

# INSPECTION REPORT

**NORTHCHURCH ST. MARY'S C.E. (AIDED) FIRST  
SCHOOL**

Northchurch, Berkhamsted

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number:117424

Headteacher: Mrs Mary Peacock

Reporting inspector: Mr Douglas Hayward  
21234

Dates of inspection: 12<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> June 2000

Inspection number: 193895

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	First School
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 – 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	New Road Northchurch Berkhamsted Hertfordshire
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Reverend Peter Hart
Date of previous inspection:	October 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Douglas Hayward	Registered inspector	Mathematics Science Information technology Art Special educational needs English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught?
Christine Laverock	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? Equal opportunities
Gail Robertson	Team inspector	Areas of learning for children under five Geography History Physical education	How well is the school led and managed?
Richard Evans	Team inspector	English Design and technology Music	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**

Northchurch St. Mary's First School is a small school for pupils from five to nine years of age. It is situated in the village of Northchurch, very near the town of Berkhamsted in Hertfordshire. Following their ninth birthday, pupils transfer to one of the nearby middle schools and later to an upper school. The school occupies an attractive and spacious site adjacent to the River Bulbourne and the Grand Union Canal. It occupies the original Victorian building, as well as extensions that were added in the 1960s to provide a hall, new classrooms and administration offices. The school enjoys close links with St. Mary's Church and pupils regularly attend special services there.

There are 168 pupils on roll, including 34 attending the nursery on a part-time basis. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (five per cent) is lower than the national average. The percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language is low. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is well below the national average. The attainment of children on entry to the school is generally above that in most schools in Hertfordshire. Children start in the nursery class at the beginning of the term in which they have their fourth birthday. The nursery operates for mornings only. During the inspection there were 30 children attending the nursery, all of whom were under five, and 12 pupils under five were in the reception class.

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

**Northchurch St. Mary's is a good school. Its pupils do very well in national tests at the age of seven and they make good progress. They attain high standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave at nine years of age. The school has strong links with parents, it is well managed and it provides good value for money.**

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

- It helps pupils to achieve results that are well above average in national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 and when they leave school at nine years of age.
- Teaching is good overall, and is often very good or excellent. Teachers are hardworking and have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They plan work carefully for their pupils and give them lots of help and encouragement.
- The school teaches a broad range of interesting subjects. There are good links between many subjects, such as English and information technology.
- The school creates an environment that pupils enjoy and in which they eagerly take part.
- It helps children under five to make a very good start to their schooling and to achieve high standards.
- It helps pupils with special educational needs to make good progress. The more able pupils achieve very high standards.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher, well supported by the governors, provide good leadership for the school.
- It forms very strong links with parents and provides them with very good information. Parents support the work of the school very effectively.

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

- The quality of individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs.
- The consistency and quality of teachers' marking.
- The part subject co-ordinators play in monitoring teaching.
- The level of supervision for pupils at lunchtimes.

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

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

The school was last inspected in October 1996. Standards for children under five were satisfactory then and they have improved considerably. Standards in English and mathematics were in line with the national average in 1996 and they are well above average now. The high standards in science in the previous inspection have been maintained. Pupils' standards of work in information technology show tremendous improvement because of the school's hard work. Pupils with special educational needs continue to make good progress. The previous report found that work for more able pupils was not always challenging enough and the school has worked hard and successfully to correct this. Pupils' attitudes to school are now very good. Their behaviour and their attendance have been maintained at the previous

good levels. The quality of teaching has improved considerably. The percentage of very good and excellent lessons has almost quadrupled. The school has successfully addressed all the key issues in the previous report. The quality of leadership is still good and the school continues to provide good value for money.

## STANDARDS

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

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

During the inspection it was judged that standards of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics are well above the national average at the end of Key Stage 1. The difference between these judgements and pupils' results in national tests in reading last year is because this is a different group of pupils. It is also as a result of the impact of the National Literacy Strategy and the school's good work to improve the results of more able pupils. The reason that pupils' results in reading were below average last year, in comparison with those in similar schools, was because not many pupils managed to achieve the higher Level 3 in the reading tests. In this year's tests in reading, writing and mathematics the percentage of pupils attaining Level 3 in all three subjects has improved considerably; for example, in reading it has improved from 23 per cent to 35 per cent. Pupils at the end of Year 4 also attain high standards in English, mathematics and science and make good progress.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are very keen to come to school. They are interested in their work and take part in all activities. They answer questions eagerly and settle quickly to their written work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils are polite to each other and to adults and are well behaved in lessons and around the school. Almost all parents think that pupils' behaviour is good in school and on educational visits.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils relate well to each other and to adults. They show initiative around the school and work together well in lessons.
Attendance	Attendance is much better than the national average for primary schools. Punctuality is very good.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Forty-one lessons were observed. Teaching was at least satisfactory in almost all lessons. It is at least good in almost seven out of every ten lessons and very good and often excellent in four out of every ten lessons. Very good and excellent lessons were seen throughout the school. This is high quality teaching. In the very small number of unsatisfactory lessons the pace was slow. Teachers have high expectations and their teaching of basic skills in English and mathematics is very good. They make clear at the beginning of lessons what they expect pupils to learn, so that their teaching is to the point and no time is wasted. Teachers make very good provision for pupils with special educational needs and for the more able.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Children learn about a wide range of interesting subjects; for example, as well as the usual subjects such as English and mathematics, they learn a great deal about how to use computers well. They also have good opportunities to study life in past times and in other countries.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Teachers and classroom assistants provide very good levels of help. The targets in pupils' individual education plans are not always clear enough and it is difficult to know whether pupils have achieved them.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school makes good provision for the very few pupils with English as an additional language.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. The school encourages the expression of pupils' individual emotions and feelings, especially through their writing in English and in art. Pupils work well together and follow the classroom and school rules that they helped to devise. Residential visits help with pupils' social development. There is insufficient attention given to the study of cultures other than pupils' own.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Staff know pupils well and support them in their learning. Teachers and classroom assistants take good care of them. The school works in close partnership with parents. Due to the nature of the school site there are times when the current numbers of lunchtime staff make it difficult to ensure that all pupils can be supervised adequately. Teachers are very good at finding out what pupils know, understand and can do and then using that information to plan future work.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	There is clear educational direction for the work of the school. The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide good leadership and have brought about many improvements to the school since the last inspection. All staff provide good support.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are knowledgeable, enthusiastic, supportive and involved in all aspects of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school looks very carefully for ways to improve the quality of education it provides. It has used the results of national tests and assessments very well in order to improve pupils' results.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses its budget well to provide a good education. It plans well for the future. Pupils benefit from a range of good resources. Staff training is regular and effective. All these initiatives have a positive impact on pupils' learning.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children are happy at school and make good progress.</li> <li>• They feel that teaching is good and that teachers have high expectations.</li> <li>• They feel that the school achieves good standards of behaviour.</li> <li>• They feel that teachers are approachable and they are confident the school will listen to their ideas and suggestions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More information about their children's progress.</li> <li>• A wider range of after-school activities.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views. The information that the school gives to parents about their children's progress is very good overall, although targets for improvement in their annual reports are sometimes too general. There is excellent daily informal contact with nursery parents and carers.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

##### **Children under five**

1. On entry into the nursery most children attain at, or slightly above, the level expected nationally for children at this age. Children have well-developed literacy, numeracy and social skills. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1, and by the time pupils leave, indicate that the school works hard to consolidate what children already know when they start in the nursery and extends their knowledge and understanding.
2. Children under five make good progress. All children benefit from caring and supportive teachers and classroom support assistants and from their well-planned lessons and activities. By the time they are five their attainment in all areas of learning, namely language and literacy, personal development, social development, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development, is at least in line with, and in many cases above, average.

##### **Key Stage 1 (5 – 7 years)**

3. The results of the 1999 tests and assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 show that the percentage of pupils reaching Level 2<sup>1</sup> and above, in comparison with the national average, was very high in reading and science, well above average in writing and above average in mathematics. The percentage of pupils attaining Level 3 was well above average in writing, above average in mathematics and science and average in reading. During the inspection, standards at the end of Key Stage 1 were judged to be well above average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. The differences regarding attainment are because this is a different group of pupils and because of the impact of the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies. In the previous report standards at the end of Key Stage 1 were judged to be above the national average.
4. Taking the four years 1996 to 1999 together, the performance at the end of Key Stage 1 was well above the national average in writing. In reading it was above average and in mathematics it was average. During the same four years the performance of boys was slightly better than that of girls in reading and mathematics, but there was no significant difference in lessons or in work seen during the inspection. The overall trend in writing has been upwards since 1996. In reading and mathematics the trend has been upward since 1998.
5. This improving trend has been maintained in the current year's tests and assessments. The results show that in the reading tests 97 per cent of pupils attained Level 2 or above. This percentage is almost the same as in 1999, but the significant difference this year is the increase in the percentage of pupils who attained Level 3 (35 per cent) compared with last year (23 per cent). In writing, almost the same percentage (95 per cent) attained Level 2 as in 1999 (97 per cent) and there was a very slight increase in the percentage of pupils attaining Level 3, from 26 per cent to 29 per cent. In mathematics, 97 per cent of pupils attained Level 2 or above, compared with 94 per cent last year. There was a significant increase in the percentage of pupils attaining Level 3 this year (40 per cent compared with 29 per cent last year). In science, 100 per cent of pupils attained Level 2

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<sup>1</sup> Levels – by the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are expected to attain Level 2 in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Those who achieve Level 3 are, therefore, attaining above nationally expected levels.

or better this year, the same as in 1999. Once again there was an increase, from 29 per cent to 35 per cent, in the percentage of pupils attaining Level 3.

6. In comparison with those in similar schools, results at St. Mary's in 1999 were well above average in writing, above average in mathematics, but below average in reading. This is because the percentage of pupils attaining Level 3 in reading was comparatively low. The school has recognised that this was the case and has worked hard and successfully to improve results for more able pupils. It has purchased new reading books, including group readers for them to read, that have provided pupils with greater interest and motivation. The impact of the National Literacy Strategy is also beginning to tell on the pupils' results. The only area that is underdeveloped in pupils' higher literacy skills is their ability to retrieve reference books from the school library using the Dewey Index.
7. In the foundation subjects, pupils in Key Stage 1 make good progress in art, geography, history and physical education. They make sound progress in design and technology and music.

### **Key Stage 2 (Year 3 and Year 4)**

8. By the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 4, standards in English, mathematics and science are well above those expected nationally. Pupils are maintaining the high standards that are evident at the end of Key Stage 1.
9. National tests are not compulsory at the end of Year 4, but most primary schools in England now administer them. They provide the schools with information about the standards pupils are attaining in comparison with other pupils of the same age, as pupils at this age should achieve the 'average' Level 3. They also help schools to analyse the progress that pupils have made since the end of Key Stage 1 and help them to predict results in two year's time at the end of Key Stage 2.
10. At St. Mary's, 83 per cent of pupils attained Level 3 or better in reading and of those 45 per cent attained Level 4. This is a significant percentage of pupils attaining the level expected of them in two years time. In writing, 80 per cent of pupils attained Level 3 or above, and of those 31 per cent attained Level 4. In mathematics, 83 per cent attained Level 3 or above, and of those 54 per cent attained Level 4. These are significant results for the school, particularly in view of the particular group of pupils that have achieved them. In 1998, when the pupils currently in Year 4 took national tests at the end of Key Stage 1, the school's results at Level 2 and above in reading, writing and mathematics were the lowest achieved in the period 1996 to 1999. The fact that such large percentages of pupils have achieved Level 4 two years later indicates a significant improvement by those pupils in their performance.
11. In the foundation subjects, by the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 4, they make good progress in art, geography and history. They make sound progress in design and technology, music and physical education.

