

INSPECTION REPORT

Totternhoe Lower School
Dunstable

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique Reference Number: 109488

Inspection Number: 187779

Headteacher: Mrs. Carole Abel

Reporting inspector: Mrs. J. M. Dickins
6752

Dates of inspection: 6th – 8th December 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 706975

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

© Crown Copyright 2000

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated. Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school.

Under the Education (Schools) Act 1992 and the Education Act 1993, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Lower School
Type of control:	County
Age range of pupils:	4 to 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Church Road Totternhoe Bedfordshire LU6 1RE
Telephone number:	01582 662959
Fax number:	01582 662959
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. Gifford Kelly
Date of previous inspection:	January 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs. J. M. Dickins, Rgl	English	Attainment and progress
	History	Teaching
	Geography	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
	Music	
	Physical education	
	Religious education	
	Areas of learning for children under five	
Mrs. C. A. Field, Lay Inspector	Special educational needs	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
	Equality of opportunity	Attendance
		Curriculum and assessment
		Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
		Partnership with parents and the community
		Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Mr. D. Carrington	Mathematics	Leadership and management
	Science	The efficiency of the school
	Information and communication technology	
	Art	
	Design and technology	

The inspection contractor was:

TRIO Inspections

Cherry Trees
Wenlock Road
Tasley
Bridgnorth
Shropshire
WV16 4QB

01746 766643

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints which are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Registrar
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

Paragraph

MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well
Where the school has weaknesses
How the school has improved since the last inspection
Standards in subjects
Quality of teaching
Other aspects of the school
The parents' views of the school

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school 1 - 4
Key indicators 5

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school

Attainment and progress 6 - 19
Attitudes, behaviour and personal development 20 - 22
Attendance 23

Quality of education provided

Teaching 24 - 31
The curriculum and assessment 32 - 38
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development 39 - 43
Support, guidance and pupils' welfare 44 - 45
Partnership with parents and the community 46 - 50

The management and efficiency of the school

Leadership and management 51 - 57
Staffing, accommodation and learning resources 58 - 61
The efficiency of the school 62 - 65

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

Areas of learning for children under five 66 - 77
English, mathematics and science 78 - 112
Other subjects or courses 113 - 150

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

Summary of inspection evidence 151
Data and indicators 152

MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Standards achieved in national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics are well above the national average.
- Standards achieved by nine year olds are above the Bedfordshire average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is good and as a result pupils make good progress.
- The leadership of the head teacher is very good and as a result of her confident management the school is an efficient and effective organisation.
- The very good ethos ensures that governors, head teacher, staff, parents and pupils are working together to achieve high standards.
- Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good
- The excellent involvement of parents supports the quality of learning and good progress made by their children.
- Good provision is made to meet the needs of the youngest children at the school and those with special educational needs. As a result these children make good progress.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. There is some lack of precision in the individual learning targets for the range of pupils.
- II. Lesson planning does not consistently identify how support staff, volunteers and students contribute to pupil progress during the opening sessions of literacy and numeracy lessons.
- III. Occasionally the work of pupils is over directed and this prevents them from showing what they are capable of.

The school has many strengths but attention to these relative weaknesses to further improve quality will form the basis of the governors' action plan, which will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

Overall improvement since the previous inspection, January 1996, is good. The head teacher and staff have high expectations for all pupils. Good progress has been made by class teachers in setting and sharing learning objectives at the start of lessons. They need to be revisited at the end of lessons so pupils have a better understanding of what they need to do next. Good progress has been made in promoting pupils' confidence as independent learners and they would relish more opportunities to find out things for themselves. Long term planning is secure. The curriculum plan is shared with parents and this helps them provide good support for pupils' learning. The good links with the community enriches the quality of education provided at the school and increases the opportunities for pupils to make good progress. The capacity to continue to improve is very good because of the high quality leadership of the head teacher, the hard work of the staff, parents and pupils and the knowledge and commitment of the governing body.

· **Standards in subjects**

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 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>
Reading	A	A	
Writing	A	A	
Mathematics	A	A	

In the 1999, national tests standards achieved at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics are well above average when compared to all schools nationally and to results obtained by pupils attending similar schools. At the end of Year 4 pupils take national tests in reading, writing, spelling and mathematics. In 1999 pupils' results in all four areas are above average when compared to other Bedfordshire schools.

Standards in information and communication technology and in religious education are good. Attainment and progress by children aged under five is good. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs is good because the learning targets in their individual education plans are used effectively to plan new work.

· **Quality of teaching**

Teaching in:	Under 5	5 - 7 years	7 - 9 years
English	Good	Good	Good
Mathematics	Good	Good	Good
Science	N/A	Good	Good
Information technology	N/A	Good	Good
Religious education	Good	Good	Good
Other subjects	Good	Good	Good

Teaching is good and this is why pupils make good progress. Almost three-quarters of teaching is good or better. In one lesson in ten teaching is very good. Teaching is satisfactory in the remaining lessons. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. The teaching of the youngest pupils and those with special educational needs is consistently good.

The best teaching is seen when teachers focus sharply on what they want individual pupils to learn during the lesson, pace is vigorous and tasks demanding. As a result pupils make the best progress. Teaching is relatively weaker when learning targets for individual pupils are not specific enough and work is over-directed so that pupils cannot demonstrate the full range of their knowledge and understanding.

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	Very good. Happy school, caring attitudes, relationships mutually respectful and behaviour very good. All of which underpins effective learning.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Average attendance is broadly in line with primary schools nationally. Pupils like coming to school.
Ethos*	Very good. This is an achieving school where all pupils are expected to do their best.
Leadership and management	Very good. The high quality leadership of the head teacher is very evident in the work of the school. Her inclusive management style ensures that everyone is working together to achieve the same goals.
Curriculum	Good. The curriculum is rich and provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to learn. Assessment procedures are good and results are used consistently to guide successful learning.
Pupils with special educational needs	Good provision is made to meet the special educational needs of pupils. Individual education plans are well written and used effectively to enable these pupils to make good progress and hone skill development.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Very good. Pupils pray together and think about the beauty of the natural world. The values and moral code of the school is very clear and well understood by all pupils. The provision for art and music is very strong and pupils have very good opportunities to learn about their culture and that of other communities.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Good. Highly effective programme of staff development enables confident high quality teaching. The good quality and quantity of learning resources and spacious accommodation make a very positive contribution to the quality of education provided.
Value for money	Good. The school has more money to spend per pupil than most primary schools but the effectiveness and efficiency with which resources are used ensures 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
IV. High standards and good progress V. Open, friendly, welcoming staff. VI. Parents are encouraged to take a full part in the life of the school. VII. Their children benefit from the positive attitudes and family values promoted by the school. VIII. Their children like coming to school.	IX. No concerns were raised by parents

The inspection findings support the views of parents. Totternhoe Lower School is a highly effective school.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

Totternhoe Lower School is a highly effective school but attention to the relative weaknesses will improve the quality of education and raise standards still further. The headteacher, staff and governors should:

1. **Improve the rate of progress so that it is at a consistently high level by:**
 - i) Improving the sharpness of learning targets by making sure they focus on what individual pupils need to know, understand and do next;
 - ii) Improving the use of time targets to increase the amount of good quality work produced in lessons so that rates of progress match the best seen at the school;
 - iii) Widening the opportunities for children to work out things for themselves;
 - iv) Improving the consistency of lesson planning to make the most effective use of support staff, volunteers and students to assess and monitor progress during the first part of literacy and numeracy lessons.

Further information can be found in paragraphs:

- 1 i). 8, 15, 27, 29, 35, 38, 55, 56, 70, 88, 94, 98.
- 1 ii). 12, 95.
1. iii) 12, 15, 17, 25, 26, 70, 85, 88, 97, 109, 116, 121, 127.
1. iv). 31, 64, 88, 98.

In addition the following less important issues also require attention:

2. Continue to improve rates of attendance 23.
3. Monitor the effective use of class-room based computers 89, 137.
4. Continue with improvements to the building to maintain good quality 61.

3. INTRODUCTION

3. Characteristics of the school

5. Totternhoe Lower School is located in an attractive village just outside Dunstable. The school is very popular with parents and two thirds of the children attending the school live outside the village. The school buildings are modern, light and airy and provide good quality accommodation for pupils and staff. The school has access to an on-site swimming pool that benefits both the pupils and the school community during the summer.

6. The current head teacher came into post in September, 1991 and the school benefits from a stable staffing situation. Links with the parents and local community including the church are very close and the aims of the school give high priority to the personal development of the pupils.

7. During the inspection there were 92 full time pupils; 50 boys and 42 girls, on the roll of the school. In the first class, there were seventeen pupils, 9 boys and 8 girls. Of these pupils, twelve were under five during the inspection. Eight pupils have been identified with special educational needs and one of them benefits from the protection of a statement. This is a lower percentage than seen in most primary schools. Fewer pupils than usual are entitled to free school meals. Currently there are no pupils whose first language is not English at the school.

8. The key educational and financial priorities are:

- . Maintain existing high standards in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology;
- . To raise standards further through continuing school self-evaluation, refining the process in the light of improved information systems;
- . To identify a fund for information and communication technology to enable the school to stay up-to-date with technological advances and training.

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	8	8	16

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	Boys	7	8	8
	Girls	8	8	8
	Total	15	16	16
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	94 (79)	100 (78)	100 (86)
	National	79 (80)	83 (81)	86 (84)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	Boys	7	8	8
	Girls	8	8	8
	Total	15	16	16
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	94	100	100
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

¹

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	3.7
		National comparative data	5.7
	Unauthorised Absence	School	0.04
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		10
	Satisfactory or better		100
	Less than satisfactory		0

5. PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

5. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

5. Attainment and progress

2. Standards achieved at the end of Key Stage 1 in 1999 are well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards are also well above average when compared to levels achieved by pupils attending similar schools. Standards achieved by pupils in Year 4 in reading, writing, spelling and mathematics are better than the average for Bedfordshire. Results also exceed those achieved by a nationally representative sample of schools as published by QCA. Overall results, at the age of seven and nine are better than those achieved at the time of the previous inspection in 1996 when standards were judged to be generally in line with national expectations.

