactory progress and build appropriately on these skills. Year 3 pupils have gone beyond the plans of the teacher to use all appropriate vocabulary to make models in their science theme of electricity. The resulting illuminated Christmas cards were very effective. Pupils can use temporary and permanent joins and finish work well using appropriate paint or paper. These Year 3 pupils also complete with great flair and precision a task to decorate a candle with melted wax and natural items collected in the school grounds. At the end of Year 6 progress is such that pupils can design with a series of detailed drawings what makes a good container. A good feature of this work is the precise disassembling of

items to see how they are constructed in layers. There are very good examples of pupils' ceramic work and building with junk items on display throughout the school.

177. The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language is similar to that of all other pupils.

178. Pupils' attitudes to their work are always very good. They are well behaved and committed to the tasks they are set. They enjoy lessons, show great interest in their activities and often take part in animated discussions when sharing their ideas and opinions informally with each other.

179. Due to the nature of the timetable, it was possible to see only one lesson during the inspection period. The quality of teaching in this lesson was good. Scrutiny of planning documents demonstrates that teachers plan their lessons very carefully, using the scheme of work to create a wealth of appropriate experiences for all their pupils. Lessons focus on what pupils will learn from each activity, so that they develop skills well and build on what they have learnt before. From the one lesson observed and the wide range of pupils' work available to view, it is clear that the quality of teaching of design and technology is at least satisfactory.

180. Resources for design and technology are adequate and well stored and accessible for pupils and teachers. The different experiences enjoyed by the pupils from these materials include batik, pottery, embroidery, string and wire sculptures, knitting and a type of crochet, papier-mâché and the use of a range of commercial building bricks.

190. **Geography**

181. Pupils benefit from a good range of different activities in geography and by the end of both key stages their attainment is in line with nationally expected levels.

182. Both infant and junior pupils make satisfactory progress as they are given the opportunity to investigate areas away from their own locality in more detail and broaden their knowledge of world issues. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that their knowledge of maps, bearings, the threats to local and world environments and specific countries of the world are sound. The work produced from their trips and parts of their own locality are particular strengths. They have also the skill to use Ordnance Survey maps, and a complicated atlas when researching different localities. The use of co-ordinates and grid references is systematically planned so that pupils make progress from using two figure references in Year 3, to four figure in years 4 and 5 and six figure references in year 6. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make similar satisfactory progress to their classmates.

183. Pupils have good attitudes to geography, writing at length and with care in all the tasks set. Behaviour is always very good and makes an important contribution to the standards achieved. In the part of one lesson observed there were good examples of co-operation and discussions as pupils considered how to represent the course of a river from source to mouth. As they move through the school pupils take increasingly greater care in the presentation of their work and of the displays that are created to show what they have learned.

184. Owing to the way the timetable is planned by the school, it was not possible to observe any full geography lessons during the inspection week. No overall judgement on the quality of teaching is therefore possible. Interesting work is planned in the long-term and day-to-day lesson planning is satisfactory and based on sound subject knowledge. Work scrutiny shows that some use is made of literacy and numeracy to enhance the work in geography, for

example by gathering statistics from the weather records and creating interesting graphs from the information.

185.The curriculum co-ordinator has recently revised the current subject guidance. The curriculum satisfactorily meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. However, assessment opportunities are not yet used sufficiently to inform future planning and provision for the future needs of each pupil. Teachers' records only show what has been covered in previous lessons, and not the detail of what individual pupils know, understand and can do.

186.The level of resources for geography is satisfactory. There are a sufficient number of books both in the library and in the classrooms, and good use is made of the multimedia computers and relevant CD-ROMs.

196. **History**

187.Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make at least sound progress in history in Key Stage 1 and good progress in Key Stage 2. By the time they leave the school, the standard they achieve is above that expected by pupils of their age.

188.In Key Stage 1, pupils make satisfactory progress and scrutiny of work shows that they develop an understanding of the passing of time, recounting stories of their own and their family's past. This sense of chronology, based on their own lives, is well developed through examples such as the stories of families today and in Victorian times, and the use of artefacts often provided by the teachers. The pupils also show an understanding of history by work concerned with specific events such as the evacuation of children at the beginning of the Second World War.

189.Pupils make good progress through Key Stage 2 by learning about famous people and events. They know how to seek information from reference books and the Internet, and study historical artefacts to gain good insights into life in the past. In the lessons observed for older pupils, they were able to recall events and make good comparisons having enjoyed a compelling visit from a local museum curator, making the exercise particularly relevant. They all worked hard and made good notes throughout the visit and answered questions well afterwards. The Year 6 pupils also made exceptionally good use of the Internet when looking for information on life in the 1940s and 1950s. The attention paid to detail by the Year 5 pupils was testament to the way they had been taught to use evidence in earlier year groups and the progress they had made in acquiring relevant historical skills.