### **Across the school**

12. The school has set up various strategies to help speed up pupils' progress and improve their results at the end of both key stages. They are also intended to improve the accuracy of their predicted targets for the percentage of pupils attaining results in line with, and higher than, the national average at the age of seven. To do this it uses a number of assessments to form a view of the ability of each group of pupils and to monitor their progress as they move through the school. Some of the assessments, such as those carried out in the nursery and reception class, are carried out under the

auspices of the local authority and suggest how well pupils might do in future. Many schools now refer to this eventual progress, in relation to what they could do when they enter school, as 'value added'. It indicates how influential the school has been in furthering the pupils' progress.

13. One area in which the school has been particularly successful recently in 'value added' education has been in its provision for more able pupils. One of the key issues in the previous report was to ensure that work was sufficiently challenging for more able pupils. Apart from the percentage of pupils attaining Level 3 in reading in 1999, the percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 was above average in mathematics and science and well above average in writing. Although there are, as yet, no national results against which comparisons can be drawn, the percentage of pupils attaining Level 3 in this year's tests has increased, and in reading and mathematics it has increased significantly. Similarly, over a third of pupils attained Level 4 in this year's non-statutory tests at the end of Year 4 in reading and writing and over half the pupils achieved that level in mathematics.
14. The standards attained in literacy by pupils in Year 2 and in Year 4 are well above average. The school's methods for implementing the National Literacy Strategy have been very effective in raising standards at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time pupils leave school. The shared planning that teachers have undertaken since the introduction of the Literacy Hour have been complemented by thorough observations carried out by the headteacher and the English subject co-ordinator. This monitoring aspect of the school's work has also been carried out in numeracy and is soon to be extended into other subjects.
15. Pupils' standards in literacy are very good. Their literacy skills are clearly apparent when they read for pleasure. This is evident when pupils in the reception class use a shared tape to follow a story. It is equally apparent when pupils in Year 4 talk knowledgeably about their much more difficult shared reading books and describe how, *'The author tells you how the boy feels deeply about Goldie and how his grandad is hurt by his loss.'* Their improving literacy skills are also clear in the development of their written work and the progress they make in presentation, handwriting, spelling and style, even in a short time. For example, one child in the nursery, basing her writing on a 'Puddles' poem by E.J.M. Woodland, wrote in her first term, *'I am jmpgin in the pdls'*. Another pupil of similar ability wrote a term later, in response to the poem 'Elmer' by David McKee, *'Elmer is a patchwork elephant and he is difrent coulers. The uther elephants play tricks on him'*. It is hardly surprising, then, that a pupil in Year 2 can show touches of humour and sensitivity in her *'Recipe for making friends'*, when her ingredients are,

*1 miserable child  
1 football (or a toy)  
1 caring person*

Nor is it surprising that the school's results have been so consistently high in tests at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Year 4 when pupils can write such outstanding creative verse such as this description of, *'How to paint the portrait of a panda.'*

*First paint some Chinese bamboo shoots,  
Then paint the glittering feel of a rainbow.  
Second, put the canvas outside on the dewy grass  
And hide behind the willow tree.  
Then wait for centuries if necessary  
And when the panda comes, if it does,  
Paint the soft blackness of its fur  
And the sound of it crunching.  
Put the bamboo round it in a house  
Take one stick*

*And carve your name on it  
And there you have a portrait of a panda.*

16. The contribution of literacy to pupils' work in other subjects is very good overall. Their improving literacy skills are often apparent in the written work they do in other subjects. They have good opportunities to write up accounts of their mathematical problems. In history after a visit to Chiltern Open Air Museum one pupil wrote, *'It was brilliant. I loved the Iron Age house, it was dark and the only light was a candle on the table.'* In Year 4 a pupil wrote about their investigations into light, *'A shadow is made when something blocks the light so a transparent material doesn't make a good shadow because it lets light through. The best shadows are made from thick material.'* There are, however, few opportunities for pupils to write extended accounts of their science investigations in their own words or for them to extend their use of literacy in design and technology. Although they have very good opportunities to discuss their plans for *'making'* activities and to discuss evaluations in depth, there is little evidence of extended written accounts. There are very good links between literacy and information technology. Even the youngest pupils use computers well to word process stories and descriptions, usually drafting their work first on the computer. Pupils in Year 4 are extremely adept at using the computer functions to change the characteristics of their writing, such as the size and shape of fonts. They know how to use the spell-check and thesaurus to improve the correctness of their written work.
17. Standards in numeracy are well above average. Pupils' work in using and applying mathematics is particularly well developed. They have rapid recall of number facts and use them well in their calculations. They use a wide range of strategies to work things out in their heads and their understanding of mathematical processes is very good. Standards in science are well above average. Pupils in Key Stage 1 have good opportunities to develop an analytical approach to their work and make a start to developing an awareness of *'fair testing'*. By the time they leave school, pupils have experienced a wide range of scientific work and have already developed a keen awareness of scientific concepts, such as forces, circuits and reflection of light. By the end of Key Stage 1 standards in information technology are above national expectations and by the time they leave school they are well above expectations. Pupils in Key Stage 1 make good progress in learning and developing their levels of skill. In Key Stage 2 this progress is even more apparent in their level of skills and the use to which they put information technology in other subjects, such as English and mathematics. Pupils in both key stages successfully use word processors to write stories and descriptions. Many have well developed skills that they have learned at home and that the school makes good use of in other subjects.
18. Pupils generally make at least good, and often very good, progress throughout the school. The school makes a positive difference to the standards that these pupils attain at the ages of seven and nine. However, the remarkable consistency with which pupils make progress is not always as apparent in Year 3. This was remarked upon in several parents' questionnaires before the inspection. Work for these pupils sometimes lacks the challenge that they meet in other years. Pupils' written work does not always meet the same high standards, in terms of presentation and content, that are apparent elsewhere. This means, of course, that the progress pupils make in Year 4 is often outstanding because in some areas it has to compensate for the slower progress in Year 3.
19. Progress for pupils with special educational needs is good across the school. They make good and often very good progress when they are supported in withdrawal groups for literacy and numeracy activities. Teachers carefully plan levels of work that matches their ability. With support, pupils identify letters, sounds and blends and use them to construct a variety of words that they use well in sentences. They make good progress in

developing their skills in numeracy. The school's results this year for pupils in Year 4 show a remarkable improvement in the percentage of pupils attaining average results compared with their results in 1998. However, pupils' individual education plans lack consistency across the school. They have improved in quality since the special educational needs co-ordinator took responsibility, but they still lack clear, specific objectives for improvement that can be attained and measured. The very few pupils with English as an additional language make good progress and attain standards in line with those of most pupils.

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

20. Pupils have very good attitudes to the school. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when attitudes were described as good. Pupils participate eagerly in lessons and enjoy the activities prepared for them. They are friendly to visitors and confidently talk about their work and the school. Their mature, sensible approach in lessons contributes to what they achieve. For example, in an art lesson pupils in Year 2 patiently and delicately added small quantities of blue paint to yellow to create many shades of green.
21. As in the last inspection, pupils are well behaved in and around the school. They are very clear about school rules and generally obey them. They are aware of the impact their actions have on others. In the vast majority of lessons pupils are very well behaved and this contributes to the good progress they make in their learning. However, there are a few occasions when pupils misbehave and this impedes progress. This only happens when lessons provide insufficient challenge or group activities are not well organised, for example in a numeracy lesson at the beginning of Key Stage 2.
22. At playtimes and lunchtimes, most pupils behave well and are kind and considerate to each other. Resources and displays are left untouched and property is respected. Hardly any litter is left around the school. No bullying or harassment was observed during the inspection. There have been no pupil exclusions.
23. Relationships between pupils are good. Groups of pupils work constructively together in lessons. Pupils in Year 4 particularly enjoy taking turns to look after younger ones in the dining hall. Respect is shown for others' feelings and values. Opportunities to learn about people from other faiths are limited and this restricts pupils' development in this area.
24. Pupils enthusiastically take responsibility for jobs around the school. Pupils in Year 4 have a range of duties that they undertake enthusiastically. All pupils are involved in developing school and class rules. Starting with the youngest children in the nursery, pupils are learning to work productively on their own. However, the remoteness of the library and limited parental help to supervise them restricts pupils' use of the library for research purposes. Pupils in Year 4 have the opportunity to attend a residential trip, which contributes to the maturity that they achieve before leaving the school.
25. Attendance has remained at a very high level when compared with the national average for primary schools, and unauthorised absences are very low. The vast majority of pupils arrive at school punctually.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

26. The quality of teaching promotes good and frequently very good standards. In 95 per cent of lessons the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory. In fact, in seven out of every ten lessons teaching is at least good, in almost half it is at least very good and in almost two lessons out of every ten it is excellent. This is high quality teaching that was found throughout the school. Ninety-three per cent of parents, in their pre-inspection questionnaires, agreed that teaching was good.
27. The high quality of teaching represents a considerable improvement since the previous inspection. In that inspection, strengths such as teachers' planning, their use of support staff and methods of assessment have all been maintained. Nevertheless, in the previous inspection teaching was very good or better in only 11 per cent of lessons, compared with 42 per cent in the current inspection. The marked improvements in teaching are due to some changes in staffing, staff support for and implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies, shared planning in the Early Years, and an increase in the monitoring of teaching by the headteacher and literacy and numeracy co-ordinators.
28. There are several reasons for good, very good and excellent teaching, many of which are common across the range of subjects. One of those is the planning process, also identified in the previous inspection. Teachers plan very carefully to ensure that their lessons are well matched to pupils' abilities. They make sure that a range of good resources is available for practical activities, that the lesson makes good use of what the pupils already know and that it teaches them subject knowledge that they did not know before. The quality of day-to-day planning in foundation subjects does not always match the high quality planning in literacy and numeracy. Teachers' half-termly planning, however, is consistently good in all subjects and forms a solid basis for short-term activities. Planning in literacy and numeracy has benefited from the school's shared approach to planning. Similarly the strength of the school's early years' provision has much to do with the way in which they plan as a 'team', sharing ideas and expertise.
29. In the best lessons the teachers' introductions are often outstanding. It is during these that teachers set out their clear expectations of what they want to achieve during the lesson. It is often their own enthusiasm for the topic that fires the pupils' enthusiasm and interest and it sets the lesson pace that rarely falters. The very best introductions are about what the pupils can and will achieve. They raise the self-esteem of pupils and their belief in themselves. For example, excellent literacy and numeracy sessions shared the same levels of pace that almost left the pupils breathless. They shared the same degree of outstanding subject knowledge and built so well on what the pupils had learned in previous lessons that the increase in subject difficulty was hardly noticeable.
30. Once the lesson has been carefully planned, the lesson objectives are made clear to pupils, sometimes by writing them down and referring to them during the course of, or at the end of, the lesson. Not all teachers did this as a matter of course, but where it did occur it helped to focus the main points of the lessons to help them to assess the success of meeting the *'intended learning objectives'*.
31. Teachers' very good use of questioning is a major strength of their teaching and forms a very important part of their short-term assessments. Lessons invariably start with a brisk question and answer session in which teachers pose searching questions to find out what pupils know. For example, in an excellent literacy lesson the teacher constantly asked questions intended to develop pupils' ideas and thinking about alliterative verse. The teacher's opening suggestion of, *'Ten dancing dinosaurs'* was quickly followed by suggestions such as, *'Ten hopping highland cattle'*. The sense of urgency that the

teacher conveyed was never allowed to falter during the introduction. In a very good numeracy lesson the teacher maintained a degree of pressure on the pupils without ever becoming repressive. Her constant *'How do you know the answer? Explain to me!'* meant that she was unwilling to accept the pupils' explanations, such as, *'I just know the answer'*. Instead, she insisted on mathematical explanations, such as *'doubling'*, *'halving'* and *'partitioning'*.

