

# INSPECTION REPORT

**Icknield Walk First School**

Royston

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117278

Headteacher: Miss M Jones

Reporting inspector: Mr A Andrews  
6436

Dates of inspection: 7<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> February 2000

Inspection number: 191067  
Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3-9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Poplar Drive Royston Herts
Postcode:	SG8 7EZ
Telephone number:	01763 243392
Fax number:	01763 244764
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs H Beck
Date of previous inspection:	10 <sup>th</sup> -13 <sup>th</sup> June 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Alan Andrews	Registered inspector	English Art Physical education	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are children taught? How well is the school led and managed?
Diane Jenkin	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Kath Beck	Team inspector	Mathematics Music Under fives Information and communication technology	How good are the curriculum and other opportunities offered to the children?
Anne Leontovitsch	Team Inspector	History Geography	
Martyn Richards	Team inspector	Equal opportunities Special educational needs Science Design and technology Religious education	How well is the school led and managed?

The inspection contractor was:

Quinset, 'Draycott,' Chappel Road, Great Tey, Colchester, Essex CO6 1JP

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Icknield Walk First School is situated on a large, attractive site to the east of the centre of Royston. It has 300 pupils on roll aged 3 to 9 years. 58 of these attend the nursery part-time. A further 31 pupils are in a reception class. The school serves its immediate area and is bigger than most primary schools. It is fully subscribed and has an almost even number of girls and boys. The pupils come from predominantly private housing, but with some council houses as well. On entry to school, many pupils have social and linguistic skills above that expected for their age. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals has fallen in recent years. It is now 7% which is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils on the school's register for special educational needs has also fallen. It is now 17% which is close to the national average. There are 3 pupils with statements of special educational needs. The school has very few pupils from ethnic minority groups.

The headteacher is new to the post and is the second headteacher the school has had since the previous inspection. In addition, there was also a short period when the school was led by an acting headteacher.

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

Icknield Walk is a good school. It achieves very high standards of work in English and mathematics and good standards in science, history, geography, music, art and information and communication technology. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work are very good. Almost all teaching is satisfactory and more than two thirds is good or better. It is particularly strong in the nursery and at Key Stage 1. Most pupils are learning well, including those with special educational needs. Pupils make a very good start in the nursery, but do not always make sufficient progress in the reception class. In addition, the higher attaining pupils at Key Stage 1 and 2 are sometimes not challenged and extended enough. The school has sound care arrangements for pupils and a strong partnership with parents. It is very well governed and self-critical. It has made significant improvement since its last inspection and provides good value for money.

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

- Nursery provision is of a high standard and enables pupils to make a very good start to school life.
- Attainments in the core subjects of English and mathematics are high. Standards in music are very good. In science, history, geography, art and information and communication technology they are good.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards work and behave well. This makes a significant contribution to the progress they make in lessons.
- Teaching is particularly good in the nursery and at Key Stage 1 as well as in the specialist teaching of music.
- The curriculum is rich and varied and captures pupils' interests.
- Pupils' social development is excellent. Their spiritual, moral and cultural development is very good.
- Governors, headteacher and senior staff provide very clear educational direction and leadership. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school and know what needs to be done to improve further.
- The school gives good value for money.

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

- The teaching of reception pupils, particularly the skills of reading.
- Use of assessment to guide what pupils are to learn next, particularly the higher attainers.
- Management of the special educational needs provision.
- Deployment of the learning support assistants.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made significant improvement since the last inspection in 1996, which found standards to be generally satisfactory. Attainments in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 and Year 4 are now well above average. In science they are above average. All action points from the previous inspection have been tackled successfully. Teaching at Key Stage 1 is now very good. There is a well-targeted programme of staff development and much closer monitoring and evaluation of the delivery of curriculum. Teachers' planning is of a high quality. It is supported by very good schemes of work and focused learning objectives which ensure pupils build skills systematically. Staff confidence in the organisation and management of information and communication technology has improved and this has helped to raise standards in the subject. Aspects of the curriculum and assemblies are used effectively to enhance pupils' spiritual development, which is now very good.

The staff and governors are determined to do their best for all pupils and the school has a good capacity to improve still further.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
reading	C	C	A	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
writing	A	A	A	B	
mathematics	C	A	A	B	

This table shows that at the end of Key Stage 1 the school has sustained and improved its standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Compared to all schools, the 1999 results in these areas of the curriculum were well above the national average. Over the last three years results have been rising, although those for reading have been variable. Compared to similar schools, standards in writing and mathematics were above average. Those in reading were average. This is because the very good start made in the nursery is not built on sufficiently well in the reception class and pupils' progress in reading slows before they begin Key Stage 1. In addition, higher attaining pupils are not always challenged and extended enough.

Observation of lessons and scrutiny of work in Year 4 shows that attainment in English and mathematics is on course to be well above average at the end of Key Stage 2. Attainment in science is on course to be above average. Although standards are high, as with the younger children, higher attaining pupils are not always extended enough.

Pupils' achievements in music are very good. In art, history, geography and information and communication technology they are good. Achievements in all other subjects are in line with those expected for pupils of this age.

The school has set realistic targets for improvement and has the capacity to meet these.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy school and want to do well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. High standards of behaviour are consistent throughout the school, in lessons, during lunchtime and on the playground.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils undertake responsibility well. Relationships are mostly very good.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Very little unauthorised absence.

Pupils work hard and are proud of their efforts. They show considerable interest in activities, although they are occasionally restless in lessons. They take initiative when given the opportunity to do so. There was no evidence of oppressive behaviour during the period of the inspection. Pupils arrive at school on time, work well together and show respect for one another and for adults.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-9 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Very good	Good

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

Teaching was satisfactory or better in 92.4% of lessons. It was very good or better in 40.9% of lessons and unsatisfactory in 7.6%. Much of the high quality teaching is found in the nursery and at Key Stage 1 and in the specialist music lessons. The needs of most pupils are met successfully, including those with special educational needs. However, the higher attaining pupils are not always challenged and extended enough. The teaching of English is good and often very good at both Key Stage 1 and 2. The teaching of mathematics is very good at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2. Both the literacy and numeracy initiatives have been introduced effectively. The good teaching stems from positive relationships with pupils and thorough planning of what they are to learn. Energetic and enthusiastic delivery styles draw pupils' attention, so that they acquire basic skills quickly. Class discussions are conducted effectively and this contributes positively to pupils' development of literacy skills. In the best lessons, time is used very well and teachers have appropriately high expectations of what pupils can do. Weaknesses in teaching occur where lesson planning does not build systematically on the knowledge, skills and understanding previously acquired by pupils. Assessment is not used effectively to guide work that meets all pupils' needs. In particular, the approach to the teaching of reading to reception pupils is not fully effective.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a rich and challenging curriculum which meets the interest and aptitude of most pupils and promotes high standards in a



	wide range of knowledge and skills.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good provision through specialist teacher. Clear and attainable targets are set for individual pupils, but these are not always taken into account in class lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good personal development. Very good spiritual, moral and cultural development. Excellent social development. These aspects of the curriculum are promoted very effectively through lessons, assemblies and general school activities.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils' welfare is ensured through good routines, adequate supervision and sound procedures for monitoring health and safety. High standards of behaviour are a strong feature of the school. Teachers make too little use of assessment to plan future work.

The school provides a caring environment in which pupils feel happy and confident. It works very well in partnership with parents and this has a really positive impact on pupils' learning. Parents are welcomed into school and many help in classrooms and with other school activities. The school makes an effort to seek parents' views before arriving at some decisions. There is an active parent teacher association, which organises social and fund-raising events in order to provide extra resources for the school. The nursery provides a very good range of learning activities, but this imaginative curriculum is not carried forward into the reception class. Pupils spend much time on activities which lack challenge or limit their opportunity to build on skills they have learned in the nursery. The curriculum at Key Stage 1 and 2 meets statutory requirements and is rich in worthwhile activities that meet pupils' needs, although higher attainers are not always extended enough. Homework is used well to support learning, particularly literacy and numeracy. A very good range of extra-curricular activities does much to meet pupils' interests. Visitors and educational visits extend pupils' understanding.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is very well led and managed with clear educational direction. The governing body makes a particularly strong contribution.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are determined to raise standards further.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school evaluates its performance appropriately using statistical information to identify areas of strength and weakness in subjects, in comparison to all schools and other similar schools.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Resources are easily accessible and used well in lessons.