190.Pupils have a good attitude to history, showing enjoyment in the subject and responding well to the tasks set. Behaviour is always good and makes an important contribution to the standards achieved. There are good examples of co-operation and collaboration as pupils work to consider historical evidence. Pupils throughout the school take pride in the presentation of their work.

191.Overall, the teaching of history is very good. The teaching observed was never less than satisfactory and in all but one lesson it was consistently very good or excellent. Lesson plans are satisfactory in detail and content. Teachers' subject knowledge is good with great care being taken to research the subjects themselves where they are unsure. Good use is made of questioning to draw out pupils' ideas and understanding. Some opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills were seen in the lessons observed, with pupils using good descriptive skills and collecting information for detailed time lines.

192. The subject co-ordinator frequently consults her colleagues in order to revise the current subject guidance and to provide a coherent scheme in harmony with the requirements of literacy hour. The curriculum satisfactorily meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, and the scheme of work contains sufficient detail to ensure that all aspects are taught. The plans also contain advice on when history is to be taught on a yearly basis if a steady progression of skills and knowledge is to be developed.

193. The level of resources for history is good with the local museum service able to supplement the school's own items. There are sufficient history books both in the library and in the classrooms, and very good use is made of the school's multimedia computers and relevant CD-ROMs.

203. **Music**

194. Throughout the school, the overall standard of pupils' achievements in music is satisfactory for their age. However, music of a higher quality is found in the extra-curricular musical activities of the choir and orchestra.

195. Pupils at Key Stage 1 can create very simple graphic scores, then clap and play their composition. They appreciate that at times there is silence in music and that this is called a rest. Pupils try very hard to play their part alongside each other. Pupils at Key Stage 1 are not fully aware of the names of the percussion instruments.

196. At Key Stage 2, pupils display a good technical vocabulary which includes words such as dynamics, pentatonic, chromatic, scales, fortissimo and pianissimo. They are able to define these words and present practical examples of them. Through a range of activities, pupils work together to create their own compositions. Pupils can write a two or three note pattern and develop it into a short piece of music. An extension of this activity was when one of the more musically able pupils created a melody and others accompanied it. Pupils can maintain a steady beat during their performances. A significant number of pupils learn to play a very wide range of instruments. Pupils receive tuition from visiting music teachers in return for payment of a fee. The school has a choir and they sing well. They take part in festivals including the county music concert at the Royal Albert Hall. The school orchestra is made up of any player who wants to take part. They play well together and create a reasonable sound. The orchestra and choir provide very good opportunities for pupils to make music.

197. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 1 and good progress overall at Key Stage 2, due in part to the extra-curricular activities. At Key Stage 1 they become familiar with handling instruments and reading their simple scores along with increased confidence in performing their work. At Key Stage 2, pupils appreciate the need to improve on their performance and presentation. They show progress in the acquisition of musical skills connected to composing and performing, and in the extension of musical knowledge.

198. Pupils throughout the school approach music with enthusiasm, and their attitude to the subject is very good. They listen carefully and are keen to answer and demonstrate. When working in groups they collaborate well, showing respect for each other. They are responsive when requested to stop their playing for a moment. They change their groups efficiently, recommencing work immediately. They listen extremely well to each other's compositions.

199. The standard of teaching is satisfactory overall and good at Key Stage 2. Teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge. In the most effective lessons, the pace is lively and there are a variety of activities to maintain pupils' interest. There are also high, but appropriate, expectations of work and behaviour. For example, in a Year 1 and 2 lesson, pupils listened to their teacher or each other very attentively, whenever required to do so, without touching their

instruments. Teachers support and intervene in group work very sensitively and appropriately. They encourage pupils to work independently and in groups with minimal teacher support. Planning is satisfactory and the chosen activities aid the learning objectives. Organisation and management of pupils and resources is satisfactory. Teaching in the extra-curricular activities, especially the choir, is more specific and encourages correct posture and positioning of the voice.

200. The school does not have a music co-ordinator. At present, the Headteacher is supporting the subject. The school uses the BBC range of programmes as their scheme of work. There is no formal assessment system in place. Resources are satisfactory.

201. Since the last inspection, standards in music have remained satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and have become satisfactory at Key Stage 2, where they were previously unsatisfactory.

211. **Physical education**

202. Pupils benefit from the full range of the physical education curriculum and enjoy a good range of extra-curricular sporting activities. All pupils, including those who have special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress from year-to-year in Key Stage 1 and also good progress in Key Stage 2.

203. Pupils in Key Stage 1 catch and pass balls underarm accurately and safely. They make balls travel in various ways, for example, by rolling, bouncing or kicking them. As they move through the key stage, they become more adept at planning and controlling their movements, with an increasing awareness of safety. By Year 2, pupils know the effect that exercise has on their bodies and realise that to be more successful they must practise their skills regularly.