32. In lessons when teaching is satisfactory, but not as effective, there are times when the pace of the lesson drops and the difference in the rate of pupils' learning between satisfactory and very good or excellent lessons becomes quite pronounced. Satisfactory lessons lack the tension and urgency that is so obvious in high quality lessons. Because the demands on pupils to participate in lessons are not so obvious there is time for them to become distracted and take a lesser part in the oral activities. In short, there is no pressure on them to achieve high standards in the same way that there is in very good lessons.
33. The very few unsatisfactory lessons were observed only at the beginning of Key Stage 2. There was no real sense of enjoyment from the teacher or pupils. Resources were not well organised before the start of the lesson and a shortage of them meant that pupils were left to their own devices with no explanation about what was expected of them. No clear targets were set, such as, *'We are finishing in five minutes and I expect you to have completed the work on the board'*. Pupils knew that they could *'get away with'* less than their best work and did the minimum amount possible. Their exercise books reflected the different, and lower, expectations in terms of presentation and content.
34. Teachers use short-term assessments very effectively to find out what pupils know and what they learn in lessons. This aspect of their work was a strength in the previous inspection and remains so. In their introductions they are very good at finding out what pupils have learned from previous lessons. They are equally good at using plenary sessions to recap what has been taught and to find out if pupils have been listening and have understood. In a very good lesson involving a parent helper the teacher asked the parent to complete an assessment form at the end of the lesson to evaluate what the group of pupils working with her had learned. Teachers deploy classroom support assistants extremely well. They are conscientious and skilled in the ways in which they support pupils of all abilities. During lesson introductions they invariably play an important assessment role, monitoring pupils' behaviour and their oral contribution to class discussion.
35. The quality and frequency of teachers' marking are inconsistent. The best examples of marking mirror the high quality dialogue between teachers and pupils that exists in almost all lessons. Teachers use praise very constructively in lessons. Their remarks, such as *'Well done! That is fantastic!'* and, *'Everybody listen to this super piece of writing!'* play a major part in raising pupils' self-esteem and motivating them to do even better. These comments are sometimes matched in teachers' written comments. For example, in English a teacher has written about a pupil's comments on cruelty to animals, *'Well done! – You've covered a lot of animal issues and your writing is very persuasive'*. The teacher had also offered ideas about how to improve the style, *'You could write... "and your children will be so happy they will not seem like themselves". It's less awkward. Look at the other sentences I've re-jigged to make it sound better'*. Remarks as constructive as these are few and far between. Pupils' errors of spelling and punctuation are often left uncorrected and marking frequently consists of a single word or phrase that does little to tell pupils what is right or wrong or how they can improve their work.
36. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers have good knowledge of the pupils and their specific needs. They invariably plan tasks that are



appropriate for the ages and abilities of pupils and that will challenge and extend their skills and abilities. Almost all teachers have good behaviour strategies to encourage pupils to learn and make progress. In small withdrawal groups pupils receive good levels of support. Pupils know they are valued and do their best to succeed. The co-ordinator for special educational needs has worked hard to improve the quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs. Their individual education plans, however, are often too vague to be meaningful. Their targets are not specific enough and they are not easily measured to see if pupils have, in fact, made progress. The teaching of the very few pupils with English as an additional language is good. Those pupils work with the majority of their peers and do not experience any significant difficulty in English activities.

37. Teachers set homework that clearly supports the work that pupils of all ages have done in school and that provides good preparation for work to be done in future. In their pre-inspection questionnaires 92 per cent of parents agree with the amount of homework the school sets. The school provides good information to parents about the work it sets and the part parents are expected to play. The 'contact books' provide an excellent form of dialogue between the school and the home.

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

38. The previous report found that the school's curriculum was carefully planned to provide breadth and balance. This is still the case. The school takes great care with the design, structure, implementation and evaluation of the curriculum it offers. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught, as is religious education. The curriculum fulfils the statutory requirements. The curriculum for children under five is designed very effectively to cover all six nationally recommended areas of learning. The careful planning for these children, together with the very effective procedures for assessing their attainment, results in very good progress. This equips them with a very positive foundation for their learning in Key Stage 1.
39. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been fully implemented. Although the strategies require an allocation of time equivalent to almost half the timetable, by careful timetabling the school has not allowed other subjects to be unduly restricted. There is a good balance within each subject. A strong feature of the curriculum is its overall planning for the development of the skills necessary for each subject. This is evident from the schemes of work which have been produced since the previous inspection. The curriculum is underpinned by a clear policy statement which sets out in good detail curriculum planning, assessment, record keeping and reporting. Science, history, geography and design and technology are linked and taught as topics, although the separate skills for each are emphasised.
40. Specific time is allocated on the timetable to pupils' personal and social education. With the approval of the governors, sex education is not taught separately but as part of the curriculum, when appropriate. Pupils' questions are answered directly with regard to their subject context and the age of the pupils. Health education, including the use and misuse of drugs, is taught through science, physical education and the school's personal and social education programme. The organisation of the curriculum ensures that all pupils have equal access to all its aspects, and an equal opportunity to learn and make progress. There is a good homework policy which describes the purpose of homework and the type and amount which will be set for each age group. There are useful comments on the role of parents in supporting their children.
41. The school prospectus outlines the provision for pupils with special educational needs. The school's policy follows the Code of Practice. Those pupils in need of help from the

Additional Literacy Support scheme receive good-quality support principally within the context of class lessons, but also by withdrawal in small groups from classes.

42. The school provides a sound range of extra-curricular activities. These include football coaching, short tennis, French, choir, recorder playing, country dancing and modern dance. Parents pay for the activities provided by outside sports coaches and language tutors.
43. The school's curricular provision is enriched by a wealth of educational visits, for example to an African dance workshop and Stevenage Museum. The school holds services in the church that are also attended by parents. During the past year there were many visitors to school including the fire service, a helicopter, the police, the mayor and musicians.
44. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. It has worked hard to maintain the '*effective provision*' noted in the previous report. Areas of the curriculum give good support to pupils' spiritual development. Pupils' exploration of their inner feelings and ideas is given good expression in the high quality of their writing in English. This sometimes reveals deep thinking on major events and sensitive issues in pupils' lives. Art and some aspects of music also provide opportunities for pupils to use their imaginations in creating and expressing individual ideas.
45. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong. Their behaviour in the classroom and around the school is good. The school has developed a strong ethos in which positive attitudes and behaviour are celebrated in the form of praise, stickers and certificates. No incidents of bullying or aggressive behaviour were observed during the inspection. In a personal and social education lesson younger pupils listened with interest to a story involving bullying, and spoke of their own opinions and experiences. Pupils assist in devising their own classroom rules and there are '*Golden*' rules for behaviour for the whole school. Wider moral issues, such as environmental pollution, are well brought out in assemblies when the headteacher pointedly produced a bag of litter collected from the school grounds. Pupils discuss the effect this might have on wild life. In another assembly pupils read out prepared statements against cruelty to animals.
46. The school is a well-integrated social community where there is good interaction between staff, parents and pupils. This is influential in producing a harmonious atmosphere which actively promotes good teaching and learning. Relationships, particularly within the classrooms, are very good. When asked to do so, pupils work together sensibly and productively in pairs or groups. There are plenty of opportunities for pupils to help, and they are encouraged to do so. Older pupils help younger ones round the school; for example, they bring in the toys after playtime. Pupils help with milk distribution and in clearing up after meals in the dining hall. They distribute and collect registers. Pupils show awareness of others' needs by collecting toys for '*Save the Children*' and participating in '*Blue Peter*' appeals. The school's extra-curricular activities encourage pupils' social interaction and relationships. The residential course for pupils in Year 4 offers the opportunity to study a different environment, for adventurous activities and for pupils to develop independence as well as responsibility.
47. There are very impressive displays in school of documents, personal belongings, household articles and military memorabilia collected and loaned by the Northchurch Society. These give pupils an excellent insight into their local cultural heritage and are enhanced by their own local walks and visits to the church. An awareness of other cultures is raised through religious education, the pupils' extensive study project on Kenya and the use in English of '*big book*' texts of stories from other continents, such as India.

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

48. The school demonstrates a very firm commitment to equal opportunities and challenging racial harassment. This is very clearly communicated to parents in the prospectus. Pupils have good access to opportunities in all aspects of the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for, as are more able pupils. Good provision is made for the very small number of pupils with English as an additional language.
49. Staff know pupils and their family circumstances well. Teachers and classroom assistants take good care of pupils. Children are very sensitively settled into the nursery and pupils in Year 4 are well supported as they transfer to their next schools. Good attention is given to pupils' safety in lessons, such as physical education, and procedures for administering first aid are appropriate. Arrangements for child protection are satisfactory. However, there are aspects of the school's procedures for ensuring pupils' health and safety that are unsatisfactory. Due to the nature of the site, there are times when the current number of lunchtime staff makes it difficult to ensure that all pupils can be supervised adequately.
50. The school carries out its own risk assessments of educational visits but has not arranged a professional risk assessment of the whole site since May 1995. The attendance of pupils is recorded at the beginning of each session, but not when pupils meet at the local sports centre for swimming lessons at the beginning of the school session. Fire drills have not always been carried out in line with the school's policy. It is not always possible to tell from all registers whether pupils are absent or present.
51. There are good measures to promote pupils' attendance and efforts made to reduce the number of unauthorised absences have been very effective. Registration is carried out efficiently and pupils receive a friendly welcome when they arrive in school. In most classes, work is well prepared for pupils to do and a prompt start to the day is made as a result.
52. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are effective. Teachers are generally very skilled at managing classroom behaviour and this contributes to pupils' academic progress. Rewards are used very effectively and pupils value them. Bullying is rare and the school's strategies for addressing incidents when they occur are appropriate.
53. There are good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and recording their progress. These start with children under five and whether they attain the levels expected of them nationally by the age of five. It continues through Key Stage 1 until they leave school at nine years of age. The school has carefully considered the function of assessment in monitoring pupils' achievement and in modifying the curriculum where necessary. The good statements on assessment in the curriculum planning policy provide teachers with consistent guidelines as to when and how pupils' work should be assessed and their achievements recorded.
54. There are useful formatted sheets noting pupils' attainment and progress in reading and writing. In the other core subjects termly records are kept of individual pupils' attainment in the various aspects of each subject. In mathematics and science there are very useful examples of pupils' work in Attainment Target 1, the investigative and problem solving aspect of those subjects. There are also good evaluation sheets for each pupil's performance in foundation subjects. These are completed at the end of each unit of work. Collectively they provide a good picture of each pupil's learning across the breadth of the curriculum. They are linked with the programmes of study laid down in the National Curriculum. These detailed assessments help teachers to plan work that is appropriate for pupils' different levels of attainment.