Accommodation is very good and used well. There are sufficient staff and learning resources, although there is too little equipment for geography. A culture of improvement has been established successfully. The school's budget is carefully and effectively managed to ensure priorities are met. The principles of best value are applied well.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents think the teaching is good;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be more informed about their child's</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Their child makes good progress;</li><li>• The school expects their child to work hard and achieve their best.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• progress;</li><li>• That the school should work closely with parents.</li></ul>
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The inspection findings support the positive views parents have of the school. They conclude that the school keeps parents well informed about progress and encourages them to be involved in the life of the school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

- 1 On entry to school, most pupils have attainment which is above that expected for their age. They make good progress in their learning and standards at the end of Key Stage 1 and Year 4 are often well above average. Standards at the end of the foundation stage are on course to be in line with, or above, expectations for this age group in all the areas of experience<sup>1</sup>. This is because pupils make a very good start with their education in the nursery. They achieve particularly well in oral skills and personal and social development so that their achievements are well above that which is normally expected for pupils of this age. This good start is not carried forward sufficiently well into the reception class where there is some slowing of pupils' progress.
- 2 The school rightly gives emphasis to literacy and numeracy. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been introduced well. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of work show that standards in English and mathematics have been raised significantly since the previous inspection and are now well above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and Year 4. Standards have also been raised in science and are now above average at the end of Key Stage 1. This is sustained into Key Stage 2, and when pupils reach Year 4 their attainment in science remains above average for pupils of that age.
- 3 In the 1999 national tests and assessments for pupils aged seven, the school's results in reading, writing and mathematics were well above average. Over recent years, the results have been rising, although those for reading have been variable. This is because the pace of progress in reading slows in the reception class and this effects progress at Key Stage 1. In addition, higher attainers are not always challenged enough across the curriculum. Compared to similar schools, the results in reading were broadly in line with the average. The results in writing and mathematics were above average.
- 4 The school sets overall targets for improvement and is well placed to meet these. Individual targets are set for pupils for the end of Key Stage 1. These motivate them satisfactorily, but pupils are not reminded enough of their targets so that they can judge the speed of their progress. The school intends rightly to extend the system of individual targets into Key Stage 2. Work shows that pupils learn most quickly in Year 2 and at a faster pace in Years 1, 2 and 4 than in Year 3.
- 5 In English, at age nine, pupils' listening and speaking skills are very good and their standards of reading are high. Many pupils read with expression and very good comprehension, although higher attainers do not always read a sufficiently wide range of literature. They write for a range of purposes with very good use of language. In mathematics, pupils have secure knowledge, skills and understanding of the four rules and apply them well when carrying out investigations or solving problems. They use mathematical language with confidence when explaining their work. In science, pupils aged nine set up simple experiments and understand the need for careful control of variables if a test is to be reliable. They record their results accurately in a variety of ways.
- 6 Standards are very good in music. Pupils learn to sing, compose and write simple notation. Some older pupils learn to play the recorder. Standards are good in geography, history, art and information and communication technology. In art, there are some high quality examples of painting in the style of well-known artists. Pupils are achieving levels expected for their age in physical education, religious education and design and technology.

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<sup>1</sup> Areas of experience for pupils under five: language and literacy, mathematics, creative development, physical development, personal and social development, knowledge and understanding of the world.

- 7 Pupils with special educational needs progress well towards the individual targets set for them, and they also make sound headway in lessons across the broader curriculum. However, there are occasions when the individual targets are not taken into account sufficiently in class lessons.

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

- 8 Pupils' attitudes and personal development are outstanding in the nursery. They are very keen to come to school and settle quickly into routines. Their interest in the challenging tasks and activities provided means they sustain their concentration for long periods of time. Pupils respond very well to teacher's high expectations of independence. They look after the resources and tidy up the classroom neatly at the end of lessons. Pupils are willing to try things for themselves, such as writing their names on their work without being asked. They use their initiative and experiment in water play and try out new computer programmes. Behaviour is excellent and pupils show courtesy to one another and to adults. In group sessions they take it in turns to speak, listening carefully to their friends. They play very well together in role-play situations such as the 'castle' or the café called 'Polly's Kettle'.
- 9 In the reception class, pupils show very good attitudes, often sitting for long periods on the carpet, listening to their teacher. They work together well in small groups, sustaining the high quality attitudes learned in the nursery.
- 10 Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good at both Key Stage 1 and 2. This has a very positive impact on the standards achieved. A particular strength is the quality of pupils' contribution to class discussions. Most pupils respond very well to the many opportunities offered by the school during lessons and extra-curricular activities. They show real interest in their work, listen and concentrate well and try hard to do their best. Some pupils can be passive, particularly when lessons are too prescriptive. A small minority can be restless and less willing to listen to the teacher or are noisy when working in groups.
- 11 Behaviour is very good in lessons and at playtime and lunchtime. There have been no exclusions in the last year. Pupils move around the school in an orderly manner and show respect for other people's property and their school environment. They are polite, friendly and courteous to adults and each other. Relationships throughout the school are very good and pupils respond well to the high quality moral and social education they receive from the school, together with the good role-model presented by staff. Most pupils are able to work co-operatively in pairs or groups and will listen carefully to other people's contribution or point of view. One or two pupils misbehave or act in a silly manner, but this is usually handled well by teachers to avoid disruption to learning. No incidents of bullying or racism were seen during the inspection.
- 12 The older pupils show great initiative and take on responsibility when applying for a position in the special pupil on trust (S.P.O.T.) scheme. They carry out their duties, which include helping at lunchtime, tidying the library, assisting with the reception pupils, collecting registers and watering plants, conscientiously and with enthusiasm. Membership of the School Council is also valued as a way to contribute towards, and influence, the life of the school. When given the opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning during lessons, pupils respond well. However, this is underdeveloped. Pupils' self-assessment and knowledge of their own learning are limited. Their satisfactory reflection on and understanding of the impact of what they do on others, means there is a conducive working atmosphere in the school.
- 13 Pupils are keen to come to school and they enjoy all the activities. Attendance is in line with national average and there is very little unauthorised absence.

- 14 Pupils with special educational needs work very well together in small groups with the special needs co-ordinator and with learning support assistants. They feel confident in what they can do, and they enjoy their successes. They concentrate well and work hard, even on tasks they find difficult.

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

- 15 Pupils are mostly taught well. Teaching is satisfactory or better in 92.4% of lessons. In 9.1% it is excellent, mainly in the specialist teaching of music and occasionally in the nursery. Teaching is very good in 31.8%, good in 28.8% and satisfactory in 22.7% of lessons. It is unsatisfactory in 7.6%, mainly in the reception, but also occasionally in Year 3. Overall, this represents an improvement since the previous inspection. At the time, teaching was good in the nursery and better at Key Stage 2 than Key Stage 1, where there was a significant proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. This is no longer the case. The teaching at Key Stage 1 is now of a high quality and better than at Key Stage 2. It is particularly strong in Year 2 where it is consistently very good. This has a major impact on pupils' learning. Teaching in Key Stage 2 is more variable, especially in Year 3. However, teaching in Year 4 is mostly good and this has a positive effect on pupils' overall progress within the key stage.
- 16 Teaching in the nursery is very good and promotes very high standards across all the areas of experience. This stems from the teacher's very good knowledge and expertise of pupils of this age. Early literacy and numeracy skills are taught well so that pupils have a very good understanding of vocabulary which helps them to read or record familiar numbers. Tasks are imaginative, structured well and provide opportunities for pupils to feel confident and secure in their learning. These are matched well to the age and needs of most pupils and motivate them to want to learn in a pleasurable way. There is room for improved provision for higher attaining pupils, especially those who are keen to start reading.
- 17 The teacher, nursery nurses and other adults listen to the pupils very well. They answer pupils' questions or ask open-ended questions which deepens and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. Through detailed assessment procedures, staff in the nursery know the pupils well and provide tasks which meet most needs. Work is planned thoroughly to include all the areas of experience and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Arrangements for visitors, such as fire fighters, police officers and the librarian are included in termly plans. Staff are well-informed about what pupils are to learn in each session and ensure the focus is maintained.
- 18 In most classes, time and resources are used very well to make the most of all opportunities and enable pupils to learn and explore new situations. Information and communication technology extends learning in language and literacy, mathematics and music. Homework in the form of 'reading packs' promotes an enthusiasm for books and provides opportunities for pupils to practise early writing skills.
- 19 Planning and assessment is weak in the reception class. Assessment and information provided when pupils transfer from the nursery is not used sufficiently to gain a clear idea of what pupils know and can do. This makes it difficult for the teacher to plan work that meets pupils' needs in each of the areas of experience. Medium and short-term plans lack a clear focus of what the pupils are to learn. This means pupils are often set undemanding work or spend long periods of time listening to their teacher.
- 20 At both Key Stage 1 and 2, teachers' lesson plans are good. They set out clearly what pupils are to learn and how. This is often explained to the pupils at the beginning of a lesson which helps build their confidence. There is good use of homework to support learning, particularly in English and mathematics. In all classes, teachers' relationships with pupils are positive. Sensible routines are established and pupils are expected to behave well. This helps create a good working atmosphere. Teachers are confident and have secure subject knowledge which enables them to teach basic skills, such as phonic awareness, effectively. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is carried out very well, but there is still some work to be done to improve

the level of expertise in information and communication technology.