204. During their time in Key Stage 2 pupils develop, refine and modify their skills well in gymnastics, through practice. Their ability to criticise their own and others' performance, set themselves achievable targets and sustain their performance over an extended period is outstanding. Pupils perform safely with due care for themselves and others. The pupils express themselves well through dance, composing group sequences in response to music. Almost all pupils can swim unaided for at least twenty-five metres by the time they leave the school. Pupils clearly understand the effects of strenuous exercise and how it improves their health, flexibility, muscular strength and endurance. All pupils know the importance of warming-up before energetic physical activities and wearing suitable clothing.

205. Pupils have good attitudes to physical education and games, showing enjoyment in the subject and responding well to the tasks set. Behaviour is always very good and makes an important contribution to the standards achieved. There are good examples of co-operation and collaboration as pupils work to consider their own and others performance. The way pupils co-operated in the Year 1 and 4 dance lessons, and in the Year 6 gymnastics lesson, was exemplary. Pupils throughout the school take great pride in their performance both in dance and in gymnastics.

206. Teaching, as observed, was good overall, and very good at Key Stage 2. It was never less than satisfactory. Lesson plans are satisfactory in detail and content. Teachers' own knowledge and expertise are good with great care being taken to keep themselves informed of the latest developments. Good use is made of demonstrations to draw out pupils' ideas and understanding. Some opportunities to develop numeracy skills were noted as pupils were asked to develop their routines in dance and gymnastics with care and precision.

207. The curriculum for physical education makes a considerable contribution to the social development of the pupils as the use of paired and group work for dance and gymnastics, as well as team games, is an integral part of the curriculum. The several instances observed of

more able pupils being used to help the less able was significant both for both social and moral reasons.

208. The curriculum co-ordinator has made changes in the quality and accessibility of resources to keep up with new demands. The curriculum satisfactorily meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, and the scheme of work contains great detail, and assessment opportunities to ensure that all aspects are taught and a steady progression of skills and ability is developed. Good day-to-day assessment is used in Key Stage 2 to ensure maximum progress.

209. The level of resources for physical education is good overall. The large equipment is well maintained and of sufficient quantity and quality. The range of small equipment is good. The size and quality of the school hall allows the full range of possible activities and makes access to the whole national curriculum certain. There is a good school field, which is well used.

219. **Swimming**

210. The inspection of the school included a focussed view of swimming which is reported below.

211. By the end of Key Stage 2 almost all pupils are able to swim the minimum distance of 25 meters recommended in the National Curriculum and the majority are able to swim much further. Only pupils from Years 3 and 4 have an opportunity to swim during the school day, and this occurs for half an hour once a week as part of their physical education curriculum, for one term per year group.

212. The curriculum taught follows the requirements of the National Curriculum. Swimming is taught by the class teacher concerned and a classroom assistant under the supervision and direction of a well-qualified swimming instructor from the leisure centre in Hitchin where lessons take place. Very capable parent volunteers support teachers and the instructor. Lesson planning is very good and is undertaken by the experienced instructors together with the class teacher. Time allocated, although short, is very well used, and all pupils spend the full thirty minutes of the lesson in the water and active. Pupils walk the short distance to and from the pool, under appropriate adult supervision. Timetables are organised such that the hour from leaving school to returning does not impact on the teaching time of any other subject.

213. The quality of teaching is very good. Pupils are divided into three groups, comprising the stronger and weaker swimmers and those whose competence is average, each group swimming in a separate, roped off area of the pool that is reserved for the half hour solely for pupils from the school. The most able pupils are taught by the classroom assistant, the average pupils by the instructor and the class teacher, and the least able by two parents. Each group is well supported by the presence of numerous life guards employed by the leisure centre.

214. Two particularly good features of the teaching are the strong emphasis placed on safety and the ongoing assessment and recording of pupils' ability. All the adults concerned know each pupil very well and have a detailed knowledge of their swimming. As a result, groupings of pupils within the three groups are effective and enable each pupil to be challenged appropriately while ensuring a continual building-up of their confidence. All pupils are fully aware of the relevant safety rules and practise them. Lessons are characterised by all pupils, including those who are only just beginning to swim, enjoying the lessons and feeling totally at ease in the water.

215. Even at this early stage of the school year there are only one or two non-swimmers in Year 3 group observed. These pupils together with the less able swimmers are well supported. They swim in a pool where they can stand in the water if needs be, and they are given tasks to undertake which both reinforce their ability and confidence and, towards the end of the lesson, become progressively more difficult. Games form an important feature of the of each lesson, allowing pupils to forget any remaining concerns and derive even more enjoyment from their swimming lessons. Parent volunteers usually enter the water with the least able pupils in order to encourage them. As a consequence even the non-swimmers in the class have, in less than a term, totally overcome their fear of the water.