55. As pupils progress through the school a cumulative portfolio of work for each is kept by the class teacher. These contain the results of assessments carried out when children start school and national tests that are carried out at seven and nine years of age. They also provide details of the pupils' performance in other tests, and information about his or her work in other subjects. They provide useful information about the progress that each child has made from year to year. They are then passed on to the pupil's middle school. Pupils also keep a personal folder containing samples of their work as they progress through the school. The assessment process includes providing information to parents in annual reports about their children's progress and to parents of pupils whose children are on the school's register of special educational needs.
56. The results of national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 and unofficial national tests in Key Stage 2 are closely analysed by the school and used to identify strengths and weaknesses in individuals' knowledge and understanding, as well as in the overall curriculum. Teachers make good use of the range of assessment information which they compile. There are regular staff meetings to discuss standards of pupils' work and curriculum planning. Teachers also keep anecdotal notebooks of pupils' social, behavioural and academic development and these also have a good impact on pupils' progress.

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

57. An analysis of parents' questionnaires and their comments at the pre-inspection meeting show that parents have very positive attitudes to school. Almost all parents say that their children like school and make good progress. They feel that teaching is good with high expectations, that the school achieves good behaviour and that pupils become mature and responsible. They consider that the right amount of homework is set, that staff are approachable and accessible, and that the school is well led. A few parents do not feel well informed about their child's progress and are dissatisfied with the range of activities provided outside lessons, although there is no explanation of what they find unsatisfactory.
58. The information provided for parents is very good. The prospectus is well written and very informative, and gives a clear picture of the school. Newsletters are sent regularly and provide useful general information as well as setting out what is to be taught in each class. Parents have the opportunity to see their child's work at monthly open sessions and, with the exception of parents of children in the nursery, are kept up to date at termly consultation evenings with how their child is progressing. Informal daily contact between staff and parents and carers of pupils of all ages is excellent. Contact books are in use throughout the school and enable a regular dialogue to take place between teachers and parents. These are a strength of the school's communication with parents. At the end of each academic year, parents receive a detailed report on their child's achievements and progress in each subject. Targets for future improvements are included in reports, but these are sometimes too general to provide clear guidance. The school's range of after-school activities is satisfactory overall. A choice is available for pupils from reception upwards, although a charge is made for many of the activities as they are run by outside concerns.
59. As in the last inspection, links with parents are very good. They are made to feel very welcome in school and help in many ways as a result. Parents are consulted about new policies, although they are not currently involved in identifying priorities for future school development. All parents have signed the home-school agreement.

60. Parents and carers contribute very effectively to pupils' learning at school and at home. Parent helpers provide good support in lessons. They are given very clear guidance on their role, which they fulfil well. For example, one parent assisted four pupils in Year 1 to make butterfly buns as part of a food technology lesson. The School Association raises substantial funds which have been spent on items such as new computers and the 'Trim Trail' in the playground. These enhance the school's overall resources.

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

61. The headteacher and deputy headteacher, who are well supported by the staff, provide clear educational direction for the work of the school. The school has a clear sense of purpose and a commitment to improvement that is shared by all who work in it. In their pre-inspection questionnaires 92 per cent of parents acknowledge that the school is well managed. Standards have improved since the previous inspection and all key issues have been successfully addressed. The good work of the school that was recognised in the last report has steadily improved since 1996. The headteacher has established a whole school approach to teaching and learning that is shared by all staff and that is effective in raising teachers' expectations of what their pupils can achieve. As a result, teamwork in the school is strong, relationships are good and staff and governors share the headteacher's view of the school's direction.
62. The headteacher is well supported by the deputy headteacher. They undertake the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning, as well as the analysis of external and internal test and assessment results to measure the extent of school improvement. Subject co-ordinators fulfil their roles conscientiously. They monitor teachers' plans and scrutinise samples of pupils' work in their subjects. The impact of their work on standards is limited by the fact that they do not yet have opportunities to observe their colleagues teaching on a regular basis or critically analyse the content of the lessons.
63. The involvement of the governing body in the management of the school is good. Governors are very supportive of the school, the headteacher and the staff. They are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and play an increasingly significant part in school management. Governors are well informed about the work of the school, recognising areas in need of improvement as well as its many strengths. They are active in monitoring standards and teaching independently, as well as in taking full account of information that is provided by the headteacher. The close understanding between the governors and the headteacher on how to raise standards has made a significant contribution to the improvements in the management and efficiency of the school and the quality of teaching and learning.
64. The school development plan is an effective working document. At the time of the previous inspection it was planned on a year-long basis, although improvements in the accommodation were of a longer time span. The present school development plan is an improvement as it is a three-year overview. It contains suitable priorities, all of which are closely linked to improvements in specific standards in the work of the school. The plan is drawn up after a programme of consultation amongst all teaching staff, governors and parents. Consultation is through the governing body annual general meeting and parent governors. There is an ongoing review of the targets and all staff are aware of what is intended and the extent of everyone's responsibilities.
65. Arrangements to co-ordinate the provision for pupils with special educational needs are good. The co-ordinator for special educational needs has improved the quality of pupils' individual education plans, but has very little time to effectively and systematically monitor pupils who are on the register of special educational needs. Pupils' targets for

improvement on their individual education plans are not specific enough and the co-ordinator does not currently monitor these pupils in their classes.

66. The headteacher and governors have maintained the efficient running of the school since the previous inspection. Financial planning continues to be well linked to the priorities of school improvement. In making decisions on spending, governors take into account the school's performance in comparison with that of other schools. The governing body considers the effects of spending decisions well to obtain the best value, for example continuing to purchase the financial advice service of the local education authority. The governors have effective supervision of the finances and budget through regular monitoring of spending patterns. The school has a small carry-forward figure of around five per cent from last year. More school building maintenance and improvements are planned. The school receives grants under the standards fund for staff training and resources for the National Grid for Learning. These grants are administered by the headteacher and used for the purposes intended. The most recent audit in November 1999 commended the school on its financial accounting and systems. All recommendations are fully in place. Day to day financial control and administration are very good. The school secretary has a good understanding of financial systems and has worked hard to establish a well-organised office. She provides a very good, efficient service.
67. The school has a good number of suitably qualified staff to meet the needs of the National Curriculum. Teachers are part of a committed, hard working team. All staff are fully aware of both their own and others' roles and responsibilities and they offer strong support to one another. Teachers are well deployed to make the most effective use of their skills and knowledge. All staff members have a management role and clear job descriptions that provide guidance on their roles. There is limited non-class contact time for co-ordinators to carry out the management of their subject areas and monitor classroom practice. The induction of new staff is appropriate.
68. In addition to the teaching staff, there are a number of classroom assistants who provide good support for class teachers and make a significant contribution to pupils' progress. They are always well prepared for lessons through their knowledge of lesson plans and learning objectives that teachers share with them. Teachers and assistants supporting pupils with special educational needs make a good contribution to the quality of education for these pupils. The school is well supported by a small group of parent helpers who support the on-going learning of pupils in a variety of ways.
69. The headteacher conducts professional development interviews on a regular basis. Targets are agreed and are regularly reviewed as part of the headteacher's monitoring programme. The information from this process is used effectively to inform the headteacher and governors of each teacher's personal and professional development needs, as well as the needs of the school. Professional development systems are well organised and thorough, and closely linked to the priorities identified in the school development plan. Staff attend a wide range of training provided by the local education authority, in addition to participating in the school's own professional development programme. Classroom assistants receive regular training and, as noted in the previous report, they are competent and make a positive contribution to all aspects of school life. The deputy headteacher has recently begun a good training programme for parent volunteers, focusing on developing their skills and boosting their knowledge of classroom practice.
70. Teachers make effective use of the school accommodation and grounds. The library, quiet room and gallery are not at the heart of the school. This limits the impact on the pupils' ability to use the library to support reading and research. The building is clean, in

good decorative order and well maintained. The good wall displays demonstrate the value the school places on pupils' work and enriches the environment.

71. The school grounds have been well developed and are used effectively to support aspects of the curriculum, such as science, geography, physical education and art. There are two playgrounds with good playground markings, benches and a trim trail, and a large field. There is now a very good fenced play area for the nursery and reception classes. Very good use is made of the early years' garden. This is a good improvement since the previous report. The teachers, in partnership with parents, have succeeded in making this a most attractive feature of the school.
72. The school has satisfactory resources overall to meet the needs of the various subjects. Those for learning in the early years are good and the high standard of role-play areas found in the previous report have been maintained. Staff put a lot of energy into creating stimulation role-play areas such as the '*bear cave*' and '*pirates' galleon*'. Book resources have improved and recent purchases of well-targeted material have contributed to the school successfully improving pupils' standards in reading. The school has recently extended the equipment for information technology and plans further purchases. The history resources in particular are superb. The school is the custodian for Northchurch Historical Society and displays of artefacts from local and other sources are wonderfully displayed and treated with respect by all in the school. Resources for all subjects are stored conveniently for access by children in the classrooms, and by staff from central storage.
73. The effectiveness of the school is good. Children's attainment is above that expected when they enter nursery. Pupils have achieved well above average standards at end of Key Stage 1 and when they leave school. Their attitudes to school are very good and behaviour is good. Teaching is good for children under five, very good in Key Stage 1 and good in the upper part of the school. The overall leadership and management of the school are good. Considering the effectiveness of the school against the costs, it continues to provide good value for money.

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

74. In the context of its strengths, and in order to maintain and improve the high quality of pupils' learning and the standards they attain, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) review the current arrangements for pupils with special educational needs to ensure:
  - a. that their individual education plans are carefully targeted and that the school has the means to measure any progress that is made;
  - b. that the pupils' individual education plans and provision for them to meet their targets are monitored regularly;

**(paragraphs 19, 36, 65 of the main report)**

- (2) review the quality of teachers' marking to ensure:
  - a. that greater consistency is achieved between teachers in the marking of pupils' work and matches the best examples in the school;
  - b. that marking offers advice about how work can be improved, and that it forms part of the target setting process for pupils to follow in order to raise their attainment even further;

**(paragraphs 35, 36, 98 of the main report)**

- (3) review lunchtime arrangements to ensure that levels of supervision are adequate to oversee pupils' safety.

**(paragraph 49 of the main report)**

**The following minor points for improvement should be considered as the basis for an action plan:**

- (1) extend the good work of the subject co-ordinators in monitoring teaching plans and pupils' work, by providing opportunities for them to monitor teaching in their subjects;

**(paragraph 62 of the main report)**

- (2) ensure that attendance registers are correctly completed.