3. In 1999 inspection evidence confirms that standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. Standards at the end of Year 4 are above average in English, mathematics and science and most pupils are on track to achieve at least level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2. Standards achieved in religious education and information and communication technology are good both at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Year 4. Standards are high because teaching is highly effective and as a consequence pupils make good progress.

4. Standards achieved by pupils at Totternhoe Lower School vary over time and the small numbers of pupils in each year group mean all results need to be treated with care. However, results in each year from 1996 to 1998 indicate that in reading, writing and mathematics pupils do better than pupils do nationally at the age of seven. Boys do particularly well. They exceed the national average by a greater margin than do girls and this reflects the specific efforts made by the school to improve the attainment of boys. However, there is still room for some improvement in the rate of progress. The school now needs to monitor the progress made by individual pupils, particularly girls, against their prior attainment to ensure all pupils achieve the highest standards they are capable of.

5. Standards in speaking and listening, reading and writing are well above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and above the Bedfordshire average in Year 4. Pupils use this very good level of skill effectively in discussions in all subjects. This is a key factor in adding to standards overall. By the age of seven almost all pupils have developed a good range of reading strategies. They listen to themselves as they read and self-correct, they show good ability to blend letters to spell out new words. Most pupils in Year 4 are confident readers who are well able to access non-fiction in the school library and undertake research. For example, about the properties of materials in science. They are confident in the use of dictionaries, index, contents, glossary and thesaurus and access the Internet confidently to read and write emails and find things out for themselves. Most pupils show a developing understanding of setting, character and plot and can discuss these in relation to their favourite authors.

6. Attainment in writing at the end of Key Stage 1 is well above average and by the end of Year 4 pupils' written work is better than seen in most Bedfordshire schools. Handwriting skills are taught systematically and almost all pupils write with a joined hand by the end of Key Stage 1. Spelling is taught systematically throughout the school. Pupils write news, stories, poems and reports and basic punctuation is secure. By Year 4 pupils have a good range of strategies to help them write. For example, they know how to plan their work and present it effectively, punctuation and the spelling of common words is usually correct. Pupils know how to use paragraphs and chapter headings appropriately. Effective use of information and communication technology is extending the range and quality of written work.

7. Standards in mathematics as judged by the previous inspection were sound but unremarkable. During the intervening years, good attention has been paid to mathematics and, coupled with the introduction of the numeracy strategy in recent months, standards have improved considerably. Results in the Key Stage 1 National Curriculum tests shows a decline in 1997 but a significant improvement in both 1998 and 1999. The rate of improvement in mathematics is better overall than that found nationally. In the 1999 tests, pupils achieved high standards in relation to both the national average and the average found in similar schools. The proportion achieving level 3 is far higher than found nationally and in similar schools.

8. Inspectors judge that standards in the ongoing work are at the same high level found in the National Curriculum tests by the end of Key Stage 1. By the age of nine, standards are also good and this positive picture suggests that by the time these pupils take the end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests in their next school, they will achieve standards which bear at least good comparison to those elsewhere. Pupils know the required number bonds by the end of Key Stage 1 and the knowledge of tables is good by the end of Year 4. However, in the Year 3/4 class, little of this work is done against the clock and pupils' speed of calculation could be quicker. Pupils made the best progress when they discovered previously unknown patterns and relationships in numbers and used them to assist the efficient solving of arithmetic and other mathematical problems.

9. Standards in science were good at the time of the previous inspection. The school has preserved the best of these things and has addressed well those areas where there was room for improvement. In the 1999 Key Stage 1 National Curriculum teacher assessments, standards in science are high in comparison with the results found nationally. When the school's result is compared to those in similar schools it is also evident that standards are very good. In addition, the proportion of pupils achieving level 3 in these tests is far above the national average and above that found in similar schools.

10. Evidence gathered in school from lesson observation, the close examination of pupils' work over the last year or so and in talking to pupils, shows that standards in science are above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 4. There is every indication that pupils in Year 4 will achieve good standards in the 2003 Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests.

11. Pupils make consistently good progress during their time at the school. There is good consolidation of work in lessons and teachers build on this effectively. There are a number of reasons why most pupils make good progress but the most significant reason is the effectiveness of good teaching. There is a very effective link between teaching, planning and target setting. The school has set targets in English, mathematics and science for recent and future years and has exceeded these on a number of occasions. Information is systematically collected and rigorously analysed to track progress. This has had the effect of making staff very conscious of the standards being achieved by different groups of pupils. The school has gone one step further and used this information to set targets for individual pupils. Pupils and parents are not yet fully aware of these targets and so there is still some margin for improvement. There is also some potential to improve the rate of progress because occasionally a too didactic teaching style inhibits the progress pupils make in lessons.

12. Pupils' good literacy and numeracy skills are effective in improving progress in other subjects. For example, work in science, information and communication technology, design and technology, and geography benefits from pupils' high levels of numeracy. Progress in religious education, history, geography and information and communication technology benefits because the literacy skills of pupils are being used to good effect to raise attainment in these subjects.

13. Evidence about the progress of boys and girls is contradictory. In general boys and girls are observed to be equally keen and enthusiastic about their work although it is evident that boys are doing better in end of Key Stage 1 tests. Just now and again there are signs that one or two boys are not as well motivated and this shows in greater levels of distraction and low level misbehaviour. This is particularly noticeable when learning is over-directed.

14. Pupils with special educational needs achieve levels that are expected given their prior attainment and they make good progress. Examination of pupils' work and records shows that some pupils with special educational needs made very good progress during the past year. This is because their individual education plans are well written with clear targets that provide a secure basis for planning and assessment. The good work of both teachers and support staff has a very beneficial effect on the attainment and progress of these pupils

15. Pupils aged under five make good progress and the majority achieve the expected levels before they are five. Their education gets off to a flying start and they quickly become confident, independent learners. Early learning experiences are well planned based on the Desirable Learning Outcomes but also take good account of the starting points for the National Curriculum. This is a strength and ensures that children make good progress in developing their early reading, writing and mathematics skills. As a result they are well prepared for the National Curriculum.

19. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

16. The school is well ordered, friendly and caring. Relationships are based on mutual respect and underpin positively the effective learning taking place. There is a very good work ethic, standards of behaviour are very good and pupils are confident to take full advantage of the good quality of education provided. Parents appreciate the ways the school fosters pupils' self-confidence, self-awareness and the tolerant attitudes shown to one another.

17. Children start school at four years of age and quickly settle into the routines. By the time they are five most are able to share, co-operate successfully and behave very responsibly. Throughout Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They demonstrate particularly high levels of confidence and well-developed social skills. Older pupils show kindness and consideration to one another and staff, and by the time they are ready to move to middle school they are well on their way to becoming responsible future citizens.

18. Pupils respond well to the code of conduct and to teachers consistently high expectations for good behaviour. There have been no exclusions within the past twelve months. Boys and girls equally work with good application and good levels of concentration in lessons. Most settle quickly to work, enjoy the challenge of tasks and are well motivated to give of their best. Pupils show pride in finished work that they are keen to share with others. They show a generosity of spirit in admiring the work of others. Pupils show good levels of self-discipline and personal motivation, and standards of behaviour are very good. Pupils with special educational needs have good attitudes to learning and respond well to the careful attention given to enabling them to succeed.

22. Attendance

19. Attendance at the school is broadly in line with the national average. There is well below average recorded unauthorised absences. The head teacher rightly takes a tough line on dissuading parents from taking their children on holidays in term-time, however still too many do this. Pupils are punctual and lessons begin on time. The governors are appropriately reporting attendance matters to the parents. Pupils' satisfactory attendance makes a positive contribution to the high standards being achieved.

23. QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

20. In 1996 teaching overall was judged to be satisfactory but in almost one lesson in five teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory. There has been a considerable improvement in the quality of teaching during the intervening almost four years. Teaching is now good. Teaching is good or better in almost three-quarters of all lessons. Teaching is satisfactory in the remaining quarter of lessons seen. Where teaching is very good, one lesson in ten, teaching is at its most effective and pupils make very good progress. Examples of very good teaching are seen in mathematics, music and with the under-fives.

21. Teaching is consistently good because of good subject knowledge, detailed planning, high expectations and the effective use of time, resources and day-to-day assessment. These strengths are seen particularly in English, mathematics, science and music. Good teaching becomes very good teaching when expectations are particularly high and the methods and organisation used give pupils the confidence and opportunity to do their best. The most challenging questioning was seen with the under-fives. Teachers' expectations are at their highest when they set the parameters for learning but do not over-direct the work and when they teach pupils specialist subject language so they can think and operate at a higher level.

22. Teachers at this school obviously enjoy working with their pupils. Good relationships are evident and teachers know just how to capture the attention and enthusiasm of their pupils. There is much joy in learning in many lessons. Just occasionally teachers appear to become over-anxious and demonstrate a lack of confidence in the ability of their pupils. As a result work is over-directed, teachers talk too much, a few boys become restless and progress is less than it should be.

23. Teachers' planning is thorough and provides a secure foundation for continuous learning. They set learning objectives for lessons and share them with the pupils. However, learning objectives are not always specific enough to be useful for assessment. In some lessons they are re-visited during the plenary session. The success of this strategy varies but in most lessons the use of this activity to reinforce learning and identify the next steps in learning is under-developed. Teachers understand the importance of rigorous assessment and evaluation of learning. Marking is good and well used to help pupils improve their work. Teachers group and re-group pupils and plan for different levels of learning well. This would be even better if the targets were more specific and pupils were involved more actively in the assessment of their own learning. The use of homework to consolidate learning and raise standards is well understood by teachers and they make very effective use of homework across the school.