216. Fully in accordance with the school's published Charging and Remissions Policy, swimming is paid for by parents who receive the benefit of the very favourable arrangements negotiated by the school.

226. PART C: INSPECTION DATA

226. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

217. The inspection was carried out by four inspectors, including a lay inspector, who were in school for a total of 14 inspector days. During the inspection, 50 lessons or parts of lessons were observed. Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked to them about their work and other aspects of the school such as relationships between pupils and with teachers and how they feel about school. Samples of pupils' work were inspected in all classes. Particular care was taken to monitor the attainment and progress of each pupil with special educational needs and the school's provision for them. A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including teachers' planning, policy documents, development plans, budget figures, pupils' reports, attendance registers, the minutes of meetings of the governing body and its sub-committees, and additional documents provided by two governors. Discussions were also held with the headteacher, all members of the senior management team, all subject co-ordinators, teachers, administrative staff, parents and others. Meetings were held with a range of governors, including all those who requested an individual meeting, and there were several telephone calls and exchanges of e-mails with individual governors. Twenty-six parents attended a meeting with the Registered Inspector and gave their views on aspects of the school's work and achievements. Seventy-eight questionnaires, representing thirty-six per cent of pupils, were returned and analysed by the inspection team, together with letters from twenty-four parents and a governor who wrote on an individual basis to the registered inspector.

218.DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
YR – Y6	218	0	16	8

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (YR – Y6)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	31

Education support staff (YR – Y6)

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked each week	98

Average class size:

Financial data

Financial year:

	£
Total Income	383 362
Total Expenditure	369 110
Expenditure per pupil	1 585
Balance brought forward from previous year	11 755
Balance carried forward to next year	26 002

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	217
Number of questionnaires returned:	78

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	10	59	14	12	5
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	17	54	9	13	8
The school handles complaints from parents well	3	27	27	22	9
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	13	42	24	19	3
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	5	47	26	19	3
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	10	62	18	8	3
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	10	58	15	12	5
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	13	58	13	14	1
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	23	51	17	4	5
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	22	65	8	3	3
My child(ren) like(s) school	38	46	13	1	1

Other issues raised by parents

Parents raised a range of issues through the parents' questionnaire, at the parents meeting and through letters sent to the Registered Inspector. Of the 218 pupils on role, negative responses were received to the questionnaire from approximately 15 respondents, negative letters were received from a similar number (mostly the same respondents), and approximately the same number of people chose to share their views at the parents' meeting. Most of the issues are addressed in the body of this report. Additional issues raised and the relevant inspection judgements are as follows:

- Parent evenings are too short and inadequate.
Parent meetings allow for ten-minute discussions and for the viewing of a limited range of pupil work. Parents are appropriately invited to make appointments for longer subsequent meetings if they wish to do so.
- Almost no feed back to pupils after they sit tests.
Feedback is given to pupils as appropriate, and to parents at the consultation meetings, particularly in the autumn term.
- Homework and class-work is rarely if ever marked. In one class maths work wasn't marked at all for two terms.
Homework is regularly checked or marked by teachers and often by pupils themselves under teacher supervision. It is acknowledged that teachers do not always write on homework, but this does not indicate that teachers have not reviewed pupils' work. However, not always writing on pupils' homework misses an opportunity for teachers to indicate to parents how their children are doing, and how they can improve their work.
- The Parents Association is not allowed to meet in the school.
The school works hard to encourage parents into the school. No restrictions exist on the Parents Association meeting in school, although it has customarily met in the comfort of members' homes.
- Asthma inhalers not taken onto field for games, or on school trips.
Inhalers for those children who require them are taken onto the field for games. They are also taken on residential and day trips. The school should review its procedures to ensure that all children who have inhalers, have them readily accessible in all circumstances.
- There are no assemblies for parents to attend.
Parents are invited to Harvest Festival in school and to the carol service in church. Inspectors agree that further opportunities should be available for parents to attend assemblies in school.
- School orchestra "forces" children to play music way beyond their capability, making it an unhappy experience for some.
All instrumentalists are expected to participate in the orchestra. This is encouraged by their music teachers who spend considerable time ensuring that the music for individuals is challenging but within their ability. Music is frequently re-written to accommodate less able instrumentalists.
- There are no extra-curricular activities in the infants. Football now out-sourced and charged to parents.
Very few schools organise extra-curricular activities for infant pupils, because of tiredness at the end of a school day and the undesirability for them to remain in school after the end of lessons. Teachers work very hard, and several voluntarily provide extra-curricular activities for older pupils. However, because no additional volunteers were forthcoming to run a football club, the school appropriately made arrangements with a commercial organisation in order to meet the wishes of those parents concerned. The range of extra-curricular activities provided by staff volunteers is good.