- 21 The good teaching includes the efficient organisation of resources and the use of a range of teaching strategies to help move learning forward successfully. Practical tasks capture pupils' interest and ensure high levels of concentration. Work builds systematically on previous experiences and teachers pose questions which help clarify points and deepen pupils' understanding and knowledge. Class discussions are conducted very well and contribute effectively to pupils' development in literacy skills. An example of this was seen in a Year 2 science lesson in which pupils discussed the changing state of materials. In the best lessons, time is used very well and teachers have high expectations that pupils will work quickly and sensibly. Examples of this were seen in the specialist teaching of music to all year groups. The energetic, enthusiastic style of the teaching ensured pupils' attention, so that they enjoyed the activities and acquired skills, knowledge and understanding rapidly.
- 22 Weaknesses in teaching occur when the teaching approach does not engage pupils sufficiently and they become unsettled. Examples of this were seen in Year 3. Across both key stages, assessment is not used sufficiently to inform what pupils need to do next and to target a faster rate of progress. In addition, higher attaining pupils are not always challenged and extended enough and learning support assistants are sometimes not deployed as effectively as they might be.
- 23 The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is generally good. This sustains the judgement made at the time of the last inspection. They are very well taught when working in small groups with the special needs co-ordinator or when following individual programmes of work. On these occasions teaching is sensitive, brisk and matched well to the pupils' needs. Their individual learning programmes are drawn up with great care and skill, and are of a high quality. Teaching in pupils' classroom work is usually good, although there are times when their individual targets are not taken into account sufficiently. Pupils are helped by teachers or by learning support assistants to take a full part in lessons. On occasions, however, such help is not provided and pupils struggle to keep up.

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

- 24 Overall, the school provides very good quality opportunities for learning and these promote very high achievement especially in literacy and numeracy. In the nursery, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, teachers plan a wide range of imaginative activities which motivate pupils to want to learn.
- 25 The school has made very good progress since the last inspection when the curriculum was a key issue. A very good clear outline framework for the curriculum places strong emphasis on pupils' facility with basic skills across all subjects, as well as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This, together with schemes of work and a clear focus on what it is the pupils are to learn, enables them to acquire knowledge, skills and understanding quickly across the full range of the National Curriculum. There are still weaknesses in teachers' planning when it makes inadequate provision for work to challenge higher attaining pupils, so that they coast in some lessons.
- 26 In the nursery, the school provides a very good range of stimulating learning activities both indoors and outdoors for its pupils. A particular strength is in the development of pupils' oral and social skills to give a very good foundation for literacy and numeracy. An example of this was the group work in which the teacher and nursery nurse used a programmable toy to teach pupils

about information and communication technology and measurement. The toy was 'Incy Wincy Spider' which the pupils took turns to programme to 'climb the water spout' in 10cms to 60cms steps, depending on a throw of a die. Pieces of card were cut to appropriate lengths for pupils to check how far the 'spider' had moved.

- 27 The nursery curriculum is planned very well to cover all the areas of experience and promote pupils' independence. Very good questioning by staff helps pupils to explain what they have learned. An example of this was the teacher discussing with a small group, different ways in which boats or a water wheel could be made to move at different speeds. Both teacher and nursery nurses take an active part in planning and developing the curriculum. They build into it the role of many volunteer parents so that all know what the pupils are to achieve. Tasks are challenging and constructed well. Pupils are very clear about what they are doing and learning. For example, the teacher used a 'feely bag' and set of pictures productively to teach pupils about the name, sound and shape of the letter 'L'.
- 28 The imaginative curriculum for the nursery is not carried forward effectively into the reception class. Planning is weak, as there is little focus on what pupils are to learn. Knowledge of what pupils already know and can do is not used sufficiently to plan work appropriate to needs. Pupils spend much time on activities which lack challenge or limit their opportunity to build on skills they have learned in the nursery. Pupils' personal development is restricted as there are few opportunities for them to use their initiative. As a result, pupils' progress is hindered.
- 29 At both Key Stage 1 and 2, the curriculum meets statutory requirements and is rich in worthwhile activities that meet the interests, aptitudes and particular needs of many pupils. Activities are often linked so that subjects such as literacy, numeracy, music and information and communication technology are integrated effectively into other areas of the curriculum. Musical activities and songs link to class topics. An example of this was work on Victorian market cries in a history project about the Victorians. Some pupils learn to play the recorder in Years 3 and 4. Musical tuition in piano, electronic keyboard and 'cello leading to exams, enhances achievements of pupils with musical aptitudes. Pupils' experience of information and communication technology out of school is integrated well into lessons. Pupils who have computers at home send e-mails to friends. Links in the community mean that friends and family send e-mails to explain their work or to ask questions. This encourages thoughtful replies from the children and increases their knowledge of the world of work.
- 30 Provision for health education, including awareness of drug abuse, is made within the science curriculum. Governors have made the decision that sex education should not be taught as a separate subject. The school uses resources from within and outside the school very effectively to enrich the curriculum. The extensive grounds are used very well to promote physical development and learning about the environment. Visits to places of interest, such as to the local church, do much to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. A very good range of extra-curricular activities including sport, choir, French and gardening clubs does much to meet pupils' interests. Homework is used well to support learning, especially in the development of literacy and numeracy skills.
- 31 Most lesson planning takes good account of the abilities of pupils with special educational needs, enabling them to share the full programme of work. This is true both for classroom work, and for withdrawal work in small groups. On occasions, however, work is not properly matched to their needs, and they struggle. Clear and attainable targets are set for them, and structured programmes are very well used to support their spelling and reading development.
- 32 There are good links with partner schools so that pupils are prepared well for their move to Middle School. The nursery has close links with local playgroups which enables pupils' smooth transition into school. At present the school has few links with initial teacher training consortia.

The high standard of teaching and curriculum means the school has very good potential for effective teacher training.

- 33 At the time of the last inspection, the school's provision for the moral, social and cultural development of the pupils was found to be good. There were weaknesses in the arrangements for promoting spiritual development and this became a key issue in the report. The school has made very good progress in these aspects of personal development since the last inspection. Opportunities for moral and cultural development are now very good, and for social development they are excellent. A high quality action plan was produced to bring improvements in provision for spiritual development, and opportunities in this area are now very good. It is a strength of the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development that teachers' plans for all subjects often show their awareness of how lessons might promote these aspects of personal development. The school's commitment to maintaining high standards in these areas of work is shown by the appointment of a governor with particular responsibility for their oversight.
- 34 Pupils learn respect for the beliefs and values of others, and begin to think about their own need at times of difficulty. They learn about the universal desire for peace, about the beauty of creation and their own responsibility to care for their world. In religious education lessons and assemblies they reflect on spiritual issues respectfully and reverently. Assemblies meet statutory requirements, and provide opportunities for calm reflection on spiritual matters. Teachers take every opportunity in their day to day teaching to help pupils deepen their knowledge of right and wrong. Moral issues, such as fairness and honesty, are addressed sensitively. In one lesson, the biblical story of Joseph led to a consideration of jealousy and cruelty.
- 35 The excellence of the arrangements the school makes for the social development of the pupils is demonstrated by the carefully constructed programme of duties undertaken by older pupils, by the politeness of staff in their dealings with pupils, and by the residential trip to Cuffley which gives an opportunity to experience social living away from home. The school council in particular provides an early introduction to democratic processes such as voting and representing others. Pupils welcome elderly members of the local community into school to help with reading, and they participate eagerly in charity fund raising events. An indication of the success of this programme is the spontaneous applause that sometimes breaks out in a class when one of the pupils has achieved an unexpected success. The school is a colourful, visually rich environment for the pupils. The visual arts are highly valued and very evident on walls and shelf displays. Music has been developed to a high level, and events such as Book Week and Science or Mathematics Week enrich the curriculum. However, little is done to help pupils develop an appreciation of the richness and variety of our contemporary multicultural society. This is a weakness in an otherwise very strong programme.
- 36 The provision made for personal, social and health education is good and the school plans to review this area in the light of future national requirements. Health and drugs education are provided in the science curriculum. The school has established good links with the community which contribute well to pupils' learning. Pupils participate in festivals and other local events, including giving musical performances in the community. Pupils benefit from a scheme that encourages senior citizens to come into school and help in classrooms. Visitors from the community, including the police, fire fighters health professionals and others with special interests, also enrich the curriculum. There are good links with partner institutions through the 'Royston Pyramid' of schools, which promotes close working and training to ensure some continuity in the curriculum as pupils move on to their next school.