24. Teachers manage pupils well. There are a number of pupils who present potentially difficult patterns of behaviour that could easily disrupt teaching and learning. The fact is they do not and this is because of the effective strategies used to manage these pupils by both teachers and support staff.

25. The teaching provided for pupils with special educational needs is good and some very good teaching is also seen. This high quality reflects the good work of support staff and the well-written individual education plans. Because targets are clear, specific and measurable planning and assessment are good and it is therefore easy to understand why these pupils make good and sometimes very good progress.

26. The under-fives benefit from the most consistently high quality teaching seen at the school. The staff work together under the effective leadership of the reception class teacher. Staff understand the learning needs of their young charges well and provide a rich range of learning experiences. There are magical moments which entrance the children so that they are fully

engaged in their learning. Not surprisingly progress is at least good and some pupils are making very good progress in becoming confident readers, writers and mathematicians.

27. Teachers in this school are reflective about their work and constantly seek ways to improve. Teachers and support staff work well together as a team. Communication between them is very good but occasionally lesson planning does not make it clear what support staff are to do to improve progress during the introduction to literacy and numeracy lessons. Professional development has been very effective in supporting all staff as they successfully implement the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies.

31. The curriculum and assessment

28. The school's curriculum is of good quality, provides rich and varied opportunities for all pupils. Curricular aims are clearly expressed in the prospectus for parents to read. The school successfully meets the aims as set out, and provides a good quality of education that offers all pupils equality of opportunity to succeed. The curriculum maintains breadth across the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, and is suitably balanced. The school has successfully introduced the National strategies for literacy and numeracy. Extra-curricular provision is good and extends the good quality, and range of curricular experiences provided. There has been good improvement since the time of the previous inspection in these respects. The curriculum planned for children under five meets well the expectations of the Desirable Learning Outcomes, and provides these children with a good start to their education. This leads them, when ready, onto the National Curriculum programmes of study.

29. Statutory requirements are met in all subjects. There is good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education including sex education and drugs awareness and provides good preparation for the next stage of education. The requirement for collective worship is observed in daily class and whole school assemblies. The quality of annual written reports to parents is good and they provide good quality detailed information about pupils' achievements across the curriculum. Reporting requirements are met in full.

30. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the National Curriculum. Individual targets are set out in pupils' individual education plans and are met well. All recommendations of the special educational needs Code of Practice are securely in place and known to all staff and parents. Parents are kept well informed about the provision made for their child and involved well in supporting the targets. Most attend the annual reviews held to assess progress made. The paperwork maintained to track these pupils' development is of good quality, and ensures that the impact of the various strategies used to meet individual needs are co-ordinated in the best interests of each child.

31. Long and medium term planning at both key stages is comprehensive and cohesive. There is good subject guidance to support teaching and learning across the subjects, and this enables pupils to make good progress. The monitoring of weekly plans is undertaken by the head teacher to ensure full coverage of the various programmes of study. A programme of evaluative monitoring of both teaching and learning has enabled good practice to be shared and this has aided positively to the schools developing self-review practices. The effective implementation of the national literacy and numeracy strategies provides an added structure to teachers' planning which is benefiting learning. Lesson planning, although satisfactory sometimes lacks clear and precise objectives for learning which cover the full range of pupils in the class or group. The role of the support staff, volunteers and students is not consistently identified in lesson plans.

32. Integral to the curriculum is a good range of educational visits that enrich and extend pupils' class work. These include visits to theatre, museums, environmental centre and village walks. Visitors to school to share their experience and expertise have included a story-teller, local historian, local residents, author, community police, multicultural support, members of the business community and local clergy. Most staff organise and run a range of sporting and music extra-curricular activities which benefit many children.

33. The school has good procedures for assessing the quality of pupils' work that are consistently applied and used. School portfolios have been assembled which usefully contain samples of completed work. These show the levels being achieved are maintained in core subjects. Detailed comments show very good insights into why the work has been chosen to exemplify the standards. This is helpful in raising teacher's expectations of what standards are achievable in this school. Teachers keep useful records of what pupils have learnt as an outcome of their experiences. Lesson plans are usefully evaluated to check on what pupils have learnt but sometimes this is affected by the generality of the objectives set and more precise objectives would enable more exact assessment of how well individuals have made gains in their knowledge, understanding and skills development. There is a school policy for marking and the overall standard is very effective in emphasising what pupils need to do next to improve their work.

34. A good start has been made in tracking individual progress and targets aimed at encouraging positive improvements are set for each child and are shared each term with parents. These support the realisation of the targets set for classes which in turn support the targets set for the school to achieve in English and mathematics each year. Governors have recently received training to enable them to monitor the effectiveness of the school's provision in meeting educational targets.

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

35. The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good because it is very effective in ensuring that pupils are becoming sensitive, reflective, well-behaved citizens with a well developed sense of social responsibility. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when provision was good.

36. In whole school and class assemblies there are very good opportunities for pupils to reflect on the beauty of the natural world and show care and concern for others who are less fortunate. Teachers use lighted candles and other symbols to mark the opening and closing of assembly time and in so doing create a 'special atmosphere'. Pupils sing and pray together in harmony and are keen to play leading roles in assembly. They conduct the singing, play musical instruments and write prayers that show sensitivity. There are good opportunities for them to respond in awe and wonder across the school. The youngest pupils are open-mouthed with amazement as the printer prints their 'computer bugs' and they gasp at the actions of the puppets in a music lesson. Pupils respond well to the beauty of man-made objects such as Clarice Cliff designs or Willow Pattern plates.

37. The moral code of the school is very clear and evident in all the actions of the staff. School rules are clear and simple and understood by all. Pupils show considerable insight into the problems experienced by new children in adapting to school rules, "He doesn't know us yet" said one boy in support of a newcomer who was being reminded of the schools' expectations for behaviour. In religious education lessons and class discussions pupils have many good opportunities to consider moral dilemmas such as what do you do if you find a ten pound note. They study the moral choices made by historical figures such as the Buddha and Mary Seole and in this way are learning principles by which to make decisions about right and wrong.

38. Social relationships at the school are very good. Tolerance and acceptance are expected and staff provide a good model in the way they relate to each other and to the pupils. New children are made to feel welcome and those from different backgrounds are accepted and integrated well. Pupils are given good opportunities to work together to undertake investigations in mathematics or science for example. They have very good opportunities to demonstrate their social responsibility as they prepare Christmas gift boxes for disadvantaged children, deliver harvest gifts and raise funds for the local hospice for sick children. Through their work on environmental issues they have very good opportunities to reflect on man's impact on the world and think about how they can bring about improvement.

39. Through music and art pupils have very good opportunities to learn about their own culture and that of other countries. Work in history and geography enables them to gain good insights into life in the past and over seas. In religious education they learn about different faiths and life-style and learn respect and tolerance. The school makes specific efforts to equip pupils with knowledge and understanding about the rich diversity of people who live in Britain. Through the celebration of non-Christian festivals such as Diwali, story, carefully selected artefacts, music, art and visitors and planned visits the school is doing all it reasonably can to equip pupils for life in a multi-cultural society.

43. Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

40. The school provides a very caring, safe and secure environment in which relationships are supportive and staff respond very well to pupil needs. There are appropriate procedures in place to deal with accidents and first aid and all aspects of health and safety are taken seriously and responded to very effectively. Individual records of achievement are passed from one teacher to the next to usefully inform a child's move through the school. Procedures for monitoring pupils' progress are very good. Strengths identified at the time of the previous inspection have been well maintained. The school continues to make very good provision for the care and well-being of pupils.

41. The induction arrangements for pupils new to the school are good. At the time of the inspection two pupils from travelling families had recently joined the school and were well integrated. Pupils under five are helped to settle in with great sensitivity to needs. They have already made a good start to their education and are happy in school. First term assessments covering how well pupils have settled into school are shared with parents and are a positive feature. Pupils with special educational needs are given good support to enable them to access a full curriculum, and they make good progress in meeting the targets set for them. Very good provision is made for pupils' personal, social and health education. Staff are alert and aware to the issues concerning child protection. There are effective procedures in place to monitor attendance; the quality of maintenance of registers is sound. The school expects pupils to be well motivated and self-disciplined. Emphasis is given to reinforcing positive behaviour as set out in the Code of Conduct. The very good quality of behaviour in evidence throughout the school demonstrates that the school's approach is working well. Parents have confidence in the school's approach to dealing with all aspects of behaviour including bullying.

45. Partnership with parents and the community

42. The sound links with parents, community and local schools identified at the time of the previous inspection have all improved, and very good links are now harnessed to the benefit of pupils.

43. Parents provide excellent support for the quality of education provided. There are extremely effective strategies in place to encourage parents to become involved in their children's education. These include; invitations to events such as Easter, Harvest and Christmas celebrations, sports day, curriculum evenings, termly consultation meetings and the home work contract. A number of parents meet in the school when they bring very young

children to the play group which meets weekly in a classroom provided by the school. Later this term the playgroup children are to perform a nativity play for the rest of the school to enjoy.

44. Communication, including regular letters from the head teacher, provides a very good range of information about the school. Recent meetings have been held about the literacy and numeracy hours and information and communication technology. About a dozen parents and friends of the school provide regular and effective help, supporting work in classes and helping with after school clubs. There is an extremely well organised and active Parents' Association (PA) which organises social events and raises very considerable funds to help the school.

45. There is on-going liaison with other local schools and this is helpful in supporting Year 4 pupils' transfer to middle school. Support has been given by business which has facilitated the development of the new information and communication technology suite.

