

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **PURWELL PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Hitchin

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117224

Headteacher: Miss E Barron

Reporting inspector: Mr T M Feast  
3650

Dates of inspection: 30 April - 3 May 2001

Inspection number: 192457

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Fairfield Way Hitchin Hertfordshire
Postcode:	SG4 0PU
Telephone number:	01462 432950
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs V Sharp
Date of previous inspection:	10 April 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3650	T Feast	Registered inspector	Design and technology Geography History English as an additional language Foundation Stage	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
9736	J Brazier	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?
19507	B Andrews	Team inspector	English Science Art Music Equal opportunities	How well is the school led and managed?
31786	V Howells	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education Religious education Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to the pupils?

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Purwell Primary School is situated in the town of Hitchin in Hertfordshire and most pupils come from the residential estate nearby. It is an average-sized mixed community primary school for pupils aged 3 to 11 years. There are the equivalent of 209 pupils on the school roll, thirty of them part-time in the nursery class. There are slightly more boys than girls. The percentage of pupils identified as having free school meals (about thirteen per cent) is broadly in line with the national average. The area overall is neither significantly advantaged nor disadvantaged economically but there are pockets of deprivation. The school has identified 67 pupils as having special educational needs and this percentage (about thirty per cent) is above the national average. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs (0.4 per cent) provided by the local education authority (LEA) is below the national average. About seven per cent of pupils come from homes where English is an additional language and nearly half of these are at an early stage of language acquisition. This is a low number. There is very little mobility of pupils other than at the traditional times of being admitted to and leaving the school. The school has the full range of ability amongst its pupils. Overall attainment on entry to the nursery class is below average when compared to the local authority average and to attainment nationally. A number of teachers have left the school in the last year and the school has had difficulty replacing some of them on a permanent basis as is currently the experience of many schools.

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

Purwell is a good school. Pupils have good attitudes and the quality of teaching is good. Pupils in the Early Years Unit reach standards above those expected nationally and make very good progress. The achievement of pupils in Key Stage 2 in many subjects is good and they reach standards broadly in line with those nationally. The leadership and management of the school are good. The overall effectiveness of the school is good and it gives good value for money.

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

- Standards are above those expected and achievement is very good in the Early Years Unit.
- The quality of teaching is good in most classes and excellent in the Foundation Stage.
- Pupils develop positive attitudes, good behaviour and very good relationships with each other and staff, as a result of good provision for moral and social development.
- Leadership and management of the headteacher and governing body are good.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- There is good strategic planning for the development of the school.
- There is good financial management.

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

- Attainment in information and communication technology (ICT).
- Standards of pupils in national tests at the age of seven.
- Consistency of teachers' marking and assessment and its use in their planning of lessons.
- The adoption and implementation of a strategy to increase the challenge in lessons to all pupils but particularly for higher attaining pupils.
- The monitoring and evaluation of standards and learning in classes by co-ordinators.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was previously inspected in March 1997. Since then the leadership and management of the school have been strengthened well by the drawing up of good development plans and the governing body and staff being fully involved in the process. Whilst aspects of the leadership role of senior managers and subject co-ordinators have been strengthened, there is still the lack of a consistent strategy for the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms. The quality of teaching has improved considerably. The quality of the curriculum has improved through better guidance from policies and schemes of work and by the improvement of teachers' medium term

planning. Whilst some excellent assessment was seen in the Early Years Unit, it is not yet sufficiently consistent across all classes and all subjects in Key Stages 1 and 2. There is insufficient use of assessment information to improve teachers' short-term planning. Resources have improved but not sufficiently in information and communication technology (ICT) at the time of the inspection. There has been the start to the process of performance management of teachers in line with statutory requirements. The school has made a good improvement since the last inspection and its capacity to continue to improve is good.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	D	B	C	C
mathematics	D	C	E	E
science	B	A	C	D

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The standards achieved by pupils at the age of eleven in the national tests in 2000 were in line with the national average in English and science and well below average in mathematics. The standards achieved by pupils at the age of seven in 2000 were well below the national average in reading and writing and below in mathematics. Teacher assessments in science of pupils at the age of seven indicated that standards were well below those found nationally. The results in 2000 showed a significant decline at both key stages on what had been an improving trend since 1997. This was mainly due to the results of the girls. At both key stages the results of the boys were higher than the girls and the girls' performance was well below that of girls nationally. The standard of the pupils' work seen during the inspection was better than that attained in the 2000 national tests and was broadly in line with national expectations at both key stages. The exceptions were geography and history at Key Stage 1 and ICT at both key stages where they were below that expected. In the Foundation Stage children's progress is very good and they are well prepared to continue their education. The achievement of the pupils at the age of seven is unsatisfactory in relation to their attainment at the start of the key stage because expectations are not sufficiently high in lessons at the end of the key stage. The achievement of the pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 is good in relation to their attainment at the start of it. In 2000 the school's performance targets in English were exceeded and in mathematics pupils' standards were close to the target. The targets for 2001 have been raised substantially in recognition of improving standards and the school is well placed to meet them. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good in relation to targets set for them in their Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good attitudes are demonstrated by the pupils overall.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave well. Those with difficult behaviour improve because of the effective support they receive. There are very few exclusions.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is good and pupils build strong relationships with each other and with staff.
Attendance	Attendance is broadly in line with the national average

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Excellent	Satisfactory	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.*

The quality of teaching is good overall. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 97 per cent of the lessons seen and this is a considerable improvement on the last inspection. It was good or better in 64 per cent of lessons and very good or excellent in 24 per cent. Only three per cent of the teaching was unsatisfactory; no unsatisfactory teaching was seen in the Early Years Unit, Year 1 or Key Stage 2. The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is good overall and, where it is planned, the teaching of literacy and numeracy in other curriculum areas is good. Particular strengths of the teaching are good subject knowledge, the planning, making clear to pupils what it is intended they learn in lessons, and the management of difficult behaviour. There is insufficient consistent use of assessment in lessons to help the pupils progress and to assist teachers in planning their next lessons. Pupils' learning in the Early Years Unit is consistently very good and sometimes excellent and at Key Stage 2 pupils' pace of working and their efforts are good. In both key stages the learning of the pupils with special educational needs and with English as an additional language is good.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. The quality of ICT provision needs further development. The curriculum in the Early Years Unit is excellent.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	These pupils are supported well and make good progress
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	These pupils are supported well and make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Satisfactory overall, with good provision for social and moral development and satisfactory for spiritual and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory overall, with very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour; unsatisfactory monitoring of pupils' progress and the use of this information to guide planning.
Partnership with parents	The partnership with parents is satisfactory overall.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good leadership and management overall but the co-ordination of some subject areas has not progressed as far as others owing to staffing changes.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is well-informed and supportive. As a result governors play a good role in the strategic development of the school.
The school's evaluation of its	The school is well aware of its strengths and weaknesses but the

performance	process of monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in the classroom is in its early stages.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory use of resources overall but very good use in the Early Years Unit.

The number of teachers at the time of the inspection was appropriate although the school has had difficulty in maintaining permanent staffing for all the classes. The number of support staff is generous and well-matched to the needs of the pupils. The school takes good steps to apply the principles of best value.

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

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school's high expectations of their child</li> <li>• Their child likes school</li> <li>• They are comfortable approaching the school</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed</li> <li>• Their child makes good progress at school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of homework</li> <li>• The range of extra-curricular activities</li> <li>• Information about their child's progress</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with the parents in their positive views of the school. In nearly every class there are high expectations and many children make good progress. Children have very positive attitudes towards their school. The school is well led and managed. The range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory and has been affected by staffing changes. The amount of homework does vary between classes but generally the quality of homework is good. Reports are satisfactory and there are a number of meetings for parents to attend.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. In the national tests in 2000 the standards the pupils achieved at the age of eleven were in line with the national average in English and science but well below the national average in mathematics. These standards were also reflected in the comparison with the results of similar schools, except in science where they were below. Results were considerably below those achieved the previous year and are mainly explained by the performance of girls, which was well below that of the boys and well below that of girls nationally. Analysis of the results in the national tests since 1997 show an improving trend overall, and one broadly in line with the national trend. The governors set targets for standards in English and mathematics based on pupils' performance in national tests at the age of eleven. In 2000 the targets in English were exceeded and in mathematics pupils' performance was close to the target. The targets for 2001 have been raised substantially to reflect the expectations of improved performance. These are challenging targets and the school is on course to meet them. In both English and science the percentage of pupils achieving above what was expected nationally was close to the national figure but in mathematics it was well below.
2. In the national tests in 2000 the standards the pupils achieved at the age of seven were well below the national average in reading and writing and in line with the national average in mathematics. Teacher assessments in science indicated that standards were well below those found nationally. These standards were also reflected in the comparison with the results of similar schools. Results were considerably below those achieved the previous year and are mainly explained by the performance of the girls, which was well below that of the boys and also that of girls nationally. In mathematics the percentage of pupils achieving standards above those expected nationally was above the national figure but in reading and writing it was well below.
3. When children start in the nursery class in the Early Years Unit, tests carried out by the school indicate that their language, numeracy and social skills are generally below the expectation for their age. By the time the children reach the age of five, similar assessments show that the children's performance is consistently above the LEA average, their average point scores having increased markedly. By the time the present children are at the end of the reception year, they all will have achieved or exceeded the expected learning outcomes for five-year olds in literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development. Children's achievement in the Early Years Unit is very good and all the children, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, are very well prepared to continue their education.
4. The standards of work seen during the inspection were generally in line with national expectations for Year 2 and the attainment of the pupils is satisfactory in most subjects. This is better than the standards attained by pupils in last year's national tests and an improvement on that reported in the last inspection. There was no discernible difference in the attainment of the boys and the girls in lessons or in the scrutiny of work. Neither the school nor the inspection team were able to find reasons for the historic imbalance in the absence of analysis of results by gender in the initial tests on entry. The achievement of the pupils at the end of the key stage is unsatisfactory overall in relation to their attainment when they start it and the very good progress they make in the Foundation Stage. The school attributes this slowing of pupils'

achievement historically to the quality of teaching and the inadequate planning of different tasks and resources, particularly when classes contained more than one year group. While this was the case historically, currently inspectors found that the high expectations of the Foundation Stage are not always replicated in lessons at the end of Key Stage 1.