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

- 37 The school has a range of appropriate assessment procedures to check pupils' attainment on entry to school, at the end of a topic, at half-term or at the end of each year. Most teachers make clear what it is pupils are to learn at the beginning of each lesson and remind them of what they have learned at the end. Some include the next focus for learning in their lesson plans. However, except in the nursery and information and communication technology throughout the school, there are few procedures to check progress on a day to day basis. This means teachers sometimes have insufficient information to guide work, especially of the higher attaining pupils, or to set individual targets to increase the rate of progress.
- 38 The general progress of pupils with special educational needs is carefully monitored, and work is adjusted whenever assessments show that this is needed.
- 39 The school has a number of informal strategies to ensure pupils are guided, motivated and supported. Pupils' personal development is monitored formally using a local education authority scheme and records are kept of any reported incidents of bad behaviour or bullying. Targets are set for some pupils to help improve their behaviour. All teachers know their children well and show care and consideration in their dealings with them. The school provides a secure environment where pupils feel happy and confident. Pupils' welfare is ensured through good routines, adequate supervision and sound procedures for monitoring health and safety and dealing with illness and accidents. Child protection procedures are in place and known by staff. The positive behaviour strategy is used consistently by teachers and works very well. The policy to deal with any bullying is followed effectively. Pupils are motivated by the system of rewards and praise and are proud to receive 'stickers', certificates or be named as a 'superstar' or 'pupil of the week'. The school's high expectation of good conduct and thought for others is reinforced through circle time and assemblies and is very successful. Registrations are carried out efficiently, records of attendance fulfil statutory requirements and there are sound procedures for monitoring and following up any absence.

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

- 40 The nursery establishes very good links with parents through meetings, to enable a smooth transfer for the pupils between home or playgroup and school. The parents' noticeboard is informative, and home/school literacy and numeracy packs involve parents very well in pupils' learning. At the end of each session, parents collect their children from the nursery or reception classroom and see for themselves the work they have been doing. This gives parents an ideal opportunity to discuss issues with staff. These very good links have led to parents raising money and giving freely of their time to provide an excellent outside play area for pupils in the nursery to extend their physical development and social skills.
- 41 Overall, parents have a positive view of the school and are satisfied with the provision the school makes. In particular, they feel that the teaching is good, that their children are making good progress and that pupils are expected to work hard and do their best.
- 42 The school has established very effective links with parents and encourages them to be involved in the work of the school. This has a very positive impact on pupils' learning. A home/school agreement has been appropriately implemented. Parents are welcomed into the school and many help in classrooms and with other school activities. During the inspection a number of parents were making an effective contribution by, for example, working with a group during the literacy hour or helping with art work or sewing. Parents support their children well through reading and other work given to do at home. There is an active parent, teacher association that organises social and fund-raising events in order to provide extra resources. The school makes an effort to seek parents' views before making some decisions; for instance parents are currently being surveyed about the future of the swimming pool. The headteacher holds an 'open door' session each Friday to give parents the opportunity to call in to school or telephone to discuss any concerns. Most parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with

questions and problems, although a very small minority feel their views are not valued.

- 43 Parents are informed very well about general matters and the curriculum, through newsletters, year group letters and meetings about literacy, numeracy and homework. Good information is provided when pupils start school and through the prospectus and governors' annual report to parents. A number of parents do not feel well informed about their child's progress. However, the school holds a parent/teacher meeting every term, each with two sessions, one straight after school and one later in the evening to suit parents who work. Teachers are also very approachable and willing to talk to parents at the end of the school day. Annual reports on progress are satisfactory and describe the activities that pupils can do, but not always how well they can do them. The school plans to review these reports to ensure that they all incorporate clear targets for improvement.
- 44 Very good liaison is maintained with parents of pupils with special educational needs. In addition to regular review meetings, the special needs co-ordinator runs information sessions for groups of parents to alert them to the school's approaches. As a result a very good partnership develops between home and school in supporting the pupils' learning.

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

- 45 The headteacher is new to the post and is settling in well. She is generous in praise of her predecessor, but is mindful that she is the second headteacher since the previous inspection and some parents are concerned about change. However, a culture of improvement has been established over the last two years and the headteacher is determined to build successfully on this. Significant improvements have been made since the last inspection and the school's capacity to improve still further is very good.
- 46 The leadership provided by the headteacher and senior staff is very good. Together with the governing body, they ensure clear educational direction that promotes high standards. Realistic targets for improvement have been set and everyone is determined that they will be met. Day to day management and financial administration is very good and this enables all staff to get on with their jobs successfully. The school's aims and values are reflected in its daily life and include good relationships and equality for all. The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities and monitors the performance of the school effectively.
- 47 The headteacher rightly places emphasis on the importance of monitoring, evaluating and developing further the quality of teaching. She has undertaken a programme of formal observation of lessons and given feedback to teachers which has included agreed actions and strategies for support. This is particularly important because of the high number of staff changes over the last two years. In addition, the headteacher has carried out work sampling and identified useful issues for discussion. Governors also have a programme of observing activities and reporting back to the main body.
- 48 Subject co-ordinators are enthusiastic and have a clear understanding of the needs of their area of the curriculum. They produce action plans for their subject and monitor standards through looking at pupils' work. Particular importance has rightly been placed on literacy and numeracy and the co-ordinators concerned have undertaken some monitoring of teaching and lesson plans. This has brought about important improvements, for example teachers' time management and the use of the plenary session in numeracy lessons.
- 49 The school's approach to the teaching of pupils with special educational needs is currently under review. The management of the provision, while meeting the requirement of the statutory Code of Practice, needs updating. The employment of the special needs co-ordinator for only one day a week prevents her having a full management oversight of all aspects of the school's provision.
- 50 Leadership in the under fives is very good. Developments in the nursery curriculum and

environment have been very well managed to improve resources and accommodation for the pupils. Planning has been monitored in the reception class and recommendations made for improvement. Checks that improvements have been made through lesson observation and looking at pupils' work are to take place shortly.

- 51 The attainment of pupils with special needs, and of pupils of different genders, is monitored regularly. However, there is no systematic monitoring of the progress made by higher attaining pupils.
- 52 The governors and headteacher are sharply aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The budget is carefully and effectively managed to ensure that the priorities they identify are met. These priorities are set out in a well-constructed development plan, and the governors monitor its effective implementation thoroughly. The budget is in surplus, with a prudent sum kept in hand to meet unexpected circumstances. Funds raised by parents and staff make an important contribution to the range of opportunity available to the pupils. The funds made available for the education of pupils with special educational needs are correctly applied. The school uses and maintains its generous site and very good accommodation well.
- 53 A satisfactory range of equipment and materials for learning is provided in most areas of work. This is easily to hand for the pupils' use, and used well in lessons. Learning resources for the education of children under five, and for the teaching of music are good, but there is too little equipment for geography teaching. The school has a satisfactory number of qualified staff. However, the decision to appoint three newly qualified teachers at one time puts pressure on the school's processes for the induction of new teachers, especially in view of the recent high incidence of change among other staff. A good programme of staff development, especially in literacy and numeracy, has contributed to very good programmes in those subjects. All staff have been interviewed individually by the new headteacher as part of a programme to identify developmental needs and improve performance. While learning support assistants are usually efficiently deployed, there are instances in which they are not used to best advantage in lessons. The governors and the headteacher have good systems for monitoring the school's effectiveness, and they are successful in ensuring that good value is obtained in the use of its resources.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

- 54 In order to improve the school still further, governors, headteacher and staff should:
- (1) raise the quality of teaching of reception pupils by:
    - (a) increasing the level of staff expertise in teaching pupils of this age;
    - (b) building more effectively on the knowledge, skills and understanding acquired by pupils in the nursery;
    - (c) improving planning to make clear what pupils are to learn and how;
    - (d) using assessment effectively to provide work that meets all pupils' needs;
    - (e) ensuring a thorough approach to the teaching of reading;(Paragraphs: 1, 15, 19, 28, 55-68)
  - (2) improve assessment arrangements by:
    - (a) introducing more frequent and useful checks on what pupils know and can do;
    - (b) using this information to ensure all pupils, especially higher attainers, are fully extended.(Paragraphs: 19, 22, 37, 51, 85)

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

- (1) complete the review of the special educational needs policy and provision in order to make sure it is more thoroughly managed;  
(Paragraph 49)
- (2) review the deployment of the learning support assistants so that they are used to best effect.  
(Paragraphs: 22,53,68)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	66
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	20

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9.1	31.8	28.8	22.7	7.6	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	29	271
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	21

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	53

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.87
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.26
National comparative data	0.5

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

### **Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	29	28	57

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	27	27	27
	Girls	27	27	28
	Total	54	54	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (81)	95 (94)	96 (92)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	27	28	29
	Girls	28	27	27
	Total	55	55	56
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (86)	96 (90)	98 (93)
	National	82 (80)	86 (79)	87 (85)

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	235
Any other minority ethnic group	1

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

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

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

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	30.1
Average class size	26.7

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y4**

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	135

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	29

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	33

Number of pupils per FTE adult	14.5
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1998
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	£
Total income	521219
Total expenditure	524277
Expenditure per pupil	1624
Balance brought forward from previous year	26438
Balance carried forward to next year	23380

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	328
Number of questionnaires returned	133

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	61	32	4	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	48	44	2	1	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	56	7	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	50	11	4	7
The teaching is good.	47	46	3	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	49	15	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	37	7	3	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	39	53	4	2	2
The school works closely with parents.	35	47	13	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	31	54	8	2	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	54	5	2	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	49	7	1	7



## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

- 55 Provision for the under fives is very good in the nursery and mainly unsatisfactory in the reception class. Pupils join the nursery when they are almost 4 years of age. Most spend 3 terms in the nursery, attending each morning or each afternoon. They transfer to the reception class in the term in which they become five.
- 56 Pupils' attitudes towards learning are good. Standards at the end of the foundation stage are on course to be in line with, or above, expectations for this age group in all the areas of experience. This is because pupils make a very good start with their education in the nursery. At the end of their time in the nursery, pupils achieve particularly well in oral skills and personal and social development so that their achievements are well above that which is normally expected. This very good start is not carried forward sufficiently well into the reception class where there is some slowing of pupils' progress.