46. There are useful links with the local community and strong ties with village-life. For example, at harvest-time pupils take gifts to the local senior citizen's homes, they celebrate harvest at St Giles church and support a hospice for sick children. A number of local people including the nurse, Sikh friend, vicar and police officer come into school to share their experiences. The school has worked hard to make itself available as a resource for the community and local groups such as cubs and beavers use school grounds for their "sausage sizzle". An adult technology club organised by one of the governors is soon to run. There are links with the wider community through a well organised visits programme to such places as a Hindu temple to support religious studies work; Quantum science theatre as part of science topic and Priory Park environmental centre to support geography. All of this enriches the experiences being provided for the pupils at Totternhoe Lower School and is enabling them to become responsible citizens.

50. **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

50. **Leadership and management**

47. In 1996 it was judged that leadership and management were strengths of the school and that the head teacher, staff and governors were purposeful in their resolve to deliver good quality education and above average standards. These qualities have been maintained and, in many respects, improved during the intervening years and today, the school is very well led and managed.

48. Visitors to school are struck immediately by the very good sense of purpose that is detectable in classrooms, offices and other places in school. The head teacher has continued to develop her role as the guiding light in school. She has an unwavering commitment to standards, teaching and learning quality which are the best for all pupils. She encourages other members of staff to shoulder a fair degree of responsibility for school management but gives firm, decisive leadership whenever necessary. In sum, her leadership and management are the keys to the many successes of the school.

49. The good quality of monitoring makes a strong contribution to these successes. The headteacher, staff and governors all know well the strengths and areas for improvement in the school. This is because the system to find out what is happening in lessons is good. The headteacher and all teachers monitor learning as it takes place in lessons. They have well thought out criteria to set their observations against, and they make astute evaluation of successes and challenges. In addition to direct monitoring, staff evaluate planning carefully to ensure learning experiences are appropriate for all pupils and there is a good system of sampling the work that has been produced. Governors keep an alert eye on the everyday work and life in school and the governors responsible for literacy and numeracy make

valuable and good quality observations in lessons that are used by their colleagues to assess the effectiveness of the school.

50. The good outcome of monitoring is evident in the quality of school development planning. Staff and governors form a premier team with a very good sense of direction. They know, and share the priorities of the school and all have a very good role in formulating the development plan. The plan itself is of good quality and is used to frame the decision making and taking process well. This ensures that governors know the cost effectiveness of their decisions as it allows them to query intentions and to judge results against predictions of outcome. In this way, the governors are growing into the role of critical friends of the school at a good rate.

51. School managers are developing a very good system of target setting in order to move ahead. They have set overall targets for attainment in National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 1 to the year 2001, even though there is no statutory compulsion to do this. So far, progress in achieving these targets is very good. In recent months, the overall targets have been used to help set appropriate targets for every pupil and the school is developing good procedures to keep track of these and to match them to actual attainment as pupils grow. This term, targets have been set and shared with the pupils at the start of some lessons for English and mathematics. This is not yet consistent practice and there is little checking, by the pupils and teacher together, whether the targets have been met at the end of lessons.

52. Within this effective process of target setting, the provision for pupils with special educational needs is well managed. The special educational needs co-ordinator does a thorough job and keeps all members of staff well informed about the assessed needs of individual pupils. Targets in the pupils' individual education plans are well judged and clearly appropriate. These targets are used carefully to match learning support to need. The good rate of progress made by the pupils is the result of the effective management of special educational needs.

53. High standards are at the heart of the work of all those involved in school management. This is very apparent in the overall ethos of the school. The school is a welcoming, happy and pleasant place for pupils to work and in most respects, existing standards are high. The school is not complacent however and managers know that best possible standards are well within their reach. Overall, the potential for management to make continuing improvement is very good.

57. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

54. Good levels of staffing, good quality resources and good accommodation support positively the good quality of education being provided at Totternhoe Lower School. The strengths identified in respect of these areas at the time of the previous inspection have all been maintained. Of particular mention is the high quality of display in all areas of the school which both celebrate pupils' individual achievements and also inspires and stimulates their interest and curiosity about the culturally rich world in which they live.

55. Teachers and support staff very effectively work together as a strong team. The very good quality of relationships between adults has a tangible impact on the good standards pupils achieve. New staff are given good support to enable them to get to know the school and induction arrangements are effective. Staff training has assisted very considerably the professional development of individual teachers who are now confident to teach all subjects to a good standard, and through self-review practices are clear about how to raise standards yet higher. The arrangements for appraisal are good and on schedule. They are seen as a positive feature in aiding raised performance.

56. The school administrative officer was away recovering from an operation during the week of inspection. From the discussions she had with the registered inspector during the initial visit

and from the scrutiny of administrative records and procedures it is evident that she assists the smooth running of daily routines very effectively. The caretaker provides good quality support in maintaining a clean, safe and very attractive environment. Kitchen and lunchtime staff make valued contributions.

57. The quality of accommodation is good. Classes are large, bright and airy and appropriate for both the age and number of pupils using them. A rolling programme of maintenance and decoration is effective in ensuring high quality. Of current concern to school managers is a leaking roof and deteriorating tarmac playground surface but these are receiving attention. The school grounds are well tended and extremely attractive. They support positively pupils' physical and environmental education. The swimming pool is used well. It is kept open as a resource for the school community during the six weeks summer vacation with financial support for this given by the Parents' Association. Learning resources are good overall. Good use is made of visits, visitors and the Local Education Authority's loan service to enhance what is available in school.

61. The efficiency of the school

58. Last time, inspectors judged that the school operated as an efficient organisation but there was some slack in long term planning and higher achieving pupils were not taxed enough. Target setting and better strategic planning were key issues in 1996, though it was acknowledged that planning ahead was made more difficult by the fluctuation of the budget as pupil numbers grew or contracted. In many ways, the position today is improved and the rate of efficiency is now good.

59. Governors, staff and parents have done much to swell the school budget. Much additional funding is raised by their collective efforts and this is directed at providing extra learning support and resources in order to keep class sizes relatively small. Although a successful initiative, the maintenance of such large scale additional finance is demanding in the long term. The head teacher has worked hard to gain more orthodox growth in the school budget to preserve existing class sizes and has succeeded in this quest. All funds are planned and managed very well and the everyday level of monetary control and administration are very good. Expenditure is set well against the school development priorities and governors have a good grasp of the cost effectiveness of their decisions.

60. In general, the other resources available to the school are used well. The teaching staff are well deployed to teach the range of pupils and learning support staff give good service. There are times when learning support staff have little to do. This is at the start of some literacy and numeracy sessions and in these cases it is not clear what the advantage to pupils is from their presence. In other respects, resources and the accommodation are put to good use. The quality of display is very good and this sets high standards for pupils to achieve in their work. Time is used well on the whole, but better use could be made of target setting to ensure that learning advances at the best rate for all pupils. Whilst most teachers give pupils a set time allowance for elements of their work, they do not often say how much should be produced in that time.

61. Partly because of the additional money it generates, the school spends much more on the pupils than other primary schools. Nonetheless, the value produced for this money is good. This is because the quality of education is good, as is progress. Standards in English and mathematics are a particular strength and they are good in other subjects too. Many improvements have been made since the last inspection and the prospect for continued improvement is very good. Pupils get a good deal for the money spent on them.

65. **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

65. **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE**

62. Pupils are admitted to the school initially on a part-time basis moving to fulltime as they gain in confidence. The school admission policy follows the agreed Local Education Authority guidelines for admission to four-plus units, with all children having the option to start school when they have had their fourth birthday. At the time of the inspection twelve of the seventeen children in the first class were under five.

63. Provision for children under five is good. The children make a good start to their education because they make good progress. Early learning experiences are well planned based on the Desirable Learning Outcomes but also take good account of the starting points for the National Curriculum. This is a strength that ensures that children make good progress in developing their early reading, writing and mathematics skills. As a result they are well prepared for the National Curriculum.

64. Internal and external accommodation is good. Resources and equipment are plentiful, of good quality and readily accessible. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress and speak highly of the provision and care provided.

68. ***Attainment and progress***

65. Early assessment shows that attainment on entry is above average. Children come to school keen, eager and ready to learn. They make good progress and most achieve the expected levels before the age of five.

69. ***Teaching***

66. Teaching is good and sometimes very good. This is a key factor influencing the amount of progress these young children make. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Staff know the children well and have very high expectations for personal and social development. They expect children to be sensible, responsible learners with positive attitudes and they are. Staff make lessons interesting and relevant to the children's interests. Many lessons are exciting and staff know just how to use drama to increase anticipation. Planning is a strength because it ensures good communication between members of the staff team. Baseline assessment is in place but staff are dissatisfied with the present system because it does not provide them with enough detailed information to set targets for pupils. There are effective strategies in place to identify pupils who may have special educational needs. The management of pupils is a particular strength. The very good approach to discipline ensures very good behaviour and promotes confidence and self-discipline. It is also inclusive and staff are observed to manage firmly but with great sensitivity the behaviour of a new entrant. There is a good balance between teacher-directed and child-chosen activities and independent learning skills are being developed well.

70. ***Personal and social development***

67. Children make good progress in this area of learning and before the age of five achieve the expected national levels. Behaviour is very good and children know right from wrong. They form friendships and work and play with other children confidently. They learn class and school routines well. For example, they know how to take part in a class discussion and follow the "bus stop" rule when sharing the wheeled toys in the playground. Children show perseverance and determination when trying to complete tasks. For example, a girl wanted to construct a box and showed considerable determination in carrying out this task. Children are encouraged to develop their self-help skills, such as helping to tidy away in creative lessons and taking responsibility for their coats and reading books. The children are keen to learn and enjoy talking to others about their learning.

71. **Language and literacy**

68. By the age of five all children achieve the expected levels in language and literacy and many exceed them. Pupils make good progress in the development of their early reading and writing skills.