5. The achievement of the pupils in Year 6 is good in relation to their attainment when they start the key stage. The standards of work seen during the inspection were generally in line with national expectations for Year 6 and the attainment of the pupils is in line with national expectations in all subjects. This is better overall than the standards attained by pupils in last year's national tests and in line with standards reported at the last inspection. There was no discernible difference in the attainment of the boys and the girls in lessons or in the scrutiny of work. The school has used the booster classes as one way to raise the performance of all pupils. The results in 2000 were very favourable when compared to the prior attainment of the pupils at Key Stage 1. The school attributes this good progress to good teaching, the use of booster classes and the impact of the literacy hour, and the inspection findings support this.
6. In the lessons observed and in the scrutiny of pupils' work during the inspection the attainment in the subjects was variable. In English the majority of pupils have well developed speaking and listening skills, building well on the skills developed in the early years. While this progress slows in Year 2, by the time they are eleven most pupils join in discussions confidently and answer teachers' questions clearly. Standards in speaking and listening are good because pupils are given opportunities to extend the range of their vocabulary during discussions with the teacher and other pupils and are encouraged to use appropriate technical language. Standards in reading are satisfactory, although some well above average attainment was seen in all year groups. By the time they are eleven, most pupils have a wide range of strategies to help them understand what they read. The quality of writing is satisfactory. Pupils' vocabulary is good and their knowledge of grammar is satisfactory. Presentation of pupils' work is appropriate and handwriting is almost always legible and well formed. Older pupils use effective joined script. This attainment is similar to the standards of the pupils in the Key Stage 2 national tests last year.
7. In mathematics attainment is well above national expectations at the end of the Foundation Stage. In Year 2 pupils add and subtract at an appropriate level. They have a secure knowledge and understanding of shape, measurement and data-handling. In Year 6 pupils understand and use relationships between the four mathematical operations and have secure knowledge of measurement, shape and symmetry but their mental mathematics is slower than would be expected nationally. This attainment is similar to the standards achieved by the pupils last year at the end of Key Stage 1 and an improvement on the standards of pupils in the national tests at Key Stage 2 last year. This improvement is linked to the school's introduction of a new mathematics scheme and the consolidation of work done in the numeracy lessons. Attainment is at least appropriate throughout the key stages but the progress of the pupils slows in Year 2 after the good start in the Early Years Unit and Year 1.
8. In science the attainment is in line with national expectations at both key stages and pupils learn effectively and this is similar to the results in the national tests at Key Stage 2 last year. In ICT the attainment is below that expected at both key stages and is mainly the result of inadequate provision of hardware and programs which impedes the use of pupils' skills across the curriculum. There is insufficient use of pupils' ICT skills to enhance the quality of their written work and they have very limited experience of control and modelling. Pupils' attainment in religious education at both key stages is in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus, with some good examples of

written work in Year 6.

9. In most other subjects at both key stages the pupils are attaining the level expected for their ages. In art and design, design and technology, music and physical education attainment is in line with expectations in both key stages. In history and geography attainment in Year 2 is below that expected, although by the Year 6 it is in line. In response to a key issue of the last report, better teaching has led to improved standards but there is still insufficient provision of a more challenging curriculum consistently to raise standards still further.
10. Pupils' skills in literacy support their learning appropriately in the other areas of the curriculum; for example, the use of technical terms in mathematics, history and geography promotes pupils' understanding. Pupils' skills in numeracy are appropriately used to support their learning in other subjects, for example the use of coordinates in geography. However there is insufficient emphasis in teachers' planning for other subjects to support pupils' learning in literacy, numeracy or ICT.
11. Across the school most pupils identified as having special educational needs make good progress relative either to their prior attainment or to targets identified in their Individual Education Plans. Reviews of their progress indicate that many of these targets are met. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language make good progress in their acquisition of appropriate literacy skills. The school is in the process of identifying gifted and talented pupils for the LEA's scheme but currently there is insufficient planning of tasks and resources to fully challenge them.

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

12. Attitudes and behaviour are good and relationships very good, which is an improvement over the last inspection where less impressive standards were reported. The staff of the Early Years Unit put considerable emphasis on the children's personal, social and emotional development. Children arrive happily each day and quickly settle into the classroom routines. Most are confident and enthusiastic participants in a wide range of well-planned activities. This start underpins pupils' attitudes throughout the school. Pupils much enjoy coming to school and enter into activities with enthusiasm, for example when learning the rules of tag rugby or taking part in a peripatetic music lesson. They are proud of their school and take care of their own and others' possessions and the school premises. These good attitudes are fostered by the enthusiasm displayed by teachers and the efforts made to make learning an interesting and participative process.
13. There is a consistent approach to poor behaviour and this is applied calmly and fairly. In occasional instances pupils have to be reminded about what is expected and may need to be kept on a tight rein, which limits learning experiences. In the playground behaviour is very good and there is a harmonious atmosphere. Pupils are polite and take an interest in visitors. There are very few exclusions as only two were reported last year, and the incidence of exclusion is falling. The school successfully integrates pupils who have been at risk of exclusion elsewhere.
14. Pupils work well together when asked to work in pairs or groups. They have respect for each other and carefully listen to each other's opinions. For example when a Baptist pastor was talking to them about his job the pupils had an extensive range of questions which they posed in a sensitive and pleasant manner. Pupils are well aware of the impact of their behaviour on others.

15. Relationships between adults and pupils are very good, as are relationships between pupils. This is a great strength of the school and contributes well to the quality of teaching and learning.
16. Personal development is good. Pupils like to take responsibility and are expected to use their initiative. All the pupils in Year 6 have responsibilities. Some help the youngest children, resolving problems and reassuring them. Pupils raise funds for charities, have evaluated playground equipment, have devised rules for football and also the use of the common room, which they supplied with games and comics and where they control the graffiti board. There are fewer opportunities in lessons for pupils to show initiative, but when given the chance, for example, in carrying out independent research, they respond well.
17. Attendance is satisfactory, exactly in line with the national average. Lessons start on time and registers are well maintained. There is little lateness.

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

18. The quality of teaching is good overall and the pupils make good progress. Teaching was good or better in just under two thirds of the lessons, resulting in good learning for most pupils. This is a considerable improvement on the last inspection. There was only one unsatisfactory lesson seen (three per cent of the total) and this is also a considerable improvement on the last inspection. Teaching is excellent in the Early Years Unit, reflected in the very good progress of the children. Good and very good teaching was observed in Year 1 but overall in the key stage the teaching was satisfactory as expectations were not sufficiently high in Year 2 lessons. In Years 3 to 6 teaching was good or better in 70 per cent of the lessons and very good in fifteen per cent.
19. The teaching is good for a number of reasons. The planning of what the pupils are to learn, and making that clear to the pupils has improved, and this reflects a considerable improvement overall in the teachers' knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the National Curriculum. In many lessons there is a good focus on activities which will help pupils make good progress with their acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding. Where necessary staff manage difficult behaviour well and overall there is good team work between the adults in the classrooms. There has been a considerable turnover of teachers since the last inspection. In most classes the current progress of the pupils in many subjects is good or even better but it is taking time to get some classes back to appropriate attainment and progress and for their current attainment to be reflected in test results.

20. At Key Stages 1 and 2, most of the teaching of English and mathematics is good. Teachers are using the strategies for literacy and numeracy appropriately, and often well, and in the main teach purposeful introductory parts to the lessons. Literacy and numeracy sessions are well organised and match the expectations of the national strategies. In both areas the best planning shows high expectations and imaginative use of resources and activities which are closely linked to what it is intended the pupils should learn. Where the teaching was unsatisfactory this was not the case and had a negative effect on pupils' achievement. In both literacy and numeracy lessons teachers generally plan and use the plenary session and questioning well, particularly in relation to mental mathematics. In the best lessons, for example in the Early Years Unit, excellent assessment of pupils' progress and attainment is used to help plan the next lesson, but this is not consistently well done throughout the school.
21. The teaching in the other subjects is always satisfactory and usually good or better. Teachers have a good knowledge of the requirements of the curriculum, which is reflected in many lessons and the high-quality learning it promotes. At the time of the inspection there was insufficient planning of opportunities to develop ICT skills and numeracy and, to a lesser extent, literacy skills in the other subjects. In the Early Years Unit there is very good planning for all the staff to be involved in offering challenging activities to the children and in most other lessons observed there was good and effective use of support staff. Elsewhere there is not yet consistent planning of activities which offer good challenges to the full range of abilities in each class, especially for the more able. Overall the quality of relationships in the classrooms are very good and these do promote good learning. Teachers use praise well as a motivational tool. Good use is made in some classes of time targets to complete tasks set and this helps a good pace to be maintained in those lessons. There is some good assessment, often by using probing questions, by some teachers to determine pupils' understanding but this is not done consistently well nor is it used consistently to plan the next lessons. While work is marked in pupils' books, it does not consistently give pupils guidance on how to improve. Some classes receive a good range of homework but this is not consistent across all classes. Pupils are expected to read at home and there was some good investigational homework set, for example, in researching what led up to World War 2.
22. In most of the lessons observed pupils acquired new knowledge and understanding well, whether it was in relation to number sequences or to the principles of tag rugby. They had acquired appropriate skills, for example, in the design process when constructing fairground toys or imaginative chairs. These gains were closely linked to the good subject knowledge demonstrated by staff. Some of the activities offered required the pupils to show intellectual curiosity when, for example, they were researching into different mountain ranges, but opportunities for pupils to show initiative in lessons were rare. In many lessons pupils responded positively to the activities planned for them, completing pieces of work in the time set. Many showed a great deal of interest in their work and overall a good level of concentration was sustained. This was helped by the teachers' good strategies for classroom management. Many pupils were able to indicate what they were supposed to be learning and teachers generally made learning objectives clear at the start of lessons but pupils were less clear about how well they had done or what they could do to improve their work. Pupils were rarely given an opportunity to assess their own learning in lessons observed and while on-going assessment was a factor in the best lessons it was not a consistent feature in all teaching.