#### **Personal and social development**

- 57 Pupils settle quickly into the nursery. They are confident to talk to their friends and adults about their experiences or to gain information they need. They enjoy periods of working individually and in groups. A strong feature is the manner in which pupils become independent. They go to the toilet without needing adult help with their clothes; seek out the resources they need; choose activities which stimulate their intellectual ability, such as learning about numbers to 10 using a computer programme; tidy up without being asked when they finish playing in the sand. Pupils co-operate well with one another in role-play and concentrate, persevering with challenging tasks for substantial amounts of time. For example, drawing a spider's web accurately. These very good features stem from high expectations of all adults in the nursery that pupils are responsible young people who can make decisions for themselves.
- 58 These good habits are maintained in the reception class as pupils are prepared to sit for long periods listening attentively to their teacher. They speak confidently in front of the class without fear of being wrong. They play well together in the toyshop taking on the role of customer and shopkeeper in turn. However, opportunities for pupils to make decisions about their work and try things for themselves are limited. This hinders their eagerness to explore new learning.

#### **Language and literacy**

- 59 Language and literacy is taught very well in the nursery. Adults engage pupils in planned and spontaneous conversations so that they listen and respond appropriately. As a result nursery pupils use a growing vocabulary with increasing fluency to express their thoughts and convey meaning to the listener. Many are articulate. Pupils enjoy talking about their work, especially when they are on the computer. They are excited by the results on the screen when they press a particular key. During 'snack time' they tell their friends about the work they have been doing and what they have discovered. Specific teaching of phonic skills helps pupils to develop early reading skills and write familiar words such as their names. Pupils enjoy looking at books and know how to 'read' a book from left to right and tell simple stories from the pictures. They recognise and name initial sounds of words such as 'L', 'N', and 'S'. Pupils have a good foundation of early reading skills when they leave the nursery. Higher attainers, judged ready to read, receive a book from the school reading scheme.

- 60 In reception, pupils do not always make sufficient progress in learning to read. This is because guidance for teaching the National Literacy Strategy to pupils of this age is not being followed closely enough. Pupils share a 'big book' with the teacher, but activities following this often occupies the pupils in play activities rather than giving them the chance to practise skills they have learned. Insufficient teaching of specific reading skills means pupils have few strategies to work out unfamiliar words. Pupils' needs, especially those of higher attaining pupils, are not always met. Pupils who are capable of writing simple sentences using a word bank spend time colouring in low quality worksheets. This, and the presentation of very easy books in guided reading sessions, limits the chance for them to use their initiative and gain confidence in reading and writing.

### **Mathematics**

- 61 Pupils have good attitudes to learning mathematics and this has a positive impact on their learning. Teachers and adults make the most of opportunities to extend pupils' vocabulary in mathematics. In both the reception class and nursery, role-play situations, such as the café or toyshop, promote knowledge and skills in the recognition of coins and the concepts of addition and subtraction. 'Snack time' is used very efficiently to develop counting skills so that pupils can count confidently to 10. In other situations pupils recognise different shapes, such as circle and triangle and make regular repeating patterns by threading coloured beads according to a pattern on a card. The current topic on 'Nursery Rhymes' means pupils know a selection of number rhymes that help them count above 20. For example pupils sing, 'Sing a Song of Sixpence' and 'The Grand Old Duke of York'. Some pupils record their numbers.
- 62 The National Numeracy Strategy has been adopted in the reception class. However, initial whole class sessions are not followed up by activities which extend pupils' mathematical knowledge and skills. Work lacks challenge and intellectual stimulation so that pupils find it hard to practise and apply skills learned previously. This stems from a lack of awareness of what pupils know and can do.

### **Knowledge and Understanding of the World**

- 63 Teaching in the nursery provides a very wide range of activities for children to explore the environment outside the school. Visitors such as a fire fighter, police officer, or nurse provide very good opportunities for pupils to ask questions about the world around them. Discussions about the care of the environment, through thinking about the 'rubbish' thrown from our homes and using computer programmes to construct a town, give pupils a very good foundation for learning geography. The school environment is used very well as a rich source for learning about small creatures. Pupils use books well to find out information about these creatures, such as spiders.
- 64 Knowledge and understanding of the world is taught mostly satisfactorily in the reception class. Pupils know about different materials that toys are made from and the different ways in which they move. This work, and their knowledge about information and communication technology, is recorded in pictures and interactive displays. Their knowledge of how to use computer programmes is limited. When using the computer, pupils are organised into groups of six to work with a learning support assistant on one computer. This restricts access and limits the chance for pupils to practise their skills. A strength in the reception class is pupils' knowledge of information and communication technology in everyday life. For example, they know about digital telephones, digital television and the use of computers to send e-mail.

### **Physical development**

- 65 Pupils in both the nursery and reception have very good skills in using appropriate tools, objects, construction toys and malleable materials. They are taught well to hold pencils and crayons correctly so that they can draw well. In both classes, pupils complete jigsaw puzzles of increasing difficulty. Older pupils press out their names from soft dough using shaped

cutters.

- 66 Only one lesson in physical development was seen. Observations indicate pupils move around the classroom without bumping into others; wait sensibly in line and wait for others to come through a door before going through it themselves.

### **Creative development.**

- 67 Pupils in the nursery respond very well to the creative opportunities provided for them. They use initiative in painting. For example, one pupil mixed colours for his picture and then experimented by using a paintbrush in each hand to paint flowing lines. All pupils under five enjoy drawing, painting, cutting and sticking in addition to acting out their ideas creatively. Music, taught by a specialist to both classes, is outstanding. To promote knowledge and enjoyment, the teacher used puppets to help pupils understand different rhythms and beats. The puppets had appropriate names such as Oscar, Henrietta and Jo. The pupils repeated the names after the teacher and in doing so heard a variety of rhythms. They copied these playing a variety of untuned instruments. The puppet 'Sheila Sheep' was effectively used to enable pupils to understand the notion of a 'rest'.

### **Other factors related to the quality of education**

- 68 The marked difference of very good teaching in the nursery and some unsatisfactory teaching in the reception has a significant impact on pupils' achievements in the areas of experience. In both the nursery and reception, relationships between the pupils and staff are very good which results in pupils' good behaviour. However, there are differences in planning. In the nursery, tasks are structured well and challenging. Assessment is used to plan work that meet pupils' needs. In the reception class, the level of expertise to teach literacy and numeracy to pupils of this age group is sometimes insufficient to take learning forward. Additional support staff are not deployed well to extend pupils' learning.

## **ENGLISH**

- 69 The previous inspection found that overall attainment in English was in line with national standards. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of work during the present inspection show that there has been a significant improvement. Pupils' attainment at the end of both Key Stage 1 and Year 4 are now well above standards expected for that age.
- 70 The school's results in the 1999 reading and writing national assessments for pupils aged seven were very high compared to all schools. The percentage of pupils reaching the higher levels in reading tests was above the national average and in writing it was well above. Results in reading over the last four years have been variable. They fell to being close to the national average, then rose again. Results in writing for the same period have been consistently above the national average and rising at a faster rate than most schools. Compared to similar schools, the 1999 results in reading were broadly in line with the average and in writing they were above it.
- 71 The National Literacy Strategy has been introduced very effectively and pupils respond positively to the structures and routines of the literacy hour. Pupils' learning over time and in lessons at both Key Stage 1 and 2 is good overall, including those with special educational needs. It is particularly good in Year 2. However, higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged and extended enough.
- 72 At Key Stage 1, pupils' speaking and listening skills are very good. Many pupils speak confidently and communicate meaning clearly. They listen attentively, respond correctly to instructions and answer questions well. In reading, pupils begin to make up for the slow progress made in the reception class. They use a range of strategies to decode new words and are able to describe characters in stories they are reading. An example of this was seen in a

Year 2 lesson using the shared traditional text of 'Red Riding Hood'.