69. Almost all children have good speaking and listening skills and most are confident articulate speakers. This was well demonstrated when children talked about books and the stories read to them. The story of *"The Snowman"* stimulated a lot of discussion about the weather and the effect of temperature on snow. Children listen to others with interest and some are beginning to ask their own questions. Early reading skills are developing well. About a third of the class have already learned a basic sight vocabulary and have begun to read and enjoy the first reading books. Another third are learning initial words and letter sounds. The rest of the class is still developing their book handling skills. All children in the class enjoy sharing a book with their teacher or visitor. The higher attainers read with confidence and enthusiasm. They recognise initial letters which helps them make sensible guesses at unknown words and they are starting to use expression and different voices when they read. Children experiment with their early writing skills. Most can write their names, they enjoy experimenting with recording their own writing and they are beginning to form letters correctly. The teaching of language and literacy is often very good. The staff are confident, they know how to teach early skills and they do so systematically. Their enthusiasm is infectious and there is much pleasure in both teaching and learning in this area.

73. **Mathematics**

70. Attainment on entry to school is above average and most pupils achieve the expected level before the age of five. Progress is good. All pupils recognise numbers to five, most can identify numbers to 10 and a few to 20. About half the class can look at the numbers 0 to 10 on a number line and work out which numbers are missing. Most pupils can sequence numbers correctly to 10 and know whether a number is greater or less than a given number below ten. About half can do this when the range of numbers is increased to between 0 and 18. As a challenge when all the numbers except one had been revealed the teacher asked the pupils to work out which number was missing. Eventually one pupil did so by a process of elimination. This was high achievement and surprised both the teacher and the inspector. Most pupils are beginning to write numbers correctly to 10. Some can successfully add and take away when using counting bears to help them. The teaching of mathematics is very good. Lessons move at a brisk pace with frequent changes of activity to maintain the interest and enthusiasm of the pupils. There is very good emphasis on learning about number patterns and relationships and using them to solve problems.

74. **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

71. Children achieve the expected levels before the age of five. Progress is good. Children have good learning habits and can sustain interest for a surprisingly long period of time. Children work in the water tray and begin to explore cause and effect. They observe what happens when they pour water onto the water wheel. They know the pouring water makes the wheel turn but lack the vocabulary to explain this. Children learn about their senses and have good recall of an earlier lesson when they investigated sight. They are keen to test their sense of touch by feeling things concealed in boxes and guessing at the contents. Children begin to understand about the passing of time as they observe the world around them and notice how the weather changes as winter approaches – they are looking forward to snow with keen anticipation! They think about the journey they make to school each day and draw simple pictures to show the route they take. They are confident users of information technology and many already know how to control programs using the mouse or key-board. They are open-mouthed when they see the printer in action and much excitement is generated as their pictures are produced. Teaching in this area is good. A strength in teaching is the care staff take to identify what the child already knows. For example, there is careful assessment of computer skills and an individual programme of extension activities developed for each child.

75. *Creative development*

72.Children achieve the national expectations by the age of five. Children make good progress as they experiment with a range of resources in art. They can select from a range of materials to make snowman collages and show independence and confidence in deciding what their snowman will look like. They print repeating patterns using a variety of resources and paint with growing confidence and accuracy. They have the confidence to make choices of resources and materials to achieve the effects they want. The children enjoy music, sing tunefully and with considerable enthusiasm. They work hard in music lessons to learn new words and tunes and many have sufficient control to stop and start in time with the music. Higher attaining pupils are already adopting a good body posture in music and follow the lead given by the member of staff very closely. Children recognise different rhythms and rhymes and many can copy them accurately. Children have good opportunities to adopt different roles when playing in the home-corner and often interpret their role with insight and enthusiasm. The teaching in this area is good. One good feature is the confidence staff have in the pupils' ability to make their own decisions. Staff have trained the children well so they know how to make safe choices and talk about what they want to achieve. This emphasis on independence and decision making is a strength of the work with the under-fives.

76. *Physical development*

73.Physical development is good and children make good progress. In the playground children show a good awareness of space and play safely leaving plenty of room for others. They control the wheeled toys well, stopping, starting and changing direction confidently. Teachers' planning indicates that children have good opportunities to improve and refine the movements of their whole body and learn to use space effectively. Children also improve the skills with which they use their hands and fingers to cut, write, thread, and manipulate small items and materials such as clay. Children run, jump and move around larger spaces, such as the hall or playground safely. They use small apparatus and can roll and throw balls with developing skill. Teaching in this area is satisfactory based on the limited evidence of two outdoor physical play sessions. One strength in this area is how the teacher is meeting some of the objectives for physical play and those for personal and social development through the equipment sharing strategy known as the "bus stop" system. As a result pupils negotiate the sharing of favourite equipment in a mature and effective manner.

77. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

77. English

74.During the previous inspection in 1996 standards in English were judged to be generally in line with national expectations and pupils' made satisfactory progress. Evidence from the 1999 inspection confirms that standards have improved and pupils' now make good progress in all aspects of English. Using a wide range of evidence, test results, completed work and work in progress, pupils' records and discussions with pupils and teachers inspectors judge that standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are well above average.

75.At the end of Key Stage 1 standards achieved in the 1999 national tests in reading and writing are well above the national average and well above those achieved by pupils attending similar schools. Standards achieved by pupils at Totternhoe Lower School vary over time and the small numbers of pupils in each year group mean all results need to be treated with care. However, results in each year from 1996 to 1998 indicate that in reading and writing pupils achieve higher standards than most pupils do nationally at the age of seven. Boys exceed the national average to a greater extent than do girls and this reflects the specific efforts made by the school to improve the attainment of boys. It is now time to monitor the performance of individual pupils, but particularly girls, against their prior attainment to ensure all pupils make the maximum progress and achieve the highest standards they are capable of.

76.Pupils at the end of Year 4 take the optional national tests and results in 1999 show that

pupils are achieving higher standards than the average for Bedfordshire and a Nationally representative sample of schools. In reading 50% more pupils achieved level 4 and in writing twice as many pupils achieved level 4 than the average for the county. Standards in the current Year 4 are not quite as high but they are judged to be above average. This does not represent regression as this group of pupils have made good progress when judged against their level of attainment at the end of Key Stage 1.

77. Speaking and listening skills are well above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Year 4. Pupils use this very good level of skill effectively in discussions in all subjects. This is a key factor in adding to standards overall. Occasionally, particularly at Key Stage 2 over-control and over-direction by the teacher limits the opportunities for pupils to demonstrate the full range of their speaking skills. Pupils in Year 1 discuss "Scat Cat" with enthusiasm and demonstrate confidence when speaking to the whole class they offer sensible reasons and explanations for the title of the book. Pupils in Year 2 discuss what a biography is and know how it differs from other books. They use past and present tenses correctly and add richness to their comments by the use of adjectives and adverbs. In Key Stage 2, in geography, pupils discuss the density of housing in a built up area and the impact on daily life. In design and technology they discuss their designs and have an appropriate vocabulary with which to evaluate them. At both key stages most pupils demonstrate the ability to discuss issues in a balanced way. For example when discussing the advantages and disadvantages of motorways, railways and buses. They are able to see both points of view and provide evidence to justify their opinions. Older pupils are aware of others as listeners and present ideas in a clear and interesting way. Listeners demonstrate the ability to listen carefully to their peers and to ask interesting questions to find out more. A love of language is developing well and some extended discussion took place about the meaning of the word 'exquisite' and when it might be used in a Year 3/4 literacy lesson.

78. Attainment in reading at the end of Key Stage 1 is well above average. Almost all pupils have developed a good range of reading strategies by the age of seven. From the earliest class pupils show awareness of initial letter sounds and names and are acquiring good strategies to deal with new or unknown words. By the end of Year 2 pupils listen to themselves as they read and self-correct, they show good ability to blend letters to spell out new words. Most pupils read with fluency and expression and they do so with confidence. They also pay good attention to punctuation and dialogue - changing voice for different characters. Attainment by the end of Year 4 is above the Bedfordshire average. Most pupils are confident readers who are well able to access non-fiction in the school library and undertake research, for example, about the properties of materials in science. They are confident in the use of dictionaries, index, contents, glossary and thesaurus. They know what the 'blurb' is and what it is used for. In Year 4 pupils are able to use their good reading skills to access the Internet, read and write emails and find things out for themselves. Most pupils are beginning to show an understanding of the development of setting, character and plot and can discuss these in relation to their favourite authors.

79. Attainment in writing at the end of Key Stage 1 is well above average and by the end of Year 4 pupils' written work is better than seen in most Bedfordshire schools. Handwriting skills are taught systematically. Pupils are encouraged to develop at their own pace and some pupils are being taught to join their writing in Year 1. Almost all pupils write with a joined hand by the end of the key stage. Spelling is taught systematically throughout the school. Pupils are introduced to common letter patterns and practise spellings regularly. Dictionaries are introduced in Year 1 and pupils become confident users by the end of Year 2. Pupils write news, stories, poems and reports and basic punctuation is secure. By Year 4 pupils have a good range of strategies to help them write. For example, they know how to plan their work and present it effectively - whether writing a story, play, poem or reporting their findings in science. Spelling is good with most common and regularly spelt words being correct. Punctuation is correct and pupils use correctly a range of symbols to punctuate their work. Pupils know when to use paragraphs and chapter headings. Information and communication

technology is extending the range and quality of written work. For example, pupils in Year 4 are gathering material and writing articles for a school newspaper.

80. Pupils make consistently good progress during their time at the school. There is good consolidation of work in lessons and teachers build on this effectively. Attention is paid to the development of imaginative or vivid language and pupils are taught specific vocabulary for different subjects. For example, in music pupils in Year 1 are introduced to terms such as dynamics, scale and tempo. Progress in the development of effective reading strategies is evident throughout the school. Group work in literacy hour is consistently well matched to the learning needs of pupils. For example, an information and communication technology activity to improve the use and understanding of grammar and punctuation in Year 3. The scrutiny of completed work and work in progress shows good progress in the incremental development of skills and knowledge over time. There is some potential to improve the rate of progress because occasionally a too didactic teaching style inhibits the progress pupils make in lessons.

