

INSPECTION REPORT

Stanbridge Lower School

Stanbridge, Nr. Leighton Buzzard

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109482

Headteacher: Mrs S. Melitus

Reporting inspector: Mr R. W. Burgess
OIN 20950

Dates of inspection: 1st – 4th October 2001

Inspection number: 193864

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior (Lower)

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 – 9

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Tilsworth Road
Stanbridge
Nr. Leighton Buzzard
Bedfordshire
Postcode: LU7 9HY

Telephone number: 01525 210328

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs J. Scott

Date of previous inspection: 28th April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20950	Roger Burgess	Registered inspector	Mathematics Information communication technology Geography History Physical education Religious education Equal opportunities	and What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
19335	Susan Dixon	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?
20281	Gill Dunkling	Team inspector	English Science Art and design Design and technology Music Foundation stage Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Stanbridge Lower School is situated in the village of Stanbridge a few miles outside the market town of Leighton Buzzard and serves the villages of Stanbridge, Tilsworth, Eggington and Billington, where the housing is both privately owned and rented and from the travelling community. The pupils come from a range of social backgrounds. It has 70 pupils aged between four and 9 years and is smaller than other schools. There are a similar number of boys and girls. Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average with a wide range of attainment. There are no pupils with English as an additional language. Eleven per cent of pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, which is below average, one of whom has a Statement of Special Educational Need. Most children attend pre-school provision. The school admits pupils into the school at the beginning of the term before their fifth birthday. Five per cent of pupils are in receipt of free school meals, which is below average. At the time of the inspection there were no pupils from the travelling community.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school was led effectively by the acting headteacher, during the last school year. The dedication and commitment of staff helped the school to successfully overcome an unsettled period following the absence and resignation of the previous headteacher. The governing body make a very good and effective contribution to the work of the school. The newly appointed headteacher and governors are clear about what needs to be improved and how to achieve it. The quality of provision is good, with all teaching being good or better. Standards are good for the majority of pupils in most subjects including English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. Learning benefits from the very good attitudes of the pupils which the school is successful in developing. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- ◆ The dedication and commitment of all staff in ensuring the school's aims are reflected in its work.
- ◆ The very good commitment, support and involvement of the governing body.
- ◆ The quality of teaching is very good in most lessons.
- ◆ The good standards attained by the majority of pupils.
- ◆ The very good attitudes and behaviour of the pupils.

What could be improved

- ◆ The consistency of assessment procedures throughout the school.
- ◆ Planning for future development beyond the current school year and the review of the different areas of the curriculum.
- ◆ The handwriting and presentation of pupils' work.
- ◆ Equipment for the children in the Foundation Stage.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school was last inspected in April 1997 there have been two changes of headteacher and some long term staff absences. There has been a good improvement since the last inspection. The school, led effectively by the acting headteacher and chair of governors supported well by staff and governors, has successfully addressed most issues from the last inspection. The curriculum organisation is now good. Schemes of work have been developed for all subjects using national guidance material. These have yet to be refined to fully reflect the work in the school. Work in information and communication technology is good, having benefited from the work of the co-ordinator and the provision of a new computer suite. The development of work in design and technology was planned for; its implementation has been affected by the long term absence of the co-ordinator and staff changes. Monitoring procedures are in place and the quality of teaching has improved. Collective worship fully meets statutory requirements. A new headteacher was appointed with effect from September 2001 and she is working well with staff and governors to continue to improve the quality of provision and standards attained. The school is now well placed to make further improvements.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
Reading	B	A	B	C
Writing	A*	A	A	B
Mathematics	A	A	C	D

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The information shows that in 2000, for pupils at the end of Year 2 standards in reading were above the national average and similar to the average for similar schools. In writing, standards were well above the national average and above average in comparison with similar schools. In mathematics, standards were broadly in line with the national average and below the average for similar schools.

The number in each year group varies considerably, also the number of pupils with special educational needs. In this small school this has a significant impact when comparing performance both nationally and with similar schools. The numbers of pupils undergoing national testing and assessment are too small and variable from year to year to provide a reliable guide to the trend of standards. Throughout the school, the overall trend of standards over the last four years has remained above the national average with fluctuations from year to year reflecting the individual groups of pupils in those years. The school has set clear and appropriate targets which make good use of baseline assessments made when children start school. These targets have been well met.

Levels of attainment upon admission to the school are broadly average. Standards seen during the inspection were good for the majority of pupils. By the time they reach Year 1 the majority have surpassed the learning goals for children in the Foundation Stage. Attainment by the end of Year 2 and Year 4 is above the national expectation in most subjects including English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. Achievement in religious education meets the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. In design and technology standards are at least in line with national expectations for the majority of pupils. Pupils achieve well and progress is good overall, for the majority of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils have positive attitudes to school and are eager to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour of pupils is very good. Pupils play and work well together at all times.
Personal development and relationships	The school makes good provision for the pupils' personal development and relationships are very good.
Attendance	Levels of attendance are satisfactory, pupils arrive on time and lessons start promptly.

The school's strong, caring ethos supports the development of pupils' very good attitudes and values. Pupils listen attentively and most respond well in lessons. In their personal development, pupils willingly take responsibility for tasks and show initiative, such as when undertaking independent research and supporting different charities. A significant number of absences are due to holidays during term time. This has a detrimental affect on pupils' progress and achievement.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Very 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 in most lessons seen was very good. Teaching was particularly good in literacy and numeracy lessons where pupils have been grouped by attainment. The strengths in the teaching include good attention to the needs of pupils with different levels of attainment and effective sessions at the beginning and end of lessons. These have a positive impact on pupils' learning and progress. The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is very good. Literacy and numeracy are taught well, within the whole curriculum. Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs. The teaching of children in the Foundation Stage is very good. The pupils are keen to learn. They concentrate well and work hard. The teachers play their part in maintaining these positive attitudes. As a result, the pupils achieve well and make good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is good and well organised. It includes a wide range of experiences which are stimulating and interesting, particularly for pupils in Years 3 and 4. The school places appropriate emphasis on the teaching of language and number skills.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision is good and the pupils make good progress. In lessons very good support is given to pupils with learning difficulties.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, social and cultural development. Provision for their moral development is very good
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has a caring, community ethos. Assessment procedures are being developed well.

The school has a good partnership with parents. Good use is made of the community to enrich the curriculum. There is good support for pupils from the travelling community who attend the school on a temporary basis. There is sensitivity and good support for pupils which has a strong impact on improving standards. The school recognises the need to refine its curriculum documents to more clearly reflect the work in the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The acting headteacher and staff showed dedication and commitment in sustaining the good work in the school following a period of uncertainty. Staff fulfil their roles with commitment and a high level of professionalism. The development of staff roles has been affected by long term absences.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governing body is very supportive and the school benefits from a high level of commitment by governors. There is a strong sense of partnership between governors and staff.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The governing body, acting headteacher and staff have created a climate in the school where there is a strong commitment to improvement. The monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance is used well to develop targets and inform teaching and learning.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Grants are used well. Good use is made of resources and the accommodation. For example, the computer suite and environmental area.

The accommodation is very good and is having a positive impact on the quality of provision. There is a good number of staff to meet the requirements of the curriculum. The

range and quality of resources is good overall. There is good leadership that is well supported by staff and the governing body. The school makes good use of the principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Their children like school and they make good progress. ◆ The staff are approachable. ◆ The expectation that pupils will do their best. ◆ Behaviour is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Information on how their children are getting on. ◆ Some parents would like more homework. ◆ Activities outside lessons. ◆ Some parents were concerned over the effect of staff absences and changes on their children's attainment and progress.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views of the school. The school works well in partnership with parents which is one of the school's strengths. There is a need to improve the quality of information on pupils' progress. There has been some inconsistency in homework although parents have commented on an improvement this term. Inspectors disagree with some parents' views that there are insufficient activities outside lessons. There is a good range of visits to places of interest and extra-curricular activities which enhance the curriculum. Inspectors' judgement is that children's learning has not been significantly affected by staff absences and changes.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. In the 2000 National Curriculum assessments, when compared with all schools, pupils' performance in reading was above the national average. In writing it was well above the national average and in mathematics was broadly in line with the national average. Their performance in relation to schools in similar contexts was similar to the average in reading, above in writing and below average in mathematics. There was no significant difference between boys' and girls' performance.

2. The numbers of pupils undergoing national testing and assessment are too small and variable from year to year to provide a reliable guide to the overall trend of standards throughout the school. The number in each year group varies considerably, also the number of pupils with special educational needs. In this small school this has a significant impact when comparing performance both nationally and with similar schools.

3. The results of voluntary national tests at the end of Year 4 and provisional results for 2001 at the end of Year 2 indicate that the majority of pupils are attaining good standards in reading, writing and mathematics, with a significant number attaining well above levels expected nationally. This was reflected in the standards seen during the inspection. Curriculum planning and organisation have been improved to provide continuity and progression. Pupils' attainment is being more closely monitored than previously and the school has set clear targets which have been well met and make good use of baseline assessments made when children start school.

4. Additional literacy support and intensive teaching is provided for identified groups of pupils. Baseline assessment is used effectively to identify and provide support for pupils. These are having a positive impact on raising standards. Most recently, careful analyses of pupils' achievements are being developed to determine strengths and weaknesses.

5. When children start school their attainment is broadly average. Most have had experience of pre-school education. During the inspection only two children were in the Foundation Stage (reception year). Children make good progress overall and by the end of the reception year the children achieve well and many exceed the early learning goals in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. This reflects the very good work of support staff and consistently very good teaching they receive. Teaching in physical development is also very good. Children make steady progress, but lack of regular access to an appropriately equipped play and activity area limits their physical development.

6. Throughout the school, the vast majority of pupils achieve above expected levels in English, mathematics and science, with a significant minority attaining higher levels. These good standards have been well maintained since the last inspection, despite significant staff changes and long term staff absences.