23. Good teaching and support is offered to pupils with special educational needs. Individual education plans are well-targeted and identify appropriate strategies and the support needed to help pupils meet their targets. It is clear that good teaching and support has been given to those pupils with English as an additional language.

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

24. The school provides a sufficiently broad, balanced and relevant curriculum to meet statutory requirements and to reflect the aims of the school. Curriculum provision for the Foundation Stage is excellent and promotes the early learning goals very effectively. Children receive an excellent variety of experiences in all the required areas of learning. They make very good progress during the Foundation Stage.
25. The curriculum in Key Stages 1 and 2 covers all areas of the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Statutory requirements are met, but, currently, there is still a weakness in the provision of ICT learning, owing to a severe shortage of computers. It is planned to provide a networked computer suite in the school in the week following the inspection. Time allocation to subjects is appropriate overall; teachers generally make good use of this time to promote pupils' intellectual, physical and personal development.
26. The literacy and numeracy strategies have been implemented effectively throughout the school and sufficient time is given to each subject. All classes have daily literacy and numeracy hours and this time is planned and used well to promote appropriate learning opportunities for all pupils. However, the school does not have in place clear strategies for promoting literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.
27. Strategies to ensure that all pupils have equality of access to the planned curriculum are in place. The school fully meets the Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs. Individual Educational Plans are well written, with clear targets and appropriate strategies for improvement. The school's provision for personal, social and health education (PHSE) is good, including that for sex education and substance misuse.
28. All subject co-ordinators have ensured that there are policies and schemes of work for each subject. These range from Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) guidelines to commercial and local education authority schemes of work, as well as the school's own schemes based on National Curriculum 2000. They offer clear guidance on the development of pupils' knowledge and skills. Work in subjects is planned to match the needs of the full range of pupils and in the majority of classes this is successful. In many lessons, however, activities lack suitable challenge to engage higher attaining pupils to extend their learning as fully as possible. Generally however there is satisfactory planning for equal access and opportunity and there is good emphasis on the social inclusion of all pupils. Planning for all subjects, using standardised medium term plans, is satisfactory. Teachers do not generally break down this planning into sufficiently detailed daily lesson plans, and particularly, the planning of on-going assessment is unsatisfactory and is used inconsistently across the school. The subject co-ordinators monitor medium term plans, with the headteacher monitoring the whole curriculum. Since the last inspection, the school has established detailed schemes of work for each subject.
29. The school makes satisfactory provision for extra-curricular activities. Pupils participate in an appropriate range of winter and summer sports. A member of Saracens Rugby

Football club visited the school during the inspection to train pupils in tag rugby before the school team took part in a festival at Hitchin Rugby Club. Pupils enjoy these occasions and benefit by developing higher-level skills. Pupils participate in musical activities, including recorders, choir and the drama and dance club. The school choir performs at school fairs and joins with the choir at the local boys' secondary school. Pupils take part in clubs that offer sewing and knitting activities. The school has good links with its partner institutions in terms of both broadening curriculum options and in the induction of pupils on transfer.

30. The provision for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. The school aims to promote relationships and patterns of good behaviour based on self-respect and regard for others, for example, through assemblies and circle time. Acts of collective worship make a satisfactory contribution to pupils' spiritual development as do visits to various places of worship. Overall, assemblies miss some opportunities for the promotion of spiritual development. In the Early Years Unit, spiritual development is promoted very well, for example in reflecting on spring as a time of birth and renewal. However, at Key Stages 1 and 2 insufficient time overall is given for reflection during lessons.
31. Good provision is made for the promotion of pupils' moral and social development. PHSE lessons, circle time and classroom debate during lessons enable pupils to learn to respect one another's points of view and to tolerate differences. The pupils have been fully involved in drawing up the school's Code of Conduct to which they adhere strictly. Older pupils involve themselves in peer counselling and often successfully sort out differences of opinion and minor disputes. Pupils from Year 6 help younger children. Children throughout the school play very well together, collaborate for group activities and celebrate each other's achievement with genuine enthusiasm.
32. The provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils take part in raising money for charities and the school has adopted an African child through the charity Actionaid. All gain a satisfactory knowledge of their own culture through visits to local places of interest, the library and the opportunities the school provides for them to handle historical artefacts. They are becoming increasingly aware of the life of non-western cultures through Actionaid and visits to religious buildings used by many different faith groups. Overall the links with the community contribute satisfactorily to the curricular opportunities offered to the pupils.

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

33. The school cares well for its pupils as it did at the last inspection, but the weaknesses in assessment reported previously still persist and this is an unsatisfactory situation.
34. Pupils feel at ease in the school. There is good supervision at break times and before and after school. All the usual safety requirements are in place and effective. Regular safety inspections are carried out by a team of governors and staff. There are sufficient trained first-aiders. Welfare provision is good, with special care being taken of children who come by taxi. Healthy living is promoted through science lessons and through projects involving the school nurse.

35. The designated person for child protection is the headteacher, who has been trained, is familiar with local procedures, and has contacts with all necessary agencies. All staff, except for midday supervisors, have been trained on what to do if a child starts to disclose details of abuse or what warning signs to look out for. They all know who the designated person is. Pupils are well known by their class teachers, who keep annual records of their personal development. Teachers talk knowledgeably about their pupils and provide good support and advice about their personal development. Pupils are able to discuss personal problems with staff and know they will receive a sympathetic hearing.
36. There are satisfactory procedures for promoting attendance. There is currently a project designed to broaden the curriculum on offer to make it more inclusive for all pupils, with some emphasis on the needs of children in single-parent families.
37. There are very good procedures for promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour. Every week the whole school reflects on behaviour in the past week and highlights particularly the good things that have happened. What constitutes good behaviour is made very clear, and sanctions are precise and uniformly applied. If there are difficulties, parents are invited to the school to be part of the discussions. A successful behaviour management strategy allows pupils who feel pressures building up on them to take time out of the classroom until they feel that they can cope again. Pupil mediation is encouraged. Oppressive behaviour is tackled in assemblies and circle time. On the rare occasions when bullying is reported, swift and effective action is taken.
38. Assessment procedures are very good for the youngest children, but it is inconsistent elsewhere. This is recognised as a weakness by the school and an improved system is an important feature of the school development plan. Very good assessments are made of children entering the nursery and reception classes. Tests of pupils' progress are made at the end of each school year for pupils aged seven and above and these are assessed against National Curriculum levels. Teachers standardise their assessments with each other for literacy and writing. Reading, spelling and mathematics are also tested at the start of each school year for the same pupils. National test results are analysed by the local authority. There is currently no way of tracking the progress of pupils consistently through the school. There is little evidence of assessment information being used to plan challenging work for all the pupils in classes.

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

39. The partnership with parents is satisfactory. The position is similar to that at the last inspection although some weaknesses identified then have now been corrected. Parents expressed satisfaction with the school at their meeting with inspectors and expressed general satisfaction in their response to the questionnaire, although there was a significant minority that was concerned about homework, being well informed about progress and the provision of extra-curricular activities. Parents felt that the school was very well managed, was very approachable and that the teaching was good. The team endorses the positive views, found that homework was satisfactory overall although it did vary between classes and that there was satisfactory provision of extra-curricular activities. Progress information is supplied on a similar basis to other schools and the acknowledged approachability of the school should allow any apprehensions about progress to be readily resolved.
40. The school's written and verbal communications with parents are satisfactory. The prospectus and the annual report are clear and cover all the essential points, but the

enthusiasm of the staff for the school does not come over in the language used. Pupils' annual reports are clearly written, contain some information about achievements and give good targets for development. Information on attainment levels and advice to parents on how they may help their children is given at the consultation evenings. There are two open evenings when parents come to talk about their children's progress, and at which their concerns and children's achievements are carefully recorded and some targets agreed. Parents are also welcome to come in after school to discuss any aspect of their child's education with their teacher. Newsletters are despatched regularly on distinctive paper to guard against their loss. There are regular information sheets on the curriculum, but meetings on curriculum matters are poorly attended.

