

INSPECTION REPORT

ICKNIELD INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL

Letchworth

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117186

Headteacher: Mrs J Egan

Reporting inspector: J Ikin
3349

Dates of inspection: 20 – 24 May 2002

Inspection number: 194662

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Archers Way Letchworth Hertfordshire
Postcode:	SG6 4UN
Telephone number:	01462 620406
Fax number:	01462 620407
Appropriate authority:	head.icknielinfants@thegrid.org.uk
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Susan Wilcock
Date of previous inspection:	19/5/97

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3349	J Ikin	Registered inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education Religious education Foundation Stage	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
1333	E Forster	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
3856	S Wellsted	Team inspector	English Geography History Special educational needs English as an additional language	Attitudes, values and personal development
2414	D Westall	Team inspector	Science Art and design Design and technology Music Equal opportunities	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
22840	S Foulkes	Team inspector		

The inspection contractor was:

OASIS
Waterstone Cottages
Naunton
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire
GL54 3AS

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33 Kingsway
London

WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Icknield Infant and Nursery School has 302 pupils on roll, aged between three and seven years. Of these, 68 pupils attend the nursery on a part-time basis. Twenty-two pupils of compulsory school age come from ethnic minority heritages: Caribbean, Indian, Chinese and other minority ethnic groups. Throughout the school 41 pupils speak English as an additional language, including eight pupils who are at an early stage of English acquisition. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is above the national average. Most children who enter the school have attended the nursery. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is above average, although no pupils have a statement of special educational needs. There is a wide range of attainment on entry but overall it is below average. The school has recently been hampered in its work by difficulties in recruiting teaching staff.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a sound school with the welfare of children at its heart. The school's values of mutual respect and care are promoted effectively. A positive atmosphere for learning has been established as a result of the good leadership of the headteacher, the effective support of the governing body and the hard work of the staff team. Pupils reach the standards expected of them in most subjects by the end of Year 2, and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher provides good leadership and is well supported by the governing body. This has resulted in a steady improvement in teaching and learning and the standards that the school achieves.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well as a result of the good support that they receive.
- The provision that the school makes for pupils in the nursery is good and ensures that pupils make a good start to their schooling.
- The provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good and the school works as a harmonious community where all are included and valued.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to school and their behaviour is good. This is due to the good relationships that pupils have with their teachers; to the extra-curricular opportunities that the school offers at lunchtime; and the consistent application of the school's high expectations of good behaviour.
- The partnership that the school has with parents is good as a result of the good information that the school provides for them; the approachability of the headteacher and staff; and the way that the school seeks their views and responds to their concerns.

What could be improved

- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT).
- Procedures for checking the work of the school and the standards that are achieved.
- The use of assessment to help pupils make progress.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has worked hard to address the issues raised in the last inspection report and has made satisfactory improvements. Standards have improved in geography, history and religious education as a result of better planning and teaching. Assessment data is now used to set targets for pupils over the longer term, and this represents an improvement since the last inspection. However, assessment and target setting expectations have moved on nationally and as a result the school needs to do further work on this. Standards of work seen during the inspection are broadly in line with those of the last inspection. Over the last four years the school's improvement in test results has been in line with national trends.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
Reading	D	C	C	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Writing	E	C	D	D	
Mathematics	D	B	B	A	

The school's results for reading were in line with the national average and with the results of similar schools, but below both sets of results in writing. The results of tests for mathematics were above the national average and well above the average of similar schools. The results of the Year 2 statutory assessments for science were above the national average and the results of similar schools.

Inspection findings show that children achieve well in the nursery and the reception classes and attain standards in line with those expected for their age by the end of the reception year. In Years 1 and 2, pupils' achievement is satisfactory and they attain average standards in all subjects, except for ICT where achievement is unsatisfactory and standards are below average. Attainment at the school fluctuates from year-to-year reflecting the profile of different year groups, some of which have higher numbers of special educational needs pupils than others. This, in part, accounts for attainment in the current Year 2 being average rather than above average in mathematics. The school has set itself appropriately challenging targets for 2002 and is on course to meet them.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils enjoy the school, take great pride in belonging to the school community and are eager to learn.

Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Most pupils behave well and are polite, friendly and helpful.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils have generally good relationships with each other and all the adults who work with them. They respond well when opportunities are given to use initiative and take responsibility.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The school has worked hard to promote attendance and ensure that pupils arrive on time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2
Quality of teaching	Good	Satisfactory

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

The consistently good teaching in the nursery ensures that children have a good start to their schooling. Overall they are well prepared for the National Curriculum. In Years 1 and 2, teaching is satisfactory overall, although some good teaching was seen in mathematics in Year 1 and in history in Years 1 and 2. Literacy and numeracy are taught satisfactorily and lessons closely reflect the national guidance. Pupils who have English as an additional language are taught well by a skilful specialist teacher, and this enables them to make good progress. Pupils who have special educational needs are well supported by teaching assistants. There are significant weaknesses in the teaching of ICT which result in insufficient opportunities for pupils to use computers in the course of their work and so limits the progress that they make. When weaknesses occur in other subjects, it is because of insufficient use of assessment to inform planning for differing needs, passive and mundane tasks and insufficient use of skilful questions to help pupils to develop their ideas. Work is regularly marked but there is insufficient use of written comments to help pupils know what they have to do to improve their work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is satisfactory overall. In the nursery it is good and includes opportunities for children to learn in practical and interesting ways. Provision for extra-curricular activities, particularly at lunchtime, is good. Provision for ICT is unsatisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils are well supported by teaching assistants.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils are taught well by a specialist teacher who has a good understanding of pupils' individual needs and, as a result, they make good progress.

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for all aspects of pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good and effectively promotes pupils' appreciation of the world around them, their understanding of right from wrong, their sense of community, and a respect for differences. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils and monitors their personal development well. As a result, they feel safe and secure from an early stage and quickly grow in confidence. The collection and use of assessment information to support pupils' academic progress require further development.

The school has successfully established a strong partnership with parents, including those whose first language is not English.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides good leadership and educational direction for the school. The leadership role of subject leaders is developing but not yet sufficiently focused on improvements in standards, teaching and learning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their role well and their combined strengths make an effective contribution to the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has a satisfactory view of its own performance. The analysis of assessment and other data has been started but now needs to be developed further in order to give the school the precise information that it needs to inform improvements.
The strategic use of resources	The school's educational priorities are supported well through careful financial planning and the principles of best value are also applied well.

The accommodation is good and enriched by very attractive displays of pupils' work. The school grounds are of a good size and good use is made of them to support learning. Due to recruitment difficulties, the school has appointed an unqualified teacher to augment an otherwise appropriately qualified staff. She is well supported and has all the necessary qualities that are needed by a good teacher. As a result, pupils' education has not been hindered. Teaching assistants and lunchtime play leaders are all well trained and this makes a substantial contribution to the quality of education that the school offers. Resources are generally satisfactory, with the exception of ICT.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
They believe that : <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the school is well led and managed;• their children are well taught and make good progress;• the school has high expectations of children;• their children enjoy coming to school.	They would like: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a greater number of extra-curricular activities;• the school to work more closely with them;• to be better informed on their children's progress.