7. The standards of work seen during the inspection were consistently good for the majority of pupils in Years 1 and 2 and for pupils in Year 3 and 4. In literacy and numeracy lessons where the teaching was in groups by achievement, there was most effective work,

appropriate to all pupils reflecting their differing prior attainment. Good strategies were used to ensure pupils worked at a good pace and expectations of standards and behaviour were high, reflecting the impact of the quality of teaching on standards. The focus on improving curricular provision, teachers' expectations, planning and organisation are having positive results. Staff continue to improve their professional expertise, such as in their knowledge and understanding of information and communication technology.

8. Standards of achievement of gifted pupils and those with special educational needs are good in relation to their prior attainment. They are supported well by all staff. Pupils from the travelling community who attend the school from time to time receive sufficient support to ensure they make good progress. Teachers encourage all these pupils to fully participate in lessons.

9. Standards in all other subjects of the National Curriculum, including information and communication technology are good by the end of Year 2, except in design and technology and physical education where they are satisfactory. They are good by the end of Year 4 except in physical education where they are satisfactory. Standards are particularly good in history and geography for pupils in Years 3 and 4. In religious education standards meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for all pupils.

10. There is a continuing focus on improving assessment and its effective use to inform planning. Pupils' performance in national tests is being carefully analysed to plan for improvement and raise standards. The school has systems for assessment but these are not consistent throughout the school to enable the effective monitoring of the progress of individual pupils.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. The behaviour of all pupils is very good; this has a beneficial effect upon the school community and creates an orderly and purposeful learning environment. Pupils behave consistently very well in lessons, assemblies and at lunchtimes. Pupils understand and follow the school rules well and show themselves to be polite and helpful to both adults and each other. There is no evidence of bullying or conflict although a small number of boys are sometimes over boisterous at playtimes. Pupils with special educational needs or those that join school during the course of the school year are fully integrated into a harmonious atmosphere. There have been no exclusions in the past year but appropriate procedures are in place should they be needed.

12. The relationships amongst all members of the school community are very good. Pupils of all ages play and work very well together. They help and encourage each other and show thought and consideration for the needs of others. Pupils approach the adults in school with confidence and respect. Pupils' personal development is very good. Pupils are encouraged to act responsibly and are provided with opportunities to carry out various duties. There are opportunities in lessons and circle times to express their feelings and opinions and to appreciate the values and beliefs of other people. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning by discussing and analysing their success at meeting their individual targets.

13. Attendance levels are in line with the national average and are satisfactory. Absences are due in part to normal childhood illnesses. Otherwise there is significant amount of holiday taking in term time. For these pupils in particular absence from school

has a detrimental effect upon their learning and attainment. Registration periods are brief and efficient and the time is well used for personal study or other activities.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. It is very good throughout the school. This has a beneficial effect on the pupils' learning and standards of attainment. The quality of teaching in the school was very good or better in almost nine out of ten lessons and good in the remainder. The quality of teaching of high achieving pupils and pupils with special educational needs is very good. Teaching is focused well and pupils are helped to recognise their own improvements. Class teachers have positive approaches to pupils with special educational needs who are well integrated with their peers. Teaching methods and strategies for promoting learning are very good.

15. The quality of teaching for children in the Foundation Stage is very good and benefits from an experienced and very effective nursery nurse. Careful planning ensures organisation, methods and resources are appropriate for different tasks. The nursery nurse contributes well to the planning which makes very good effective use of her expertise. The teaching strategies are clear to ensure the best use of the adults' time. For example, the class teacher spends time with each group of children within the mixed Year 1 and Foundation Stage class and moved between individuals to support progress in learning. The use of questioning of children in the Foundation Stage and Year 1 is very good. It is well matched to each individual. It is used effectively either to reinforce individual learning or to extend pupils' thinking.

16. Good emphasis is placed on early reading and writing skills in the Foundation Stage and there are good opportunities for the children to discuss their work and improve their listening and speaking skills. The teacher makes very effective use of the nursery nurse and voluntary helpers to work with the children so that they can focus on the needs of a group. A variety of approaches are used to interest the children so that they are given suitable opportunities to express themselves. The teacher and helpers intervene very effectively and show sensitivity in asking questions and in guiding the children.

17. There is a very good balance between free choice and directed activities, which help the children to gain in confidence and to make good progress in language and literacy. Good use is made of assessment to set tasks which are matched effectively to the different levels of attainment. Children are assessed across a range of tasks. This information is used effectively to set appropriate challenges for individual children. Observations of children are clearly focused. Relationships are very good and help to create a positive learning atmosphere.

18. Teachers' planning shows very good learning objectives. Lessons proceed at a very good pace and a wide range of teaching strategies is used to very good effect. Skilled questioning techniques ensure that all pupils within the mixed age classes are challenged and teachers monitor pupils' progress carefully during the lesson. For example, pupils in the Year 2 and 3 teaching group enthusiastically respond to a literacy session to develop their understanding of the processes involved in drafting and editing text using different fonts and other presentational skills and they used their information and communication technology skills well, following good assessment and planning, clear explanation and encouragement from the teacher.

19. All work is planned carefully, following National Curriculum programmes of study. Teachers give clear explanations, instructions and demonstrations and provide careful

support for all pupils. Lesson objectives are challenging and through good use of their different assessment tasks teachers plan well to meet individual pupil's needs, particularly those of high prior attainment.

20. There are many strengths in the teaching. Teachers organise lessons well to support pupils with special educational needs. Very effective management of contrasting activities during lessons is a feature of the very good teaching. In these lessons there is a very good balance between whole class and group discussion, practical activities and written tasks. For example, in history in Years 3 and 4 pupils discussed the development of the city of Rome, allocated tasks within their groups, identified the reasons for its development, recorded their findings and reported back in the ending discussion. Teachers link lessons to previous learning well. For example, in a Year 3 and 4 numeracy lesson the teacher reminded pupils of their learning about estimation and approximation. Teachers use plenary sessions well to reinforce and assess learning from the group work. This is particularly good in the literacy and numeracy teaching where pupils are left with a strong sense of achievement. Management of pupils' behaviour is very good. Teachers use methods that are effective. For example, the teachers identify expectations very calmly and clearly and pupils respond well to this approach.

21. The teaching of English has some very good features and benefits from the introduction of grouping of pupils by achievement. Teachers make very good provision through literacy lessons for the development of language skills. All staff use the approaches in the National Literacy Strategy well and make very good use of resources to interest the pupils. Teachers make very good teaching points about the mechanics of language, such as punctuation and spelling, and link this well to the sharing of texts as a class. They provide challenging tasks for the pupils and give clear guidance for skills such as grammar. The teaching of reading includes good opportunities for the pupils to build words from letter sounds.

22. The teaching of mathematics is very good and also benefits from the introduction of grouping of pupils by achievement. There is very good teaching of mental arithmetic. The teachers correctly emphasise the quick and accurate recall of number facts and most lessons have good pace and include challenging tasks. Good, clear explanations are given followed by activities to allow pupils to consolidate and practise what they have learned. There are high expectations that pupils will succeed with the challenging work they are set. In the group for the highest achievers further provision is made for the gifted pupils through good use of the general assistant enabling the teacher to challenge and extend these pupils. Sessions at the end of lessons are well managed and leave the pupils with a strong sense of achievement.

23. In science, teaching is very good. Good use is made of the subject knowledge and skills of the co-ordinator. The teachers place a strong emphasis on pupils undertaking experiments and investigations to find things out. This is developing their scientific vocabulary and improving their enquiry skills, setting tasks which were well matched to the pupils' different ages and levels of attainment. For instance, in Years 3 and 4 the teacher used the opportunity to emphasise important principles such as the idea of fair testing and the use of prediction in supporting scientific enquiry. She used carefully phrased questioning for pupils with special educational needs and very high level questions for the highest attainers. This had a significant impact on raising the level of each pupil's thinking. Teachers establish positive working relationships with pupils in the class.

24. In the other subjects the teaching is very good, particularly in history and geography

for pupils in Years 3 and 4. The teaching of information and communication technology is very good and has improved significantly since the last inspection. Good use is made of the knowledge and skills of the co-ordinator ensuring very effective use of the computer suite, for example, pupils have used the computer to produce graphs linked to their work in data handling in mathematics related to their study of holidays in geography. Teachers have good subject knowledge in the word processing, graphics and control aspects of information and communication technology. For example, in an information and communication technology lesson the teacher used her good subject knowledge to use technical language effectively when explaining the task using a line drawing and painting program. Staff follow a good scheme of work and develop pupils' information and communication technology skills well in other subjects. In religious education teachers have good subject knowledge across the different religions required in the locally agreed syllabus. This ensures thorough coverage of these religions with the use of correct religious terminology. The very good quality of support staff has a good impact on the standards attained.

25. Teachers' medium term planning is detailed and ensures all pupils in the mixed age classes cover the full range of the National Curriculum programmes of study. This planning is based on national guidance materials and has yet to fully reflect the very good work undertaken in the school. Short term planning clearly identifies the objectives for each lesson. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it to set clear objectives and focus on what is to be achieved. Class teaching is used effectively at the start of lessons and most lessons end with discussion of what has been learned. For example, following a Year 1 lesson on handling money to discover which coins to use to make different amounts of money. The teachers and nursery nurse provide good support through verbal comments which include guidance on how the pupils might improve. The teachers' good use of their individual assessments ensures appropriate challenge for the different ages and levels of attainment in each class to extend their learning in all areas of the curriculum. They mark the pupils' work regularly. The teachers use praise effectively to motivate the pupils. Discipline is good, teachers have very good control and relationships between them and their pupils are very good. Although there were no pupils from the travelling community at the time of the inspection, discussion with staff and pupils indicate there are good procedures to help them settle well into school routine with good learning support.