41. Parents help in school, on trips and they help coach athletics. There is an enthusiastic Parent Supporters Association that raises valuable funds and holds social events. Parents were consulted about the school's Code of Conduct and their views taken into account. Parents help with reading at home, most reading records are well maintained and their contribution to their children's learning is satisfactory.
42. There are good arrangements for the induction of new pupils into the school and information meetings are held for their parents.

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

43. The leadership and management of the school are good overall with some strong features. At the time of the last inspection serious weaknesses in the management and leadership of the school were highlighted. The school has made effective improvements since the last inspection and there are strengths in the way in which the school has tackled the key issues.
44. The headteacher, who was deputy head at the last inspection, has worked hard to effectively tackle the issues from the previous inspection. Her leadership and the measured way in which she has managed the issues have been successful in giving staff a greater involvement in whole school development. She has a clear educational vision for the school and is committed to improving standards. She recognises that the achievement of seven year olds does not reflect the good standards achieved at the end of the reception year and continued until the end of Year 1.
45. The deputy headteacher joined the school at the beginning of the summer term so had been at the school for only one week at the start of this inspection. He has quickly established a good relationship with staff and pupils and is able to offer perceptive views about the school.
46. Almost all parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire think that the school is well led and managed.
47. School development planning now sets clear and measurable targets for school improvement; the senior management team is working appropriately and staff and governors are fully involved in the strategic management of the school. This has had the effect of encouraging a greater sense of involvement in the improvement of the school.
48. Results from national tests are analysed effectively to provide information for improvement. However, there is insufficient formal monitoring to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning and insufficient use of assessments of pupils' work in planning for progress. There is insufficient identification and sharing of good

practice in teaching and learning as a means of rectifying weaknesses and raising standards.

49. The quality of subject co-ordinators and their effectiveness in raising standards varies. Some are able to get a clear view of the work in subjects throughout the school. This is particularly true in English and mathematics where the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has enabled co-ordinators to identify the standards pupils are attaining and use the information for future planning. However, in other subjects co-ordinators are less clear about the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning in their subjects because of a lack of opportunity for first hand observations. This is largely because the school has not yet developed a structured programme of looking at the work achieved across the school. Consequently, some co-ordinators are not well placed to improve standards in their subjects and to plan for future developments.
50. Nevertheless, there are strengths in the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work. The headteacher works very closely with the LEA's monitoring officer. Data provided by the LEA is evaluated and used by the headteacher and the governors in identifying priorities for school development. The introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has been managed satisfactorily and teachers have been helped to teach the key skills.
51. The provision for the children in the Foundation Stage is very well managed and this contributes to the very good progress made by the end of the reception year. Planning is very good and systems for assessing children's learning are used consistently and effectively to plan for progression.
52. Provision for special needs is good, as is support for pupils with English as an additional language. The school has been commended by the LEA for its good practice in including all pupils in the full range of educational opportunities it has to offer. Pupils' needs are identified and met through action plans and statements of special educational need. Pupils, parents and teachers are involved in the reviews of these programmes.
53. The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities and has very good involvement in the strategic planning for improvement. The chair of governors and other governors are well informed and actively involved in the life of the school. They take a full part in making long-term decisions and ensuring that the financial resources are well used. The detailed school development plan is linked to the school's budget and governors are diligent in seeking the best option when making spending decisions. However, the committees have no formal systems for seeking the views of pupils and parents regarding services provided. There are good arrangements in place for the governors to be kept informed about the life of the school and those governors with a special interest in the curriculum are regularly briefed by subject co-ordinators.

54. At the time of the inspection there were sufficient suitably qualified teachers to meet the needs of pupils. There is a balance of experience so that pupils meet a range of new and well tried methods as they move through the school. Teachers who are new to the school, or the profession, are supported effectively. The number of support staff is generous and well matched to the needs of the pupils. They are appropriately trained and well directed by teachers in the classes where they work. Support staff concerned with lunchtime supervision are sufficient in numbers. They are informed about school policies concerning behaviour and relationships between pupils. Staff leaving and the recruitment of new staff has been well managed.
55. Overall the teaching resources provided in the school are satisfactory. In some areas where national schemes have prompted purchases to meet new requirements, such as in literacy and numeracy, resources are good. In ICT the resources are insufficient. Accommodation for teaching and learning is spacious, The good facilities for children in the Foundation Stage provide suitable opportunities for outdoor and indoor play. The outside areas for the rest of the school provide good facilities for science investigations and for games in the summer. The hard playground areas are adequate. The introduction of small play equipment for use during playtimes has been well received by pupils. Accommodation for the school secretary is unsuitably cramped. The school is clean and a pleasant place in which to work.

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

56. The governors should include in their post-inspection action plan the way in which they are going to respond to the following issues in order to raise standards in the school. The governors, headteacher and staff should:
- (1) Improve standards in ICT by:
- increasing the availability of equipment so that all pupils can regularly learn and use the skills they develop in this subject;
  - improving the availability of programs which develop the pupils' skills across the full range of the subjects;
  - reviewing their scheme of work to take full advantage of the improved resources;
  - monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning.  
(Paragraphs: 8, 10, 21, 25, 92, 114, 120, 127, 128, 129, 130, 143)
- (2) Improve standards of pupils in national tests at the age of seven by:
- building consistently on the pupils' previous learning;
  - raising expectations of what the pupils will achieve across all their subjects;
  - monitoring and evaluating the quality of learning and teaching across all the subjects.  
(Paragraphs: 2, 4, 18, 79, 89, 94)

- (3) Improve the consistency of teachers' marking and assessment across all subjects to use the information gained to assist the planning of lessons by:
- making clear that the marking should focus on providing guidance to pupils as to ways in which they can improve their work;
  - share the examples of excellent practice already evident in the school;
  - monitor and evaluate the teachers' consistency in following the school's assessment policy and its success in promoting improvement;
  - use the information provided to support the planning of tasks and resources which challenge all the pupils in the class and particularly the more able.
- (Paragraphs: 20, 21, 27, 28, 38, 88, 91, 96, 108, 113, 120, 130, 135)
- (4) improve the challenge in lessons in all lessons to all pupils but particularly higher attaining pupils by:
- identifying gifted and talented pupils;
  - agreeing a strategy to increase the range of challenges to all pupils;
  - undertaking professional development where necessary;
  - implementing the agreed strategy;
  - monitoring and evaluating the implementation and effectiveness of the new strategy.
- (Paragraphs: 88, 91, 96, 108, 113, 118, 126, 143)
- (5) improve the monitoring and evaluation of standards and learning in classes by:
- establishing the criteria by which standards and learning will be judged;
  - providing appropriate training for all in a co-ordinating role to feel confident and competent to undertake this part of their management role;
  - implementing a systematic programme of classroom observation which has at its heart a focus on the quality of teaching and learning;
  - using the information provided by this programme to disseminate the excellent practice already present in the school and to secure a consistency of high expectations in all classrooms.
- (Paragraphs: 49, 100, 108, 114, 135, 143)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	37
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	18

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6	18	39	33	3	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– Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	15	194
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	27

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR– Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	67

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	15

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.0
National comparative data	5.2

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
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
	2000	17	13	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	15	16
	Girls	9	8	10
	Total	23	23	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	77 (88)	77 (92)	87 (96)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	16	15
	Girls	7	9	8
	Total	20	25	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	67 (92)	83 (96)	77 (96)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	13	14	27

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	11	13
	Girls	8	3	9
	Total	20	14	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	74 (86)	52 (83)	81 (94)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	9	11
	Girls	7	3	3
	Total	18	12	14
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	67 (77)	44 (80)	52 (80)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	13
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	10
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	141
Any other minority ethnic group	2

*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	2	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-- Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.0
Average class size	27.7

#### **Education support staff: YR-- Y6**

Total number of education support staff	8.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	144

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	30

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	64

Number of pupils per FTE adult	6
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	426674
Total expenditure	414958
Expenditure per pupil	1737
Balance brought forward from previous year	14225
Balance carried forward to next year	25941

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	238
Number of questionnaires returned	103

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	58	38	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	48	47	5	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	61	7	2	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	35	19	1	2
The teaching is good.	50	41	2	2	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41	45	12	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	32	2	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	43	0	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	40	39	17	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	64	29	2	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	44	7	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39	27	12	4	16

### **Other issues raised by parents**

Management is much tighter now, and the school has more direction. The accommodation is better.

## **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**

#### **Personal, social and emotional development**

57. The staff of the Early Years Unit put considerable emphasis on the children's personal, social and emotional development. Planning shows that they emphasise opportunities for children to experiment and express themselves in a happy and secure environment, to gain confidence and enjoyment in the challenges they tackle and to develop confidence in mixing with adults and the other children. The children, many of whom on entry have limited experience of collaborating, choosing independently or persevering with an activity, make very good progress as is demonstrated through the respective baseline assessments of the children in the nursery and reception classes.
58. Children arrive happily each day and quickly settle into the classroom's routines. Most are confident and enthusiastic participants in a wide range of well-planned activities. All demonstrated at various times the ability to persevere with an activity for a sustained period of time either on their own or in small groups, for example playing in the sand area or working on the computer. Good social skills were shown by the children, including sharing and taking turns. The provision of the role play area encourages the children to play together and join in tasks such as preparing the meal and washing up. Children show a caring approach, as for example when one of the class was feeling unwell.
59. All children attend assemblies and this helps to support their social development. During the inspection one of the assemblies focused on saying "please" and "thank you" and this provoked some good comments both in terms of everyday situations and situations in literature, for example "The Pizza Princess". The children have a good understanding of right and wrong, including how to look after caterpillars.
60. Some children have challenging behaviour but all staff consistently and calmly reinforce the agreed approach very successfully within the parameters of high expectations. By the end of the reception year, nearly all the children meet or exceed the anticipated outcomes in this area of learning and all make good progress, with the majority making very good progress.