81. Literacy skills across school are good and this is improving progress in other subjects. For example, in science, religious education, history and geography where the literacy skills of pupils are being used to good effect to raise attainment. The information and communication technology suite and the main school library are well used to ensure good progress in the development of research skills.

82. Pupils with special educational needs achieve levels that are expected given their prior attainment and they make good progress. Examination of pupils' work and records shows that some pupils with special educational needs made very good progress during the past year. This is because their individual education plans are well written with clear targets that provide a secure basis for planning and assessment. The good work of both teachers and support staff has a very beneficial effect on the attainment and progress of these pupils

83. Pupils' response in lessons is good. Boys and girls show equal application and interest in lessons. During the previous inspection it was judged that perseverance and concentration were sometimes lacking and pupils sought adult help before it was needed. These issues are no longer a concern. Pupils are well behaved, they are keen and enthusiastic. They come to school ready to learn. Pupils show commitment to their work and on several occasions pupils were heard to volunteer to find out more at home. The very good relationships are used effectively to promote collaborative work. Pupils are confident to read aloud, or speak to the whole class or school. They are confident, eager, learners who are beginning to be involved in self-assessment but this is an area for further development.

84. The quality of teaching is good in over three-quarters of lessons. There is no unsatisfactory teaching in English. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when teaching was judged to be good in reading but sound overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge in English they know how to teach basic skills such as phonics and spelling imaginatively so that pupils sustain interest and remain attentive. Expectations are high. For example, there is some demanding questioning which challenges pupils to think more deeply and this is effective in raising standards. Sometimes over-direction by the teacher has a negative impact on questioning which results in close-ended, narrow questions being asked which do not enable pupils to demonstrate fully what they know, understand and can do. Planning is a satisfactory but learning targets are not always precise enough to support the crisp assessment of progress. The management of pupils is a good, firm, fair application of the school and class rules that are well understood by all ensures that the few difficult pupils at Totternhoe are well managed and do not become a problem in lessons. Pupils are frequently warned of the passage of time but this would be more effective if they were also told in all lessons what they had to achieve in the stated time. Introductions to lessons and plenary sessions are given sufficient time and introductions in particular are purposeful and well focussed. Teachers need to re-visit the lesson objectives more precisely in plenary sessions to reinforce learning and to

identify the next steps in learning. Marking is often of good quality, it praises effort and frequently includes comments to help pupils improve. The use of homework is a strength because it is well used to support and extend learning. Support staff make good contributions to teaching in English particularly when working with individual or small groups of pupils. They work well with class teachers but should be given a more specific role, perhaps recording or observing, during the introduction to the literacy hour.

85.The provision for English is good. The literacy hour has been implemented effectively and there is good emphasis on skills' teaching and the use and application of skills. The school maintains a rich and varied curriculum for English. A particular strength is the good use of text as a starting point from which to explore words, structure, form, character, setting and dialogue. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is well matched to their specific needs. The use of information and communication technology in the English curriculum is good and growing although class machines are less well used than those in the computer suite. Links between English and other subjects are good but more opportunities to extend and reinforce specific literacy skills across the curriculum need to be identified in planning. Assessment procedures are of good quality and results are well used to group pupils, set targets and plan new work. Assessment information is being used to chart progress but the full potential is not yet realised as pupils are less involved with their targets than they need to be. The management of English is good. The temporary postholder shows good insight into teaching and learning across the school and has had the opportunity to observe literacy sessions in other classes and at another school. There is rigorous analysis of test results to identify areas for improvement and staff development has been effective in ensuring staff are confident to implement the National Literacy Strategy.

89. **Mathematics**

86.The picture in mathematics painted by the previous inspection report showed satisfactory teaching creating sound opportunities for learning and the gradual development of skills and knowledge to average levels by the end of Key Stage 1 and then by the end of Year 4. Overall, there was nothing really remarkable in mathematics in 1996.

87.During the intervening years, good attention has been paid to mathematics and, coupled with the introduction of the numeracy strategy in recent months, the picture has now changed much for the better. Tracking of the results in the Key Stage 1 National Curriculum tests shows a decline in 1997 but a significant improvement in both 1998 and 1999. The rate of improvement in the school is better overall than that found nationally. In the 1999 tests, pupils achieved high standards in relation to both the national average and the average found in similar schools and the proportion achieving level 3 was far higher than found nationally and in similar schools.

88.Inspectors judge that standards in the ongoing work are at the same high level found in the National Curriculum tests by the end of Key Stage 1. A much higher proportion of pupils is achieving the expected level at this age and many go well beyond this. By the age of nine, standards are also good and this positive picture suggests that by the time these pupils take the end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests in their next school, they will achieve standards which bear at least good comparison to those elsewhere.

89.Boys tend to do rather better in mathematics than the girls, though in lessons few reasons for this are to be found. Generally, girls and boys give similar levels of concentration and effort to the work. Paradoxically, there are a few instances of a small number of boys losing interest early in the work, but on the whole all pupils, including those with special educational needs make good progress in learning.

90.The school has set and published targets for attainment in mathematics for recent and future years and has exceeded these on a number of occasions. These targets are well tracked against actual achievement at different stages in school and have a profound impact on the sense of direction that pervades the work in mathematics. These overall targets have been used as the basis for the production of targets for individual pupils and, again, the effort put into this has been repaid in the form of improved rates of progress. This year, as the school introduces its numeracy strategy, some teachers are setting targets for learning in each lesson and sharing them with the pupils. This is in its infancy as the process is not consistent and pupils do not yet have much involvement in deciding whether the targets have been achieved or not. It is, however a successful procedure as it is giving sharper focus to the teaching of skills and knowledge in mathematics.

91.Because the curriculum is broadly based, covers all four aspects of mathematics and is well implemented in lessons, pupils develop good knowledge, skill and understanding. Attention to basic numeracy is good and the school has made a good start to its numeracy strategy. Pupils know the required number bonds by the end of Key Stage 1 and the knowledge of tables is good by the end of Year 4. However, in the Year 3/4 class, little of this work is done against the clock and pupils' speed of calculation could be quicker. Inspectors saw some gripping moments in lessons as pupils discovered previously unknown patterns and relationships in numbers and then used them to assist the efficient solving of arithmetic and other mathematical problems. So, one Year 3/4 set used their fairly slick knowledge of the five times table to solve time problems, the Year 2 class worked out the half way point between 20 and 30 on the basis of their knowledge of what is half way between 0 and 10, and in a Year 1 lesson, some pupils found setting related addition and subtraction sums side by side made their learning easier.

92.Attainment and progress in mathematics are both enhanced by the good focus on basic numeracy, problem solving and investigation, the use of mathematics in other subjects and the good use made of computers. Good examples include the use of computers for Year 2 pupils to create a motif and then to change it in different ways, and to move Terry the Turtle around the screen, avoiding obstacles in their quest for the target. Both of these experiences build deeper insights into shape, space and movement geometry.

93.Pupils respond well to mathematics. They are keen to take part in the practical activities, behave well on the whole, and have very good relationships with adults and other pupils. The personal development of pupils is sound, but could be better. In a few lessons, teachers talk for too long or do not give pupils enough opportunities to work independently. Despite this, mathematics lessons are purposeful learning sessions where there is a good learning atmosphere.

94.The quality of teaching is good in both key stages. Strengths of teaching include teachers' knowledge of the subject, their good level of expectation, the brisk pace to learning, the good variety of activities and teaching methods and the use of well judged amounts of homework that build firmly on things learned in lessons. The aspects for continued development are the identification of exact things to be learned in planning, the consistency of target setting and sharing and the occasional over-long introduction to lessons by teachers. Classroom assistants make good contributions to teaching in mathematics particularly when working with individual or small groups of pupils. They work closely with class teachers but they should be given a more specific role, perhaps recording or observing, during the introduction to the mathematics lessons.

95.The management of mathematics is effective and the improvements identified are testament to this. The school has made a good start to its numeracy strategy, and although this has posed some problems for staff in relation to its impact on the wider mathematics curriculum, the firmer focus on the foundations of number, counting and arithmetic is already having good impact.

96.The school has already made good progress in improving mathematics. It is now poised to make even more improvements and is very well set to produce standards that will stand strong comparison with those in any school across the country.

100. **Science**

97.Standards in science were good at the time of the previous inspection, the subject was well taught and pupils experienced good quality learning. The school has preserved the best of these things and has addressed well those areas where there was room for improvement.

98.In the 1999 Key Stage 1 National Curriculum teacher assessments, standards in science are high in comparison with the results found nationally. When the school's result is compared to those in similar schools it is also evident that standards are very good. In addition, the proportion of pupils achieving level 3 in these tests is far above the national average and above that found in similar schools.

99.There are no published comparisons available to compare trends over the last four years in the school's results in the science teacher assessments with the national picture. However, scrutiny of the school's own figures show that standards have been broadly maintained at a good level and that this year's standards are the best yet.

100.Evidence gathered in school from lesson observation, the close examination of pupils' work over the last year or so and in talking to pupils, shows that standards are above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 4. There is every indication that pupils in Year 4 will achieve good standards in the 2003 Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests. The curriculum for science is broadly based, well balanced between the four attainment targets and teaching is well motivating. These things impact strongly on standards and skills and knowledge are built well. Overall levels of progress are, therefore, good.

101.There was absolutely no difference in the 1999 Key Stage 1 teacher assessments between boys and girls. In fact all the boys and all the girls gained at least level 2. On the whole, this is mirrored in lessons. Boys and girls show similar levels of interest and application, they work as hard as each other and generally make the same good progress. Just now and again there are signs that one or two boys are not as well motivated and this shows in greater levels of distraction and low level misbehaviour.

102.As with all other pupils, those with special educational needs make good progress. This is especially noticeable where there is additional support in lessons. In these cases, the pupils are helped to understand the task and they complete much work during the lesson.