26. Teachers use resources very well. They provide high quality artefacts to enrich pupils' experiences and understanding. Teachers use resources well in literacy to motivate pupils' interest and to support pupils in writing in other subjects. For example, in history and geography by ensuring the pupils have the particular vocabulary needed to write about their work on different countries. Computers are used well during information and communication technology lessons as well as in other subjects. Teachers use classroom assistants and other adults effectively, particularly for pupils with special educational needs. They ensure that they have a clear understanding of the learning required, for example, in Year 2 the assistants worked very effectively to support pupils with special educational needs during a physical education lesson. They targeted their support very carefully and ensured that each pupil received focused support. There is good use of adults to effectively support individual reading development.

27. Teachers have high expectations in the literacy and numeracy work. There are high expectations of pupils' speaking skills as all pupils are expected to speak formally to a large audience of pupils, teachers, parents and visitors. Expectations of handwriting and presentation are variable throughout the school. It is very good in history and geography

work for pupils in Years 3 and 4. There are high expectations of pupils in the teaching in mathematics where all are challenged to extend their thinking. Expectations of children in the Foundation Stage are high in language and literacy and in mathematics.

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

28. The school currently provides a broad and balanced curriculum, which meets the needs of all its pupils. The quality and range of learning opportunities has improved since the last inspection. Policies and schemes of work have been developed for all subjects using national guidance material. These have yet to be refined to fully reflect the work of the school. The teaching of religious education follows Bedfordshire's agreed syllabus and the daily act of collective worship meets requirements. The curriculum also makes appropriate reference to sex education and drugs awareness. Inspectors do not agree with concerns about homework expressed by some parents in their pre-inspection questionnaires. At the time of the inspection, changes had been implemented to ensure that homework appropriately extends work done during the day. The planned personal, social and health education programme makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. The school works hard to ensure that all pupils have full access to the curriculum and wider opportunities.

29. The curriculum provided for the youngest children is good overall. Detailed schemes of work cover the six areas of the Foundation Stage and good principles for early years' education effectively support the very good teaching and the very good management of the nursery nurse. Lack of regular access to an appropriately equipped play and activity area limits children's physical development.

30. The curriculum and range of work provided for pupils in Years 1 and 2 are good. In Years 3 and 4 they are very good. The school's work in literacy and numeracy, follows that recommended in the respective national strategies and this has improved the teaching of basic skills. Literacy skills are taught very effectively. There are very good opportunities in subjects like science, history and geography for extended factual writing. Speaking and listening skills are developed progressively across the school. Numeracy skills are taught very well. Pupils develop speed and accuracy with their mental work and confidence in their use of numbers as they move through the school. The new computer suite provides effective opportunities to use information and communication technology skills in literacy and numeracy.

31. Pupils work together in mixed classes and there is good provision for both girls and boys. Children are assessed on entry to the school and their progress is tracked through to Year 4. Pupils identified as having special educational needs have detailed individual education plans, which are reviewed regularly with parents, and outside help is called in when it is appropriate. This effective liaison contributes to the good progress the pupils with special educational needs make. Pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need are fully included in the life of the school. There is no agreed policy for meeting the needs of gifted and talented pupils, but the school plans to address this situation. The well designed accommodation means that pupils with physical disabilities can be effectively catered for.

32. Inspectors disagree with some parents' views that there are insufficient activities outside lessons. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, which enhance the

curriculum. These activities include basketball, draughts, chess, country dancing and football. Many take part and often involve parents. The curriculum is also enriched through good use of the local area. Pupils visit the local park, churches and shops as part of their studies. Pupils visit Leighton Buzzard town centre to see the “lay out” and particular buildings such as All Saint’s Church. Pupils contribute well to their local and the wider community, for example, by visiting Tilsworth old people’s home and supporting Guide Dogs for the Blind and the British Heart Foundation. Good contact is established with the fire service and the local police who give talks about road safety. Pupils have opportunities to visit places of interest, such as St. Albans, to support their work in class. All pupils have access to all the activities provided by the school.

33. Good links are established between the school and Leighton Middle School. Good transfer arrangements are in place to ensure that pupils move from one school to another with minimum disruption to their learning. The school has close links with local pyramid schools. Many pupils participate in the Inter-Schools Singing Festival and Carol Concert. All these aspects of the school’s life enrich the curriculum and contribute effectively to pupils’ personal, spiritual and cultural development.

34. The provision for pupils’ spiritual, social and cultural development is good. The school lays considerable emphasis on promoting a strong Christian ethos and is successful in developing Christian values. There are many opportunities for pupils to explore and reflect on personal values and beliefs within the wider curriculum. Teachers develop and use pupils’ thoughts and experiences through for example, discussions to reflect on what they are doing and how their actions will affect others. The use of stories and music has a positive impact on raising pupils’ self-esteem and appreciation of others. The curriculum subjects, especially creative work in art and design, music and English and in the exploration of words and ideas in the literacy hour, as well as the sense of wonder promoted in religious education and science, all give good support to the spiritual development of the pupils. Their spiritual awareness is also raised through the close relationship with the local church and a variety of visits to such places as the National Portrait Gallery.

35. The school monitors and supports pupils’ personal development very well. This enhances the good provision for pupils’ social education. Provision for pupils’ moral development is very good. When children begin school in the reception class, they learn to trust, play and work together well. This lays a successful foundation for the very good level of behaviour and attitudes found throughout the school. Rules are displayed in the classrooms and are known and understood by everyone. Award schemes, such as points and stickers, help to promote personal achievement, positive attitudes, appropriate behaviour and good citizenship. Relationships are very good and staff, pupils and visitors are made to feel welcome. Many opportunities are provided during lessons for pupils to work collaboratively with partners or in groups. Pupils happily take responsibility for helping and doing their jobs, for example, taking the register to the office. They bring gifts for the elderly to their harvest festival and support the Keech Cottage Hospice.

36. The promotion of pupils’ interest in their own cultural heritage is good. They undertake a good range of local visits that develop their appreciation of local and national history. The school promotes pupils’ awareness of cultural and religious beliefs in the wider community through, for instance, visits from the jazz and string quartets and the Arena Theatre and the study of Judaism and Islam. They are taken on visits to places of interest associated with the work they are doing in school, such as a visit to a local church or to the Mosque in Luton. Parents and members of the community also provide cultural

links. The school arranges visits further a field to such places as the Millennium Dome and the London Planetarium. Teachers also work effectively with the Bedfordshire Multicultural Education Service to help pupils experience the world beyond Stanbridge and the different ethnic groups that make up modern multicultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

37. The school provides a happy and caring environment where all are equally valued. Pupils are very well supported by the very good relationships that exist and all are well known. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported and provided for. Adults and pupils alike treat each other with care and respect. When traveller pupils are in school they are fully integrated into school life and are very well supported by the school and by outside specialists.

38. The school has satisfactory arrangements for the care and protection of its pupils. Health and safety procedures are generally good. The governing body is becoming increasingly involved in supporting their newly adopted health and safety policy. Pupils are encouraged to be aware of their own safety and to act responsibly. The arrangements for child protection are satisfactory. There is a suitably trained designated person and staff are alert and caring. The school has identified a need to extend the training and written guidance available to all the adults working in school.

39. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good and those for eliminating oppressive behaviour are good. There is a clear and consistent system of rewards and sanctions that are well understood by all reflecting the involvement of pupils in discussions about class rules and expectations. Praise is used effectively in lessons to motivate pupils and raise their self-esteem.

40. The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory. The administrative arrangements are efficient and the school meets with statutory requirements. The school has recently provided clear messages to parents about the need for good attendance and the adverse effects of holiday taking in term time. This has yet to prove effective.

41. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good. There are no formal procedures for recording or monitoring personal development but in this small school all are well known. This area is well supported by the good provision for personal, social and health education and by circle time discussions. Pupils throughout the school receive very good educational guidance. Targets for improvement are provided for each pupil, they can easily be consulted in the classrooms. Pupils are encouraged to examine their own learning and their success at meeting their individual targets.

42. The procedures for assessing pupils attainment and monitoring their academic progress are good. A variety of tests and assessments provide the information needed for class teachers to maintain comprehensive records of pupils attainment in English and mathematics. In the other subjects of the curriculum this practice is not currently in place. Pupils' progress and areas of concern are identified and individual targets can be set. These are shared on a regular basis with pupils and annually with parents. The production

of whole school systems for tracking pupils' progress are at an early stage. The assessment and recording procedures for children in the Foundation Stage are good.

43. The use of assessment information to guide the planning of the curriculum is good. Information is used effectively in the Foundation Stage to meet the needs of these children. Elsewhere in school lessons are evaluated and this information is used by teachers to adjust the next lesson if necessary to meet the needs of the class in general, groups of pupils or individuals. Assessment information is used well to set individual pupils' targets.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

44. The parents' views of the school are good. Parents support the school well and appreciate the education that is provided for their children. In particular they feel that the school has high expectations of their children and that their children are happy at school. Parents feel that the headteacher and the staff are approachable. Some parents are not happy with the information they receive about how their child is getting on, the amount of homework provided and the range of activities offered outside lessons. A small number of parents are concerned about the effect of staff changes and absences on pupils' learning. The inspection findings support the positive views of parents. The inspection evidence finds that there is a good range of activities outside lessons. There are some extra-curricular clubs and in all years there are visits to places of interest to support class work and visitors to the school enrich pupils lives. The provision of homework has much improved recently and now offers structured, consistent work that supports pupils learning well. The information provided about how pupils are getting on is satisfactory. The inspectors' judgement is that pupils' learning has not been significantly affected by staff turbulence.

45. The effectiveness of the schools links with parents is good. Parents are welcomed into school and are provided with good opportunities to become involved in the life of the school. Daily contact is good and teachers are readily available at the start and finish of the day. Parents are invited to school performances and special assemblies. The opportunity to gain insight into the work that their children do through workshops or class assemblies is at present limited.

46. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is good. A good number of parents are able to offer to help in the classrooms and on school trips. School events are all well supported indicating parents' general commitment to the school and their children's education. The Parents, Friends and Teachers Association provide strong support for the school. They hold a variety of fund-raising and social events for both pupils and parents. These are well supported and funds raised provide the school with welcome additional resources.