Inspection findings mainly support parents' positive views. There is no evidence to support their view that the school does not work closely with them. Parents have the normal range of opportunities to discuss their children's progress and annual reports are detailed and informative. Evidence shows that the school has successfully extended extra-curricular opportunities, particularly at lunchtime.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. There is a wide spread of attainment on entry to the nursery, but overall it is below average. As a result of the good teaching they receive, children develop positive attitudes to learning and make good gains in all areas of the curriculum. Their knowledge, understanding and skills are developed further in the reception classes so that by the time pupils enter Year 1, most attain the levels that are expected for their age. Pupils attain average standards in all subjects of the curriculum, except for ICT, by the end of Year 2 and this represents satisfactory achievement. In ICT, standards are below average and pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. This shows a decline since the last inspection, which can be partly explained by the fact that national expectations for ICT have moved on since then. Inspection findings show that there are significant differences in the profiles of different year groups. Both progress and attainment are better, overall, in Year 1 than in Year 2, partly as a consequence of more effective teaching, but also because there are more pupils with special educational needs in Year 2.
2. Most pupils in Year 2 attain the expected standard for their age in reading, and a small number do better. Higher attaining pupils read confidently and fluently using a range of strategies to work out the meaning of texts. Most lower attaining readers read accurately, but their understanding is often limited by their understanding of words and their ability to look deeper into the text to find hidden meaning. Pupils' skills in asking their own questions and using the library and other sources of information in the course of their work are not sufficiently developed. Their skills in speaking and listening are average overall. They mostly listen with an appropriate degree of concentration, and higher attaining pupils are articulate and express themselves both clearly and confidently. Lower attaining pupils are reluctant to participate in discussions and demonstrate weaknesses in patterns of speech and vocabulary. These weaknesses are also transferred to their writing and spelling. Pupils in Year 1 produce extended pieces of work, and develop reasonable control for their age over their handwriting and the presentation of their work. By the end of Year 2, most pupils just achieve the standard expected for their age but very few achieve at the higher levels. They master the basic structure of simple sentences and demarcate them appropriately with capital letters and full stops. When weaknesses occur it is because pupils find it difficult to organise and structure their work and use new and more complex words.
3. The evidence of the inspection is that the attainment of the majority of pupils is in line with the standard expected for mathematics by the end of Year 2. This represents satisfactory achievement and is similar to the findings of the last inspection. The satisfactory progress that pupils make is a result of a sound grasp of basic numeracy skills. They have a satisfactory grasp of mathematical facts, such as addition and subtraction up to 100, and as a result can calculate accurately. Year 1 pupils achieve better than those in Year 2 mainly because teachers have higher expectations of them and also because there are fewer pupils with special educational needs. Where weaknesses occur in mathematics it is because pupils' skills in problem solving, and investigations are underdeveloped.
4. Inspection findings show that pupils generally achieve satisfactorily in science. The vast majority achieve the nationally expected standard, although relatively few exceed

this level. Standards were also average when the school was last inspected. Most pupils know that they use their senses to experience the world about them and know something about the living world of animals and plants. They have a growing awareness of physical forces such as magnetism and electricity, and of the properties of everyday materials. Most pupils understand the need for systematic investigations and have a reasonable grasp of the principle of fair testing. However, their skills in drawing simple conclusions from investigations are generally underdeveloped.

5. Pupils' achievements in art and design are satisfactory, overall, and their standards are generally in line with national expectations in Year 2. While there is some evidence of above average work, standards are not as high as when the school was last inspected. Their skills in creating interesting collages and paintings are stronger than their work in observational drawing, where they need to pay closer attention to detail. In design and technology, pupils' achievement is also satisfactory and standards are in line with those that are expected for pupils in Year 2. This is similar to the findings of the last inspection. Pupils' progress in the subject is satisfactory overall. They plan their designs with varying amount of detail and develop their skills in using a range of different materials, joining them together in various ways and making moveable parts.
6. Standards in geography, history and religious education have improved since the last inspection and are now in line with those expected by the time pupils reach the end of Year 2. This is a result of an improvement in the quality of teaching, and better planning and use of resources. Pupils' achievement in physical education is satisfactory and standards are about average by the end of Year 2. This is not as high as the findings of the last inspection. However, a great deal of focused work has taken place and this has lessened the dependence on broadcast materials, which was criticised in the last inspection. Pupils' achievements in music are mainly satisfactory, and standards are in line with national expectations in Year 2. Pupils' singing is clear and controlled and their understanding of the musical elements such as pitch and dynamics is sound. All pupils are able to attend lunchtime recorder clubs, and good achievement is evident in the more advanced of the two groups.
7. Pupils with special educational needs make generally sound progress in their learning and in work related to the targets in their individual education plans. The school's own analysis shows that, overall, lower attaining pupils with special educational needs make better progress in relation to their starting points than higher attaining pupils with special educational needs, and that girls do better overall than boys. The fact that more boys than girls with special educational needs have behavioural difficulties is a factor which affects the progress they make. The school has identified a few pupils with special educational needs deemed to be making 'inadequate' progress', and plans are in hand to target support even more closely to their specific learning needs.
8. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress throughout their time in the school, and their attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 2 generally reflects their true capabilities. With rare exceptions, they meet the standards set nationally for all pupils aged seven in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.
9. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls or of pupils from ethnic minorities.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Almost without exception, pupils enjoy school. They like their teachers and other staff who work with them, and most pupils do their very best, most of the time and within their own understanding of what is required, to meet their teachers' expectations of them. Most pupils listen politely, sometimes to quite lengthy introductions to lessons, and they also settle readily to the tasks they are given to work on independently of adults. More able pupils tend to cope confidently with the tasks they are given. However, some lower attaining pupils lack both the skills and the confidence to complete writing tasks successfully on their own; and, while some pupils readily use the resources teachers have made available to them, for example to help them spell common words accurately, many do not. A significant number of pupils, in all year groups and irrespective of ability, prefer to remain silent during discussions, often in spite of their teachers' best efforts to include them. Others clearly enjoy answering questions and airing their views and are developing a genuine interest in learning.
11. Above all else, perhaps, pupils enjoy belonging to the 'family' groups represented by their classes and by the school as a whole. Their pride and their sense of security in belonging and being valued within such groups are very strong. Most pupils thrive on social interaction with adults and with other pupils, and they respond with great warmth when others show that they care or praise their efforts. They prize friendship. Even very young children in the nursery introduce their friends with pride during a circle time activity. Pupils like working together and gain strength through collaboration. Nowhere was this more evident than in the very accomplished performance given by a Year 1 class who recited, to the obvious delight of the assembled school, Roald Dahl's version of the story of 'The Three Little Pigs'. During lessons, they work well together in groups when required to do so, and they share resources fairly.
12. Most pupils are sociable and responsible, and they delight in being given responsibility for practical tasks, whether in the classroom, in the dining hall, or on the playground. They also respond very well to the lunch-time challenges set up by play-leaders. Their comments to inspectors show that these aspects of school life, where they are required to use their own initiative, are, in some ways, even more important to them than their lessons.
13. During most assemblies, pupils respond appropriately to invitations to pray and to reflect on moral themes, but their spiritual response is more strongly motivated by events with which they can identify at a human level. For example, they responded sensitively, both in drawings and in writing, to the recent death of the Queen Mother, and they are also able to empathise strongly with the feelings of people caught up in the Great Fire of London in 1666.
14. Most pupils behave well at all times. They show respect for their own and others' property, and they are polite and courteous, friendly and helpful. Occasionally, however, teachers are unable to engage the full attention of one or two pupils in their classes who are not easily motivated by the idea of learning for its own sake. There is, therefore, some off task behaviour. Occasionally, too, pupils are heard to say unkind things to others. Such behaviour does exist, but it is not the norm, and incidents involving bullying or racist comments are very rare. The overriding impression is of a very happy, caring school where relationships are good at all levels. Pupils show respect for one another and for adults, and also for beliefs, cultures, religions and opinions other than their own. Those pupils who have special

educational needs associated with emotional and behavioural difficulties work hard to meet the targets in their individual education plans.