103.Reception pupils develop good knowledge of animal and plant life, they have good awareness of the most common materials around them and they know that ice melts in warm conditions and that sand is different when wet. They can also name the main parts of the body and are beginning to make simple classifications of some of the materials and living things they are studying. In Year 1 this knowledge is developed well. In one lesson the pupils made simple predictions of how pasta would change when cooked. They talked knowledgeably of its raw state and after it had been boiled and cooled, they observed it carefully and made comparisons of its before and after state. One pupil said the raw pasta "smells like flour" and inadvertently, at least, then knew more of the basic properties of this material.

104. Some good work was seen in Year 2 as the pupils worked to observe, classify and record different types of plastic and woven textiles. These pupils can, with some adult help, test the waterproof qualities of such materials, though they are not yet able to do this as a fair test since the amount of water applied varied from a flood to a drop! It is, however, apparent that pupils in the Year 3/4 class appreciate the need for fair testing. They use this knowledge to set up tests to evaluate the use of different materials for a wind gauge, they find out which materials make the best gloves on the basis of their insulation properties and they make and test predictions about plants growing without light. At the end of the test, they record the outcomes in different ways, making good use of mathematics to chart and graph the data or information and communications technology to log changes and represent their findings.

105. There is an enthusiasm and enjoyment in lessons which impacts well on progress. The pupils are generally well behaved, work well with each other, look after the resources and are polite and thoughtful of others. In some lessons teachers make most of the choices of resources, ways to record the work and methods to complete it. Some also monopolise the discussion for too long. This reduces the pupils' personal development as it lessens their ability to work responsibly on their own or in small groups and to discuss their findings in a thoughtful and reflective way.

106. Aside from this close control of some lessons, the overall quality of teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and expectations and plan the work successfully. Whilst there is now more setting and sharing of targets for pupils, this is not too widespread. In addition, the identification of what knowledge, skills and understanding will be learned is often not precise enough, and therefore the targets are sometimes too wide ranging. Management of pupils is effective on the whole, lessons are brisk and there is a rich mix of activities. Homework is well structured, and appropriate in amount, to support and extend learning.

107. Management of science is good. The head teacher and another member of staff share the management of the subject and between them, they have good insights into the strengths and weaknesses of provision and standards. They have ensured a diverse, well balanced and broad curriculum is in place and that pupils develop the necessary skills of investigation and experiment at a good rate. This could be improved further if pupils are given the opportunities identified above to choose and use their own resources and methods and have even more time to talk themselves about what they think, observe, predict and reflect upon.

108. Science is an improving subject, standards are often very good and pupils make good progress. The subject is an obvious strength of the school and the pupils enjoy a range of experiences that are well thought out and well matched to their individual needs.

112. **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

112. **Art**

109. In 1996, art was judged to be a strength of the school as teaching and learning were both good and the standards achieved were better than was expected by pupils aged from 5 to 9. The school has sustained these strengths and this enables pupils to make a good start in the subject.

110. There is very much evidence in the form of displays and collections of work done earlier this year to show that standards are still good. Pupils are gradually introduced to a widening range of materials and artistic styles and forms, both in two and three dimensions. It is also evident from such scrutiny, that progress is good.

111.A walk along the corridor from the reception class to the Year 3/4 class shows dramatically how pupils' art skills and knowledge are built effectively. The displays that line the walls include painted friezes to show elements of stories heard by pupils in reception and underwater scenes from pupils in Years 1 and 2 combining work with printing, painting, textiles and appliquéd collage. Pupils in Year 2 have also linked some of their art with work in information and communication technology. They have researched the life and works of Piet Mondrian on the Internet, produced draft patterns in his *block of colour* style using a graphics program, printed it and then translated it using strips and rectangles of boldly coloured paper. This has been mounted in a niche formed by the angular style of the school building that sets off the style in complete harmony. It also shows good attention to detail by teachers and this, in turn, encourages good progress and levels of attainment. Year 2 pupils have produced some very good *Willow Pattern* plates and items in the style of Clarice Cliff in a similar way, combining their art and information and communications technology skills and knowledge well. The work on fishes made from combed textiles by Year 3 and 4 is original and of very high quality.

112.Because there is such an enterprising approach to art in school, pupils develop a keen interest and enjoyment of the subject and they put much effort into their work. Teaching is an obvious strength. Good subject knowledge, high expectations and effective planning are combined to produce motivating lessons where work is conducted with purpose and brisk pace. Overall, the quality of learning and teaching are both good.

116. **Design and technology**

113.At the time of the previous inspection, standards in design and technology were sound and the quality of both learning and teaching was satisfactory. It was also identified that there was no scheme of work for the subject. The school now has a good scheme of work for the subject and this is partly responsible for the good improvement made to design and technology since 1996.

114.Today, standards in design and technology are much above what might be expected for pupils of this age range. It is evident from the quality and range of work that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and that their skills and knowledge are built effectively. Good attention is given to the plan and design elements of the work, as well as the make stage. At Key Stage 2 the pupils make good evaluations of what they have made and can suggest how they could improve the product next time.

115.Skill level in handling the good variety of tools and materials available is very good. Pupils give good thought to their designs and cut out and assemble materials neatly. The quality of decoration of products is also of a high standard. Whilst adults often support the youngest pupils in this work, older pupils can work independently to produce good quality finished items. The battery powered vehicles made by Year 3/4 pupils show ingenuity in design and care in manufacture and are of a very high standard of finish. There are many more examples of such good work in other classes.

116.Pupils enjoy design and technology lessons immensely. They are well behaved, respond well to the teacher and work well together. This applies in all classes and is an important factor in the good progress made.

117.Teaching quality is good in both key stages and has improved markedly since the previous inspection. Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations. Planning quality is good, the pace of lessons is brisk and the management of pupils is effective. There are times when older pupils especially could more profitably make their own selection of materials and tools to use when making items as teachers sometimes do this for them. Nonetheless, teaching of design and technology is a strength.

118.The school has a good reputation for the work in design and technology and this is justified entirely. The subject is a particular strength of the school.

122. **Geography**

119.During the 1996 inspection standards were judged to be sound at both key stages. In 1999 only two lessons in geography were observed, one at each key stage, as a result limited judgements have been made on the basis of this evidence, examination of pupils' work and teachers' planning, work on display and discussions with staff and pupils. In 1999 progress is judged to be good. Pupils are acquiring a good knowledge base and know how to use specialist language to discuss issues in geography.

120.By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils know how to make their own maps to illustrate their journey to school or a well known story. They include both natural and man-made features and know how to compile a key. They are familiar with the main points of the compass, can recognise significant maps such as the United Kingdom and label it with the names of major cities such as London. Pupils in Year 2 pay close attention to a video programme about urban features and can compare and contrast them with features in the village. They compile their town plans and recognise that pedestrians, car, bus and train users have different needs that are sometimes in conflict.

121.By the end of Year 4 pupils have studied different communities and know that climate and location have an impact on the life-style of people. They use a range of resources effectively. For example, they understand the differences between maps and plans and use aerial views, ground elevations, photographs and books to find things out. They trace their route from home to school on a large-scale map and using the key provided identify landmarks such as the park and bus stop. Pupils study the use of the environment and colour code areas on a map to indicate residential, commercial, educational and industrial use.

122.The response in lessons is good and some very good enthusiastic responses are also seen. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to undertake research and their very good literacy skills mean they use a wide range of resources well and discuss their findings clearly.

123.It is not possible to make a full judgement about teaching but teaching in the lessons seen was good at Key Stage 1 and satisfactory at Key Stage 2. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this means they use correct geographical terms with their pupils. Teachers set time targets in the lessons to ensure that a brisk pace is maintained. However where learning is over-directed there is little opportunity for pupils to contribute fully. Planning is effective but the learning outcomes refer more to activities rather than to the levels of achievement being targeted. Assessment and record keeping are soundly based. Educational visits and the local environment are well used to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of places and the physical world.

127. **History**

124.During the 1996 inspection standards were judged to be sound at both key stages. In 1999 only one lesson in history was observed at Key Stage 1. As a result limited judgements have been made on the basis of this evidence, examination of pupils' work and teachers' planning, work on display and discussions with staff and pupils. In 1999 progress is judged to be good. Pupils are acquiring a good knowledge base, have a developing understanding of chronology, are enthusiastic 'history detectives' and know how to use specialist vocabulary to discuss issues in history.

125.While it is difficult to make a full judgement about progress in history lessons there is plenty of evidence in completed work to indicate that progress over time is good. Evidence from the scrutiny of pupils' work in Key Stage 1, indicates that pupils handle old and new artefacts and sequence toys and objects in order of age. They develop a sense of the passing of time as compare the past with the present. For example, when studying markets from different periods in history and comparing them with markets today pupils identify similarities and differences. They use information in the pictures to deduce what goods are for sale. They use historical language such as, 'past', 'present' and 'future' in their talk and have a clear understanding of when to use them. At Key Stage 2, pupils study different periods of time and begin to develop a better understanding of the past. For example, they study the Romans and know that they were a powerful people who brought many changes, such as improved roads, to Britain. The extent and quality of their work is improved by the independent research that pupils undertake at home and through the Internet.

126.There is insufficient evidence to make a full judgement about the quality of teaching but in the one lesson observed teaching was good. Planning is good because it develops historical knowledge, skills and understanding systematically. Assessment and record keeping are soundly based. The range and use of learning resources and books are a strength in history. The school makes good use of the county loan services and visits and visitors are well used to support pupils' understanding of the past.

130. Information and communication technology

127.The previous inspection report indicated that standards in information technology were average, teaching was satisfactory and the overall provision for the subject was appropriate. In the meantime, the school has improved all of these things and is poised for a bright future, as recent additions to the number of computers and the provision of a dedicated computer room are both having an immediate impact on the quality of work and standards the achieved.