47. The quality of the information provided for parents is satisfactory. The governors' annual report is excellent and offers parents useful information about the work of the school. The school brochure is satisfactory and letters inform parents about day-to-day events and issues. Parents are provided with detailed information each term about the curriculum and coming topics. Parents of pupils in the Foundation Stage receive good information about how they may support their children at home. Information about pupils' work and progress is conveyed in satisfactory written reports and with consultation events held in the autumn and spring. In the summer term parents are invited to make appointments if they wish. Some parents feel that if they receive information about their

child's difficulties it is given too late in the school year. Written reports are inconsistent. They provide general formation about what each pupil has done. Some reports provide clear information about a pupil's level of learning, where they have problems and how these can be improved, but others do not. Parents of pupils with special educational needs receive good information about their children and are well involved in regular reviews of their children's work and progress.

48. The contribution that parents make to their children's learning at home and at school is good. The home-school agreement is supported well indicating parents' general commitment to their children's education. This is marred by the significant number of families who take holidays in term time. Good information is given about the general expectations of homework for pupils in different years. Reading record cards are well used by parents but there is no recording system at present to indicate parental support for other areas of homework. Homework has been the subject of much hard work recently and there is now a consistent and structured provision.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

49. The acting headteacher provided very good leadership and managed the school well in the last school year. The very good working relationship between the acting headteacher, chair of governors, governing body and staff was a key factor in the successful management of the school's work. In the short time since her appointment the new headteacher has done much to build teamwork and has set a clear agenda for improvement in the school. In recent years, there have been two changes of headteacher together with periods of long term absence of staff which has affected progress in achieving the school's targets as set out in the school's action plan after the last inspection. In particular the review of curriculum provision in design and technology and revision of policies and schemes of work in the light of the publication of national guidance materials has been disrupted.

50. The management of the school successfully promotes its aims and values. These are apparent in the work of the school. There is a shared sense of purpose, a strong commitment to community life and an ethos in which people are valued and respected. Pupils are well cared for. Staff have a consistent approach which ensures that behaviour and discipline are well managed. A commitment to equal opportunities for all pupils is clearly evident in the everyday life of the school, particularly in the attention given to the needs of pupils from the travelling community who attend the school from time to time. Parents are supportive of the school's aims and values as shown in the questionnaire and the parents' meeting before the inspection.

51. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance by the headteacher has given a good insight, shared understanding and an awareness of the school's needs. It is clearly apparent that the acting headteacher, governing body and staff have created a climate in the school where there is a strong commitment to improvement. The newly appointed headteacher has analysed the school's results in both internal and external tests and has established procedures to track pupils' progress throughout the school. This should help provide a clear insight into the school's future needs. The headteacher has monitored and evaluated teaching and learning in the core subjects with focused observations of teaching which are helping to further develop teaching and the very good practice which is already taking place.

52. The governing body is very supportive of the school and committed to the continued development of the school. Governors have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and the areas it needs to develop. They fulfil their legal responsibilities by retaining oversight of the budget, plans and policies. They are well informed in terms of the school's position and educational direction. Training for governors for their role, including monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum, has taken place.

53. The teaching staff, nursery nurse and classroom assistants are well qualified and appropriately deployed. All staff work well together to ensure that the pupils are well cared for in an educationally stimulating environment. They all have an appropriate role in developing their curriculum subjects. Arrangements for performance management are in place. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are taking place. Governors have been involved in setting targets. Staff development is managed effectively and is playing an appropriate role in improving the quality of teaching and raising standards.

54. The financial management of the school is good. The recommendations of the audit in autumn 2000 have been effectively addressed. Routine administrative procedures are satisfactory. The school is prudent in managing and monitoring its finances and ensuring best value. Initiatives and developments are carefully costed, with due regard for the four principles of best value. For example, this is seen in the decisions taken to ensure the high quality of provision in the new computer suite and on staffing levels, where alternatives have been considered and costed and decisions evaluated. These decisions have enabled the school to move from a deficit budget to a situation where there is an appropriate carry forward for contingencies. The school improvement plan shows well-targeted developments, which are appropriately costed and linked to the school's budget with time scales for completion. It does not currently cover a period beyond the current school year.

55. The school makes very good use of the grants it receives, frequently supplementing them with its own fund-raising initiatives. For example, the funds provided to resource the computer suite and establish the environmental area have been used well. The school is also developing its range of books within the library. Good use of these resources is made in classrooms, financial administration and in support of the curriculum and the raising of standards.

56. The school's provision for special educational needs is managed effectively. Pupils with special educational needs receive sensitive support. The requirements of the Code of Practice are met in full and policies are appropriate. A member of the governing body has been nominated to liaise with the co-ordinator. Governors report to parents on the success of the special educational needs policy and give details of the allocations of funding to support pupils. Funds and resources are effectively used to meet the needs of all pupils with special educational needs.

57. The accommodation is very good. It is spacious and used well. Facilities for storage are limited and there is a need to ensure that the existing storage facilities are used to best effect. The school has attractive grounds, including an extensive environmental area established through very good support from the Parents and Friends Association. Corridors are furnished with attractive displays of pupils' work. Classrooms offer good space. A sizeable hall provides ample space for dining, physical education, assemblies and other activities. The playground is of a good size for outdoor physical education and play. There are good plans at an advanced stage to further improve this

with the establishment of a hard surface games area on the site of the disused swimming pool.

58. Resources are satisfactory overall. They have improved since the last inspection, particularly in provision for information and communication technology. The introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies is also well supported with good quality resources. There is insufficient large play equipment for children in the Foundation Stage. Effective use has been made of the school's links with other local schools. Overall the school offers good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to further raise standards and the quality of education, the governing body, headteacher and staff should:

- ◆ Give high priority to build on existing examples of good practice to establish consistent assessment procedures to:
 - *monitor individual pupils' attainment and progress;*
 - *provide information to help set targets for individual pupils and for school improvement;*
 - *provide information to help develop curricular planning and to assist in its evaluation;*
 - *use the results of these assessments to help plan appropriate work for pupils of different levels of attainment;*

(paragraphs 4, 10, 19, 25 and 42)

- ◆ Improve the plans for the strategic development of the school by:
 - *developing a plan to cover a period beyond the current school year;*
 - *developing a timetable for the review of the different subjects and aspects of the school's work within an appropriate period of time;*

(paragraphs 28, 49 and 54)

- ◆ Improve the handwriting and presentation of pupils' work by:
 - *establishing a whole school policy and practice for handwriting;*
 - *applying consistently high expectation of presentation of pupil's work in all subjects;*

(paragraphs 27 and 84)

- ◆ Improve provision for children in the Foundation Stage by:
 - *providing appropriate equipment for children's physical development.*

(paragraphs 5, 29, 58 and 60)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weakness should be considered for inclusion in the action plan. These are indicated in paragraphs: 38, 47, 48 and 57:

- ◆ Review the use of existing storage facilities to optimise its use and identify future needs;
- ◆ Ensure all staff are fully aware of Child Protection and Health and safety procedures;
- ◆ Improve the consistency and quality of information to parents.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	27
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	11

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	23	3	0	0	0	0
Percentage	4	85	11	0	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than three percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	70
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	7

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0

National comparative data	5.2
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National comparative data	0.5
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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 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	10	6	16

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	10	10
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (90)	100 (90)	94 (90)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	10	10
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (86)	94 (86)	100 (90)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

The number of girls undertaking the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2 in 2000 was less than 10, therefore their results are not recorded.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	64
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17 : 1
Average class size	22.7

Education support staff: YR – Y4

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	55

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
	£
Total income	203,196
Total expenditure	202,370
Expenditure per pupil	2,851
Balance brought forward from previous year	- 1,109
Balance carried forward to next year	- 283

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	70
Number of questionnaires returned	42

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	57	36	5	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	48	40	12	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	64	29	2	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17	40	31	7	5
The teaching is good.	40	53	5	2	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	36	19	5	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	38	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	45	5	2	0
The school works closely with parents.	36	48	14	2	0
The school is well led and managed.	31	38	14	7	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	50	9	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	10	26	52	12	0

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM AND SUBJECTS

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

59. The quality of education for children in the Foundation Stage is good. Children are admitted into the school at the beginning of the term in which they are five. At the time of the inspection, there were two children in the Foundation Stage and these were taught with 15 pupils from Year 1. Assessments are carried out during the first few weeks of admission and staff use these and regular observations and assessments to identify areas for development. Children with special educational needs are identified early and given good support and those with Statements of Special Educational Need are fully included.

60. When children start school most have had experience of pre-school education. Their attainment is broadly average. By the end of the Foundation Stage the children achieve well and many exceed the early learning goals in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. This is because of the very good management of the nursery nurse and consistently very good teaching they receive in these areas. Teaching in physical development is also very good. Children make steady progress, but lack of regular access to an appropriately equipped play and activity area limits their physical development.

Personal, social and emotional development

61. When they start school, children are settled into the class routine quickly and happily. They are welcomed warmly by the class teacher and nursery nurse each morning. They feel safe and secure in the classroom environment and are eager to learn. The consistently very good teaching and high levels of encouragement help them to develop confidence and a good level of maturity. This means that children make good progress in this area of learning and by the time they leave the Reception class most of them exceed the learning goals. Children play and learn together very well. They take personal responsibility as they volunteer to take the registers to the office and tidy the classroom at the end of lessons. The full integration into the school of a child with physical disabilities develops children's understanding of the need to treat everyone with sensitivity and respect.

62. The adults provide very good role models and treat each other and the children with courtesy, respect and friendliness. As a result, children learn to trust and co-operate with each other and are given a successful foundation for the very good level of behaviour and attitudes found throughout the school. Children are given frequent opportunities to work in small groups and this helps them to develop good personal and social skills. Adults also help them to become independent by effectively setting up areas such as the "999 Communications Centre" and by making resources easily accessible.