**(paragraph 50 of the main report)**



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	41
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
17	25	29	24	5	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	17	134
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	22

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.6
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	19	12	31

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	19	19	18
	Girls	12	11	11
	Total	31	30	29
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	100 (76)	97 (90)	94 (81)
	National	82 (81)	83 (81)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	19	18	19
	Girls	11	11	12
	Total	30	29	31
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	97 (84)	94 (88)	100 (84)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	132
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)	6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22
Average class size	27

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

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	63

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	34

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	17

Number of pupils per FTE adult	17
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	1998 / 1999
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	£
Total income	315,394
Total expenditure	314,187
Expenditure per pupil	1,928
Balance brought forward from previous year	9,341
Balance carried forward to next year	11,023

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 74.8%

Number of questionnaires sent out	163
Number of questionnaires returned	122

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	60	34	5	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	55	38	5	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	55	4	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	42	44	7	2	5
The teaching is good.	55	38	4	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	45	38	15	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	61	30	6	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	39	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	46	47	4	2	1
The school is well led and managed.	49	42	6	2	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	46	50	2	2	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	46	7	5	11

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

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

75. Children normally enter nursery at the beginning of the term after their fourth birthday and attend on a part-time basis for mornings only. This is different from the finding of the previous inspection. The local education authority's admissions policy has changed and funding for pupils now is for part-time placement only. The nursery premises are let to a private concern for four afternoons. The committee that operates this private nursery comprises some of the school's governors who employ the same nursery staff. Many of the nursery children attend these afternoon sessions on a fee-paying basis. Children move to the reception class at the beginning of the term in which they are five. At the time of the inspection there were 30 children under five in the nursery and 12 in the reception class.
76. Children's attainment is assessed within the first six weeks of entry to nursery using the same tests that are used throughout Hertfordshire schools. These show that children come with a wide range of abilities, but most attain higher standards than those expected nationally. Children's previous experiences are valuable and support them well. Further tests are carried out when children enter the reception class. In all areas of learning almost all children attain the desirable learning outcomes and some achieve well beyond these. Children under five, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in the nursery and reception classes. This represents a significant improvement since the previous report.
77. The induction of children into nursery is a very good feature of St Mary's school. Parents and children are very well prepared for starting school. Meetings and visits to the class are well organised. The nursery staff have a good relationship with the children before entry. Children and parents are confident to come and begin the home-school partnership necessary for successful learning. Several parents, in their pre-inspection questionnaires, commented on how quickly their children had settled into the nursery. Both classes share the garden and play together under the careful supervision of all early years' staff. The nursery and reception staff of two teachers, a nursery nurse and classroom assistants work very well as a caring, thoughtful, well-organised, experienced team.
78. The curriculum offered to children under five is good. It is broad and balanced and comprehensively covers all required areas of learning. In the reception class the curriculum includes the literacy and numeracy strategies. In the nursery, children are introduced to parts of the strategies that are appropriate for their age. Assessments are used effectively to identify children's needs, and teachers keep comprehensive up-to-date records of all children. Parents are invited to interviews to discuss their children's progress after the initial nursery assessment and school testing. A report is given of children's work at the end of the year. Parents rightly expressed their satisfaction with the early years' provision.

**Personal and social development**

79. Children's attainment in their social development is well above the standards expected for children of this age. They are happy, confident and able to establish effective relationships with other children and adults. They settle well and show a good understanding of daily routines. Children sit quietly and are well behaved during registration or when adults are talking, sometimes for extended periods of time. They work well as part of a group and independently. They concentrate and persevere in their

learning. They willingly help each other, for example when working in paired activities. Children are interested in activities they are set and eager to explore new learning. They demonstrate independence in dressing and personal hygiene. They are considerate of others. They take turns, share fairly and understand the principle of standing in a queue. Independence in selecting activities and resources, using their initiative in solving problems and seeking help only when needed are fully established in the reception class.

80. Progress in personal and social development is very good and provides a secure foundation for the next stage of learning. Children express their feelings well in role-play. They show anger, fear, happiness and joy; for example, when they experiment with the absorbency of materials they are amazed to find all the water quickly disappearing in their container. When cotton wool is added they show joy when they squeeze the cotton wool and the water '*magically*' appears again. They recognise the joy or sorrow of others and respond appropriately. They behave considerately. A strong emphasis is given to this area of learning and children are clear about what is right, what is wrong and why.

### **Language and literacy**

81. Children enter nursery with attainment in line with that expected for their age, particularly in conversational skills, the range of vocabulary used and hand control for writing. The planned range of activities promotes children's language and literacy skills well. Children are encouraged to listen attentively and enjoy story time. They love to hear the story of, '*The Wicked Pirates*' over and over again. Teachers give children good opportunities to talk about their experiences and interests throughout the school day. Children are encouraged to recognise and write their names. They are taught the necessary skills for reading and they are most careful when handling books. Children were seen on many occasions sitting in the nursery library reading books. However, the reception class does not have a designated book area with soft furnishings to entice children to select a book and enjoy reading. The most able children can recognise many words and have learnt phonics and word-attack skills. A small number of children are reading at a level expected of pupils much older than they are. Children are expected to take home a book to share with an adult and have an enjoyable time together. They also take home sound books to reinforce initial sounds learnt in class. This link between home and school to foster their language and literacy skills is a good feature of the provision for children under five. Children know that writing is used for many purposes, including stories, letters and lists. They can copy write and write independently, using their own symbols, individual letters, words and sentences to convey meaning. In the reception class their handwriting is developing well with clear, shaped and correctly orientated letters.

### **Mathematics**

82. Pupils' mathematics level on entry is above that expected for children of their age. Teachers support learning in mathematics with a wide variety of resources and experiences and no opportunity is lost to reinforce number work in a variety of ways. Children make good progress in counting skills, number recognition and mathematical language. They are able to count well beyond 10. They know the names of common shapes such as triangles, squares, circles and rectangles. They use non-standard measures well in the measurement of length and when going for a walk they compare their height with the gate, bushes and walls. In their work on capacity, when using the sand and water trays they begin to understand the relative capacity of containers and can make reasonable estimates. In role-play children use mathematical terminology such as, '*one more*' and '*too many*'. The quality of learning in mathematics is good.

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

83. Children's attainment in this area of learning is good. Many very good opportunities are

provided for them to begin to understand history and they talk about their families, homes, and past and present activities in their lives. They can sequence pictures of themselves as babies and toddlers and when they start school. They can make a simple, but meaningful, family tree from their grandparents to themselves. They learn about geography when they go on a visit to the model village of Bekonscot and record what happens when they go on a 'bear hunt'. Staff link this work well with the computer programme, 'My Town', in which children build streets and roads with good mouse control using the technique of 'click and drag'. Walks and visits around the school and the church help to foster among children a greater understanding of their own community. They learn to explore the wonders of their world through topics such as, 'Materials all around us'. Well thought out activities to make children think and become more curious are planned, for example growing beans and cress, and watching their pet rabbits and the numerous tanked fish. Watching changes in the flowerbeds further promotes the sense of change, wonder and curiosity and a keen interest in the world around them. Children have good experiences of using technology. They freely use the computer and attain a good level when typing their first drafts. The tape recorders are operated competently by them and they enjoy listening to stories being told. Teachers constantly provide children with very good opportunities to understand their world through creative activities that stimulate their senses.

### **Creative development**

84. Most children attain the expected levels in creative development and make sound progress. All children know their colours and select different paints and crayons in their work. They use a suitable range of techniques to work with a variety of textures; for example, they made owls with thick bright paints and drawings of amaryllis lilies with light pastels, creating an interesting effect. The outdoor play provision and indoor areas of the classrooms promote the development of this area very well. Children are imaginative and creative; for example, in the garden staff have made a tremendous effort to promote further role-play opportunities when they made the playhouse attractive and welcoming for children to play pretend house and families in. The house is large enough for children to continue play in the upstairs section. Children loved the 'pirate ship' and acted out many treasure hunt stories. They explore sound and can sing many nursery rhymes and jingles. Children show developing skills and evident enjoyment.

### **Physical development**

85. Children in both classes have immediate access to outdoor play and also have the opportunity to use the school hall for physical development. Their gross motor control is well developed and teachers provide good experiences for them to explore their bodies' potential. Outside activity is always well supervised. By the time they are five all children reach the expected standards in body control and the hand control which is necessary for writing, drawing and painting. Children move confidently inside and outside. They are aware of space and rarely bump into each other. Their control of wheeled toys is very good. They manoeuvre at speed around the paths, avoiding children and obstacles in their way. They have opportunities to climb, jump, stretch, balance, crawl and run. They use a range of small equipment well, such as scissors, paintbrushes, crayons and pencils. When children play with play-dough, opportunities are provided for them to roll, squeeze and squash the mixture.

## Teaching

86. The quality of teaching for children under five is good overall, and there are some very good and outstanding features. Excellent teaching in both classes was observed. The many excellent features of these lessons included teachers' high expectations of children's ability to learn; for example, in physical development when children developed their floor work on to the apparatus. Another strength was teachers' questioning to make children think very carefully; for example, after experimenting with different materials to test for absorbency the teacher said, *'Now have your milk, and if you accidentally spill some what absorbent paper are you going to use to mop it up?'* The teachers' excellent, well prepared resources encourage the children to use and learn; for example, the *'pirates' galleon* is fully manned with a motley crew of fierce sword-bearing, patch-eyed teddies guarding their hoards of treasure boxes!

## ENGLISH

87. At the end of Key Stage 1, and by the time they leave school, pupils' attainment is well above national averages in all aspects of English. National tests and assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 show that trends in reading have fluctuated over the past three years. They have never fallen below the national average, but in comparison with those in similar schools they were below average in 1999. The finding of the present inspection is that pupils have made very good progress in reading, particularly at the higher levels. This is confirmed in the recent national tests where the percentage of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 increased by 12 per cent. By the time they leave the school, pupils make very good progress in reading. Over 80 per cent of pupils are achieving the nationally expected Level 3 or above. Almost half the pupils are already achieving the higher Level 4. This is well above national expectations.
88. Pupils' writing at the end of Key Stage 1 has been consistently well above average over the past three years in national terms and in comparison with that in similar schools. In 1999 the percentage of pupils reaching Level 2 and Level 3 was well above the national average. By the time they leave school over 80 per cent of pupils achieve the expected Level 3, with 30 per cent reaching the higher Level 4. This is well above national expectations for pupils of their age. The previous report found that pupils' attainment in English at Key Stage 1 was sound overall and sometimes above average. In Key Stage 2 attainment was good. The current results and judgements indicate that the school has made very good progress since then.
89. At the end of Key Stage 1 pupils' speaking and listening skills are very high. The vast majority listen attentively to the teacher and to other pupils in discussion. They enjoy listening to stories and join eagerly in questions on the text section of the Literacy Hour. Most pupils express their ideas clearly and in good English. Teachers provide good models in their use of expressive language. Across the curriculum pupils show good understanding and use of correct vocabulary. The high standard of their English helps them to express their knowledge and understanding well, both orally and in writing. In one assembly some older pupils read out their views on issues such as fox-hunting and cosmetic testing on animals. These were hard-hitting and well expressed. Generally, though, insufficient opportunities are given to pupils to discuss extended ideas in this way.
90. Pupils of average and above attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 read fluently and expressively. They have a good awareness of punctuation and dialogue markings. They cope easily with unfamiliar words and know how to find their meaning in the dictionary. They enjoy talking about books, mentioning favourite authors and stories. One pupil, asked why he liked reading books about animals, replied that they were *'cute, and some*



*were endangered*'. Lower attaining pupils also read appropriate texts accurately but with less fluency and expression. They, too, have a good understanding of how to tackle unfamiliar words. Pupils receive a very good start to their reading in the nursery and reception classes, where they quickly learn the basic features of books and that words and pictures carry meaning.