15. All pupils mix well together and incidents of racist name calling are rare. Pupils are generally good at valuing others and including them in their activities.
16. Attendance at the school is satisfactory and there are low levels of unauthorised absence. Registers are taken appropriately at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions, which start promptly. A small number of pupils arrive after the formal start time for the school but this is not always recorded in the registers.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

17. The quality of teaching in the nursery and reception classes is good overall. In Years 1 and 2 it is satisfactory overall although some good teaching was seen in mathematics. Overall 73 per cent of lessons were satisfactory and 27 per cent were good. Although few lessons were seen in geography, history and religious education, the evidence from pupils' work and the lessons seen indicates that teaching is at least satisfactory and sometimes good in these subjects. This is an improvement since the last inspection and is a result of better planning, improved subject knowledge and better use of resources. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen, although there were important weaknesses in the teaching of ICT. The quality of teaching in mathematics and English is satisfactory overall. The introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies has made a significant contribution to this and to the improvement in standards in these subjects. In other subjects of the curriculum, teaching is satisfactory.
18. Teaching in the nursery is consistently good. Children's learning is promoted well through a range of well-planned practical experiences and activities that involve play and talk, and which are challenging but achievable. There is a good balance between teacher directed activities and those that are initiated by the children themselves. For example, during the week of the inspection, practitioners worked with groups of children in mathematical and language activities based on a mini-beast theme. At the same time, the role-play areas, based on the local garden centre and also on the story of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears', were also well used as a result of the children's own interest, and the careful provision of resources to ensure the development of learning. All practitioners in the nursery model a range of positive behaviours and take particular care when speaking, to help children develop their vocabulary and to use language for thinking. Interactions and support are given in a way that helps the children to develop confidence, to enjoy their learning and to persevere to overcome difficulties. As a result, children develop positive attitudes to themselves, to others and to learning.
19. Good teaching was also seen in the reception classes, although not to the same extent as in the nursery. Where teaching was good it was well focused and involved the imaginative use of resources to motivate children to learn in interesting and practical ways. For example, in a numeracy session, children enjoyed responding to 'Joshua', a giant puppet, in the course of a simple counting game; and enjoyed working practically with toy mini-beasts to count how many had crawled away. Where teaching was less successful it was because children were kept sitting on the carpet for too long, and tasks were dull, uninteresting or insufficiently matched to the interests and needs of the age group.

20. In Years 1 and 2, good teaching was seen in geography and history lessons where teachers had good subject knowledge and could pose skilful questions to help pupils extend and develop their ideas. Broadly satisfactory subject knowledge was evident in most other areas, including English and mathematics, and teachers are technically competent in teaching phonics and other basic skills. However, their knowledge, understanding and confidence in the use of ICT, results in insufficient teaching of the subject and its use as a tool for learning in other subjects of the curriculum. Recent in-service training has improved teachers' skills in teaching physical education, especially gymnastics, and this is having a positive impact on the progress that pupils are making in the subject.
21. Planning is mainly sound. This is an improvement since the last inspection because teachers now set clear objectives that the children understand. Satisfactory use is made of the literacy and numeracy guidance and the school makes sound use of national guidance to help teachers with medium-term planning in other subjects. The best lessons are supported by well thought out short-term planning that rigorously identifies what pupils are to know, understand and be able to do, and ensures a well structured series of tasks which pursue these objectives throughout the lesson. The best activities are interesting, purposeful and well matched to the needs, interests and aptitudes of the pupils. In these lessons, pupils respond well and are motivated and involved throughout because they are interested in what they have to do. Where lessons are less successful it is because there is less rigour in planning for pupils' differing needs and tasks are dull, uninteresting and make little contribution to the main learning objective. As a result pupils' knowledge and understanding are not sufficiently extended.
22. Teachers mostly have good relationships with their pupils and manage them well, dealing quickly and firmly with incidents of unacceptable behaviour. This helps most lessons to flow smoothly without undue interruptions. Pupils with particular emotional and behavioural difficulties in the school are managed well by teachers and the teaching assistants. However, in a small minority of whole-class lessons, quieter and more reticent pupils do not always receive the same amount of attention as the more dominant members of the class.
23. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations of pupils and use interesting and exciting methods of teaching that expect the most of pupils. Pupils work at the edge of their capabilities in these lessons and so deepen their knowledge and understanding. Progress is then good rather than satisfactory. The high standards that were achieved in the course of the performance by Year 1 pupils of a choral rendition of the Roald Dahl's 'Three Little Pigs' story, for example, were a result of the teacher's belief that the pupils could learn the complex vocabulary and respond to its hidden meaning with understanding, and they did. In a Year 2 literacy lesson a well-chosen text on 'The Planets' engaged pupils' interest and challenged their thinking. In a Year 1 numeracy session pupils worked at the edge of the capabilities when the teacher challenged them to make up their own 'big sums' from the random digits suggested by throwing a dice. Where weaknesses occur, for example, in the teaching of writing, teachers sometimes accept work that does not represent a pupil's best effort.
24. Interesting and practical ways of working were a feature of the best lessons. For example, a role-play area had been set up as a 1930s kitchen in a Year 1 class, using authentic artefacts, with great attention to detail. This was highly effective in promoting active learning about life in the past. Adults had a good knowledge and understanding of the subject and, as a result, asked appropriate questions to help

pupils develop their ideas, encouraged historical enquiry through skilled questioning, and gave clear and interesting explanations and demonstrations. This inspired great enthusiasm and motivated pupils' interest throughout lesson. Where weaknesses occur it is because teachers' questioning does not enable pupils to develop and explain their ideas. In addition, teachers do not take sufficient account of pupils' differing needs; there is an over-reliance on identical worksheets and tasks which repeat what pupils already know. Particular weaknesses occurred in the teaching of ICT because of the inappropriate use of whole-class teaching as a method, given the limitations of the school's computer resources.

25. Throughout the school, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop the skills of independent learning by asking their own questions, accessing sources of information independently, making decisions and choices about the methods and resources they will use for their work and organising their own materials and resources. A good example of this is in the development of pupils' skills in using the library. The skills that they need are not adequately taught. Although a new school library is being set up, more able readers are not currently given the practice they need to undertake independent research, for example in history and geography.
26. The school now has a satisfactory range of assessment procedures but they are inconsistently used by teachers to inform their ongoing work. This results in a lack of precision in planning for the differing needs of pupils and the targets that they need to meet in order to make progress in some lessons. Although work is regularly marked there is insufficient use of constructive written comments to help pupils know what they need to do to improve. Too often, feedback and marking in writing address, quite rightly, 'accessible' weaknesses such as spelling, handwriting and punctuation, but stop short of tackling equally significant weaknesses in organisation, structure, grammar and style.
27. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is sound, and, by the age of seven, most attain standards which reflect their capabilities. Generous staffing in the form of well trained teaching assistants and other support staff means that all teachers are able to rely on at least one extra 'pair of hands' in almost all lessons. Because of this, teachers are able to organise lessons so that either they, or a teaching assistant, can work with those pupils who most need help. In literacy sessions, group tasks are specially designed to develop pupils' basic skills. Teaching assistants are well briefed about the lesson content and the intended outcomes, and they make a significant contribution to pupils' attainment and progress. Their observations and written comments on pupils' progress are used constructively by class teachers when they plan future work. Several pupils in the school have special educational needs related to emotional and behavioural difficulties. These pupils are supported sensitively and capably. All staff are very aware of the importance of educational inclusion, and every effort is made to ensure that, whatever their special learning needs may be, pupils are encouraged to play a full part in all discussions and activities, to share their work with others, and to take pride in their achievements.
28. The few pupils in the early stages of learning English as an additional language benefit from periods of support from skilled, specialist staff, usually during lessons in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The part-time teacher who supports pupils from ethnic minority families provides very effective help for pupils in lessons, and occasionally withdraws pupils for specific help with English. For example, she has recently tailored a support programme for an Afro-Caribbean pupil whose home language is Patois. At the time of the inspection, a bilingual classroom support assistant was quietly but effectively helping a child to settle into school routines.