Communication, language and literacy

63. By the end of the Foundation Stage most children exceed the early learning goals for communication, language and literacy. Many children speak confidently in sentences, for example, when discussing the different houses of the three little pigs. They respond well to the imaginative settings that are provided for them. The teacher, the nursery nurse

and other adults, consistently encourage children to think about the effect of the words they use, in order to guide and further clarify their thinking.

64. Children routinely practise individual letter sounds and are developing a very good awareness of how the sound of individual letters can help them to build up a picture of the whole word. Many are able to read simple words. They apply this knowledge soundly when sharing books with the teacher and each other. She skilfully uses a range of strategies to interest the children when teaching basic skills. When they first enter the school, many children have a good awareness of stories and books. This initial knowledge is developed well through a daily storybook session, where book features, such as the cover, pictures and print, are reinforced. Vocabulary, dialogue and story details are also emphasised and children are encouraged to answer questions and tell some of the story in their own words. They are thoroughly absorbed in the teacher's expressive reading of "On the Ning Nong Nang". Their behaviour is very responsive. They interact well with each other, do not call out but wait to be asked to speak. Teachers effectively support the development of reading skills through clear labelling of children's names, activity areas and resource materials around the room.

65. Children are given plenty of opportunity to develop their writing skills whatever their stage of development. They practise writing their names and label their pictures. Children are developing a handwriting style with recognisable letters, most of which are formed correctly. The more able can write simple sentences and sequence events, using full stops and capital letters, for example, when writing about their own experiences.

66. The quality of teaching is very good. The teacher's planning is detailed and provides a good range of activities to foster children's independent learning. Children are given very good opportunities to write for different purposes. The resources made available for the lessons are well selected and appropriate for the children's needs. Information and communication technology is used very well to develop skills in literacy.

Mathematical development

67. By the end of the Foundation Stage most exceed the early learning goals for mathematics. They are familiar with nursery rhymes, counting games and action rhymes such as "One, Two, Three, Four, Five". Most children in the Foundation Stage can count to 10 reliably. The more able can count to 20 and some count beyond. Children are encouraged to recognise and use mathematical and positional language confidently, for example, words like 'bigger', 'smaller', 'above', 'below' and 'behind', when using the gymnastics apparatus and moving Sid the Robot and Terry the Turtle through the maze on the computer. They are given frequent opportunities to count on and to count back, for instance, to find out how many children are having a hot dinner. Many of the older children recognise flat shapes such as square, circle, rectangle and triangle, and some children can identify repeating patterns.

68. The quality of teaching is very good. The teacher and nursery nurse plan and organise interesting group activities, such as selecting shapes from a "Feely Bag" and describing them to the others in the group, who had to name the shapes according to the number of edges, corners and faces. They consistently encourage children to actively participate, who, as a result, develop good levels of confidence in using appropriate mathematical vocabulary.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

69. Children start school with a broadly average range of experiences, in this area of learning. Staff plan interesting opportunities for them to find out and talk about the world in which they live, and as a result, children make good progress and exceed the early learning goals by the end of the Foundation Stage.

70. Children talk confidently about their families and past and present events in their lives. They have a good awareness of where they live and can discuss their route to school. All children explore living things by studying plants and animals. They find out about changes to materials and experience the effects of heat on ice and chocolate.

71. The teacher and nursery nurse effectively organise opportunities for children to learn about their own and other cultures and beliefs through discussing multicultural books and videos and visiting local places of worship. Their knowledge of places is extended as they locate places that Barnaby Bear might have visited on holiday.

72. Children use the computer confidently and are given very good opportunities, through the use of information and communication technology to develop skills across the areas of learning, for example, a talking word processor to develop language and communication, vocabulary and writing; a paint program to develop early mark making; a telephone for speaking and listening; calculators, video, television and musical tapes to find things out. Children can select resources and use tools safely. They build imaginatively with bricks and have a good sense of how things join together. The quality of teaching in this area is very good because there is very good provision of stimulating, child centred activities which interest children.

Physical development

73. By the end of the Foundation Stage, most children meet the early learning goals. They move confidently with a good awareness of space and others. They show good control in their movements as they run and change direction safely. They are made fully aware of the need for safety and understand some of the effects of exercise on their bodies. Children listen well to instructions and respond quickly and enthusiastically. Well-timed and effective prompts from staff help children to refine their movements and as a result they demonstrate sound progress and increasing agility. Children are given regular opportunities to practise skills such as cutting and manipulating mouldable materials and as a result most are able to control their fingers and hands well.

74. The quality of teaching is very good. The staff have very good knowledge of how children develop and support them effectively. The main factor limiting children's physical development is the lack of access to an outside area suitably resourced with appropriate wheeled toys, large construction materials and climbing apparatus.

Creative development

75. In creative development children receive very good teaching, make good progress and many exceed the expected level by the end of the Foundation Stage. Children experiment with many different mediums such as pastels crayons, chalks, coloured pencils and paint. They make good observational drawings of their shoes and use thick paint very effectively to produce a colourful collage of "The Little Red Hen" as part of their harvest festival displays. In role-play they enjoy acting out parts and this helps them to improve their speaking and listening skills.

76. Many enjoy listening to sounds, can sing simple songs from memory well and play musical instruments enthusiastically. Many recognise sound patterns and match movements to music.

77. The quality of teaching is very good. The teacher provides a wide range of opportunities in art, craft, music, dance, story making and imaginative play providing the children with good opportunities to experiment and explore. Through very good detailed planning and high quality discussion she very successfully develops the children's use of descriptive language.

ENGLISH

78. In last year's tests for 7 year olds results were well above average in writing and above average in reading. Compared to similar schools, they were above average in writing and similar to the average in reading.

79. Test results have improved steadily and consistently over the past four years with standards above national expectation for the majority of pupils. There is no significant difference between the achievements of boys and girls. Although the school does not formally have to publish targets, they are set for pupils in English and are monitored regularly. Pupils make good progress towards these targets. Inspection findings show that current pupils make good progress in reading and writing overall. Learning is good for all pupils at both key stages, in all aspects of their work in English. Standards in reading are considerably supported by parents' involvement in reading with their children at home. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum.

80. Pupils enter the school with broadly average attainment. Throughout the school pupils make good progress in developing speaking and listening skills and standards across the school are above national expectations. All pupils become engrossed in stories, and infants respond thoughtfully and enthusiastically to questions. In Years 1 and 2, pupils enjoy reading "We're Going on a Bear Hunt" and enthusiastically identify unusual words in the story to describe sounds such as swishy, swashy, squelch, splish and splash. In an act of collective worship based on the "National Poetry Day" pupils from across the school recited poems such as "There Was an Old Woman", by Charles Causley, "The Lion", by Roald Dahl and "Daffodils", by William Wordsworth, very clearly with skilful variation of expression. Other pupils listened attentively throughout. Pupils across the school generally listen carefully. The teachers give pupils time to reflect and make considered responses. As a result, they speak clearly and organised in what they say well. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 use an increasingly sophisticated vocabulary and answer questions confidently. The teacher encourages them to give more expansive answers by using good, open-ended questions.

81. In Years 1 and 2 pupils enjoy reading and make good progress, the majority achieve well, including the talented pupils and those who are less able. Many pupils are becoming confident users of a wider range of strategies. For instance, younger pupils use pictures and letter sounds to help them read unfamiliar words in information texts, poems and stories. Older pupils understand the main points of stories and can identify characters. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 read competently and with expression and are able to talk about their preferences in fiction and information books. Standards of attainment in reading are above national expectations.

82. The less able pupils make good progress in reading and writing as a result of effective planning and the good support they receive. For instance, in Year 2, pupils were well supported by a learning support assistant when identifying rhyming words and a physically handicapped pupil was provided with an enlarged template to help her to complete her story writing. Talented pupils are often provided with extension activities to enhance their learning.

83. Throughout the school pupils are taught grammar and punctuation effectively and progress in writing is good. In Year 1 many pupils can compose simple sentences with full stops and capital letters and use dictionaries with increasing confidence to help them with their writing. In Year 2 pupils show that they are beginning to write for a range of different purposes, such as information writing about "Our Visit to Bekonscot Village". The writing of the more able is often organised well, for example, when writing extended imaginative stories, such as "The Toymaker". Pupils in Year 2 have begun to practise joined up writing in their handwriting books, but the generally good presentation found in these books is not always seen in other work.

84. In Years 3 and 4 standards of attainment in writing are above the national expectation. Pupils can write effectively in different forms, for example, in imaginative stories such as "The Big Fright" and stories and poems about Tabby, the cat who lives across the road from the school. They write lengthy, detailed accounts of "My Visit to Leighton Middle School" and of visits made to the London Planetarium and the National Portrait Gallery. Many pupils use commas, speech marks, paragraphs and tenses correctly, and their spelling is good. Handwriting is usually joined up and generally well presented. Standards in handwriting and presentation are inconsistent across the school. In some instances, teachers' marking lacks focus and pupils are not always clear about what they do well and how they might improve. Information and communication technology is generally used well to support work in English, having benefited from the work of the co-ordinator and the provision of a new computer suite.

85. Pupils have very good attitudes, work hard and respond well to teachers' questions. They work productively at a good pace and sustain concentration well. Their behaviour was consistently good in every lesson seen.

86. The National Literacy Strategy is having a positive effect upon pupils' progress and standards in English. The school has invested money in big books and multiple copies of books for classrooms. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 reported that they use the library regularly for English and subject work but pupils in Years 1 and 2 said they used it less frequently.

87. The quality of teaching in English is consistently very good. This has a strong impact on standards and makes a positive contribution to pupils' attainment and progress in literacy. Teachers are knowledgeable, confident and skilled in the subject. Work is well planned so that pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are systematically developed as they move through the school. Teachers ensure that pupils know what they are expected to learn and make effective links with what was covered previously. Assessment procedures are not always consistent throughout the school.