- 73 By the age of seven many pupils read with growing confidence and to a good standard, though with limited expression. Writing skills are very good with a basic understanding of sentence structure, including the use of capitals and full stops. Pupils write for a range of purposes, often using interesting vocabulary and developing ideas well. Examples of this were seen in some Year 1 writing that involved retelling the story of 'The Three Little Pigs' and in some Year 2 work on 'Millennium Promise'. Simple words are usually spelt correctly and handwriting is mostly neat and uniform.
- 74 At Key Stage 2, pupils build successfully on their earlier learning, although progress is more marked in Year 4 than in Year 3. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are very good. They are willing to put forward their own views and do so sensibly. An example of this was seen in a Year 3 lesson when pupils showed a good understanding of traditional stories and expressed likes and dislikes. Pupils' standards of reading and writing are high. By the age of nine, many pupils read with expression and very good levels of comprehension. They are able to retell stories they are reading and to predict possible outcomes. They know some children's authors, although higher attainers do not always read a sufficiently wide range of literature. Home school reading diaries could be more effectively used to ensure this happens. Pupils' writing is often sensible and imaginative with good use of spelling and punctuation. Their vocabulary is often very good, as in a Year 4 lesson listing adjectives in order of their intensity. Handwriting is usually neat and legible. Pupils' research skills are good, although little use was made of the library during the period of the inspection.
- 75 The overall quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Teaching at both Key Stage 1 and 2 is now never less than satisfactory and almost all lessons are good or very good. This includes the specialist teaching of pupils with special educational needs. All teachers show a clear understanding of the requirements of the National Literacy Strategy and have satisfactory or better subject knowledge which is shared effectively with pupils. Lesson planning is usually very good and teachers know what pupils are to learn, although higher attainers are not always sufficiently challenged.
- 76 Classes are managed effectively and pupils are motivated to work hard and behave well, although this aspect of teaching is not always as strong in Year 3. Pupils mostly have very good attitudes towards tasks set and this means they usually work quickly and with a sense of purpose. There is a good range of activities and questions are used skilfully to move learning forward. This has a positive impact on pupils' progress. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do in the time available and tasks are undertaken at a brisk pace. Explanations and directions are clear and pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are built systematically. An example of this was seen in a Year 2 lesson in which pupils focused successfully on capital letters and full stops as well as letter blends and the use of suffixes. Another example was a Year 4 lesson in which pupils sensibly considered differences in language and rhythm within a poem about boats. At both key stages, but more particularly at Key Stage 2, homework is used effectively to support learning.
- 77 Staff training for the introduction of the literacy hour was organised and run by the co-ordinator for the subject. Teachers have responded well. The co-ordinator sees teachers' plans on a half-termly basis and comments when appropriate. An annual book week and book fayres help to enrich pupils' experiences of the subject.

## **MATHEMATICS**

- 78 Standards in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 and Year 4 achieved in national tests in 1999 were very high. Work of the pupils in the current Years 2 and 4 reflect these very high standards in all aspects of mathematics. When compared to all schools, standards are very

high. They are good when compared to similar schools. Standards have risen, much faster than the national trend, over the last four years.

- 79 Pupils have very secure knowledge, skills and understanding in addition, subtraction, multiplication and division and use these well when carrying out mathematical investigations or solving problems. A particular strength is pupils' speed of response during mental arithmetic sessions. A game, such as 'I say 3, you say 7' supports young pupils' learning of numbers which make 10 very effectively. This is developed very well so that by the end of Year 2 pupils know their number bonds to 10 and 20 very well.
- 80 At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils work speedily and accurately counting in twos, fives, and tens, forwards and backwards to 100, recording their work carefully. Some know numbers and their place value up to 1000 and add and subtract two digit numbers. Pupils draw and measure accurately in centimetres, know about fractions such as halves and quarters which they relate to telling the time. Pupils know about handling data. They collect data from traffic surveys and enter it into a computer programme. They then analyse the information which they present as a graph.
- 81 By Year 4, pupils know about the measurement of angles and how this links to points on a compass. They extend this work using computer programmes to draw two-dimensional shapes and letters of the alphabet accurately and quickly. Pupils have secure knowledge in the addition of three and four digit numbers, multiplication tables, shapes and measurements. The scrutiny of work shows there is less work in handling data. In both key stages, pupils have very good knowledge of mathematical vocabulary which they use confidently to explain their work, give answers or explain their difficulties.
- 82 Changes since the previous inspection are very good. Standards have risen significantly, from satisfactory to very high. The quality of teaching has improved from satisfactory throughout the school to very good in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. Teachers' planning is very specific about work to be covered over the week and during each lesson, including the use of information and communications technology. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, learn at a much faster rate than at the time of the previous inspection.
- 83 Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported, especially in Year 2, so that they take a full part in lessons. They do very well in meeting the targets set out in their individual action plans and reach expected standards. Higher attaining pupils are insufficiently challenged in Years 3 and 4.
- 84 Good teaching in both key stages, but especially Year 2 where it is very good, enables children to acquire basic mathematical skills rapidly. Teachers prepare and plan their lessons very thoroughly and make clear to the pupils what it is they are to learn. This helps pupils to concentrate and think hard about what they are doing. The pupils share teachers' enthusiasm for the subject so that they are confident and keen to learn new skills and apply them well. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to provide a variety of imaginative, short, well-focused activities in each lesson, to maintain children's interest and challenge them intellectually. In doing so teachers promote very high standards especially for boys. Teachers in Key Stage 1 and 2 mostly manage pupils very well and insist on high standards of pride and presentation in written tasks so that they work with accuracy. Some pupils in Year 3 are less willing to listen to their friends or teacher which slows the pace of learning for all in the class. By making the best use of time, teachers and pupils cover substantial amounts of work. In most classes, support staff are very clear about the way in which they are to help children, especially those with special educational needs, so that they play a full part in lessons. A good range of computer programmes is used well to help pupils practise mathematical skills and improve their capability in information and communication technology.

- 85 Pupils explain confidently their strategies for solving problems or working out sums. In turn, teachers listen very well to pupils and provide very good explanations to help them overcome any misunderstanding. Formal assessments of pupils' achievements give information about what they know and can do. However, the information is not used sufficiently, especially in Key Stage 2, to set individual targets or provide work that meets pupils' precise needs to increase the pace of learning. Marking is inconsistent and rarely makes clear how pupils are to improve.
- 86 Very good leadership by the co-ordinator means the National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented very effectively. Teachers have adapted their teaching very well so that there is a very strong emphasis on oral and mental work as well as written and practical tasks. The status of the subject has been raised significantly. Attractive displays value pupils' efforts and provide pupils with examples of mathematical concepts and vocabulary. Teaching of mathematics has been monitored carefully since the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. Many strengths in teaching have been recognised, boosting staff confidence. Changes were made to the plenary session and staff advised, very successfully, about ways to improve time management.
- 88 A new, commercial scheme of mathematics books supplements much of the work recommended in the National Numeracy Strategy and provides the full scheme of work required at the time of the previous inspection. This and regular homework is supporting pupils' work well. An annual 'mathematics week' provides a range of intellectually challenging tasks to illustrate the importance of learning mathematics in real situations. It enriches the mathematics curriculum and does much to extend pupils' investigative and problem solving skills.

## **SCIENCE**

- 89 At the time of the last inspection, pupils made satisfactory progress in learning science and reached average levels of attainment. There was some variability in how well they achieved in different aspects of the subject. In particular they had too few opportunities to follow their own lines of enquiry or to make decisions for themselves in the course of their work.
- 90 Attainment has improved in the intervening years. At the end of Key Stage 1 it is now above average in relation to national expectations. This is sustained into Key Stage 2, and when pupils reach the end of Year 4 their attainment remains above average for pupils of that age.
- 91 This finding confirms the evidence of the national assessment programme in 1999. Those assessments also showed that the percentage of pupils reaching levels above those expected nationally, at the end of Key Stage 1, was well above that in most schools. When compared only with schools with a similar pupil intake, the percentage reaching the national standard was still above average.
- 92 Together with this significant raising of standards, the school has also successfully addressed the other issues identified in the previous inspection. Pupils now have satisfactory opportunities to plan simple experiments of their own, to predict possible outcomes from their investigations and to observe results carefully. The good standards currently achieved apply across all parts of the science curriculum.
- 93 Pupils' attainment on entry to Key Stage 1 varies from year to year but is generally above average. They work hard in their science lessons in both key stages, and the school's good teaching ensures they progress at a good pace. Pupils with special educational needs also

usually make good headway in science because they receive help to carry out the same science tasks as their classmates. However, there are instances in which work is not matched to their needs with enough care, and they struggle. Higher attaining pupils do not progress as well as they should. This is because lessons seldom include any activities to challenge them to more complex scientific concepts.