Using his first language and English, she is helping him to make good progress in learning to speak English and to learn about reading and writing at an appropriate stage for his development. The progress of all pupils with English as an additional language is monitored carefully, and underachieving pupils are targeted for focused intervention to help them improve.

29. Teachers are careful to ensure that pupils with English as an additional language can understand lessons. In some lessons there are few plans to help more able pupils to reach their potential. Strategies are being introduced to help boys achieve better standards in writing.

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

30. Children in the nursery benefit from a well-balanced curriculum, which provides a good range of learning opportunities and enables them to progress well. The curriculum for children in reception is satisfactory overall but there should be more planned opportunities for them to initiate their own learning through practical activities involving play and talk. For example, while the creative development of children in the nursery is promoted well through the class 'garden centre', where they organise the resources and role play when serving refreshments to customers, there is no similar provision for reception children. In addition, while children in the nursery have ready access to an outside play area to promote their physical development, reception children have more restricted access. The school recognises this and plans are in hand to improve the situation. The good curriculum provision in the nursery and the sound overall provision in reception ensures that children have a secure foundation for learning in Year 1.
31. In Years 1 and 2, the curriculum provides a sound range of worthwhile learning opportunities, and meets statutory requirements. Sufficient time is now allocated for history and geography, in contrast to the situation when the school was last inspected, and the syllabus for religious education is now covered appropriately. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy are firmly established in the school, and sound use is made of the time given for these key skills. Teachers' planning has improved since the last inspection, and teachers are making sound overall use of the national guidance provided by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority to promote continuity in pupils' learning. However, there are weaknesses in the provision for ICT, and pupils require more opportunities to develop their skills as independent learners. At present, lessons are often too prescribed by teachers to enable pupils to make decisions and be actively enough involved in the learning process.
32. The school makes good provision for pupils' personal and social education. Sex education and the importance of healthy eating are appropriately included in the science curriculum, and Year 2 pupils are told about the dangers of drugs. In addition, time is specifically allocated to enable pupils to discuss their feelings and to learn to be part of a caring community. Overall, the curriculum for pupils in Years 1 and 2 is sound and provides a satisfactory basis for the next stage in their education.
33. When the school was last inspected, there were no extra-curricular activities. However, recorder groups are now well established, and there is a very popular mathematics club, which was well attended by pupils and parents during the inspection. During lunchtimes, a range of interesting activities are provided by the play leaders, and have included a gardening club, an art club and opportunities for pupils to develop their netball and football skills.

34. Pupils with special educational needs enjoy full access to the whole curriculum and to extra-curricular activities. On the very rare occasions when alternative provision is made, arrangements are agreed with parents and with all appropriate external agencies, and are judged to be in the best interests of the child concerned. In response to very specific individual needs, the school adapts its provision, for example by making it possible for pupils to work within a different age group. Every effort is made by the school to ensure that pupils' entitlement to the whole curriculum is not prejudiced when pupils receive specific intervention to meet identified needs, for example through the 'Tracks' language programme. At the time of the inspection, most of the targets in the individual education plans of pupils with special educational needs were related to either literacy or to behaviour. Some pupils would also benefit from targets related to their work in numeracy, and the school hopes to diversify its provision in the near future to make sure that these needs are also met. Most existing targets in pupils' plans are appropriately focused on short-term achievable targets that are reviewed regularly. Pupils for whom English is an additional language play a full part in all the activities offered by the school. They have access to some books in their own home languages, and also to some dual-language texts.

Links with the community and partner institutions

35. Good use is made of the local area to broaden pupils' knowledge. Pupils visit the church, library, allotments and shops as part of their studies and visit a nearby town by train to compare it with their own. They also benefit from a variety of visitors such as the vicar, community policeman and school nurse who share their knowledge with them. Business links are mainly confined to sponsorship at Parents Association events. Pupils have opportunities to contribute to the community through occasional charity fund-raising events.
36. The school has maintained close links with the feeder junior school since the separation of the two governing bodies. The headteacher and staff have discussions about the curriculum, school improvement plans and other administrative matters and there is close liaison about transfer to ensure continuity of provision for all pupils including those with special educational needs. The pupils have the opportunity to use the information technology equipment occasionally and attend their sports day. This helps them feel more confident about moving up to their new school. Pupils also enjoy the chance to perform with others at the annual Letchworth music festival. Staff make appropriate visits to pre-school settings to meet the children who will be starting in the nursery.
37. Nearly all pupils have equal access to the curriculum but those in reception do not have the same easy access to outdoor play enjoyed by nursery children. Teachers plan to ensure that those in the mixed age class for pupils in Year 1 and 2 have similar opportunities.
38. The multicultural diversity of the school intake is positively celebrated and this is a strength of the school. Pupils learn about the festivals, food, dance and music of many lands and this makes a very positive contribution to the self-esteem of pupils from ethnic minorities. Pupils who go on extended holidays are expected to keep a record of their experiences and these are shared with others on their return.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

39. Overall provision for pupils' personal development is good, including for pupils' moral, social and cultural development. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory and acts of worship fulfil statutory requirements. This is an improvement on the last inspection when assemblies were insufficiently Christian in character.
40. Spirituality is soundly promoted through assemblies and lessons across the curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to develop an empathy with others and to explore values, beliefs and feelings, particularly through circle time, history and religious education. Thoughtful questioning enables pupils to express their feelings sensitively when exploring what makes them happy or sad, and to reflect on their inner emotions. In science, the study of mini-beasts actively promotes pupils' curiosity and sense of awe as they observe the creatures in their care, and helps to develop an early understanding of mankind's moral responsibility to all forms of life. Lessons in dance allow pupils to become immersed in the power of music and movement, and this is well demonstrated in an African dance performed in the class assembly.
41. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is good. The good behaviour policy is implemented consistently, across the school, and the vast majority of pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations of work habits, attention and movement around the school. The relatively new approach to behaviour management at lunchtime is also proving to be successful. Led by the lunchtime 'playleader', this good initiative provides pupils with imaginative challenges and opportunities, and has had a beneficial impact on behaviour and relationships, both in the dining room and on the playground. All lunchtime staff are involved, and they operate a good system of rewards to enable pupils to understand and recognise positive behaviour. Across the school, pupils are taught the difference between right and wrong and are given a range of opportunities to work and socialise together. For example, pupils are taught to listen and respond to each other sensitively during circle time; and to work collaboratively in pairs and groups, in lessons across the curriculum. The school is particularly successful in its active promotion of the 'school family'.
42. Cultural development is well promoted across the school. The school is particularly keen to celebrate and promote the diversity and richness of the cultures represented in the school population. Major cultural and religious festivals are used as the basis for dance, music and art activities, and enjoyed by pupils, parents and staff. Lunchtime and after-school clubs are popular and well attended, for example the half-termly Maths Club; and the school makes particularly good use of visits to enrich the curriculum. For example, pupils are given many opportunities to visit places in the locality and further afield.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

43. Icknield is a community where the importance of care and the fostering of high self-esteem underpin the good support that it provides for the pupils. Teachers and support staff know the pupils well, and relationships throughout the school are based on respect and encouragement. All adults are good role models for the pupils and always act in the pupils' best interest. The school has due regard for inclusion so that each child is valued and receives appropriate specialist support to enable full participation in all aspects of school life. The good relations fostered with parents means that they are prepared to share concerns or changes in circumstances with the staff, allowing for the briefing of staff to provide sensitive and well-focused support when necessary. The school, in consultation with the parents, is flexible about which class their child should be in to ensure that they are receiving the experiences and curriculum most suited to their stage of development.