88. Pupils with special educational needs have appropriately detailed individual education plans, which are followed well and the pupils make good progress. Learning support assistants are an integral part of the "teaching team" and use their skills successfully to raise pupils' standards of attainment.

89. English is well managed by the co-ordinator. She has written a good action plan that sets out what she wants to achieve and measures her progress against targets. She has developed the scheme of work using national guidance material and is aware of the need for it to be fully refined to meet the needs of the school. She has a very good understanding of the standards of teaching and learning throughout the school. The co-ordinator effectively uses the analysis of pupils' achievements to set targets and measure improvement. Resources for English are good.

MATHEMATICS

90. National Curriculum assessments for pupils at the end of Year 2 in 2000 were close to the national average and below the average for pupils in similar schools. The small number of pupils and the number of pupils in each year group with special educational needs make trends in attainment unreliable from year to year. The trend over the last four years has been one of variation reflecting the different groups of pupils, and has been consistently above the national average.

91. Since the last inspection results indicate that standards have been improved and are good for the majority of pupils by the end of Year 2 and Year 4. This reflects the way teachers plan effectively for the range of ages and attainment in the class. Learning is very good for all pupils, including high attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, in all aspects of mathematics. The school has set clear targets for improvements in pupils' attainment which have been met well and has developed effective strategies linked to the National Numeracy Strategy, particularly in basic numeracy and mental mathematics, to help achieve these targets. Inspection findings show that the majority of pupils attain standards which are above the national expectation for their age.

92. By the end of Year 2, pupils are developing effective skills of mental calculation and count forwards and backwards in tens with confidence. They count in tens from any point on a 100 square grid and correctly identify odd and even numbers. They know how to double and halve numbers in their heads, such as "double 90" and "half of 180". They apply their knowledge of number very well when identifying the correct coins needed to make an exact amount of money. They are beginning to estimate numbers sensibly and explain their thinking clearly. High attaining pupils produce graphs accurately using the axes with confidence, for example, when recording the different types of transport used to travel on holiday.

93. In Year 1 pupils enjoy using mental methods to calculate different ways of making numbers to 10 using simple addition of two digit numbers. Younger pupils use number lines to order numbers correctly. They record their work accurately and write the numerals correctly. Pupils with special educational needs are supported appropriately as they calculate different ways of making 20, and record their calculations, for example "four lots of five" and "fifteen add five". They have a good knowledge of two-dimensional shapes such as circles, squares and rectangles.

94. By the end of Year 4 pupils' mental skills are well developed using addition, subtraction, multiplication and division when calculating problems in their heads. They identify the properties of two and three-dimensional shapes. High attaining pupils subtract decimals accurately to two decimal places. Pupils readily use their skills in other subjects, such as science and geography. They become confident in using fractions and simple percentages. Pupils compile data which they present in the form of different graphs, pie-charts and pictograms showing the different results from throwing dice and their favourite sports. From their graphs they calculate how many people took part in the survey

altogether and identify which is the most popular sport. Pupils apply their knowledge of multiplication to calculate problems and show their working out clearly. Different types of quadrilaterals are identified correctly and they use appropriate vocabulary such as vertices, face and line of symmetry. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported as they record their findings.

95. Progress in mathematics over time is good. Learning in lessons is very good, reflecting the positive impact of the recent decision to group pupils according to their previous achievement. Pupils are well motivated and suitably challenged by their tasks. Pupils' enthusiasm for mathematics is skilfully exploited by very lively questioning to keep pupils' attention. There is very good use of support assistants, tasks are demanding and lessons are fast paced and well balanced.

96. Work for pupils with special educational needs is planned to be similar to that undertaken by the rest of the class, but at appropriate levels of difficulty or complexity, so that their progress is maintained and their confidence enhanced. Some pupils with particular mathematical talents are given special attention and work to enable them to work successfully towards their potential. Higher attaining pupils are provided with extension work to challenge them, this helps to ensure they make good progress in relation to their previous learning. The pupils with special educational needs make good progress as a result of the good support they are given through the well devised and well managed individual education plans. Learning support assistants who provide the support are well informed and know when to provide direct help and when to encourage pupils to make the discovery for themselves.

97. Pupils' attitudes are very positive throughout the school. They enjoy mathematics, show interest and enthusiasm and work with considerable concentration. Pupils behave well. They pay close attention in discussions and listen well to each other and to their teachers. Pupils have high levels of concentration and are very well motivated by the strong sense of purpose transmitted in their lessons.

98. Teaching is very good. In the best lessons, teaching is exemplified by some outstanding features, including clear objectives, high expectations and careful attention to the needs of the different abilities, for example, by challenging and extending the more able pupils as seen in a lesson for pupils in Years 3 and 4. Pupils' attention is fully engaged and there is an insistence on good behaviour. There is very good management of pace and time, with lessons being conducted at a smart pace. Questioning skills are used very well to promote interest, to provoke thinking skills and to arouse all pupils' participation. Good, clear explanations are given followed by activities to allow pupils to consolidate and practise what they have learned. There are high expectations that pupils will succeed with the challenging work they are set. Sessions at the end of lessons are well managed and leave the pupils with a strong sense of achievement. Very effective use is made of discussions to share pupil's experiences and to review what they have learned. Teachers' marking is consistent and frequently includes useful advice to guide future learning and identify targets and reflects the good quality marking policy.

99. Throughout the school mathematics is woven into other subjects such as information and communication technology and geography as pupils use their skills to handle data and present it well through the use of computers. Pupils' literacy skills are being appropriately extended by a range of mathematical terms being used, for example, imaginative displays of vocabulary lists help to extend pupils' knowledge of the properties of different triangles such as scalene, isosceles and equilateral.

100. Teachers' assessment of pupils' learning is good. They analyse the results of tests and other forms of assessment and these are used in planning individual targets for the pupils to attain. These are shared with the pupils together with helpful comments as to what they need to do to improve further. The teachers have high expectations of their pupils which are appropriate to their previous learning. Homework includes learning number bonds to help with basic numeracy skills and plays an important part in their progress.

101. The successful co-ordination of the subject has had to take account of the considerable differences in numbers and distribution of year groups between classes. Their careful planning and skilful teaching applied consistently throughout the school. Resources and the accommodation are very good for mathematics. The National Numeracy Strategy is securely in place. Resources to support the initial part of numeracy lessons, mental warm-up and quick-fire sessions, are used effectively.

SCIENCE

102. Teacher assessments of 7 year olds last year showed pupils achieved above average standards in science. Inspection findings show that by the ages of 7 and 9, pupils achieve above average standards.

103. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have a good understanding of life processes, properties of materials and physical processes. For example, they know that electricity is a source of energy and they are able to relate life process to the animals and plants they find in the well developed environmental area in the school grounds. Their work on materials is good. They know how some materials are changed by heat and they explore words that describe the characteristics of different materials. There are good opportunities for investigations and experimentation. The quality of teaching and pupils learning is very good and shows improvement since the last inspection. Two very good lessons in Years 1 and 2 investigating pushing and pulling forces illustrated several features of very good teaching that extended pupils' learning very successfully.

104. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 work hard and build steadily on their previous science knowledge. They undertake a wide range of investigations, for example, they have investigated which of a series of materials, including flour, sugar, tealeaves and salt, will float, sink, dissolve or settle when water is added. They have a good understanding of the function of teeth and the heart's role as a pump to circulate blood around the lungs and the whole body through vessels. Some very good teaching was observed, which led to pupils having a very good understanding of resistance and gravity and how they work against each other. The pupils' use of correct terminology to describe forces was impressive. From the pupils' work it was clear that 9 year olds understand the importance of a fair test and can draw conclusions from the results of their experiments. Pupils benefit greatly from devising their own experiments and following up their own ideas through research activities.

105. In the lessons seen the teaching was very good. Teaching rightly places a strong emphasis on pupils undertaking experiments and investigations to find things out. This is developing their scientific vocabulary and improving their enquiry skills and their ability to record efficiently what they have found. Teachers establish positive working relationships with pupils in the class. They take the opportunity to emphasise important principles such as the idea of fair testing and the use of prediction in supporting scientific enquiry.

Teachers use a wide range of recording techniques such as descriptive writing, diagrams and charts to record and display work.

106. Throughout the school pupils have very good attitudes towards science. They are well motivated and keen to learn. Pupils across the school work well together and adopt safe practices when using and handling equipment and resources.

107. Lessons are based on the nationally recommended scheme of work, which has yet to be refined to meet the needs of the school. The newly appointed co-ordinator has identified science as a whole school development priority in the School Improvement Plan. Resources for science are satisfactory.

ART AND DESIGN

108. The last time the school was inspected standards in art and design were average overall. Since then attainment has improved to be above what you would typically see from pupils aged 7 and 9.

109. No lessons in art and design were observed in Years 3 and 4. The judgement that the pupils' attainment is above average is mainly based on evidence from teachers' planning, pupils' work, including that on display, and discussions with teachers and pupils.

110. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 enjoy exploring a range of materials and media. They know how to mix colours to produce various tones and shades and can use tools safely. They develop skills and techniques such as observational drawing. They make detailed sketches of shoes and demonstrate a good level of observation in their work, especially when drawing plans and colouring pictures of the newly developed environmental area. Pupils collaborate effectively to make a colourful frieze of animals based on the story of the Little Red Hen and baskets of fruit for the harvest festival. A very good lesson was observed based on being able to record from imagination and experience. Pupils produced impressive pictures using a variety of images from magazines.

111. In Years 3 and 4 pupils build on the positive experiences they have had in previous classes and undertake work in a wide range of media successfully. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of other artists' work and apply particular skills and techniques to their own work. For example, they show good observational skills and brush control in their watercolours based on "Vase of Sweetpeas" by Raoul Dufy. Pupils investigate the work of Mondrian and then apply and interpret the artists' techniques using computers. The clay work, paintings and drawings are of a high quality.