91. Most pupils in Key Stage 2 have developed good accuracy in reading their own choice of books. Average and higher attaining pupils read confidently and often dramatically, modulating their voices appropriately to the text. Some read dialogue using different registers of voice. By the end of Year 4 many pupils are very good readers, with a mature understanding of their texts. They discuss characters, plots and information books in good detail, referring to the texts they have read. They have imaginative ideas about what might happen next in a story they have not yet finished. The library is being developed as a resource base of fiction and non-fiction books. It is currently underused as a place for quiet reading and independent research. Pupils with special educational needs receive help through the Additional Literary Support scheme and they make good progress.
92. At the end of Key Stage 1 a scrutiny of pupils' written work reveals a very good range and a high quality of ideas and expression. Pupils write letters, narratives and reviews and describe scenes and characters in stories. Their writing shows a well- developed understanding of the use of punctuation. Spelling is reasonably accurate and mis-spelt words are usually recognisable. Pupils are developing good sentence writing. They write complex sentences easily and vary their length for effect. Good writing is begun in the reception and Year 1 classes, where pupils use capital letters, full stops and speech marks increasingly correctly. There is evidence of good vocabulary development as pupils describe characters in a story as, '*gentle*', '*sensitive*', and '*playful*'. They write their own poems with examples of rhyme and alliteration, such as, '*Pass the ham Sam*', and, '*Want a chip Pip?*' Pupils' handwriting in Year 1 shows increasing control of size, shape and space and in Year 2 most pupils are beginning to write satisfactorily in a joined up style.
93. Pupils' progress in writing falters at the beginning of Key Stage 2. There is insufficient consolidation of their previous good progress in Key Stage 1. Pupils complete less work and its presentation is more slipshod and sometimes careless. Pupils write in a satisfactory range of styles in English lessons and across the curriculum. However, the development of the quality of their writing in extending vocabulary, improving spelling and punctuation, and writing interesting and vivid sentences is too limited.
94. In Year 4 the quality of pupils' writing across a wide range of styles is outstanding. In the lessons observed pupils discussed poems in various styles. They refer with good understanding to rhyming couplets and alternate rhymes, and have a very good understanding of the use of poetry to express images, emotions and humour. Pupils make individual collections of published and original poems and they write thoughtfully about the impact poetry has upon them. They consider in depth Adrian Mitchell's poem '*Listening*' and quickly spot that there are no rhymes. The teacher introduces the genre of blank verse in poems which contrast '*lists*' of images. She skilfully links this with musical concepts of strong and weak sounds, fast and slow beats and the rhythm of words. Pupils write their own blank verse modelled on the poem they have studied. Working independently they produce poems of considerable sophistication showing a very mature feeling for structure, rhythm and the expressive use of language.  
*'The rustling of Autumn leaves crunching underfoot  
and noiselessly floating through the air  
A creeping spider silently threading a web.....'*

And from a lower attaining pupil:

*'Water trickling to the Summer bay  
The soft squashy clouds racing in the crystal blue sky.....'*

95. The high quality of their writing is also evident in other styles. They show maturity and sensitivity in their writing, especially when they are writing about themselves, their families or distressing times. For example, one pupil wrote an evocative poem about her grandfather,

*My grandad loves to paint.  
When I was small  
He gave me my first painting  
Of sparkly fairies and teddies.  
It's still in a safe place.  
I can remember the smell of his pipe  
He has grey hair  
His eyes are brown  
And he's a fan of Christmas pudding.  
I love my grandad  
And I don't want him to die.*

Other very good examples of pupils' writing make good links with other subjects. These include extended narratives, descriptions of Victorian schooldays and life in a Kenyan village.

96. Pupils respond well in their English lessons. Their behaviour is good and they are anxious to learn and make progress. The very good relationships with their teachers and amongst themselves promote interesting discussions and good collaboration in paired and group work. Most pupils are very interested in English and are proud of their poems, stories, play scripts and other writing. They readily discuss their enjoyment of reading with visitors, talking about their favourite authors and books.
97. The very high quality of teaching in Key Stage 1, and of older pupils in Key Stage 2, impacts strongly on pupils' learning and attainment. Seventy-five per cent of lessons observed ranged from good to excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The teaching has many strengths. Teachers communicate their enthusiasm for English and their commitment to developing pupils' understanding, enjoyment and use of language. Most lessons are purposefully managed so that pupils' learning is constantly driven forward. The majority of teachers' own use of language is a good model for pupils to follow. The National Literacy Strategy is firmly in place and teachers' skilful use of its planning and structure has been a significant factor in raising standards. The implementation of the strategy is well monitored by the subject co-ordinator and headteacher. The able and energetic co-ordinator provides very good leadership of the subject.
98. There are very good procedures for the assessment of pupils' reading and writing. Records are kept of their attainment and progress in all aspects. The *'contact books'* provide parents with good information on what pupils should be doing at home and how they can help. In many cases the books have good, constructive dialogue between the teacher and parent. Marking of pupils' work, however, is inconsistent across the school. Generally there is insufficient feedback to pupils about how they could improve their written work. Sometimes basic errors of spelling and punctuation are left uncorrected and untidy work receives no comment.

## MATHEMATICS

99. By the end of Key Stage 1, and by the time pupils leave school, pupils' attainment is well above average and they make very good progress. The inspection findings show that there has been considerable improvement since the previous report, when attainment was judged to be in line with national expectations.
100. The judgement in the current inspection is slightly higher than the results in the 1999 national tests for seven-year-olds. In those tests the percentage of pupils attaining Level 2 (94 per cent) was above the national average. The percentage of pupils attaining Level 3 was also above the national average. In 1997 and 1998 the percentage of pupils attaining Level 2 was in line with the national average. In comparison with those in similar schools, results in mathematics were above the national average in 1999.
101. The steady and consistent improvement in the school's results at Level 2 and Level 3 since 1998 is due to several factors. The teaching has become much more effective with the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy, the school has used the results of tests more effectively to plan work, better planning is in place for more able pupils and the co-ordinator's management of the subject is very good. The improvement has continued in this year's tests at the end of Key Stage 1. In those tests the percentage of pupils attaining Level 2 has risen to 100 per cent. The percentage of pupils attaining Level 3 has also risen from 29 per cent last year to 35 per cent.
102. These factors have also had a positive impact on the attainment of pupils by the time they leave school. In 1998, the current group of pupils in Year 4 were then in Year 2. Their test results in mathematics were the lowest between 1997 and 2000 when 83 per cent of pupils attained Level 2. A further 23 per cent attained Level 2c, the lowest grade at Level 2. However, in this year's non-statutory tests for pupils at the end of Year 4, the mathematics results show a significant improvement. Eighty-two per cent of pupils attained the expected Level 3 and 58 per cent of those attained Level 4, which is the expected Level at 11 years of age.
103. The school's implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy is clearly helping to improve attainment. The emphasis given to 'quick-fire' mental arithmetic activities at the beginning of lessons plays a large part in very effectively developing pupils' understanding and use of multiplication tables and their rapid recall of addition and subtraction facts. Even very young pupils at Key Stage 1 are confident at working out sums rapidly 'in their heads'. So noticeable has been the improvement in pupils' ability to work out sums quickly that parents at the pre-inspection meeting commented on it and regard it as an area of improvement since the last inspection.
104. Pupils have above average attainment in mathematics when they enter school and they use this ability very well to make very good progress and attain high standards. For example, pupils in the reception class could very quickly work out different ways of making sums up to 10. Pupils in Year 1 count on and backwards in twos and tens quickly and accurately from different starting points. Pupils in Year 2 are very quick at spotting patterns in mental arithmetic work that will help them to find answers. For example, when they are asked to work out in their heads what 12 and 8 add up to one pupil answers, 'I knew that 11 and 9 make 20, so I took one from the nine and added one to the 11 to find the answer'. Another pupil, working out the answer to 13 add 7 told the teacher, 'I know that 3 add 7 makes 10 so I just added on another 10'. By the end of the key stage pupils can identify and name three-dimensional shapes and their properties, tell the time and write it in numbers, work out fractions of numbers, measure length, weight and capacity and use money confidently. They cover a very wide range of work and present their findings neatly and accurately.

105. By the end of Year 4, pupils' work continues to show wide coverage of mathematical topics and their mental arithmetic becomes faster even working with larger numbers. They can explain how many twos there are in 20 by '*halving 20*', '*calculating the multiples of 20*', '*using the two times table*' and '*counting in even numbers*'. Their ability to work with large numbers and to combine two or three different mathematical processes in one sum is evident from their well-presented written work. As well as regular practice with the four rules of number, pupils apply these skills to their work in length, capacity and money. They know how to find factors and can accurately draw angles and nets of shapes, graphs and frequency charts.
106. Work in both key stages is very well linked to other areas of the curriculum, so that pupils understand that mathematics has a practical application in everyday life. Their work in Attainment Target 1, using and applying mathematics, is particularly strong. There is much evidence of a real problem solving approach that involves more than one curriculum area and enables pupils to apply their knowledge well to new work. For example, pupils in Year 2 constructing triangular prisms worked out that they could use an odd number of plastic squares to construct rectangular sides. Links between mathematics and information technology are very good and are another strength of pupils' mathematics work. Pupils program a robot to move in different directions, using their knowledge of right angles and distances very effectively. There is also a great deal of evidence of pupils' ability to handle data and represent it in various graphical forms.
107. Sometimes there are very good links between more than one subject. For example, pupils in Year 4 combined English, art, mathematics and information technology extremely well in their problem solving. They carried out the investigation and then wrote it up precisely, using a word-processor. '*We each chose four numbers – any numbers at all – and put each number in the corner of a square. We then subtracted the smaller numbers from the larger numbers on each side of the square and wrote the answer at the middle point of each side. Then we joined those middle points to form a new square inside the original square, looked at the new numbers and did the same thing again. We found that by repeating the process, square after square, sooner or later the difference between the numbers on each side of the square will always be.....0!*' Pupils then used '*First Logo*' to construct this problem on the computer and printed off the patterns, using a colour printer to make attractive geometric displays.
108. Progress for pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs at both key stages, is very good overall, although the rate of progress for pupils in the first year of Key Stage 2 is slower than in other classes throughout the school. Pupils are not challenged to produce the very high standards of work there that they encounter in other classes. It is apparent that the high standards of work and presentation that other teachers expect are not consistently found in that class. Generally, however, the very good rate of pupils' progress is clear to see. Their progress is well supported by work that becomes gradually more challenging and builds well on what they already know. This not only applies to their written work, but also to the mental arithmetic sessions at the beginning of lessons and the increasingly adventurous and sophisticated links between mathematics and information technology. The school consolidates the knowledge that pupils bring to school with them and builds impressively on this as they move through both key stages. The amount of work pupils complete increases, the range of work they cover widens and the presentation and accuracy of their work improve.
109. Pupils' attitudes to their work are good overall. They are interested and enthusiastic learners. They listen well and respond to questions quickly and enthusiastically, especially in their mental arithmetic work. They settle quickly to their tasks and work hard to complete them. On the only occasion when pupils' attitudes were unsatisfactory the

work they were asked to do was not well prepared and there were insufficient resources for them to use. This meant that they had to wait until resources became available, and they became distracted and bored. The overall impression these pupils give is of confidence in their own ability and enthusiasm for the subject. The successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has had a tremendous impact on their mathematical capability. They concentrate, work well independently and co-operatively and are keen to find answers.