44. Arrangements for child protection are good with all adults in the school having knowledge of guidelines and procedures to follow if they have concerns. Pupils are reminded about the need to keep safe, and checks are made on adults who might come into contact with pupils during the school day. Teachers are particularly careful to ensure that children are collected from school by known adults. Pupils benefit from good opportunities for personal and social education, for example through sex education and healthy eating. The school nurse helps with the drugs awareness programme that covers aspects appropriate for pupils' age. Road safety activities are also included as part of the programme every year. Each week, pupils have the opportunity to discuss matters relating to their personal development and feelings and this helps them to articulate any worries and to develop positive attitudes to school and their peers.
45. The school is successful in promoting good behaviour; the principles of positive behaviour are clearly understood by pupils and staff and are consistently promoted across the school. Pupils are keen to earn stickers in recognition of their effort, achievements or attitudes, and are proud of the certificates presented to them in celebration assemblies. Good use is made of behaviour plans to help those pupils who find it more difficult to maintain the standards of behaviour expected. There was a total of three exclusions last year. Trained play leaders are employed at lunchtimes to encourage the pupils to enjoy using the variety of play equipment provided. Staff have extended this role and now provide interesting challenges such as skipping, hitting targets or learning to tie their own shoelaces. This makes playtimes more interesting for the pupils who respond enthusiastically to the challenges. This good practice has had a significant impact on improving behaviour and raising pupils' self-esteem. Incidents of bullying are rare, quickly identified and dealt with effectively.
46. The attendance of pupils is carefully monitored and parents are contacted if the school has not been notified of a child's absence. Regular reminders are included in newsletters about the importance of punctuality and attendance and to avoid holidays in term-time. Children arriving after the start of school are appropriately recorded by the school office but the school accepts that procedures need to change to ensure that their lateness is also included in the class register. There are carefully planned visits to the nursery and school before the pupils start to help them become familiar with the environment and to share with parents the school's routines and expectations.
47. The health and safety policy is well implemented through regular site inspections by the caretaker, staff and governors and a number of risk assessments have been completed. There are well-established procedures and supporting documentation for medicines, accidents and emergencies and the majority of the staff have up-to-date training in first aid. The buildings and grounds are clean, tidy and well maintained and provide a safe and secure environment for the pupils.

Assessment

48. Overall procedures for monitoring pupils' academic performance and personal development are satisfactory although there are aspects in need of further improvement. Pupils' personal development is monitored and supported well but there is still a need to refine the collection and use of assessment information to support pupils' academic progress.

49. The last inspection report identified that the school needed to complete its assessment policy; and that there was no whole-school approach to target setting or the monitoring of pupils' progress and use of assessment information to inform planning. The school has clearly moved forward since that time. An agreed assessment policy is in place and provides sound procedures for assessing and recording results from end-of-year tests and teacher assessments in all subjects. This has resulted in a National Curriculum record sheet, based appropriately on a local education authority exemplar, which is filled in annually to record each pupil's current level of attainment and a predicted level for the following year. While these are useful for tracking the levels achieved by individual pupils and class groups, they do not adequately address the steps that pupils will need to take to improve their learning in important aspects of each subject. Short-term targets are set for individual pupils, and shared with parents, but there is scope to develop this practice further.
50. To strengthen the school's assessment procedures further, therefore, there needs to be a more rigorous analysis of pupils' work and test results in order to identify clear subject issues. These then need to be broken down into achievable small steps to aid improvement in the subject across the school, resulting in well-focused year, class and group subject targets. To aid this process of whole-school improvement in assessment, the school could make better use of the local education authority's handbook of assessment criteria for all subjects. This would assist teachers when making ongoing assessments and setting short-term targets; and would also support the tracking of pupils' achievements in key aspects of each subject.
51. At present, there is no whole-school agreement on giving written and oral feedback to pupils. An analysis of pupils' work shows that marking practices are variable and that the majority of teachers give brief, positive feedback on completed work. While these encouraging comments are important, there needs to be a greater emphasis on moving pupils' learning forward. The school has rightly identified the need to address this issue in the coming year. It will be important to establish clear guidance and a whole-school approach to marking and oral feedback so that pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do next.
52. The school is sensitive and supportive to those pupils with particular medical conditions and ensures that staff are well briefed about any special procedures of medicines required. Racial harmony and the valuing of each child are strongly promoted in the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

53. The headteacher and staff have been successful in establishing a strong partnership with parents, including those whose first language is not English. Parents have full confidence in the way the school is managed and value the teaching and the progress that their children are making. From their earliest contact with the nursery, the staff are open and welcoming with parents. They provide clearly written and friendly documentation about the school. There is also the opportunity for new parents to observe sessions in the nursery and reception classes. This gives them a clear idea of expectations and the chance to ask questions. This link is maintained through the weekly session of sharing a book in school with their child, which also serves to stress the importance of their part in their child's education.
54. Parents receive a full range of information about the curriculum, which is explained at a meeting at the start of the autumn term. Regular newsletters keep them in touch with school activities; and the governors' report to parents is exemplary in its clarity

and content. Parents' views are regularly sought about changes to school procedures such as school uniform; and the school improvement plan is also circulated to them for comment. This gives parents a sense of ownership and pride in the school, which is then reflected in the attitudes of their children.

55. Parents generally find that teachers are easy to talk to and know that they will alert them to any concerns or problems their children may be having in school. Good use is made of the chance for informal contact between parents and teachers at the start and end of the day. Parents have the normal range of opportunities each term to discuss how their children are progressing; and staff make every effort to ensure that contact is made if appointments are not convenient. Annual written reports are detailed and informative, and pay particular attention to children's personal development.
56. The school works hard to encourage parents to become involved in their children's education. They are given clear guidance about homework, supporting mathematics and hearing their children read and this gives them confidence to support their children. During the inspection week, the school held its after-school Maths Club, which is planned twice a term. Many parents accompanied their children to try out a large number of different mathematics tasks and investigations and all participants were enthusiastic to join in. This exciting venture makes a significant contribution to children's mathematical skills and further fosters parental involvement.
57. For their part, parents are supportive of the school and a few give generously of their time to help with activities or to accompany visits. The Parents Association, jointly run with the junior school, organises well-supported events to raise funds for additional resources and improvements to the school's environment. The majority of parents give their children encouragement to complete homework tasks but there is scope for some to increase their commitment to hearing their child read regularly at home, as this would have a beneficial effect on improving skills.
58. Evidence shows that the school makes every effort to keep parents informed about, and involved in, the provision made for any child who has special educational needs. The majority of parents appreciate the school's efforts on their child's behalf and work well with staff. For example, they make sure there is consistency in support for reading at home and in school, or, should it be necessary, they assist their child, and the school, by following an agreed approach to the management of behaviour. They attend meetings that have been arranged, for example with outside specialists whose services have been engaged to help their child; and, where relevant, they contribute ideas for future targets in their child's individual education plan. Unfortunately, however, there are a few parents who cannot, or who do not, support the school as fully as they might in its endeavours to help their children. The school is fortunate in being able to draw on the expertise and skills of the bilingual classroom assistant and the support teacher for pupils from ethnic minority families, to help it in its communication with parents. For example, the bilingual classroom assistant is able to interpret for Punjabi and Urdu speaking parents when there are discussions involving pupils' progress, school routines or curriculum matters; and both staff have been successful in encouraging the parents of pupils from ethnic minority groups to come into school and to participate in special events such as the mathematics workshop.
59. Most notices around the school are in several languages and copies of newsletters, school documentation and pupils' reports are translated where necessary. The school is careful to ensure that parents not living with their children are fully informed

about school activities and their progress. Parents from ethnic minorities generously provide food and artefacts for the celebration of festivals.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