112. Across the school pupils use sketchbooks well to record, refine and develop their ideas, particularly when drawing. Information and communication technology is being used well to draw or create images or to undertake research in the subject.

113. The teaching of art and design is very effective throughout the school. It motivates and stimulates the pupils, who apply themselves well and show much interest in the work. They work hard and with care, taking pride in what they do. Teachers are good at giving pupils plenty of opportunity to work with a variety of media, tools and techniques to communicate their ideas and feelings. For example, a clay teapot, made by a local artist, was borrowed from the art loan service. Pupils looked at it carefully, wrote about it, drew detailed pictures and then made their own pots and teapots from clay and painted them

bright colours. Pupils of all ages apply themselves very well to the range of experiences on offer and produce work of a good quality.

114. There is effective leadership and management of the subject. The co-ordinator's skills are used to good effect in classes other than her own and this is contributing to the good work seen. The scheme of work provides an appropriate balance between the teaching of skills and techniques and the opportunity for pupils to explore various media, but has to be fully refined to meet the needs of the school. The staff have worked hard to create good quality displays around the school. These attractive and stimulating displays make a significant contribution to the quality of the learning environment and ensure that the pupils know their work is valued. Resources are good.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

115. The judgement of the previous report was that standards in design and technology would be improved by the provision of detailed written guidance to ensure full coverage of all the required elements of the subject. Some guidance was provided by the previous co-ordinator who subsequently had a period of extended absence. This resulted in the guidance not being fully implemented.

116. It was not possible to observe any lessons in design and technology in Years 1 and 2 during the inspection. The subject had previously been taught in Years 1 and 2 by a supply teacher. It is not possible, therefore, to make a judgement of standards by the end of Year 2. Only one lesson was observed in Years 3 and 4. Evidence of pupils' attainment and progress in Years 3 and 4 is derived from discussion with teachers and pupils, available work, photographs and teachers' planning. Pupils reach at least satisfactory standards of attainment in design and technology by the end of Year 4. Learning is good when pupils gain skills, knowledge and understanding at a good rate by designing, making and evaluating their work.

117. Older pupils understand good principles of design and technology. Pupils build on this work by learning more about mechanisms that make things move and how to join materials together. The oldest pupils use their knowledge effectively to create free standing photo frames and a variety of money containers. Their understanding of how to plan a design or follow a brief to create something that fulfils a purpose is good. For example, when designing their photo frames, pupils were fully aware of the need to think about a space for the photograph. Pupils create and refine ideas well and show confidence and skill in handling materials.

118. Pupils show very positive attitudes towards their work. They are enthusiastic and involved in their tasks. They enjoy the practical activities. In discussing work done previously pupils have clear ideas about the purpose of the work and show good understanding of the design process.

119. Teaching in the lesson observed was very good. The teacher's instructions were clear about how ideas, plans or models would be judged to be successful. The pupils were well motivated to produce well finished products. She gave the pupils plenty of opportunities to discuss their work. Resources needed were prepared carefully and practical tasks were conducted with due regard to hygiene and safety.

120. Lessons are based on the nationally recommended scheme of work which has yet to be refined to meet the needs of the school. The newly appointed co-ordinator is aware of the need for further resources.

GEOGRAPHY

121. Standards in geography are good in Years 1 and 2 and very good for pupils in Years 3 and 4. All pupils, including gifted pupils and those with special needs, make at least good progress. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection for pupils in Years 1 and 2 and have improved for pupils in Years 3 and 4.

122. By the end of Year 2, pupils understand the difference between coastal locations and the countryside. They know that maps and atlases provide information about different parts of the country and they enjoy locating different countries using a globe. They learn about the times when most plants and flowers start to grow. They learn about people who help others. They walk around their locality and study the surrounding area and start to learn about their own community in relation to others, including the nearby town of Leighton Buzzard and a Scottish island. By the end of Year 2 pupils start to use appropriate geographical vocabulary.

123. By the end of Year 4, they are able to label the names of various countries throughout the world and those that make up the United Kingdom. Pupils carefully record their study of different localities, including a study of the contrast between hot and cold countries in their studies of India and Iceland. They confidently locate the main rivers such as the Trent, Severn, Thames, Forth and Clyde on outlines of the United Kingdom and are also able to identify the upland areas. Pupils are able to identify features on an Ordnance Survey map and understand geographical vocabulary such as physical and human geography.

124. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and very good progress in Years 3 and 4. Mathematical and information and communication technology skills are used effectively. Pupils respond well, showing interest in the subject and they sustain concentration and work well both independently and co-operatively. They are keen to contribute to discussions and develop speaking and listening skills to good effect in oral work.

125. The quality of teaching is very good. The teachers have a good knowledge of the subject. The enthusiastic approach of the Year 3 and 4 teacher has a good impact on the pupils' learning. The use of challenging questioning and productive pace ensured that pupils gain knowledge and develop their geographical skills. The pupils work in groups and this promotes the personal development of the pupils. Pupils are enthusiastic and concentrate well on the tasks set.

126. The policy and scheme of work has not been updated recently to reflect the good work undertaken throughout the school. New national guidelines are being used satisfactorily to ensure that the pupils receive a balanced programme of study. Resources are appropriate in number and include a wide variety of atlases and globes, which are used well to support the teaching. A particular strength is the way in which the local environment is used to promote pupils learning.

HISTORY

127. Standards of achievement and progress are good for pupils in Years 1 and 2 and very good for pupils in Years 3 and 4. This is an improvement for pupils in Years 3 and 4 since the last inspection when standards in both key stages were judged to be good.

128. In Years 1 and 2 pupils learn to recognise primary sources of historical knowledge. They begin to understand that there are different ways to find out about the past and use books and artefacts to find out more about the event or custom they are studying.

129. By the end of Year 2 pupils have a good understanding of some aspects of the past and knowledge of the life and customs of long ago. Much of the knowledge they gain is linked to topics they study. Pupils understand the difference between the past and the present, for example, they have compared the celebration of Christmas 100 years ago with today and how people spent their holidays 100 years ago and today. They also know that life was very different long ago and, for instance, have an appropriate understanding of how difficult it was to travel long distances in the past before modern forms of travel were invented. They also have a sound understanding of famous people in the past, such as Guy Fawkes. They are constantly developing skills and the older pupils can distinguish between the recent and the distant past and are able to sequence and put items and events in chronological order.

130. In Years 3 and 4, pupils' books contain some very good original writing. Their extended writing and use of a wide vocabulary shows very good knowledge, understanding and imagination. Their work is often well illustrated. Pupils' written work makes a significant contribution to their literacy progress. Pupils undertake independent research well, using books or information and communication technology. By the end of Year 4, pupils know that the Romans came from Italy. They understand that they were responsible for creating many straight roads and talk about the features which made the site of Rome a good place to build a capital for the Roman Empire.

131. Pupils are interested in history. In discussion, they eagerly contribute information that they have discovered. Older pupils talk knowledgeably about past times and offer opinions and ideas about the differences between then and now. In discussion, they showed good recall of information. Pupils maintain concentration and their behaviour is good.

132. The quality of teaching is very good and benefits from the knowledge and enthusiasm of the co-ordinator. Lessons are designed and planned to interest pupils and provide them with stimulating activities. The teachers show good knowledge and understanding of the subject and are clear about what they want their pupils to learn. The tasks they provide are carefully thought out and are suitable for the range of abilities in the class. Teachers use artefacts well to stimulate enthusiasm in the subject. Teachers' careful planning links the history curriculum well with other subjects, such as art and design and music. The enthusiasm that the teachers show and their skill in asking questions has a positive impact on the pupils' desire to learn and the quality of the work which they produce.

133. The policy document has not been reviewed lately but good use is being made of new national guidelines, which ensure that the pupils gain a balanced programme of study. Art and design is used well to promote the subject and class books contain many good quality sketches of features such as Roman life and of different buildings to show how

styles have changed over time. The subject is well resourced and benefits from a good range of visits to places such as the Roman site of Verulamium.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

134. The school has successfully developed its provision for the subject and kept pace with national developments in information and communication technology and the standards attained by the pupils by the end of Year 2 and Year 4 are above national expectations. This reflects a significant improvement since the previous inspection.

135. Pupils are making very good progress through very good use of the new computer suite and there is regular access and use in several areas of the curriculum, including English, mathematics, history, geography and art and design. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress as they are supported well by the learning support assistants. The improved accessibility of computers provides all pupils with opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and understanding in the use of computers. Teachers have undergone in-service training to improve their subject knowledge and their own skills in information and communication technology. There is very good documentation to support teachers' planning. All these improvements have had an impact upon standards.

136. In Years 1 and 2 pupils recognise that many everyday devices respond to signals and commands and that they can select options when using devices to produce different outcomes. Pupils use information and communication technology to assemble text. They understand the use of the computer to word process text. They know how to use the arrow and delete keys and print the text they have written on the screen. Pupils retrieve and store their work confidently. They use the mouse and the keyboard with skill and have learnt how to operate the printer. Pupils are adept at word processing and know the meaning of "font". They use capital letters and punctuate their work. Pupils learn to master the technique of clicking and dragging the mouse and are learning the first steps in importing graphics. They use the computer to sort and classify information and to present their findings.

137. In Years 3 and 4 pupils use information and communication technology to generate, amend and present ideas. For instance, they design a newspaper article, creating text frames and composing appropriate fonts for the headlines. They are beginning to choose suitable font sizes for headlines and understand how to import graphics from the main bank. By the end of Year 4 pupils use information and communication technology to combine different forms of information. They use graphic images to complement text and show an awareness of audience. Pupils confidently use a wide specific vocabulary, for example "minimise", "menu", "scroll", "cut and paste" and "edit". They are confident in using their skills in information and communication technology in importing graphics. Pupils benefit from intensive sessions using information and communication technology to use graphics and text effectively using a format of columns and titles. This provides a strong link with literacy. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress, reflecting the effective support by non-teaching staff and the good quality resources available to them.