#### **Communication, language and literacy**

61. On entry to the nursery the children have a wide range of language skills and this is reflected in the LEA's tests administered after five weeks which show that the level of attainment overall is below the LEA average. By the end of their reception year their standards are above those expected for their age and their achievement in the Early Years Unit is very good. They make this very good progress because of the high quality of the curriculum and the very good use of assessment to inform the planning of challenging activities.
62. Children enjoy hearing stories well read such as "The Hungry Caterpillar". They listen very carefully and answer well-posed questions with enthusiasm. They listen carefully to both adults and to the response of others in the class. Generally the children listen well to instructions from adults and are able to put them into effect well; for example moving into groups is smoothly accomplished. The high quality, constant oral communication between all the adults and the children results in very good gains in

their spoken language. Questioning is used well by the adults, thereby encouraging responses from all the children. The role play area provides good opportunities for the children to speak and listen to each other as they engage in imaginative play. They play the part of parents, teachers and medical staff very well.

63. There is a high priority given to children acquiring a confident knowledge of letters, sounds and words. The work is appropriately well-planned to cater for the different ages and abilities within the classes. The youngest children gained a very good knowledge of the letter "c", and, using Cocou the Clown as a visual aid, accurately sorted articles into sets beginning with c and those that did not. Children can use ICT programs to link initial letters to identified items. The oldest children used letter fans well to identify initial sounds and then went on to spell three letter words. Many of the children read their own names, recognise the names of friends and the oldest read at an appropriate level. There is good progression in children's writing skills as they move towards writing conventional letters with the oldest children writing simple words and sentences.
64. At the last inspection it was reported that children made a good start to reading and writing. The pace of progress has been improved and the children make very good progress, especially in their willingness to talk.

### **Mathematical development**

65. Children of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make good gains in their knowledge and understanding of mathematics and by the end of the reception year have achieved or exceeded the goals expected of them in this area. They attain these because they are provided with a rich and regular diet of experiences to learn through both play and discussion, and their progress is assessed very well and used to inform the planning of future activities. There is good emphasis on mental mathematics and the children enjoy greatly the variety of games and other activities with a mathematical focus that they play on a daily basis.
66. The younger children in the nursery have learnt quickly and accurately the numbers between zero and ten, can count them in various sequences and recognise them when written down. Older children can count to twenty and beyond and recognise these numerals. They write numbers accurately. The older ones recognise the number of objects in a small group without counting and the younger ones are accurate in matching their counting to the number of objects. The younger children are able to recognise and construct repeating patterns accurately and put them to good use when constructing their models of caterpillars. Children's skills of sorting and classifying are good and the younger children's sense of ordering is good. The older children are developing well their skills of addition and subtraction.
67. The children develop a good range of mathematical language related to number, size, shape and capacity. They confidently deal with objects being bigger and smaller than others. There is a good understanding of groups having more, less or a similar number of items. In their play with sand they know if containers are full or empty and which container holds the most. Older children recognise and name simple shapes and they talk about the number of sides where appropriate.

68. There is above average attainment in the nursery and reception classes and this is reflected in their oral and written work and in tests they take. Children make very good progress in this area and this is an improvement on the attainment and progress reported at the last inspection.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

69. The Early Years Unit provides a particularly strong and exciting curriculum to develop children's scientific, technological, historical and geographical knowledge and understanding. The children come into the school with levels below those expected for their age and by the end of the reception year all are meeting or exceeding the intended outcomes in this area of learning.
70. In their early scientific learning, children develop good skills in observing living things such as caterpillars and frogs. They observed the caterpillars using a magnifying container and noticed their features and the way they moved. Children have a good knowledge and understanding of the life cycle of a butterfly. Children develop their skills well in making things, using different materials and tools and a wide range of construction kits. During the inspection they made moving models of caterpillars in paper, joining the parts with split pins. Children work confidently and collaboratively with a range of construction kits, for example when making a marble run, and then watching the marbles roll down. They were able to work out how to improve the run and then successfully made the necessary adjustments. The children can talk very articulately about the weather and the differences between today's weather and yesterday's.
71. A particular strength of the Early Years Unit is the way that it uses activities that develop children's knowledge and understanding of the world to strengthen the other areas of learning, for example enriching their vocabulary and encouraging their speaking and listening. There has been an improvement in the children's attainment in this area since the last inspection and the results of tests show the good progress that the children make.

### **Physical development**

72. Children start in the nursery class with a wide range of attainment in their physical skills. All children, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and many make very good progress in developing these skills because of the excellent teaching and the provision of a range of opportunities which challenge them and help them to grow in confidence. As a result, all of the children by the end of the reception year are meeting or exceeding the intended outcomes in this area of learning.
73. Children have good body control and knowledge of how exercise can affect them, for example, that spinning around can make them dizzy. They offer good suggestions readily. They move around and travel through the space in the hall very well so that there are no collisions and they respond instantly to instructions. Children use time very well to reflect on music they hear and how they will translate that into movement. They plan their movements very well and practise them and the results are very good. Children curl up, rock, stretch, crawl, "eat" and simulate growth in a caterpillar-like fashion. It is evident that they have observed well the real caterpillars in their classroom and they gain a great deal of pleasure from this type of activity. The children show a very good range of movement, from stillness to slowness through to "jerkiness" and they use their whole bodies in large and small movements. They are graceful in their transformation from the egg to the butterfly stage and the children are able to

explain very well the meaning of this cycle.

74. Children show a good development in their handling of tools and construction kits. All the children develop their manipulative skills well in a range of contexts, for example in fixing the shapes to create a caterpillar. They work well and confidently with construction kits of various types and sizes, as was seen when they made a race track and played with the cars. The good development of children's manipulative skills results in many of the older children using pencils and crayons well to begin to write letters and numbers. The children make good progress in their physical development and there has been an improvement in the attainment of the children in this area since the last inspection.

### **Creative development**

75. The achievement of the children is very good because they are provided with an extensive and exciting range of opportunities to explore and experiment, developing their creative skills very successfully. Many choose to paint and are very confident in their use of colour, making bold shapes and patterns. This is re-enforced and extended when they use computer programs to produce high quality images, for examples, of chicks as part of their work on spring and Easter.
76. The children are encouraged to explore a wide range of textures, such as wet and dry sand, dough and pasta shapes. They are very imaginative as they explore and produce a range of shapes. They are eager to use the various construction kits to design and create race tracks, imaginative tower blocks to direct marbles and objects such as spinning tops and houses. The children have appropriate techniques for joining materials. They are able to discuss very sensibly improvements to their designs, both amongst themselves and when questioned by adults. The children listen and respond to music excellently, as shown in their reflections on the music which conveyed the story of the development of a butterfly.
77. The role-play area provides good opportunities for the children to use their imagination, which they do very well. The groups using the area were often mixed in age and gender and they acted out various scenarios collaboratively and with a great deal of accuracy, for example, acting out the roles of teachers and pupils or parents and children.
78. There has been an improvement in the attainment of the children in this area since the last inspection and they make very good progress with their creative development, as is demonstrated by their performances in the LEA's tests. As a result, all the children by the end of the Reception year, including those with special educational needs, are meeting or exceeding the expected outcomes in this area of learning.

### **ENGLISH**

79. The standards of pupils in English when they are both seven and eleven are in line with those expected nationally for those ages. This is an improvement on standards reported in English at the last inspection when those for pupils aged seven were below the national average and those for pupils aged eleven were in line. Results of the national tests in 2000 show that the number of Purwell pupils reaching standards above those expected was above that reported nationally at Key Stage 2 but was below average in writing and well below average in reading at Key Stage 1. Evidence from this inspection indicates that pupils' attainment in speaking and listening, reading and writing has improved and is now in line with that expected nationally at both key stages.

This is an improvement at Key Stage 1 on the standards in the national tests in 2000 where those in reading and writing were well below the national average. The main reasons for the improvements overall are linked to the effective introduction of the National Literacy Strategy, increased resources to support teaching and learning in reading and writing, and parental involvement in practising reading skills at home.

80. In Key Stage 1, the majority of pupils have appropriately developed speaking and listening skills. They maintain concentration in listening to teachers' explanations and to other pupils' contributions. Pupils read together with expression and understanding, they listen attentively to the teacher's explanations and to contributions made by other pupils. They are able to express their views and opinions clearly as they explain the significance of an ellipsis, the use of exclamation marks, discuss the character of the Pizza Princess and re-tell the story from their standpoint as the main character. The achievement of the younger pupils is good but the achievement overall is not satisfactory as the older pupils do not continue to make the good progress evident in the earlier years.
81. By the time they are eleven most pupils join in discussions confidently and answer teachers' questions clearly. In Year 4 pupils use specific vocabulary as they explain the function of a hyphen and discuss a dilemma and the consequences of actions taken. In Year 6, pupils discuss dispersion and photosynthesis in relation to plant growth and landscape, foreground and scale when choosing a view point for their art work. Pupils in Year 5 respond confidently, using sentences in response to the teacher's good questioning technique. Pupils speak confidently in front of a larger audience when they contribute to school assemblies and take part in concerts for parents. Attainment in speaking and listening is good because pupils are given opportunities to extend the range of their vocabulary during discussions with the teacher and other pupils and are encouraged to use appropriate technical language.
82. Standards in reading are satisfactory, although there are some very able readers in all year groups. By the time they are eleven, most pupils have a wide range of strategies to help them understand what they read. They use contextual clues well and recount significant ideas, events and characters in stories. Higher attaining pupils read children's novels of good quality with fluency and expression to bring the text to life. They cope well with more complex narrative structures in these stories. All pupils experience a good range of literature, including poetry and non fiction. In the literacy hour pupils read together from enlarged print and this benefits all pupils by encouraging pace and expression. Pupils study vocabulary and sentence structure which give them valuable practice in understanding harder texts and also enriches writing activities. Completion of the planned computer suite will enable pupils to have much greater access to the Internet as a valuable source of information in the future. The small non fiction library is up to date and resources are appropriate. Pupils at the age of seven and eleven were able to use the cataloguing system to locate books on a subject of interest. Their attainment in reading is in line with that expected and the progress they make is satisfactory.