- 94 By the end of Key Stage 1 most pupils can distinguish natural from man-made materials, and classify some materials as liquid, solid or gas. By Year 4, they have a good knowledge of the effects of heating and cooling, and are aware of changes which can, or cannot, be reversed. The younger pupils are beginning to grasp the concept of reflection of light, and by the age of nine most have a sound knowledge of light sources, transparency and opacity. Most Key Stage 1 pupils can set up simple experiments with teachers' help, and observe the outcomes carefully. By Year 4 they have developed a sound understanding of the need for careful control of variables if a test is to be reliable. They record their results in a variety of ways, including graphically.
- 95 Characteristic of the pupils' very positive attitudes to their work is a high degree of concentration and an eagerness to ask and answer questions. They generally show a lot of interest in their work, and are prepared to work hard to master new ideas. They present most of their work carefully and neatly. These good attitudes contribute greatly to the fast rate of their learning.
- 96 The ability of teachers to elicit such good levels of response from the pupils is one of the main strengths of science teaching in the school. All the lessons seen were at least satisfactory, and some in Key Stage 1 were very good. Teachers are skilled at finding ways of introducing science topics which will capture and hold the pupils' interest. They strike a good balance between explaining new ideas to the pupils, and challenging them to work out answers for themselves. Some lessons set particularly high expectations for the pupils. In one very good Key Stage 2 lesson, the class had been learning about thermal insulation, and were investigating how different insulating materials might slow down the melting of ice. In a very good discussion the pupils predicted which materials would be most effective, and thought about what type of test might be constructed to provide secure evidence. They went on to conduct tests and record their results. The expressive and enthusiastic style of teaching captured pupils' interest, and they were fascinated by their experimental work. These are challenging concepts for such young pupils, but because of the high standard of teaching they learned much more than would normally be expected.
- 97 In a few lessons, which were otherwise satisfactory, pupils became restless and did not cover as much ground as they could. While lesson planning is mostly good, too little attention is given to meeting the needs of higher attaining pupils.
- 98 The school has recently adopted a new, nationally recommended programme of work for science. This has been carefully implemented and is helping ensure that pupils' learning progresses smoothly from week to week and year to year. While checks are carried out on the effectiveness of the science programme as a whole towards the end of each year, there is no effective system yet for assessing pupils' progress as the school year unfolds. As a consequence, teachers planning science lessons have insufficient detailed information to ensure that all work is pitched at the right level for the pupils. Higher attaining pupils in particular are held back by this.
- 99 At present, the school does not set itself precise targets for year-on-year improvement in science as it does in English and mathematics. This is needed to make sure that standards continue to rise.
- 100 A Science Club and annual Science Week are excellent initiatives. They are popular, and enrich the school's strong science programme.

## ART

- 101 Four lessons were seen during the period of the inspection, three of them at Key Stage 2. Judgements were informed by an examination of teachers' planning, scrutiny of pupils' work and displays around the school. The programme is suitably broad and balanced. Standards of work are good and sometimes very good. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous report.
- 102 Pupils' learning in lessons and over time is good, including those with special educational needs. At both key stages, pupils generate good ideas and show increasing confidence in experimenting with a range of media. Programmes of art work are often linked effectively to other subjects. Good examples of this were seen in Year 1 collage work on the story of Creation and in some very good Year 4 paintings of characters from the 'Harry Potter' stories.
- 103 Pupils show good skills in drawing, painting and colouring. This often helps them illustrate work in subjects such as science, history and geography. As they move up through the school, pupils' creative development is good. They show growing confidence in the ability to represent what they see through pictures. They mix and apply colours with increasing skill and make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the use of shade, shape, pattern and texture. Their work includes printing, weaving and the making of computerised pictures. Appropriate emphasis is given to observational skills. An example of this was seen in a Year 4 lesson in which pupils were successfully observing and drawing a range of Sikh artefacts. Appropriate attention is given to the work of well-known artists such as Georges Seurat and William Morris. Pupils copy their styles effectively. Year 2 pupils have painted very pleasing sunflowers in the style of Vincent Van Gogh, and pupils in Year 3 have produced patterns of a high standard, using paint, in the style of Paul Klee. Such studies help broaden pupils' understanding of different cultures.
- 104 Teaching overall is good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, which is shared effectively with pupils, and this has a positive impact on progress. Lesson planning is good and teachers mostly have high expectations of what pupils can do. This is an improvement from the previous inspection which found expectations at Key Stage 1 to be too low. Lessons themselves begin with reminders about previous work and well-conducted practical demonstrations to illustrate particular skills. Relationships are good and questions are used effectively to help pupils know how to improve their work. Time is used well, as in a Year 3 lesson in which pupils successfully designed and printed repeat patterns. They worked productively and with enthusiasm. Resources are organised efficiently and pupils are provided with opportunities to select materials and equipment for themselves. This too is an improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils have very good attitudes towards the subject and behave well. This means they remain on task and work hard. They are prepared to share ideas and to learn from one another. Examples of this were seen in a Year 2 lesson on weaving in which pupils were excited, but still courteous to adults and helpful to each other.
- 105 Displays of art work around the school are often of a high standard. Together with the use of good quality artefacts, they help build pupils' visual awareness and creative development.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

- 106 Only two design and technology lessons were seen during the inspection. Both of these were in Year 2. While both were very well taught, there is not enough evidence to make an overall judgement about the standards of design and technology teaching in the school. Work on display, photographic records and the scrutiny of teachers' past lesson plans shows that a balanced programme of work is offered. Within this programme pupils' achieve sound standards and make satisfactory progress.
- 107 The programme of work at present focuses on the design and construction of simple mechanisms, on the use of textiles and on food technology.



- 108 Key Stage 1 pupils have made simple moving pictures, using cut-out figures on card sliders. They have thought about different ways of fixing the materials and about the relative sizes of the components. In Key Stage 2, pupils have built three-dimensional moving models using cardboard boxes and syringes or balloons to provide pneumatic power. This work involved good quality design activity before the models were made and sound critical evaluations of the outcomes.
- 109 In food technology, pupils are supported by parents when working in the small kitchen area making cakes and sweets. Often these are an imaginative extension of studies in other subjects of the curriculum. As part of the religious education programme, for example, pupils made traditional Jewish potato cakes. On another occasion they made the small sweets traditionally eaten as part of Sikh religious observance.
- 110 Work in textiles again often links to other areas of the curriculum. In the very good lessons seen, pupils extended their religious education work on Joseph and his multi-coloured coat. They designed, and made patterns for such a coat. They selected materials and tools carefully and began making the coat. Some realised quickly that designs need to be practicable as well as imaginative. These were lively and imaginative lessons which combined good learning about the properties of materials and tool use, with careful design and evaluation activities. The teachers showed a thorough knowledge of the subject and set a high level of challenge to the pupils.

## **GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY**

- 111 Only a small number of lessons were seen during the inspection. It is clear from work displayed around the schools and from a scrutiny of pupils' previous work, that pupils' learning develops steadily in both subjects as they move through the school. At the end of Key Stage 1 and Year 4 they reach standards above those expected for pupils of this age.
- 112 Younger pupils know about the local environment and have well-developed mapping skills. Traffic surveys and work on the environment in Year 1 have enabled pupils to consider the impact of the use of cars for short trips, such as taking children to school, on pupils' health and the environment. Mapping skills are developed well in Year 3, where pupils study climate of different countries and explore their place in the world using an atlas. In Year 4, pupils know map symbols such as a triangle to identify mountain peaks. Pupils know about other places in the world such as the Punjab and compare how life there differs to this country.
- 113 In history, pupils at the end of Key Stage 1, know the difference between modern toys and toys in the past. A good display of old toys and a visit to a toy museum enhanced pupils' knowledge of recent and distant past. Some toys were only 20 years old, others almost 100 years old. Pupils in Year 4 have well-developed historical research skills which they used effectively in a project about the history of Royston. Pupils used old photographs, newspaper reports, maps and experiences of long term residents of the town, to note how much the town has changed. They know much about life in Victorian Times. Some pupils used CD-Roms to find out more information.
- 114 The breadth of the curriculum, found at the last inspection has been maintained. This adds much to the rich curriculum experiences of the pupils and extends their general knowledge about the world and times past. Much of the work is presented neatly and carefully. In discussions, pupils put forward their ideas sensibly and with confidence.
- 115 Teaching is mostly good, as tasks are well-planned and lessons have clear objectives, which are explained carefully to the pupils to focus their attention. Work that involves pupils in carrying out research or practical activities captures their interest more than when the teacher provides a substantial amount of information. This requires pupils to listen for a long time so

that they become restless. In turn, this makes it hard for the teacher to ensure the aim for the lesson is carried out, so that pupils make sufficient progress. Teachers place substantial emphasis on the development of appropriate subject vocabulary and promote pupils' interest by asking them to work as 'geographers' or 'historians'. This helps pupils to acquire appropriate subject and thinking skills.