138. Pupils' learning is very good across the school. They have good opportunities to search for and retrieve information, to handle data or to control a range of equipment. They develop skills in word processing. Pupils use information and communication technology in other subjects when they use a range of software, for example, to practice

mathematical skills. Pupils, including talented pupils, make very good progress throughout the school. This reflects the impact of the co-ordinator who has good expertise and knowledge in the subject which she shares with colleagues.

139. Attitudes in information and communication technology lessons are very good. Pupils enjoy their work, concentrate well and handle the resources with due respect and care. They are very keen and interested and there is a strong sense of wanting to succeed. Pupils work together well in pairs, taking turns. The pupils take pride in their work, which is completed well, and are proud to talk about what they have done. Their behaviour while working on the computer is good and they handle equipment properly and carefully. Pupils competence in the subject is regularly assessed and they are kept aware of what they need to do to make progress. This information is used in setting targets for groups and individuals.

140. Teaching is very good as there are clear objectives, very good behaviour management and lessons are conducted at a crisp pace. Teachers have good subject knowledge of word processing and graphics and use technical vocabulary to good effect, for example, "import", "edit" and "click and drag". Teachers organise their lessons effectively with a good balance between whole-class discussion, individual support and group work. Whenever possible, teachers deploy other adults well, for example, a voluntary helper assisted a group as they practised using an art program to draw their own pictures. Teachers develop literacy and numeracy skills effectively as they provide opportunities for pupils to use the computers in other subjects, for example, in drafting stories using a word processing program, importing graphics, or compiling a database. Higher attaining pupils are confident and successful in the use of several icons to choose different fonts in varied styles. Teachers are adept at assessing pupils' achievement through day-to-day observation or by careful questioning.

141. There is a suitable policy and scheme of work based on national guidance materials which provides clear guidance on coverage of the aspects of information and communication technology. This has yet to be refined to fully reflect the very good work taking place in the school. There is clear identification of the use of information and communication technology skills in different areas of the curriculum. There is a good number of computers.

MUSIC

142. By the time they reach the end of Year 2 and Year 4 pupils are achieving standards which are above those generally found in other schools. The youngest pupils are introduced to music by singing songs from memory. They are learning to control the sounds of their voices as well as a variety of untuned instruments with which they accompany the singing. In a Year 1 and 2 music lesson the pupils enjoy dramatising their singing with actions. They build their knowledge of rhythm and can introduce different speeds or volume into their work. Their singing is tuneful and enthusiastic. They learn an appropriate variety of songs. In one very good lesson in Year 1, the high quality of the teaching enabled the pupils to make good progress in learning the song entitled "My Favourite Colour".

143. In Years 3 and 4 pupils learn about rhythm, compose simple tunes, write and follow musical notation and co-operate well in composing and performing. They compose a series of suitable tunes to compliment Vivaldi's "Autumn" from "The Four Seasons". By the

end of Year 4 pupils have made good progress in understanding musical terms. They explore and express their own feelings about music through movement, dance, expressive language and musical vocabulary. All pupils, including those who are talented and those with special educational needs, have full access to the music curriculum. In the lessons observed teaching and learning was very good. The progress of pupils is enhanced by opportunities to take part in public performances and concerts.

144. Some pupils learn to play instruments such as violin and flute. They are enthusiastic and reach sound, and sometimes good, standards. All pupils in Years 3 and 4 are given the opportunity to play the recorder. They play tunefully and learn appropriate skills well.

145. Music is used in a variety of ways in the day-to-day life of the school. Music is often used in assemblies and pupils are told about composers and their lives, such as Johan Strauss. The singing in assemblies is of a high quality. All pupils join in enthusiastically and the harvest festival was a most enjoyable experience. Pupils have been involved in a variety of musical activities such as the Inter-Schools Singing Festival and Carol Concert and singing for the elderly at the local residential home.

146. Pupils show very good responses in musical activities. They collaborate very well together when they work on group compositions. They behave well, sharing instruments and working sensibly when playing or composing. Pupils show confidence and persistence in their music lessons, trying hard to achieve pleasing results. This was particularly evident in a Year 3 and 4 lesson to learn "Now the Summer's Over" and "Look for the Signs that Summer's Done", where pupils were keen to enter fully in the lesson with enthusiasm, concentration and application.

147. The quality of teaching across the school is very good. Teachers plan lessons carefully. Activities are very well organised, learning outcomes are clear and the pace is good. Teachers have high expectations both about the standards they want pupils to achieve and their behaviour, for example, when using instruments.

148. The co-ordinator has a clear sense of direction of the subject. Due to the reorganisation of the curriculum she no longer teaches music throughout the school. In order to develop teachers' expertise she has introduced a commercial scheme of work for guidance and support. Resources are appropriate, readily accessible to pupils and carefully stored.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

149. Pupils make good progress in physical education, achieving at least satisfactory standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 4. These standards are similar to those described in the last report. During the inspection a limited range of activities were seen. Plans indicate that through the course of the year there is a good range of activities provided.

150. In Years 1 and 2 pupils develop appropriate understanding of different ways in which they can travel across, on and below apparatus. Older pupils can link a series of movements into simple sequences. In the lesson seen in Years 1 and 2, pupils made good progress in developing their ball skills. They showed good co-ordination when throwing and catching. They worked well as partners. Teachers

encourage the pupils to observe each other at work and point out good practice and good examples of movement and technique. Pupils describe what they and others have done and are able to make simple judgements. By the end of Year 2 they have acquired appropriate balance and control of their movements. They know why the body needs exercise and are aware of the need to warm up before exertion and to cool down afterwards.

151. In Years 3 and 4, pupils continue to develop their performance, considering balance, shape, height and speed. Most understand the need to warm up before developing their sequence of movements. Pupils develop ability to perform a set of movements with appropriate skill and control. They respond quickly to instructions and have a well developed awareness of safety. Pupils have a good understanding of the purpose and importance of aerobic exercise for a healthy lifestyle.

152. Attitudes to physical education are good. Most pupils are keen to take part in all the activities. They listen to instructions well and try hard to improve their own performances. Pupils' personal development is good as they learn to control their own bodies. They appreciate each other's performances and co-operate well in pairs or small teams. Behaviour is good in lessons with pupils responding well when teachers use praise. Pupils all change quickly without wasting time. Pupils with special educational needs respond well in lessons. The learning support assistant has a very good understanding of their physical limitations and uses encouragement very effectively which motivates the pupils to try harder.

153. Teaching is very good. Teachers use resources effectively to develop skills. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. They speak firmly but sensitively to individuals and explain clearly what they expect of the pupil. Teachers' subject knowledge is good which leads to clear explanation of tasks and appropriate use of language. Planning is clear and based carefully on the schemes of work to ensure that skills are steadily developed. Tasks are well balanced in lessons to ensure that pupils build on the previous tasks. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and of the pace at which they carry out the tasks. Teachers all use demonstration effectively to celebrate good work and to share in different ideas. They all give clear demonstrations themselves. Teachers make good use of opportunities for pupils to develop critical skills of commenting on each other's performance. All teachers use praise effectively to encourage pupils to try harder.

154. The policy and scheme for physical education clearly outlines the curriculum and organisation to ensure there is full coverage of the programmes of study. Resources are satisfactory in range and quality. Standards in swimming benefit from weekly sessions for older pupils during the summer term.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

155. Pupils' standards in religious education by the end of Year 2 and Year 4 are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Progress in learning is good. This is similar to the findings of the last inspection

156. Pupils, by the end of Year 2, know a range of stories from the Bible. They retell the story of Noah in their own words and learn about different parables and miracles. Pupils have reflected on the stories that Jesus told and have made good progress in their

personal and social education in developing an awareness of self, the community of the school and the wider locality. Pupils know about the life of Jesus and how this forms the basis of the main Christian festivals such as Easter, harvest and Christmas. They are given sound opportunities to learn about the importance of Ramadan to the Islamic faith and the festival of Eid ul-Fitr. They know that there are stories about families in some of the Holy Books and listen to the story of The Prodigal Son. As a result of making visits to the local church they know what the various parts of the building are used for and what they are called. Throughout Years 1 and 2 pupils gain knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other faiths including Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam. They recognise that there are special times in everyone's life and become more aware of the beauty of the environment as they learn about the Creation.

157. By the end of Year 4, pupils recognise that there are similarities and differences in a range of world faiths. They have a sound knowledge of the principal festivals of the Christian year and know that Lent and Good Friday lead to Easter Day. Their knowledge of the Christian faith and Bible stories is good. Throughout Years 3 and 4 pupils become more aware of the teachings of Jesus and the relevance of the parables and miracles. As they study other religions, pupils gain a deeper understanding of Sikh and Hindu traditions. They become more aware of the importance of religion in many people's lives. Pupils know that religions have their own special holy books, places of worship and festivals. At both key stages, all pupils, including talented pupils and those who have special educational needs, make good progress in their understanding.

158. Pupils are genuinely interested in learning about religion and are eager to display knowledge and express their ideas and feelings. In shared discussion time they willingly share their views and show empathy for others. Religious education makes a very important contribution to the good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It provides insights into the spiritual values of Christianity and the other religions studied in ways that enable the pupils to relate them to their own lives. In the sensitive attention paid to the beliefs and practices of religious believers the pupils are able to develop the ability to think about and discuss important matters of belief with courtesy and sympathy. This contributes also to the accepting and encouraging atmosphere of the school.

159. The teaching of religious education is good throughout the school. The teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject and recognise how pupils of various ages and stages of development learn about religion. They are sensitive in their approach to their pupils' feeling and beliefs and this acts as a good model for the pupils' own behaviour in this respect. The teachers are careful to develop the specialist vocabularies that are appropriate to the religions studied and this gives an accuracy and fluency to the pupils' discussions.

160. Through their careful planning the teachers demonstrate a good understanding of the subject. They make effective use of a satisfactory range of resources, which include religious artefacts from faiths other than Christianity. The agreed syllabus gives good guidance as to what should be taught.