83. At the ages of seven and eleven the quality of writing is satisfactory. Pupils' vocabulary is good and their knowledge of sentence structure is at least satisfactory and often good or very good. Most teachers pay appropriate attention in their lessons to spelling and punctuation, as when Year 1 pupils used their word books for spellings and wrote using full stops and speech marks. Examples were seen of older writers illustrating their ideas well, as in the composition of a persuasive text in Year 4 as they wrote a diary entry justifying an action that they had taken. The majority of work is marked but not all teachers offer points for development or follow up corrections. Word processing is used for writing but opportunities for pupils to extend their writing and develop skills in drafting and re-drafting using the computer are unsatisfactory.
84. Presentation of pupils' work is appropriate and handwriting is almost always legible and well formed. Older pupils use effective joined script. Teachers provide an appropriate model for pupils when they write on white boards and in pupils' books.
85. Behaviour is good in almost all lessons. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour are well managed by teachers. Pupils listen and respond well in lessons, working in a supportive way with other pupils or in groups. They enjoy their work in the literacy hour, are able to sustain concentration and produce satisfactory results.
86. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Half the lessons observed were very good; of the remainder, two lessons were satisfactory or good and one was unsatisfactory. The best lessons were characterised by the teachers' enthusiasm and imaginative use of materials, ensuring that interest and often excitement in the learning was sustained. Suitable opportunities were taken to introduce new or related words and ideas and to encourage pupils to think. Effective links were made between pupils' reading and writing, for example, in a shared reading of extracts from 'The Demon Headmaster' pupils were able to understand how words and phrases were used to create suspense by analysing the text and writing their own passage using the technique. In contrast, pupils in another class did not make such progress because the activities were not specifically linked to the aim of the lesson and the majority of pupils worked with little direct supervision. Pupils' literacy skills are appropriately used in other subjects but there is not yet a consistent approach to accelerating the acquisition of literacy skills through appropriate focus and activities in these subjects. Higher attaining pupils are not provided with sufficient challenge to extend their thinking because the limited use of teacher assessments to plan work for pupils of all abilities.
87. Additional resources have been purchased using the funds provided to support the National Literacy Strategy. Effective use is being made both of the additional literacy support provision and of strategies to support pupils with special educational needs. The few pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress in learning English.
88. The recently appointed subject co-ordinator and the headteacher have given a sound lead in analysing literacy problems as identified in the previous inspection and taking steps to tackle weaknesses. There is now a clear understanding of the need to monitor and evaluate the results of various national tests and teacher assessments and to take steps to ensure that the evidence gathered is used to help improve pupils' progress

## MATHEMATICS

89. Standards in mathematics, confirmed by inspection findings, are broadly in line with national averages when pupils reach the ages of seven and eleven. Currently, attainment at the age of eleven is in line with expectations and this represents an improvement on last year when national test results were well below the national average. Children's achievement in the Foundation Stage is very good and although attainment is still in line when they are seven their progress in Key Stage 1 is unsatisfactory as pupils in Year 2 do not continue to progress at the same high rate as seen in the earlier years.
90. By the age of seven pupils do add and subtract using double digit numbers and their attainment and progress is in line with that indicated in the national Numeracy Strategy. Similarly they have a secure knowledge and understanding of shape and measurement appropriate to their age. They understand the reasons for collecting data. They compare examples and represent findings in simple tables. By the age of eleven the pupils' achievement is satisfactory and their attainment in line with that expected. Pupils have effective methods of computation and record these with good understanding. They have sound understanding of relevant multiplication facts. These show the benefits of the National Numeracy Strategy. However, the impact of mental mathematics is taking longer to have a positive impact and although pupils understand these areas of computation their recall of some of them is slow and this impedes their use of mental strategies for solving problems. Pupils have an appropriate knowledge of measurement, shape and symmetry. At both key stages pupils undertake relevant investigations to develop and extend their knowledge and understanding of mathematical principles and they demonstrate satisfactory attainment and achievement in this aspect of the subject. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are confident to offer their own suggestions and to ask for help if it is needed.
91. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is consistently good in Key Stage 2 and it is satisfactory in Key Stage 1. Since the last inspection, teaching has improved throughout the school. The numeracy sessions are well planned, timed and organised employing a suitable range of strategies to enable pupils to develop appropriate mathematical skills with knowledge and understanding. Teachers have a lively approach to teaching mathematics and devise interesting activities and challenging mental tasks in their lessons. Good use is made of questions to challenge pupils to use their mental skills and to consolidate their learning. They listen attentively to questions and contribute effectively to whole class sessions. Teachers plan for and use plenary sessions well to assess pupils' learning against lesson objectives, but insufficient use is made of these for assessing individual progress. In the best lessons, pupils have opportunities for self-assessment. Throughout the school, lower attaining pupils are supported through being given work that suits their ability and through well targeted help from the classroom assistants. The pace is too slow in some lessons to challenge higher attaining pupils, who become distracted and do not learn as effectively as they should. Throughout the school, good numeracy teaching is extending pupils' strategies to add and subtract numbers and apply these skills to money calculations with pupils undertaking more complex ones as they move through the school. Teachers interact effectively with their pupils and respond to their needs. Marking of work is not yet consistent across the school in encouraging and guiding pupils to improve in their work. Teachers have not yet devised a consistent whole school system for judging pupils' work against National Curriculum levels to provide work to develop individual pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in the subject, and this is unsatisfactory.

92. The co-ordination of mathematics throughout the school has been disrupted through staff promotion to other schools and is currently overseen by the headteacher. However, a new co-ordinator has been appointed from this term. There is a policy and scheme of work based on a commercial scheme. This provides for continuity and progression in learning for all pupils as they move through the school. Since the last inspection, the school has made good progress in ensuring that there is consistent planning across the school and procedures to monitor work in all classes. Procedures for judging the standards pupils achieve are unsatisfactory and adversely affect planning for future learning. There is insufficient use of ICT to support pupils' learning in mathematics and the use of mathematics across the curriculum is not planned for effectively.

## **SCIENCE**

93. By the age of eleven pupils achieve standards that are broadly in line with the national average. These are reflected in both what is seen and what has been tested. However, when compared with similar schools' achievement from the age of seven standards are high, particularly for boys who have consistently outperformed the girls. When compared with the same pupils' results in Key Stage 1 these results represent good progress.
94. By the age of seven teacher assessments for the subject show standards to be well below the national average. However, the percentage of pupils who attained standards above the national expectation was above that recorded nationally. In work seen during the inspection the attainment of the pupils was better than last year's teacher assessments and broadly in line with that expected nationally.
95. Achievement is satisfactory because there is a clear long term scheme of work and teachers' knowledge and understanding of the scientific ideas that they teach is sound. All teachers plan practical activities that involve investigation and experiment; for example, pupils in Years 2, 4 and 6 were investigating characteristics of different habitats and the living organisms peculiar to each environment thereby improving investigation skills. Worksheets feature prominently in the scientific work, often the same for all pupils in the class and this limits the progress they make, particularly higher attaining pupils. Opportunities for pupils to devise their own investigations and make their own hypotheses about what might happen were limited in the lessons observed. Pupils in Years 2 and 4 conducted investigations but there was too little time for them to record and evaluate information. Pupils in Year 6 discussed what they would measure, how they could construct a fair test and the best method of recording the results.
96. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have good scientific knowledge and understanding. They use correct technical vocabulary in their discussions with pupils and encourage the pupils to do the same. When studying the ways in which plants adapt to changing environments in Year 6 the teachers set up an appropriate investigation where pupils worked together to observe and compare the characteristics of dandelions growing in different locations. Pupils in all groups were confident in discussion of the activity, listening to each other. Throughout the key stages teachers give insufficient thought to building on the previous experiences of pupils. Assessment opportunities are identified in the mid-term planning but results are not always shared appropriately in order to help pupils of all levels of ability to achieve their best. It is unsatisfactory that there is not yet in place an agreed and shared system for tracking pupils' achievement and planning work to meet the needs of every pupil.