110. The quality of teaching ranges from unsatisfactory to very good and is good overall. In the unsatisfactory lesson the pace of teaching was slow, resources were not well organised and pupils became distracted. The usual high expectations apparent in other lessons were not found in this lesson. The good quality of teaching has a marked impact on the high standards that pupils attain. Consistently good features, such as planning, high expectations and questioning are apparent in most lessons. Teachers enjoy the success of teaching the National Numeracy Strategy. Their confidence has gradually grown with the advice they have received from the subject co-ordinator about how to improve. They know that the strategy has helped to improve pupils' standards in mathematics as well as their own teaching and subject knowledge.
111. Teachers' planning is carefully geared to the pupils' abilities and is shared with them at the start of lessons. Their short-term assessments, on which they base their future planning, are very good. Their questioning, to find out what pupils know, is frequently outstanding. For example, a teacher's lesson with reception pupils contained many excellent examples of questioning to reinforce the concept, such as *'What position was James? How many children were behind him? Where did Philip come?'* The main ideas of the lesson were repeated on other occasions, whenever an opportunity presented itself; for example, at lunchtimes when the teacher asked, *'What do we do **first** before we have our dinner? What's the **second** thing?'* Teachers' questioning during the mental arithmetic is often demanding and 'pushes' pupils to calculate faster and explain their reasoning. *'How do you **know** that is the answer?'* is a commonly heard remark, often combined with, *'If you don't know the answer have a good guess'* to impress the importance of mathematical thinking rather than concentrating on 'right' or 'wrong'. This approach, combined with lots of praise, such as, *'Good boy, Well done!'* or *'You're a good mathematician, you'll know the answer'* were examples of clever and skilful teaching to raise pupils' self esteem and confidence.

## SCIENCE

112. Very few lessons were timetabled during the inspection. Judgements, therefore, are made on a scrutiny of pupils' work, a scrutiny of planning and discussions with pupils. By the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time pupils leave school attainment is well above expectations and pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress.
113. In the 1999 teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 the percentage of pupils who attained Level 2 and above was very high in comparison with that in all schools. The percentage of pupils attaining Level 3 was above the national average, although there were weaknesses in pupils' knowledge of physical processes, such as electricity, forces and light. In the current teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 the percentage of pupils attaining Level 2 or better has remained at 100 per cent. The percentage attaining Level 3 has increased from 29 per cent to 35 per cent. In the previous inspection it was also judged that pupils' attainment was well above average. The school has done well to maintain very high standards over a long period of time.
114. Pupils in the reception class are beginning to develop an awareness of what happens to

hot water when it is left for a period of time. They use the words *'hotter'* and *'colder'* and make good links between the experiment to show the effect of insulating a hot water bottle and their own experience of wearing jumpers in the cold weather and discarding them when the weather is warm. Pupils in Year 1 can name the main parts of a plant and are beginning to understand the different stages of growth in plants and animals. Pupils in Year 2 carry out experiments with sound, light, materials and force. They hypothesise about the effects of pushes and pulls on model cars and write, *'I think it will travel furthest with a hard push on a smooth surface. When we give it a hard push it gives off a lot of energy.'* They carry out investigations to see how far paper aeroplanes fly and record that, *'I think that Tom's plane went the furthest because it's got a long body'*. They associate the development of a healthy body with a suitable diet and use correct terminology such as, *transparent*, *waterproof*, and, *rigid* in their work on materials. They use batteries and wires to make circuits and know that they have to be joined to make a bulb light up.

115. Pupils in Year 4 carry out soil analyses that involve filtering water to separate out the stones and soil that it contains. In their work on determining the comparative hardness of rocks they wrote, *'We had to try to scratch rocks with a knife to see if they were hard or not. Some were so hard that we didn't make the faintest mark but chalk was so soft that it made a deep groove.'* They are well aware of the importance of *'fair testing'* and know that variables have to be changed one at a time. They know that using lenses can bend light and that *'convex'* and *'concave'* mirrors produce different images. They make reasoned and informed hypotheses based on the investigative work they have undertaken so far. For example, they know how to construct a simple circuit to make a bulb light, but have never tried to construct a series circuit. When asked to suggest what would be the effect of inserting two bulbs they suggest, *'One bulb will light and the other will flicker'* or, *'the battery won't have enough energy to light the bulb'* before reaching the correct conclusion.
116. Throughout the school, pupils' progress in science is very good. More able pupils progress well, as can be seen by the number attaining the higher levels in assessments. Pupils in Year 4 regularly work at a level that one would expect from pupils at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils gradually develop their scientific knowledge and are very adept at applying the facts they know to situations they have not encountered before. That is, they think scientifically. The school has made good progress in developing pupils' understanding of physical processes. Their ability to record their investigations neatly and accurately develops well through the school.
117. Pupils have very good attitudes to science. They show a keen interest and enthusiasm. Pupils are eager to answer questions and contribute ideas for discussion. Even if they do not know the *'correct'* answer to a problem they are very good at making *'educated guesses'* without worrying about being *'wrong'*. They listen respectfully to others' opinions and are well aware of how important good behaviour is in experiments and the need to observe safety rules.
118. Teaching was very good in the single lesson observed. The teacher had good subject knowledge and used correct terminology and phrases such as, *'sensor'*, and *'trapped air'*. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly and lesson objectives are clear. A strength of science planning is the school's emphasis on Attainment Target 1, experimental and investigative science. A very useful collection of pupils' work contains good examples of investigative work as a source of ideas for other teachers. Good use was made of information technology in the lesson observed. A digital thermometer enabled rapid changes of temperature to be noticed and read out by pupils. Generally, however, information technology is under-used in science. There are few occasions when pupils' writing about their investigations is word-processed and little evidence of data handling

programs. Although there are limited examples of pupils extended writing there is an over-dependence on single word answers in books and worksheets. Teachers do not consistently develop older pupils' skills of writing or recording succinctly when explaining what they have done in an investigation.

## ART

119. Judgements on pupils' progress are made on a scrutiny of pupils' work, displays around the school and discussions with pupils, in addition to observing a small number of lessons. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in art by the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time they are nine years of age. In the previous inspection it was judged that pupils made good progress overall throughout the school. Their work includes sketching, observational drawing, drawing from imagination, painting, printing and clay work. Pupils experiment with different media. They use with careful control, chalk, charcoal, pastels and water-colour.
120. Pupils successfully build up their knowledge and understanding of a variety of techniques. For example pupils in Year 1 use art straws, clay and sweets to make different types of houses, linked to their topic, using glue, brushes and scissors very well. Pupils in Year 2 enjoy a wide and varied range of experiences that challenge their understanding of different techniques. For example, they show real deftness of touch when they very carefully mix powder paints to obtain very subtle changes of colour in the range from yellow to green on a *'colour strip'*. Their understanding of shade is well demonstrated in the originality of the names they give their colours, for example *'Yolk Yellow'*, *'Shredded Wheat'*, *'Welly Green'* and *'Spinach Green'*.
121. Pupils in Year 4 show considerable sensitivity when they use a range of media to compose pictures in the style of different artists. They are able to use a range of techniques very well to produce pastel pictures in soft tones, pencil sketches that convey texture and paintings that show how well they mix paints to obtain gradual degrees of shade. Although there are many examples of pupils' art work on display around the school, they do not have opportunities to use sketchbooks to jot down various ideas and thoughts on an informal basis and to record the development of their ideas.
122. Pupils enjoy art lessons very much and talk with enthusiasm about their work. They remember well the techniques they have used and are keen to explain what they have done. They work very carefully and can be relied upon to do their best. Even the temptation of working with real sweets to stick onto their 'houses' did not prove too much of a temptation for pupils in Year 1! Pupils are interested and involved in their work. They are very good at offering constructive advice to each other and their praise for each other's efforts is genuine. They persevere very well with tasks and use equipment sensibly and carefully.
123. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers plan their art lessons very well to develop specific skills. Their high expectations of pupils' capability in art can be seen from the high quality of finished items and the care with which they are displayed. Teachers' own knowledge and expertise in art are high. They offer very clear, precise suggestions about how best to approach the task. Often the teacher will demonstrate to give practical advice and show the possible pitfalls. The timing of their interventions in lessons is just at the right moment to improve pupils' work, without over-directing the end results. They make very good ongoing assessments of pupils' work to praise them and to offer advice to others. For example, in a very good lesson painting in the style of famous artists the teacher was quick to point out to the rest of the class that one pupil's work, *'is different from the original, but it's got the same feel and style'*. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and use praise well with clear, evaluative comments.

Lessons are relaxed and enjoyable. Art makes a positive contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; for example, the stunning use of colour in some of their drawings and the sensitivity with which pupils talk about their own and others' work.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

124. No lessons were timetabled during the period of the inspection. There was only limited evidence of pupils' work in school as pupils take home their finished products. Judgements are therefore based on artefacts that were seen in school, teachers' planning and assessment records and discussions with teachers and pupils. The previous report found that pupils' attainment was in line with expectations for the pupils' ages. They made sound progress across the school. Current evidence suggests that this is still the case.
125. The curriculum is now based on nationally produced material, and the co-ordinator has received training in its implementation. She has disseminated this to the staff. From discussion and teachers' planning, it is evident that the curriculum covers the broad range of elements in keeping with the recommendations of the National Curriculum. Teachers' planning shows that there is a strong emphasis on the development of skills necessary for the designing and making processes. In the early years pupils talk through their design process with the teacher. In Year 2 they choose and list materials which are to be used, and draw a design plan. In Key Stage 2 pupils make more detailed plans, moving towards creating a design brief. Where possible they make articles associated with a study topic; for example, when studying the Romans pupils made models of chariots.
126. Pupils work with a variety of media. They make biscuits, sandwiches and cakes. A rota of parent volunteers help with this work. Pupils work with textiles learning simple stitches and creating fabric collages. They learn to cut and shape materials, join them, strengthen them where necessary and finish the article to make it attractive. They make models using a variety of boxes, flexible and rigid materials and construction kits. Pupils evaluate their work and describe how they would modify any future product. For example, a pupil in Year 2 described a four-wheeled vehicle he had designed and made. He said that the *'Mod-Roc' skin* which covered the vehicle's body had, *'made it too heavy for the axles and they therefore required strengthening'*. This was achieved by, *'adding extra glue and a strong sleeve for the axle'*. The outcome was successful and the vehicle moves on its wheels. Pupils in Year 3 successfully make pop-up cards with levers and pivots. Pupils in Year 4 design and make large models of different mini-beasts which they then decorate attractively.
127. A good feature of the teaching is the use of detailed assessment sheets. These analyse and contain comments on each pupil's achievement in the stages of designing and making a product.

## GEOGRAPHY

128. The progress pupils make in geography, including those with special educational needs, is good. This is the same judgement as the last inspection. The school has maintained its good standards. Mapping skills are well taught and learnt.
129. Pupils make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of environments different from their own. They gain an increasing awareness of their own locality as they move through the school. Teachers make good use of the school grounds and the immediate area as pupils go on organised walks, note local features and begin to use appropriate geographical terms. Mapping skills develop as pupils in the reception class



use their visit to Bekonscot and look at roads and buildings. Pupils in Year 1 go on a spring walk and use the computer to build up a town correctly placing houses along roads. At the end of the key stage in Year 2 pupils can draw their own map of the school grounds, carefully inserting a relevant key. Pupils in Year 3 use these skills satisfactorily and map their walk in the village. However, they were unsure of road names and the difference between the River Bulbourne and the Grand Union Canal. By the time pupils reach Year 4 they are able to locate countries on the world map. They complete an in-depth study of Kenya as a contrasting country. They study the journey of a Kenyan snopea from the farm Naro Monu to our supermarket shelves. They write good accounts. Throughout the school there are examples of well-presented maps and hand written work.