128.Pupils enjoy a rich variety of work in information and communications technology and this is an additional reason why standards and progress are both good. It is very clear that pupils start from different base levels of experience, as many have computers at home, but also that the school has successful means of determining the appropriate work for each pupil. This results in good progress.

129.Good assessment procedures in the reception class show clearly the strengths and weaknesses of individual pupils' skills and knowledge. Following from this, the teacher designs an individual work programme for each pupil to ensure that he or she makes purposeful use of computers. During the inspection, reception pupils were observed building skills well in handling the mouse and keyboard. This was on a supervised basis and was well-structured experience. At the same time, those pupils assessed as needing opportunities to work independently were using the other computer alone to improve their knowledge of counting, position and size in mathematics.

130.This good start is maintained in Years 1 and 2. Not only do pupils build knowledge and skills in the use of computers and allied technology, but they also learn more about other subjects because of the effective way information and communications technology is used across the curriculum. For example, in one lesson, pupils in Year 1 drew pictures of the outside and inside of different fruits in their work on science and then used the scanner to make a computer image of the picture. They saved this to disk and printed out the image that was displayed with pride.

131. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are developing good skills in the use of the Internet. Each has their own email address and password and they are becoming very adept at sending, receiving, printing and replying to messages from pupils in their own school and in other schools. The high attaining pupils know how to send an attachment to an email message and they add text and graphics in this way to the messages they compose.

132. The pupils have a fascination with information and communications technology that leads to an enthusiastic approach to the work and considerable enjoyment of the many activities they experience. They behave very well in lessons and are able to work responsibly with other pupils, collaborating appropriately in their learning. The spiritual and cultural development of pupils is particularly well catered for in computer work. A group of reception pupils watched with open-mouthed attention as the printer disgorged a boldly coloured "computer bug" just moments after they had saved it to disk.

133. These strengths of information and communications technology stem from the good quality of teaching to be found in school. The school has undertaken a very successful programme of staff development in the subject and teachers now have good subject knowledge, high expectations and they provide stimulating and enjoyable lessons. In general, the use of resources is good, though the school now needs to assess how effectively the computers are used in individual classrooms. During the inspection, most computer use was in the new suite and the class-based machines went unused for much of the time. The scrutiny of work completed over the last year by pupils in all classes shows, however, that there is good teaching of skills and knowledge and effective assessment of these things.

134. The management of information and communications technology is good and the co-ordinator has good knowledge of the work across the whole school. There is a keen sense of priority in the development of the subject. The school has a good basis of resources for the work and has opened a small, but valuable computer room to ensure that pupils have timely practice in skills immediately after they have been taught. Additional machines are due to be added to those already in place. The prospect for future improvement in the subject is very good and there is every reason to suggest that standards could be very good in the future.

138. **Music**

135. Music education plays an important part in the life of the school and it was possible to see one music lesson at each key stage. This evidence together with observations of extra-curricular music, instrumental tuition and music in assembly provide sufficient evidence on which to base judgements.

136. During the previous inspection in 1996 standards were in line with expectations and the quality of teaching and learning was sound with good features. Standards have improved. Pupils make good progress in music because teaching is good and there are many good opportunities to enjoy, compose and make music.

137. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils' knowledge about music is good. They know and understand terms such as dynamics, scales, vibration and pitch. They have good control of tempo and volume when playing together. They can discuss the music they hear and recognise and give examples of onomatopoeia. They have good posture when singing and their diction is clear. By the age of nine many pupils can read standard notation and recognise sharps and flats in the different scales. They can sing two and three part rounds and conduct the singing of others. Pupils learn to appraise music from an early stage. They discuss sensibly the mood the music creates and give examples to support their point of view. A number of pupils have the opportunity to benefit from instrumental tuition and large numbers of pupils learn to play recorders in extra-curricular lessons.

138. Pupils' response in music is good. Music plays an important part in daily school

assemblies and pupils listen carefully to the wide range of music provided. They have good opportunities to appreciate the style and format of different pieces of music from many countries. They sing with enthusiasm and show the ability to learn new songs quickly. Their pleasure in music is very evident. Older pupils enjoy the opportunity to play recorders and other instruments to an audience and this provides a good opportunity for personal development. In Year 4 pupils have additional opportunities to sing and play to an audience when they visit the local residential home and club for elderly citizens.

139.The teaching of music is good. Teachers' expectations are high. Subject knowledge is secure and teachers make effective use of taped resources to reinforce skill development and foster critical enthusiasm for music. New songs are systematically taught so that the pupils become confident about both the words and the tune. Assessment procedures and record keeping are soundly based.

143. Physical education

140.During the previous inspection in 1996 standards in physical education were sound and teaching and learning at Key Stage 1 was also sound. In 1999 no physical education lessons were observed during the inspection. As a result a limited judgement has been made on the basis of teacher's planning, swimming records and information from pupils and parents.

141.Pupils and parents speak highly of the provision for physical education at the school. Most pupils take part in extra-curricular sport with enthusiasm. The school football team is very successful and many Key Stage 2 pupils play in netball teams. Records indicate pupils' increasing sporting prowess in team games.

142.It is not possible to make an overall judgement about the quality of teaching. However, teacher's planning indicates that lessons cover the full range of activities, dance, gymnastics, games and swimming. Pupils' reports indicate clearly the good progress made by pupils and their enthusiasm for physical activity. Records indicate that pupils make good progress in learning to swim and all pupils are on track to meet the required end of Key Stage 2 standard before they leave the school. The swimming pool is both a valuable school and community asset

146. Religious education

143.During the previous inspection in 1996 standards in religious education were judged to be in line with national expectations and teaching and learning were sound. These standards have been raised as in 1999 attainment, progress and teaching are all judged to be good. Provision meets the requirements and expectations of the locally agreed syllabus.

144.Across the school pupils make good progress in adding to their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other major world religions. Pupils' very good speaking and listening skills mean they can discuss complex issues and ideas confidently. Their good reading and writing skills are reinforced and used effectively when they write prayers in Year 1 or record the main events in the life of Grace Darling in Key Stage 2. Pupils in Year 1 learn about Christian festivals and have a good general understanding of Advent. They are also familiar with a range of religious symbols such as candles, clothes worn by a vicar and the cross. Pupils in Year 2 learn about other faiths and are very interested in difference and diversity. There are gasps of amazement when they see the Moslem prayer mat for the first time and one pupil immediately suggests they should make some to use in prayer. They recall the main features of a mosque and recognise the crescent as an important Islamic symbol. Pupils continue to add to their knowledge and understanding in Key Stage 2. They know a range of stories from the Old and New Testament and learn about the teachings of the Buddha, the story of Rama and Sita and the main tenets of Judaism. Pupils learn about ritual and worship in the different religions and write their own prayers for use in class and school

assembly.

145.The response of pupils in religious education is good. They show interest in and respect for the beliefs of others. They listen carefully in lessons and want to find out more. Pupils in Year 1 are already developing an appreciation of quiet, reflective moments and share their thoughts and feelings with each other.

146.The teaching of religious education is good. Strengths in teaching are the ability of all teachers to create and sustain a good atmosphere in religious education lessons. Teachers are sensitive to the contributions of pupils and treat their observations respectfully. This ensures all pupils respond in the same way. While most teachers have good subject knowledge there are some weaknesses in the knowledge and understanding of non-Christian religions and more in-service training is required. Planning is effective in ensuring coverage of the themes in the locally agreed syllabus and ensuring knowledge and understanding is developed across the school. Assessment is soundly based on suggestions in the Local Education Authority handbook. Resources for religious education are good in quality and quantity and readily available.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

150. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

147. Time spent observing lessons:

Key Stage	PreKS1	KS1	KS2	Total
Total hours	4.4 hours	10.3 hours	11.2 hours	25.8 hours

A total of 53 lessons or parts of lessons were observed during the inspection. Inspectors also observed registration, acts of collective worship, and extra-curricular activities.

A team of three inspectors worked in the school for a total of 9 inspection days.

- Discussions took place with a wide range of pupils about their work particularly in English, mathematics and science. (3 hours)
- Pupils were heard to read individually, during literacy lessons and in withdrawal groups. (3 hours)
- Discussions took place with pupils at lunch time and in the playground and all pupils in Year 4 contributed to group discussions. (2 hours)
- Discussions took place with the headteacher and other members of staff (10 hours)
- There were also discussions with a majority of the governors. (2 hours)
- There were discussions with members of the administration staff, caretaking staff, lunchtime staff and parents. (1.5 hours)
- A representative sample of pupils' work from all year groups was examined in detail to assess attainment and progress over time. (6 hours)
- A selection of work, individual education plans, statements and pupil records relating to pupils with special educational needs were examined to assess compliance and quality. (3 hours)
- Work on display in classrooms and in circulation areas was examined. (2 hours)
- All documentation provided by the school: reports; records and teachers' planning was examined. (3 hours)
- The registered inspector held a meeting for parents (2.00 hours)

1.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 – Y4	92	1	8	6

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (YR – Y4)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	4.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21

Education support staff (YR – Y4)

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked each week	66.75

Average class size:	23
---------------------	----

Financial data

Financial year:	1998/1999
-----------------	-----------

	£
Total Income	190 414
Total Expenditure	193 745
Expenditure per pupil	2 106
Balance brought forward from previous year	2 419
Balance carried forward to next year	(3 331)

Figures in parenthesis indicate negative values

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	72
Number of questionnaires returned:	32

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	74	26	0	0	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	71	26	0	3	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	26	35	19	0	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	26	68	3	3	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	35	55	3	3	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	55	39	3	0	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	52	42	3	3	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	39	55	3	3	0
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	58	39	3	0	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	48	42	3	3	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	65	32	0	3	0

Other issues raised by parents

Comments included with questionnaires:

All of the comments were very supportive of the school, its work and staff

Issues raised by parents at the meeting:

Parents attending the meeting had positively chosen to send their children to Totternhoe Lower School and were pleased with the standards being achieved.