97. Pupils' books show an appropriate coverage of all the attainment targets in science and older pupils use a clear format for recording scientific work. Some links are made with mathematics and ICT when pupils record information using tables and graphs that are sometimes produced with the aid of a computer programme; opportunities for language development are provided through discussions, writing of instructions and recording observations.
98. Much of the work is the same for all pupils. Work sheets glued into books show the same coverage and content regardless of the pupils' ability, but the majority of pupils are achieving at an appropriate level. While work sheets ensure all pupils cover the appropriate work, they give the teacher very little information about what individual pupils understand. This also comes through in some marking, where teachers' comments are mainly related to the quality of presentation, not to the individual's response and not to what pupils need to do to improve their work. The quality of assessment and its use to help plan future activities is currently unsatisfactory.
99. Pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes enable effective group learning. A Year 4 lesson on habitats generated great interest and excitement as pupils discovered a variety of living organisms in different environments. The teacher intervened to encourage group discussion helped pupils stay on task by suggesting hypotheses or directing investigations. The majority of pupils worked well together. Accurate scientific vocabulary encouraged scientific thinking and learning.
100. The resources in the school are appropriate and the school grounds provide a good environment for studying the natural world. The subject co-ordinator has had some opportunities to observe lessons. Nevertheless the level of monitoring teaching and learning in lessons and the use of information derived from this in strategic planning for the subject and in planning good progression for pupils is unsatisfactory.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

101. Opportunities to observe lessons during the inspection were limited but there was a wide range of evidence from displays, photographic records, discussion with pupils and teachers' planning.
102. All of these indicate that pupils' attainment at the ages of seven and eleven is broadly in line with that expected nationally. This is an improvement since the time of the previous inspection when pupils made insufficient progress and standards were low.
103. Inspection findings show a wide range of materials and approaches being used and helping pupils to make satisfactory progress. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 work with different materials, creating colourful patterns and different textures in their group pictures and collages. They weave paper and fabric and design and make ceramic and card models. Pupils in Year 2 study the work of Chagall and collaborate in the production of a painting in the style of the artist, producing work of a satisfactory quality which shows knowledge and understanding of his work.

104. This satisfactory achievement is maintained in Key Stage 2. Older pupils use pastels, water colours and charcoal to create pictures in the style of Cézanne and Matisse. Their knowledge of the artist Boccioni enabled pupils to identify important features of his style, practise these in their sketch books and then use them to create their own compositions of moving figures. This recognition of a technique and using it in a personal way is an important step in developing satisfactory skills and understanding of art. The school athletics events, stories, drama, music and natural and artificial structures provide subjects for pictures, collage, textiles and sculptures and work of a satisfactory quality is produced.
105. Three dimensional art in the form of collage, clay and papier maché is used effectively in art and other subjects; for example, pupils in Year 1 make clay candle holders and older pupils design and make larger models. Other links are made with Tudor portraits, Victorian tiles and links to English through illustrations for poems and stories. There are many examples of pupils collaborating on larger projects such as collage and three dimensional constructions, for example, for a fair ground project in Year 6. Such opportunities foster pupils' satisfactory attitudes to the subject.
106. The school uses material from the Internet to download work by famous artists and to organise visits to art galleries and museums but generally there is insufficient use of ICT as a support for learning in the subject.
107. There are adequate resources for art. Pupils are experiencing a wide range of art activities and, with the support of teachers' planning through the scheme of work, pupils' progress as they move through the school is satisfactory.
108. Too little teaching was observed to make a judgement on its overall quality. Work in sketch books and on display signifies that the work of all pupils is valued. However the subject co-ordinator has only recently been appointed and monitoring the progression and development of pupils' skills and of teaching throughout the school is as yet unsatisfactory. The subject contributes well to the pupils' cultural development. There is as yet insufficient use of assessment information to give guidance to pupils on ways in which they can improve or to help the planning of activities which challenge the pupils to achieve higher standards.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

109. As no lessons were observed during the inspection, judgements on standards have been made through the scrutiny of pupils' work, displays around the school and discussion with the teachers and subject co-ordinator. This evidence indicates that attainment is in line with that expected by the ages of seven and eleven and that the pupils' achievement at both key stages is satisfactory. Design and technology is taught as a separate subject but is linked to the class's topic wherever possible.
110. From the earliest stages in the school pupils begin to develop their making skills. In Year 1 pupils had looked at equipment in their playground and then had designed their own models using construction kits. It was evident that they had made at least satisfactory progress in the lessons in finding ways to stabilise the structures.
111. In Year 2 the pupils had constructed model vehicles using wheels and axles. The models were well finished off. In their work with food they had correctly sequenced the bread making process and were able to design and identify the materials to be used in making a pizza. The curriculum plans show progression in line with the requirements of the National Curriculum.

112. At Key Stage 2 the satisfactory achievement is maintained. By the age of eleven pupils are capable of designing, constructing and evaluating a moving model of a fairground ride. In many instances the movement was linked well to sources of power. In Year 3 pupils had used appropriate tools to make a photograph holder and in Year 4 the pupils had shown good design and construction standards in making chairs linked to identifiable film or book characters. These showed that pupils take pride in their constructions and the evaluations in Year 6 show that they can make appropriate suggestions on ways in which they could be improved. Pupils talked positively about the work they do in design and technology.
113. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement on the quality of teaching. The teachers have benefited from professional development in the subject and the adoption of a scheme of work closely allied to the requirements of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). Their planning shows an improvement on the last inspection where work in Years 1 and 2 did not build on previous learning and lesson objectives were not always clearly identified. The work is marked but assessment is not used sufficiently to aid lesson planning, particularly of a range of activities which focus on challenging all the pupils in the light of their ability.
114. There has been an improvement since the last inspection. Attainment at Key Stage 1 is higher and there is a policy and scheme of work. Resources have been improved in both key stages. The subject does not support sufficiently the school's drive in literacy, numeracy and the use of ICT across the curriculum. The subject co-ordinator has used non-contact time to build up a file of teachers' planning, but no lesson observation or scrutiny of pupils' work has been undertaken.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

115. Opportunities to observe geography being taught were limited during the inspection to two lessons in Key Stage 2. Additional evidence was obtained from pupils' past and present work, displays around the school, teachers' planning and school documentation. This shows that pupils' attainment by the age of seven is below that expected and by the age of eleven it is line with that expected. The achievement in Key Stage 1 is unsatisfactory because of the slow rate of progress made by pupils in Year 2 but the achievement in Key Stage 2 is good. No judgements in relation to standards were reported at Key Stage 1 in the last inspection but similar standards were reported at Key Stage 2.
116. Pupils in Year 1 develop their knowledge of their own area. They successfully produce maps of their journeys to school and continue to develop their knowledge of the locality. Very little geographical work was seen in the books of Year 2 pupils, where it was limited to a partially shaded map of the British Isles. Other work had been planned for in the curriculum map for the subject but pupils had limited recall of this work.
117. By the end of Year 6 the pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of appropriate vocabulary, for example, linked to different types of environment. They use atlases, globes and plans appropriately, incorporating keys on their own maps identifying mountain ranges. They are clear as to the geographical difference between a mountain and a hill. Year 5 pupils have an appropriate knowledge and understanding of Wales in relation to why places are as they are. Pupils in Year 4 demonstrate an appropriate knowledge and understanding of physical processes, having studied coastal erosion as a focus for their field study trip to the Isle of Wight.

118. The quality of the teaching observed was good. The lessons were clearly planned and the lesson objectives were made evident to the pupils. In the Year 5 lesson, good use had been made of brainstorming at the start of the lesson as a way of finding how much the students already knew about Wales in the first lesson on the topic, and in Year 6, the teacher used the plenary session well to highlight the good learning of the class. The teachers used the assistants well, both to help with classroom management and in supplying the pupils with geographical information. Tasks were not sufficiently varied to cover the range of abilities in the classes and there was little evidence of assessment being used to help with the planning of challenging tasks, especially for the higher attaining pupils.
119. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour in the lessons were generally good. In Year 6 pupils responded very well to opportunities to conduct independent research and put their research to good use when feeding back at the end of the lesson. Where it took a little time to settle down the teacher managed the class well in a situation where class routines were not firmly established.
120. Since the last inspection a policy and a scheme of work, closely linked to that suggested by the QCA, have been put in place. However, resources still need to be upgraded and there is insufficient linkage of the subject with priorities in literacy, numeracy and the use of ICT across the curriculum, or the use of assessment information to aid planning for the subject.

## **HISTORY**

121. Opportunities to observe history being taught during the inspection were limited. One lesson was observed in Key Stage 2. Additional evidence was obtained from scrutiny of pupils' present and past work, displays around the school, teachers' planning and school documentation. This evidence indicates that the attainment of the pupils at the age of seven is below expectations and it is in line with expectations at the age of eleven.
122. This represents similar attainment to that reported at the last inspection. The achievement at Key Stage 1 is unsatisfactory as the work in Year 2 still does not sufficiently extend previous learning. Pupils' progress is good at Key Stage 2 although that of the higher-attainers is constrained by the lack of consistent high challenge.
123. The younger pupils in Key Stage 1 maintain the progress they make in the Foundation Stage and have good knowledge and understanding of the subject. They have studied toys, kitchens and bathtimes and can use appropriately historical words and phrases in these contexts. They have used a variety of sources and have posed and answered appropriate questions in relation to them. There was little evidence available at the end of Key Stage 1 that the pupils had continued to make such progress. Throughout the key stage there is insufficient use of ICT as a means of providing sources of information or of communicating knowledge and understanding in a variety of ways.
124. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have an appropriate knowledge and understanding of aspects of history that they have studied. In Year 6 the pupils' projects confirm their grasp of the way of life, beliefs and achievements of the Ancient Greeks and the good progress made since the end of Year 2. The pace of progress improves from the start of the key stage. In the work in Year 3 on life in Britain during World War 2 pupils understood well the impact rationing had on the home front and at the start of the lesson they showed a good knowledge of the lead up to the war. Teachers' planning and the pupils' work show little planning of different work for the range of abilities in the

classes or that there is consistent use of ICT either for providing sources of information or as a means of communication. There is insufficient use of assessment of the pupils' work to help in the planning of tasks and resources for pupils of all levels of attainment.