130. Pupils show interest in their activities and are keen to talk about their work. Their attitudes are positive. Pupils are confident and prepared to try out their ideas. In fieldwork they co-operate well and listen intently to the adult instructing them.
131. Teaching ranged between excellent and unsatisfactory, and is good overall. At the end of Key Stage 1 the teacher has high standards and ensures pupils are motivated and work hard throughout the lesson. She uses questions effectively to make pupils think carefully and they give a high standard response. Lessons are very well paced with no loss of time, resources are well prepared and immediately to hand. Excellent use is made of support staff and parent volunteers who were well briefed with their own lesson notes to support the learning. Teaching in the early stages of Key Stage 2 is satisfactory overall, although unsatisfactory teaching was also observed. The lesson lacked pace, expectations of what pupils could do were set too low and the lesson lacked challenge and rigour. Teachers generally make very good use of visits to reinforce pupils learning.
132. The residential visit to Woodrow House in Year 4 is enjoyed by all pupils and there is a good geographical element when pupils have to follow a route and make a key for the map reinforcing the mapping skills learnt at school. The school maintains a broad curriculum although the school's arrangements for planning the subject means that during some terms pupils are not taught any geography. The co-ordinator has identified this as an area for future development. Resources are good and well used to support the learning.

## HISTORY

133. No teaching was timetabled during the inspection. Evidence was gained from a scrutiny of pupils work, displays around the school, looking at teachers' planning and records and from discussions with teachers and pupils.
134. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress throughout Key Stage 1 and by the time they leave school. This is the same judgement as in the previous inspection report. Pupils gain an understanding of history and acquire relevant skills at a sound level for their age. In Year 4 pupils presented their knowledge to show good recall and understanding in their study of the Victorians. They remembered the hardship of life as chimney sweeps and kitchen maids, and the research they did to find out more of the lives and work of Victorian artists, such as William Morris and Turner. They recalled the inventors that changed our lives, such as George Stephenson and Isambard Kingdom Brunel. They compared Victorian schools and those of today, although pupils did not realise that St Mary's school opened in the Victorian era. Pupils were taken for a historic walk around Northchurch and discovered that the local lock was nicknamed '*Sheepshead Lock*' a hundred years ago. Pupils in Year 3 visited the museum at Stevenage and discovered history from first hand evidence. Pupils in Year 2 can sequence changes in themselves from birth until now. As part of their topic on

giants, pupils found many facts and statistics about dinosaurs. They are fascinated by their size and how we know so much about their existence. Pupils in Year 1 are introduced to sequencing and their knowledge of the past is secure. One pupil wrote, *'I was a quiet baby, my favourite toy was Winnie the Pooh. I liked him sleeping in my bed'*. Pupils visited the Chiltern Open Air Museum to further their understanding of homes and buildings. This made history come alive. One pupil wrote, *'I enjoyed making the bricks'*. In the good interactive display in the Year 1 class there is a class made rag rug which is of a high quality.

135. No judgement on teaching can be made but teachers plan work carefully from the scheme of work. The subject policy is thorough and is to be revised to take into account the new Curriculum 2000 to be taught in September. Teachers make good links through historic topics with other areas of the curriculum, in particular art, information and communication technology and English. Good use is made of literacy skills taught; for example, pupils write notes from bullet points, extensive descriptions and use their good research skills to glean further knowledge. Good historical visits to places of interest are organised and the school is fortunate in having a local historian who comes into school regularly to talk to the pupils
136. As noted in the previous report the school is most fortunate to house historical artefacts belonging to the Northchurch Historical Society. Pupils were seen carefully looking and commenting on the articles in the display cabinets around the school. The school is allowed to use the artefacts for lessons and displays. Pupils show great respect in handling them and appreciate their value.

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

137. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils' attainment is above national expectations. By the end of Year 4 their attainment is well above national expectations. This is a considerable improvement on pupils' standards of attainment during the previous inspection, when they were judged to be just in line with national expectations. The school has worked very hard and successfully to raise the profile of information technology, to rationalise its use and to ensure that pupils' skills are improved in a logical progression. Pupils have regular access to computers and well-planned links between information technology and most other subjects are clearly evident in much of the pupils' work and in displays around the school. The fact that the school does not have a computer suite is not an obstacle to the development of pupils' skills. The work of the headteacher in establishing information technology as a priority and the hard work of the teachers to use computers in their classrooms are major contributory factors in the improvement in standards.
138. At the end of Key Stage 1 pupils use keyboard and mouse controls confidently and accurately. They have a good knowledge of the component parts of the computer system, for example keyboard, mouse, printer and what precisely they are used for. They can change font and are familiar with keyboard icons. Most can save, retrieve and print their work often without help. They successfully write a range of instructions to move a programmable robot in different directions and use computers well to complement art and mathematics activities. Groups of pupils use *'listening stations'* to listen simultaneously to taped stories and they use computer programs to develop their understanding of their reading books. Pupils, as a matter of course, first draft their work using a word-processing program.
139. By the time they leave school at nine years of age, pupils achieve standards of computer skills that are more often associated with those at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils in Year 4 particularly are extremely adept at using computers to extend the range of work in other subjects. They use word-processing programs, data handling, control and modelling

programs extremely competently. They can amend information, change font, highlight, cut and paste, print and save independently. They are able to issue instructions to a screen robot to make repeating patterns in mathematics to illustrate the results of their mathematical investigations.

140. All pupils at Key Stage 1, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. By the time they leave school pupils make very good progress, particularly in Year 4. The most notable feature of information technology in both key stages is the way in which pupils regard it as an integral part of learning in other subjects. For example, pupils in Key Stage 1 use a *'talking books'* program to consolidate their understanding of reading. In mathematics they use programs to reinforce and revise their skills in addition and subtraction and their recognition of 3-D shapes. In geography they use a program to help develop their understanding of mapping journeys and in English they use the word processor to write their stories and poems. In Key Stage 2 pupils imaginatively link computers and more than one other subject. For example, in English they identify the *'mood'* of other pupils' favourite stories and poems, input that information into a data base and print off the results as a pie chart as part of their mathematics work. Pupils in Year 3 design their own letters and envelopes and word-process the contents. There is a very clear progression in the way in which pupils develop skills in information technology. Good use is made of pupils' existing skills that have been learned at home. Pupils with special educational needs make the same degree of progress as other pupils. They have equal access to all the programs in use and some are designed specifically to improve their basic skills in literacy and numeracy.
141. Pupils' attitudes to information technology are very good. They learn quickly and enthusiastically. They work very well individually, in pairs and as whole classes, sharing tasks, taking turns and discussing their work sensibly. These tasks are often carried out without direct teacher supervision. Pupils listen attentively to instructions, concentrate well and handle resources with care. Because they are used to working with computers they regard them in a very *'matter of fact'* way and do not waste the time available.
142. Limited direct teaching was seen, but where it was observed it was at least good and there were examples of excellent teaching in both key stages. High quality, direct teaching of information technology is a major factor in pupils' high standards of attainment. Teachers are confident of their ability to develop pupils' skills and knowledge. Their medium-term planning includes many very good opportunities to link computers into other areas. In both the excellent lessons teachers inspired pupils to achievement that is beyond that attained by many primary school pupils. In one lesson the links made between English and information technology were exemplary. The development of the content of their written work was closely linked to their ability to use keyboard skills to retrieve it, amend it by using advanced word-processing skills, save it and print it. Teachers provide immediate feedback, praise and suggestions for improvement.

## MUSIC

143. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and in Years 3 and 4. The previous report found that standards in music were sound or better throughout the school. It commented that recorder playing was of a very high standard. The music co-ordinator was absent during the inspection and her particular talents were not available for observation. In composing, pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 understand the importance of making contrasts between fast and slow, loud and soft music. They consider a poem comparing the slow movement of the snail and the scampering of the mouse. As the poem is read from a tape pupils make different body and vocal sounds to suggest contrast. They develop this well, working in pairs and playing tuned and untuned percussion instruments.

144. Pupils in the reception class also use instruments to suggest elements of their *'pirate story'*. They show good understanding of the instruments' sounds as they suggest which would be suitable to represent a *'waterfall'*, *'a stormy mountain'* and *'a jungle scene'*. They correctly name some of the instruments and play them at appropriate points in the story. One pupil successfully conducts the instrumentalists.
145. Pupils in Year 4 discuss how the mood of a song is set by its tempo, rhythm, lyrics and volume. Working in groups with untuned percussion instruments they devise variations on the song, *'Everybody Loves Saturday Night'*. They work out different rhythmic accompaniments and write them down using their own form of notation. One group changes the lyrics to, *'Everybody Hates Monday Morning!'* and successfully composes an appropriate rhythm for the changed mood. Pupils perform their versions to each other, listening carefully and appraising each group's work. Small groups of pupils from Years 2, 3 and 4 learn to play the recorder during school time. Standards of playing have declined since the previous report. Pupils have not yet developed a sense of phrasing, correct articulation or good tone quality. Singing in assembly has good tone and diction. There is a weekly hymn practice but this did not take place during the period of the inspection. The weekly choir practice also did not take place because of the co-ordinator's absence. Development of pupils' singing did not feature to any great extent in the lessons observed.
146. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their music making. They collaborate well in pairs and groups to produce successful compositions and performances. They are appreciative of each other's work, often greeting group performances with applause. Their behaviour is good.
147. Teaching is satisfactory in 60 per cent of lessons and good in the remainder. In the good lessons, planning includes precise objectives and good detail of the activities to overtake them. At the end of the lesson the teacher discusses with the pupils what they have learned. In these lessons there is a variety of composing and performing activities to maintain pupils' interest. The lessons move at a brisk pace and make good use of instrumental resources. In the satisfactory lessons, although teachers are less confident, strengths of teaching such as class management and use of resources outweigh weaknesses. Although pupils are able to develop skills in playing classroom instruments, planning sometimes lacks focus and detail. In these lessons teachers usually concentrate on one objective and activity. This reduces the breadth of pupils' musical experience.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

148. All pupils in Key Stage 1 make good progress, particularly in gymnastics. By the time pupils leave school their progress is sound. This is a difference since the last inspection when pupils made good progress throughout the school. No games lessons were observed.
149. In Key Stage 1 in gymnastics pupils use space very well and quickly learn to control their bodies. They stop immediately at a given signal. Pupils in Year 2 work very hard throughout the lesson putting into their movement a considerable amount of energy. They can link a number of movements into a well thought out sequence. Throughout the lesson they are aware of the effect of exercise on their bodies and the changes that take place in their breathing and heart beat. In a dance lesson pupils express themselves by making strong stamping movements to the beating of the drum and are developing control and balance of their bodies. In the dance lesson in Key Stage 2 pupils listen very carefully to the music and move to the teacher's instructions, rather than creating their own movements and expressing their own ideas. They are developing satisfactory skills

of spinning, turning and stretching. By the time the pupils leave St Mary's in Year 4 all pupils can swim 25 metres.

150. Most pupils have a good attitude to physical education. They join in well, enjoying themselves and making good physical effort. Occasionally, a small minority of pupils does not give their full attention to the teacher, either by not listening carefully or by showing their disinterest in the dance. Pupils' attitudes to gymnastics are positive and they work well. In gymnastics, through working and playing together, pupils learn qualities of self-discipline and co-operation
151. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall although excellent teaching was observed in gymnastics in Key Stage 1. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly. They provide clear instructions for pupils and motivate them through their own enthusiasm. Lessons are well resourced with an appropriate range and variety of equipment. This allows all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to make good gains in their learning and improve their skills. Most members of staff change into suitable footwear for lessons and join in and demonstrate for pupils. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and make suitable demands of pupils' performance. In the best lessons, they are conducted at a brisk pace, with pupils being kept busy throughout. Teachers have appropriate control and management skills, especially when a wide range of activities is being undertaken. Teachers take the opportunity to use pupils to demonstrate good practice and encourage pupils to discuss and evaluate the quality of work. Teachers emphasise the importance of safety, but do not encourage pupils to change clothes for dance lessons.