60. The overall leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership for the school and gives a clear educational direction. The leadership by senior staff is satisfactory but requires further development.
61. The headteacher has a clearly articulated vision for the school, which places the child at the heart of school improvement and aims for high academic and personal standards. Under her leadership, the staff and governors have agreed a range of policies; and there is a well thought out programme for ongoing review and development in which all are involved. As a result, staff work well together and provide a secure environment which effectively fosters pupils' personal development. Teachers have worked hard to develop their practice and recognise that more needs to be done in order to meet the school's academic goals. The staff and governors hold the headteacher in high regard and value her professionalism, the time that she gives to listen, the ability to provide effective support and challenge, and her openness. There is very good encouragement for all members of staff to take responsibility, and they know that their contribution to the school is appreciated and valued. A very good example of this is the way the mid-day meals supervisor's role has been developed so that she takes full responsibility for the play leader scheme. This has made a significant contribution to the quality of pupils' play at lunchtime and has also improved behaviour. Roles and responsibilities have been appropriately delegated and there is appropriate provision of support and training. Subject managers have been guided in the development of their roles. All members of the leadership team have undertaken training in school self-evaluation. Opportunities are given for individual expertise to be shared for the benefit of the school. The deputy headteacher gives sound support in her role as special educational needs co-ordinator and has led training sessions on the new Code of Practice. The teacher with responsibility for pupils with English as an additional language, and the English and mathematics subject managers have also led training sessions. The school recognises that more needs to be done to develop the leadership role of senior staff, for example, in identifying how to improve standards, and in the evaluation of teaching, learning and standards.
62. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities well and make a substantial contribution to the effectiveness of the school. They are ably led by the chair of governors who is highly committed to the school. Governors share a wide range of experience and expertise and use their combined strengths well for the benefit of the school. Committees and meetings are well organised and attended and issues are rigorously debated prior to decisions being made. Governors are appropriately involved in monitoring and school development planning. They ensure that they are well informed about the school, not only through the headteacher's reports but also by visiting the school regularly, talking with staff and observing lessons. They have a clear view of the school's strengths, weaknesses and the challenges that it faces, and use this knowledge well to inform their work.
63. The management of the school is satisfactory overall. The headteacher has carried out checks on teaching and learning through a programme of lesson observations. These have involved thorough feedback to individual teachers and included useful pointers on how they can improve. Subject managers have also observed lessons and, as a result, developed a broad overview of the subject across the school. These procedures now need to be sharpened to ensure that they are more tightly focused on teaching and learning and give more precise information to inform planning for

improvement. Assessment data, which gives a picture of the progress and achievement of every child in the school over the longer term, has been collated. The results are used to set longer-term targets for individual pupils and to inform future developments. However, a more rigorous analysis is needed in order to identify the precise areas of subjects that need to be improved.

64. Procedures for development planning are good and ensure that everyone understands the main priorities for improvement, and their part within school development. Key areas for improvement are identified as a result of consultation with staff and governors, and actions are carefully planned so that they are manageable and properly funded. There are very good links with the budget. However, success criteria and arrangements for checking progress need to be more precisely focused on the impact of actions on improving standards, teaching and learning.
65. The management of special educational needs provision has improved since the last inspection and is now largely effective in ensuring that pupils receive the help they need to make progress, particularly in aspects of literacy. Special educational needs funding is used efficiently, and support staff are both suitably trained and well deployed. The special educational needs governor monitors provision with a critical eye, and the annual report to parents contains an informative report on the success of the school's special educational needs policy. The day-to-day management of special educational needs provision is shared between the special educational needs co-ordinator, who is also the deputy headteacher, and a part-time support teacher. Their roles are complementary, and they sensibly divide responsibility for monitoring the progress of pupils. Approaches to special educational needs work in the school is consistent, and there is effective teamwork amongst all staff involved. The special educational needs register has been adjusted appropriately in response to the recommendations in the new Code of Practice. All statutory requirements in regard to special educational needs provision are met.
66. The management of provision for pupils with English as an additional language is effective in anticipating and meeting the needs of pupils, parents and staff.
67. There is a sufficient number of appropriately qualified teachers, and collectively they have the expertise to meet the demands of the curriculum. The school's procedures for performance management are good and are used well to promote the professional and personal development of staff. Most staff feel that they are given good encouragement and support in the development of their roles, but recognise that they need to develop greater expertise and confidence to promote improvements in their subject areas. The school's teaching assistants work in close partnership with teachers and make a significant contribution to pupils' learning and progress. Induction procedures are good and the unqualified member of staff is given very good support.
68. The budget is well managed and the principles of best value are applied well so that all the monies that are available to the school are directed towards obtaining the best provision for the education of the pupils. The school makes good use of all its allocated funds for their designated purposes and links them closely to its priorities for improvement. The large carry over figure that appears in the school's budget can be explained by the need for the school to retain funding to pay for improvements to the building. The school's accommodation is good and recent improvements have been beneficial to the curriculum for pupils in the nursery, reception classes and in Year 2. Further improvements are planned to create better provision for pupils with a physical

disability, a computer suite, and better office and staff room arrangements. Resource provision is satisfactory overall and resources for religious education have been improved substantially since the last inspection. The school has extensive grounds, which it uses well to support the curriculum, particularly in physical education, mathematics and science. Provision of outdoor climbing and play equipment enhances opportunities for pupils to develop their physical skills. The school has plans to improve resources for outdoor play for nursery and reception aged children.

69. Given the higher than average unit cost for each pupil, the values and attitudes that the school successfully promotes and the satisfactory progress that pupils make in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, the school gives satisfactory value for money.
70. The school has a satisfactory policy for equal opportunities but recognises that it needs to be reviewed to take account of the needs of more able pupils. Achievement of ethnic groups and boys and girls are appropriately monitored, and strategies have been introduced to help all pupils reach their potential. Although the school is on one level, access for pupils or parents in wheelchairs is restricted because there is no toilet provision. The school has a good range of books, including dual language books, and resources to reflect the ethnic background of its pupils.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

71. In order to build on the work that the school has ready done and improve standards further, the headteacher and governors should address the following issues:
- 1) Raise standards in ICT by:
 - improving teachers' knowledge, confidence and skills in the subject;
 - providing consistent opportunities for pupils to learn the specific skills of ICT;
 - improving opportunities that pupils have to apply their ICT skills in other subjects of the curriculum;
 - implementing the school's plans for the development of an ICT suite and ensuring that it is regularly used.(Paragraphs 1, 17, 20, 24, 31, 96, 102, 110, 115, 127, 133, 134, 135, 136, 138)
 - 2) Improve the rigour of monitoring and evaluation so that it gives more detailed information to inform planning for the improvement of standards by:
 - ensuring greater precision in the analysis of test results to identify and focus subject issues;
 - developing the skills of subject leaders in observing and evaluating teaching and learning;
 - ensuring that success criteria in school development and action planning identify specific outcomes based on improvements in teaching, learning and standards.(Paragraphs 61, 63, 106, 111, 116, 121, 133, 137, 149)
 - 3) Strengthen the use of assessment procedures by:
 - breaking down identified subject issues into meaningful year, class and group targets for learning that raise standards progressively over time;
 - making better use of the local education authority assessment criteria to guide ongoing assessment and short-term target setting, and to track pupils' progress over time;

- establishing whole-school approaches to marking and oral feedback so that pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do next.
(Paragraphs 21, 24, 26, 49, 50, 51, 98, 99, 104, 127, 149, 155)

In addition, the headteacher and governors should consider the following less important issues to improve the quality of teaching and learning:

- 1) Improve teachers' intervention in writing so that:
 - pupils' written work is analysed in relation to the criteria used for marking national tests so that common weaknesses can be identified and addressed;
 - individual pupils are shown how to improve weaknesses in their writing related to structure, organisation, grammar and style.
(Paragraphs 2, 26, 98)
- 2) Improve pupils' reasoning skills and their skills of independent learning by:
 - developing the skills that teachers need to ask questions in a way which helps pupils to develop their thinking;
 - ensuring well planned opportunities for pupils to ask their own questions and develop their own lines of enquiry.
(Paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 10, 12, 24, 25, 31, 101, 110)
- 3) Strengthen the links between the nursery and reception classes so that:
 - all pupils have similar access to a rich and stimulating learning environment both indoors and out;
 - all pupils have opportunities to learn through similar teaching approaches which are relevant and interesting to their age and stage of development.
(Paragraphs 18, 19, 30, 72, 73, 74, 78, 89, 91)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	45
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	23

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	0	12	33	0	0	0
Percentage	0	0	27	73	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	34	234
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	52

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	Y1 – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	8	68

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	41

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	37
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	23

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	36	29	65

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	27	25	33
	Girls	25	27	28
	Total	52	52	61
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	80 (81)	80 (89)	94 (95)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	29	32	34
	Girls	27	28	28
	Total	56	60	62
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	86 (88)	92 (95)	95 (97)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	16
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	134
Any other minority ethnic group	3

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y2

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26
Average class size	29.25

Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	233

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	34
Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	94
Number of pupils per FTE adult	8.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.7
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	1	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	1	1
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.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
	£
Total income	572,817
Total expenditure	534,189
Expenditure per pupil	1,926
Balance brought forward from previous year	30,047
Balance carried forward to next year	77,462

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	302
Number of questionnaires returned	30

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	63	27	7	0	3
My child is making good progress in school.	40	50	0	3	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	57	7	7	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	50	13	0	13
The teaching is good.	53	40	3	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	47	13	7	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	67	20	10	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	40	60	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	37	43	20	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	50	50	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	40	7	7	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	37	17	7	13

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

72. Children are admitted to the nursery class in either the September or January of the year in which they become four and move into the reception classes in the year in which they become five, at the same times. Most children who enter the school have attended the nursery on a part-time basis, either in the morning or afternoon sessions. The nursery is housed in a unit with a small but adequate outdoor play area, which includes a hard play and small grassed area. The reception classes are adjacent to the nursery. They have their own outdoor area, although limited use is currently made of this, there are well-developed plans to improve the situation.
73. The nursery and reception staff meet together, to ensure that children have access to a similar curriculum at an appropriate level. The curriculum covers all six areas of learning; and activities are particularly purposeful, coherent and well structured in the nursery. Activities in the reception classes are more variable.
74. Provision in the nursery is good and this is a strength of the school. A rich environment for learning through play and talk has been created. There is a good balance between teacher directed and child initiated tasks; and ample opportunities for children to take part in practical and purposeful activities both indoors and out. The nursery teacher leads a talented and effective team who are well-qualified early years practitioners. They all contribute to planning and share responsibilities for groups of children and areas of the nursery. This results in the children benefiting from their shared expertise. Provision in the reception class is satisfactory overall with an appropriate emphasis on the basic skills of language and mathematical development. In some lessons; a range of interesting activities are planned which motivate children and actively engage them in learning. There are weaknesses in some lessons however, when teacher directed activities predominate and children spend too long sitting on the carpet listening. Although there is access to the outdoors, there are fewer opportunities for outdoor play in the reception class.
75. Provision for children with special educational needs is good throughout the Foundation Stage. There are very good links with outside agencies, for example, the early years advisory service for special educational needs, who visits the school regularly, and work alongside staff to plan suitable work and assess progress. Teachers and educational support assistants work closely with parents and there are good monitoring arrangements, which are used to inform planning for children's particular needs. This contributes to the good progress that they make. Provision for pupils who have English as an additional language is good.
76. The partnership between parents and the staff is very good. There are appropriate induction procedures, which ensure that children are well prepared for entry into the nursery. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress and of the work that the children are doing. There is a wide spread of attainment on entry to the nursery but overall it is below average for pupils of a similar age. The quality of education that is provided in the nursery and reception classes overall prepares them well for the curriculum in Year 1 and 2.

Personal, social and emotional development

77. Children develop positive dispositions and attitudes to learning in the nursery and reception classes. They are keen to learn, show developing confidence and a growing independence in their ability to select and use activities and resources. The wide range of interesting, purposeful and practical tasks provided in the nursery is particularly effective in engaging children's interest and, as a result, they demonstrate an ability to concentrate well for extended periods. Children have ample opportunities to develop an awareness of their own feelings and a growing knowledge of the language they can use to describe them. This enables children who do have problems and concerns to approach the adults who work with them to discuss their feelings privately. There are also some good opportunities for children to act out their own feelings and imagine what it might feel like to be someone else. In the course of role play, for example, how they might feel if they were Goldilocks in the three bears' house when the bears return. This growing awareness of their own and others' feelings makes a significant contribution to the development of their ability to develop good relationships with their classmates. This is further developed through opportunities to work and play alongside each other. They have a good understanding of the basic rules that make for harmonious groups, such as turn taking. Children have a developing knowledge of what is right and wrong and some understanding of the consequences of their actions for themselves and others. They can dress themselves and take care of their personal hygiene. The good provision of equipment and resources to reflect children's own backgrounds and cultures, makes a significant contribution to their understanding of cultures that are different to their own.
78. In the nursery teaching is good. Staff, build trusting relationships with children from an early stage and encourage children to try new experiences. They use varied and suitable teaching methods, including lively and effective interaction with children's play, giving clear explanations, introducing props at appropriate moments and using questions skilfully to move learning on. Children are given opportunities to demonstrate what they know and understand and this encourages them to think about what they have achieved, to take a pride in their work and grow in confidence when talking with others. In the reception class teaching is also mainly good. Relationships between adults and children are good and there are clear explanations and sensitive interactions to support learning. Opportunities for children to develop the skills of choice, responsibility and independence are more limited than in the nursery, however.

Communication, language and literacy

79. Although there is a wide spread of attainment, the language skills of many children entering the nursery are below average for their age, and their expressive use of language is often particularly weak. However, they are given a secure foundation in initial literacy skills, and they gain confidence and control in speaking and listening with adults and their peers. Children of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress towards the Early Learning Goals defined as 'standards of attainment' for children aged five. The quality of teaching in this key area is good.
80. At the time of the inspection, during the first half of the summer term, most children in the nursery are able to join in confidently when the teacher leads them through songs. They have learned most of the words by heart, and they recall increasingly lengthy refrains as the song progresses. When the teacher reads the story of 'Lucy the Ladybird', all children listen with rapt attention. The more confident children answer

questions about the plot, characters and key events sensibly, and most children understand, and use, special terms such as 'beehive' and 'cocoon' related to the 'mini-beasts' topic they are studying. A few, higher attaining children, can use inference to identify the moral of a story, and can predict, for example, what might happen if the ladybird came too close to the spider's web. Older children in the nursery are beginning to recognise letters, which represent the initial sounds in names and other words, and some can distinguish between capital letters and those written in a lower case.

81. Most children in the nursery have settled quickly into school routines and are able to participate in 'shared' activities involving language use with growing confidence. However, a significant number do not readily volunteer to answer questions during discussions, and a few still need to be persuaded gently to speak up during registration.
82. Most children in the reception classes listen well, although their use of speech remains, overall, a little below average for their age. All have a growing understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds, and many can also match whole words written on cards to words in a story book. A few, higher attaining children, can already read very simple texts independently. Most children can use pictures and context to help them make meaning when reading or looking at books, and all have a growing vocabulary of special terms for talking about books. For example, they know words such as 'author', 'illustrator' and 'title-page', and they know, generally, how books 'work'. Some children can identify rhymes in a text and can recognise, in the rhyme, the repeat of a phonic pattern. Many children still find this difficult, and it is also clear, from their responses during discussion, that they are not yet 'reading for meaning'.
83. Most children in the reception classes can form at least some letters accurately, and most can communicate ideas for an adult to write on their behalf, for example to accompany drawings recording things they have done or learned. Their independent writing, although still 'emergent', often already bears many of the conventional characteristics of conventional handwriting. For example, the writing follows a left to right direction across the page, certain familiar letter sounds are represented accurately, and some children are beginning to leave spaces, as if between words. A very few, higher attaining children, write recognisable words in an appropriate format, for example as a shopping list.