- 116 At present the headteacher oversees the development of geography. Monitoring of lessons shows that some teachers are more confident in teaching the subjects than others, leading to some inconsistency in progress. Improvements have been made through detailed planning and clear learning objectives. Resources in geography are insufficient and some are out of date. The history co-ordinator checks teachers' planning and looks at work to see that they are implemented. Resources are good and enhanced by visits to places such as Hatfield House. Teachers arrange opportunities for pupils to handle artefacts or to live for a day, perhaps as a Roman taking part in a Roman feast, to make learning real.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

- 117 Standards in information and communication technology are above that expected for pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 and Year 4. Developments since the last inspection have improved pupils' progress significantly. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have secure knowledge of the use of information and communication technology in the wider world, basic keyboard and word processing skills and data handling. This is built on in Years 3 and 4 so that pupils can work independently of the teacher. They know how to save and retrieve their work or set up the programmes they wish to use. In both key stages, pupils have good knowledge of correct terminology for use when learning information and communication technology. They know the names of the keys and their functions and use them well to describe their success or difficulty.
- 118 The school has made very good progress since the previous inspection. Teachers set aside sessions each week to teach a specific computer skill that is also related to a curriculum area. For example, in Year 2, pupils learned how to improve and correct a piece of text linked to work in the literacy hour. Teaching focused well on the use of the mouse and keys to move the cursor to the correct position so that words could be added or deleted. In Year 1, teaching focused on the use of the tools in an art programme to draw pictures in the style of an impressionist painter. A well-qualified computer technician has been employed to maintain the resources and teach small groups, skills in using the Internet, e-mail and CD- Roms. This has been very beneficial to pupils' independent research skills. During the inspection a group of Year 4 pupils worked with the technician to find information on the Internet about the Sikh religion.
- 119 Teaching is often good as teachers' confidence has improved. There is still work to be done to ensure a high level of expertise in all year groups. Planning is detailed and linked to clear learning objectives. These are conveyed very well to the pupils. In turn, this has enabled the systematic development of information and communication capability and its application across the curriculum. The school has a rolling programme to keep resources up to date within financial limitations. Resources are limited in comparison to many schools, and the school has yet to gain access to the New Opportunities Funding. It is to the school's credit that achievements are good.
- 120 Teachers have high expectations that pupils do well in learning information and communication technology. They build well on the expertise pupils gain from using their computers at home. All parents were given the school's e-mail address and many responded with messages. Pupils too send e-mails to their friends at school. In providing and including pupils in very clear

explanations and instructions, teachers enable them to work independently. In mathematics lessons, pupils in Key Stage 1 use good quality CD-Roms to practise their addition and subtraction skills in an imaginative way. In Year 4, pupils use a computer programme to enhance learning in measurement of angles.

- 121 Teachers use word processing to provide labels for displays of pupils' work. Their confidence in demonstration provides pupils with good role models. Effective questioning helps pupils to remember the steps they need to take to ensure they use the computer keys and mouse correctly. New assessment procedures which include pupils' assessment of their own progress is enabling pupils to understand what they are doing, how well they have done and how they can improve.
- 122 The co-ordinator is new to the responsibility. A very good action plan is helping to drive developments forward at a good pace. The co-ordinator's expertise and that of the technician is very good. Checks on teaching and planning have improved teachers' confidence and promoted greater continuity in pupils' learning.

## **MUSIC**

- 123 Standards in music are very high at the end of Key Stage 1 and Year 4 so that music is a major strength in the school. Pupils sing with enthusiasm reflecting the mood and tone of the song. For example, pupils in Year 3 and 4 were preparing the musical 'Millennium Heroes' during the inspection. This consists of a number of different songs, some of which are very quiet and reflective and others up-beat. The musical is based on wishes for the future but reflects on the life of Jesus and how it has influenced our lives. Pupils sang the words very clearly with emotion, conveying the mood and meaning of each song. In addition, some pupils played their recorder or 'cello as an accompaniment to raise the quality of the work. This contributes significantly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- 124 The curriculum covers all aspects of the National Curriculum for music. Pupils learn to compose and write simple notation at an early stage. This is developed very well later as some pupils in Year 3 and 4 learn to play the recorder and to read music. In turn, pupils who learn piano, 'cello, or electronic keyboard make rapid progress towards their musical exams as a result of work done in school. Music is often linked to other areas of the curriculum. In Year 4 history, pupils made up their own Victorian Street cries. Younger pupils chose instruments to reflect the straw, twigs or bricks in the story of the 'Three Little Pigs'. At various times of the year, pupils experience music from a range of traditions, music hall, jazz, folk or classical. This is a substantial improvement since the last inspection, when the pressure of time was said to limit opportunities for musical appreciation.
- 125 Lessons remain short, twenty minutes in length, but class teachers follow up work in these sessions in the classroom. The specialist teacher's enthusiasm and significant musical skills promote very high standards. The pace of lessons is fast, not a moment is wasted, so that pupils work very hard and make rapid progress. Pupils share their teacher's enthusiasm so that there are a substantial number of boys and girls in the choir and pupils learning different instruments. They have a good understanding of technical terms and are keen to play well. Planning is very detailed and worked out in collaboration with the class teacher. Music chosen takes into account pupils' interest and aptitudes and inspires them to achieve as well as they possibly can.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

- 126 Gymnastics, games and dance lessons were observed during the period of inspection. The school's records show that athletics and swimming take place at other times of the year. In addition, Year 4 pupils undertake outdoor pursuits when they attend a residential centre during the summer term. Sufficient time is given to the subject and pupils at both key stages achieve

standards appropriate for their age. This is in line with findings of the previous report.

- 127 In lessons, pupils' learning overall is satisfactory, including those with special educational needs. They use apparatus and equipment sensibly and are mindful of safety factors. At Key Stage 1 they show awareness of space and each other. They sustain activity well and their actions show increasing control, co-ordination and balance. In games, pupils work hard to develop ball skills. They are beginning to position hands and feet correctly and they pass, receive and strike a ball with increasing confidence and accuracy. For example, in a Year 2 lesson on bat and ball skills, pupils worked effectively in pairs and identified ways to improve. Key Stage 2 pupils build satisfactorily on previous learning. In dance, they work together well, listen carefully to music and carry out movements in the correct sequence. In gymnastics they devise increasingly complex sequences of movements which involve twisting, turning and travelling over the floor and apparatus. This was clear in a Year 4 lesson in which pupils showed the ability to practise, refine and improve their movements.
- 128 In lessons observed, teaching at both key stages was never less than satisfactory and sometimes good or very good. Sensible routines have been established and pupils change and move to and from the hall quickly and quietly. This saves time and helps to give a sense of purpose to the lessons. Teachers have secure subject knowledge which is shared effectively with pupils, often by demonstrating particular skills. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Lesson planning is good and teachers are clear what pupils are to learn. Control and management of pupils is also good and this ensures that work moves forward at an appropriate pace. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their efforts so that they know how to improve. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations of what can be achieved in the time available. A strong emphasis is rightly placed on building skills systematically and this has a positive effect on pupils' progress. All pupils are motivated to work hard, sometimes out of breath through effort. They have very good attitudes towards the activities and their behaviour is of a high standard. This too has a positive impact on their progress.
- 129 Currently, the school has an acting co-ordinator for the subject. However, there are helpful policy statements and schemes of work to support the teaching. A range of sports activities are available after school and these help to enhance pupils' experience of the subject.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 130 Pupils' attainment in religious education at the end of Key Stage 1 is in line with the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Standards at the end of Year 4 are also in line with Agreed Syllabus expectations for pupils of that age. Similar standards of attainment were reported in the last inspection. In most of their lessons pupils learn quickly and with good understanding because they are very interested in the imaginative tasks the teachers present to them. Pupils with special educational needs also make good headway because they get support in coping with the writing demands many lessons place on them.
- 131 By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have a good understanding of aspects of Christian worship and religious observance, and some awareness of religious practice in other faiths. They appreciate that church, temple and gurdwara are places which people regard as special, and they are beginning to learn about what takes place in these worship centres. Good use is made of visits to places of worship, and this helps make learning come alive for the pupils. They know about the uniqueness of every person and about some of the needs that all people have in common. They learn about the beauty of the created world and about their duty to protect it. Learning is extended in Key Stage 2 where the pupils know more about other faiths, about important religious festivals and about the rules for living, propounded within different faith systems.
- 132 While pupils generally learn well in their lessons, their progress from term to term is sometimes unsatisfactory. This is because sequences of lessons jump too abruptly from theme to theme. The programme as a whole is fragmented, and understanding is not built up as systematically as it should be. In some classes too little work is undertaken, and in others too much time is given to small parts of the programme. At present the school lacks a sufficiently precise

scheme of work, and is sensibly awaiting publication of the new Local Authority Agreed Syllabus later in the year.

- 133 Pupils enjoy most of their religious education lessons. They are very eager and polite participants in discussion. They are commendably respectful in handling sacred objects and in considering the religious practices and beliefs of others.
- 134 The teaching of religious education is satisfactory in Key Stage 2 classes. In Key Stage 1 classes it is good, and sometimes very good. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen during the inspection. In a very good Year 1 lesson, pupils were studying the importance of sacred texts. A copy of the Koran was respectfully displayed, and a Muslim child from Key Stage 2 visited to tell them about the place of the holy book in Islam. The pupils were spellbound as he went on to read, and recite passages in Arabic from memory, and to explain the place of the Koran in his own home. Imaginative and engaging teaching like this captures and sustains the pupils' interest. They concentrate hard and learn more than would normally be expected at this age. In some otherwise satisfactory lessons, teachers depended too heavily on a slow recounting of information to the pupils rather than enlivening their lessons with the inventive use of visual aids and other materials. In some lessons, where high levels of interest are not achieved, pupils are slow in settling to the written tasks provided for them.
- 135 Preparations are in hand in the school for the adoption of the new Agreed Syllabus. However, at present there are no satisfactory arrangements for the co-ordinator to have an oversight of work across the school, and of the standards reached in each class.