125. There was insufficient evidence to judge the overall quality of teaching, although the one lesson observed was good. Learning intentions were made very clear to the pupils at the start of the lesson. The teacher effectively reviewed previous learning as an introduction to the work, and throughout her input and her questioning she demonstrated a good knowledge of the subject's requirements. The response of the pupils was good. In the lesson they engaged enthusiastically in discussions about whale and horse meat. They listened carefully and showed that they had taken into account the moral viewpoint of why they were studying the causes and impact of the world war.
126. Since the last inspection a policy and scheme of work have been completed which aid the planning for pupils to acquire subject skills and cover the different topics required. Teachers' planning does not yet help to provide greater challenge for the higher attaining pupils. Currently, owing to the staffing situation, the headteacher is temporarily co-ordinating the subject but intends to change this through the new appointments.

### **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

127. Currently the standards of pupils at the age of seven and eleven are below those expected. This is a similar picture to that reported at the last inspection. Pupils are not afforded sufficient time to use and explore the possibilities of computers as learning tools and their achievement at both key stages is unsatisfactory.
128. By the age of seven pupils are able to use simple art programs to draw and label pictures and to give commands to move a turtle around the screen. By the age of eleven, pupils can search the Internet and print a web page. Pupils use computers to record data and for word-processing. However, further development of pupils' skills is limited by the time available to individuals owing to a shortage of suitable computers. The school has worked hard to overcome building problems and computer shortages and has planned to remedy this situation. A new computer suite will be installed in the week following the inspection.
129. The pupils' attitudes towards ICT are satisfactory. For example, in Key Stage 1, pupils enjoyed pretending to be a programmable toy and learned to give commands to the robot. They co-operated well as a class to instruct a classmate to guide the turtle on the screen. But generally, there is insufficient time for individuals to explore programming and other aspects of the subject successfully.
130. In spite of the limited availability of equipment, teachers plan suitable activities in ICT lessons for pupils and monitor their use of the computer to ensure each has the opportunity to experience the planned activity. They manage the pupils appropriately in such situations and have appropriate expectations. Although usage is monitored there is insufficient tracking of attainment and progress to help teachers plan future lessons. Planning is not consistent across the school to develop the use of ICT in other subjects, thereby helping to raise standards both in ICT and the subjects being studied. This was reflected in the under-use of computers and other equipment that was available during the inspection.
131. The subject is led by enthusiastic co-ordinators, who have a good vision for the future

development of the subject. Considerable development has taken place and teachers have had or are about to receive appropriate training in the use of the new technological resources. Whilst the improvements since the last inspection have been unsatisfactory, the capacity to improve now is good.

## **MUSIC**

132. During the week of the inspection, timetable arrangements limited opportunities to observe music. Only one music lesson was seen in Key Stage 2. Judgements are also based on singing in assembly, discussions with pupils and staff and pupils' work displayed in classrooms. Standards are broadly in line with those expected of pupils at this age nationally. The achievement of the pupils is satisfactory at both key stages. This is the same as reported at the last inspection.
133. Pupils are enthusiastic when talking about music and their involvement in musical events, for example singing events with North Hertfordshire Music School and a local secondary school, about opportunities to join a recorder group or the school choir and to take part in the Christmas Concert. In Year 2, pupils write about their favourite person being Mozart. Pupils in Year 4 have an appropriate technical vocabulary and use symbols satisfactorily when communicating musical ideas. In Year 6 computerised musical symbols created by pupils are displayed. Peripatetic teachers visit the school during the week to provide teaching on the piano and trumpet. Parents make a financial contribution to this.
134. Too little teaching was seen to make a valid overall judgement on the quality of teaching. Nevertheless some strengths and weakness were evident. In a Year 4 lesson on exploring sounds, the teacher's expectations were high and pupils rose to them. They had good opportunities to work on several strands of the music curriculum in the one lesson; they listened carefully to sounds in a variety of contexts, they undertook simple compositions using their voices to create sounds. They made progress with their listening skills during the lesson. The teacher planned the lesson well and knew exactly what the pupils were to achieve from it. These learning objectives were shared with the pupils and the majority tried hard. In contrast, in the first assembly of the week when pupils sang along to taped music and were accompanied by a group of recorder players, not all pupils joined in the singing and the quality of their singing was hindered because of inappropriate posture, breath control and diction.
135. The subject co-ordinator for music left the school at the end of the Easter term and the appointment of a new subject leader is planned for the start of the autumn term. The school uses a published scheme of work that provides whole school plans of work. There are sufficient resources, such as musical instruments and recorded music, although as yet there is insufficient use of ICT to support pupils' learning in the subject. There is insufficient assessment in the subject and the use of this to support lesson planning and to help pupils identify how they might improve. There is not yet in place a programme of systematic observation of teaching and learning in lessons to aid planning in the subject. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is satisfactory and opportunities for the more able musicians to develop their skills are provided by visiting instrumental tutors and collaboration in singing events with older pupils and professional music organisations. The overall amount of time spent on the subject, taking into account whole school song practices, is satisfactory.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

136. In the lessons observed, the standards attained were in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. The achievement of the pupils in both key stages is satisfactory. Standards at both key stages are in line with those reported at the last inspection.
137. It was possible to observe only gymnastics during the inspection week for pupils in Key Stage 1. Pupils were seen to explore simple gymnastics movements with control and co-ordination. Most were able to modify and contrast movements, linking actions to form effective sequences. They used space well, travelling safely over apparatus and enjoyed demonstrating their work to others in the class, although peer demonstration was not used effectively to help pupils improve their work. When working in small groups, pupils took turns and understood the need to be aware of safety during lessons. They handled apparatus carefully and safely. The attainment in these lessons was in line with expectations.
138. In Key Stage 2, pupils build on their physical skills and are developing increasing competence in gymnastics and games. It was not possible to make judgements on standards in swimming as this was not on the timetable at the time of the inspection. Pupils work carefully to improve on 'personal bests' in athletics and have an understanding of how to increase the efficiency of body movement. During games lessons, pupils worked in pairs and small teams with a sense of fairness and honesty. They enjoyed learning how to bat and bowl correctly in preparation for participation in net and wall games and they are developing appropriate hand-eye co-ordination and movement which will enable them to participate better in team games. Older pupils benefited from the involvement of professional rugby players to coach them in tag rugby before entering a local competition. They run enthusiastically, pass the ball well and create space during the game. Throughout the school, pupils listen attentively to their teachers and to each other; there is good emphasis on speaking and listening skills in physical education lessons.
139. The quality of teaching at both key stages is satisfactory. The school follows a commercial scheme of work for games and gymnastics that consists of lesson plans for the whole of each key stage. The scheme of work for other aspects of the subject has been guided by the QCA documents. Teachers have satisfactory knowledge and understanding to teach the subject. Good use is made of praise and encouragement and most teachers have good relationships with their pupils. Teachers' expectations are high and their classroom management is good. Lessons consist of good warm-up sessions; teachers provide clear explanations for pupils and encourage them to have knowledge of their bodies in order for them to work safely. Peer demonstration is used to celebrate good performances, but pupils' evaluation of their own and others' performance is generally underused to help them to improve their work. Resources are adequate overall and for some areas good, allowing for planned differentiation. They are in good condition and well used. The school has a good-sized school hall designated for physical education, and outdoors there is a good-sized playing field and hard surfaced area; all are well used.
140. Pupils enjoy additional physical education activities through a range of after school clubs that include athletics, football, netball, dance and drama. Boys and girls participate in competitive sport in the locality.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

141. Pupils at the ages of seven and eleven attain standards in line with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The work of the pupils in Year 6 in particular contained

some good examples of written work. The achievement of the pupils as they move through the school is in line with the expectations determined by the LEA's scheme of work. This scheme plans for all the required aspects of the subject to be taught. Since the last inspection the reported standards have remained broadly similar.

142. Pupils enjoy their lessons and bring in artefacts when required. At Key Stage 1 they have brought in their favourite or special book and are eager to give reasons for the book being special. They develop an appropriate understanding of the respect given to sacred texts in different religions. As they move through the key stage they acquire by the age of seven a satisfactory knowledge of Christianity through exploration of ceremonies and festivals. By the time they are eleven they have made appropriate progress in their understanding of the beliefs held by Christians through visits to churches and by listening to visiting Christian ministers. They have studied Buddhism, Hinduism and the art, drama and sacred music relating to world faiths and have developed an appropriate knowledge and understanding of them for their age. Pupils have a good understanding of the sacred and secular and in Year 6 they have considered the concept of 'what is God?' Extended writing for a range of purposes and audiences is well supported through religious education. The subject supports the pupils well in their personal development, especially through opportunities for moral and spiritual development when considering respectfully the beliefs of others.
143. Teachers have sound knowledge of the subject and this contributes positively towards the teaching of some of the more difficult concepts. Through the school the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers follow the Hertfordshire scheme of work closely. They manage the pupils well. There is insufficient use of ICT as a means both of communication and of providing materials for the pupils to investigate. Marking of pupils' work lacks the rigour to guide and extend pupils in their work and to be effective for planning challenging lessons for all pupils. The subject is well co-ordinated across the school and this leadership reflects the school's commitment to improvement. There is not yet systematic observation of teaching and learning in the subject. Visits to places of interest including the local church, the London Mosque, a London synagogue and the local Sikh temple enhance pupils' learning and introduce them to the cultural life of the community.