Mathematical development

84. When children enter the nursery their mathematical development is below average. As a result of good teaching they make good progress to attain the standards expected by the end of the reception year. Teachers plan a wide range of mathematical opportunities and make good use of talk to help children develop their mathematical vocabulary. There is very good use of everyday activities, such as registration, to promote the use of counting and number recognition.
85. Children begin to show an interest in numbers and in counting at an early stage because of the well-designed activities provided. For example, in the nursery they count and order toy mini-beasts and the number of chocolate buttons that they need for their 'ladybird biscuits'. Practical activities are a feature of the best lessons in the reception classes, for example, when counting along with puppet.

86. Children in the nursery begin to develop an early understanding of shape and space as they build tall towers and long lines with blocks, and enclosures with construction apparatus. In the course of their work with sand and water they fill and empty containers and begin to learn the language and meaning of full and empty, more and less. This work is built on in the reception classes where children learn more formal recognition of shapes. They also develop an early understanding of how to tell the time and develop their ideas about measurement through the use of non-standard units. Reception children have made good use of their mathematical skills in the course of finding out about the natural world and created simple block graphs to show the range and numbers of creatures they have found in the school grounds.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

87. Evidence from planning, from classroom displays and from photographic records shows that children experience a relevant curriculum and are taught appropriate vocabulary, knowledge and skills as a basis for the later study of geography and history. It is clear that children are helped to understand the wider world in which they live. For example, they look at houses, talk about their similarities and differences, and learn the names of their various parts and materials. They observe the changes being made to their environment when buildings are dismantled on the school site. They watch the builders at work and discuss what is happening. They also learn about more natural changes to their environment. For example, they note the changes that occur in summer when flowers appear in the school field and when the trees provide shade for them from the hot sun. Postcards and photographs from holiday places at home and abroad remind the children of places further afield. In order to develop an understanding of 'past' and 'present', children are encouraged to talk about significant events in their own lives and about significant changes that have occurred within the lives of other people that they know. They recall their own earliest memories, consider how they have changed since they were babies, and, by looking at photographs, recognise that even their teachers were once very young. They routinely use language associated with the passage of time and with the changing dates and seasons in relation to everyday activities and observations, and they learn how to organise events in a chronological sequence, for example when recalling things they have done. When they learn about dinosaurs, they begin to distinguish between events that have occurred in the recent past and those which took place a long, long time ago.
88. In nursery and reception, children make good progress in developing their scientific understanding of the world. At present, they are all learning about the insects and other small creatures which can be found in the local environment, and even the youngest children can identify a good range of mini-beasts. In a session observed in the nursery, children carefully searched the naturalised area in the school grounds for creatures and made good progress when discussing where to look to discover them. They benefit from looking closely at the creatures using magnifiers, and take great care to put them back safely in the school field after their observations. While children were painting pictures of ladybirds, good questioning by the nursery nurse helped children to explain what they had learned - for example, that they needed to paint six legs and knew that ladybirds fed on tiny creatures living on plants. Children in the nursery have also planted seeds and are carefully watching their development; and all nursery and reception children recently enjoyed a talk by a parent who works at the local garden centre. In reception, children are watching the development of tadpoles with great interest and know that these will eventually become frogs. Children's understanding has developed well as they have watched caterpillars change into chrysalides, and they are patiently awaiting the emergence of 'Painted

Lady' butterflies. The understanding of nursery and reception children was broadened further by a visitor who showed a wide variety of different mini-beasts. As a result of effective teaching, the scientific knowledge and understanding of most pupils meets the expected level at the age of five.

Physical development

89. Children in the nursery and reception classes benefit from suitable opportunities to develop manipulative skills when using construction toys and play dough, and when painting, drawing and working with role-play equipment. They make sound progress and develop an appropriate degree of dexterity for their age. Children in the nursery enjoy regular access to the outdoor area where, supervised by adults, they develop their co-ordination and their awareness of space for themselves and others. The hard play area ensures that children need to control their movements through a growing awareness of the speed and direction in which they travel. They demonstrate that they can do this with great accuracy. They also move with increasing control over their bodies when working on more formal teacher directed activities in the hall. Access to outdoor play using large toys and equipment for reception aged children is more limited. They do, however, demonstrate that they can also move safely and with growing confidence when using small games equipment. Appropriate use is made of the hall for physical education lessons, which involve the children in more formal activities in preparation for the early stages of the National Curriculum. They control and co-ordinate their bodies confidently, when walking and running and have a good awareness of their own space in relation to others. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers and nursery nurses interact with activities to help children to develop and extend their skills

Creative development

90. In the nursery children make good progress in their creative development. They become engrossed in role play in the class garden centre including when providing teas for their customers. They also benefit from small world play with model creatures and people, and have ready access to puppets. In a lesson observed in the nursery, good teaching enabled pupils to achieve well when creating bold paintings of ladybirds, and when making model insects using play dough. The garden centre is attractively decorated with children's vibrant paintings of flowers and the many pictures of mini-beasts which are displayed in the classroom demonstrate children's confident approach to painting. Nursery children have learned a range of action songs, and clearly enjoy their regular singing sessions.
91. In reception, children continue to progress well in art and design, make satisfactory progress in music but need more opportunities to promote their creative development through play. They have made effective clay models of mini-beasts and their paintings of snails, butterflies, caterpillars and bees represent mainly good achievement. In addition, reception pupils make sound progress when learning simple printing techniques, and have created delicately coloured butterflies, using overlapping tissue paper of different colours. They have looked carefully at Matisse's picture 'The Snail' and have made their own effective interpretations using paper shapes. In a lesson observed in reception, children listened carefully to music from 'The Carnival of the Animals' and made satisfactory progress when creating pictures that reflected their response to the piece. At present, reception children have limited opportunities for role-play, and this contrasts significantly with the opportunities provided for nursery children. As a consequence, opportunities are being missed to promote their creative development further. Despite this deficiency, the provision

made for children's creative development is good when considered across nursery and reception as a whole; and most pupils reach the standards expected at the age of five in this important element of their learning.

ENGLISH

92. In the national tests for Year 2 pupils in 2001, the school's results were in line with the national average and with the results of similar schools in reading, but below both sets of results in writing. Overall, pupils do better in reading than in writing, a pattern that reflects results nationally. Pupils in the school also tend to do less well in English than in mathematics. The school's results for the year 2001 showed a significant improvement on those of previous years in the performance of higher attaining pupils, particularly in writing, although standards of attainment in writing, overall, remain below those attained in reading. Indeed, the school has identified attainment in writing as a focus for improvement and has introduced some useful strategies to address this weakness in pupils' performance.
93. Inspection findings show that there are significant differences in the capabilities, and, consequently, also in the performance of, different year groups. The current Year 2 groups, for example, include a significant number of pupils with special educational needs, and this, to some extent, accounts for the fact that attainment in this year group remains, overall, slightly below average. Both progress and attainment are better, in Year 1 than in Year 2, partly as a consequence of effective teaching, but also because the profile of pupils, in terms of their capabilities, is more favourable than in Year 2. Only a few pupils in the current Year 2 group exceed the standard expected of pupils aged seven in reading, and very few do so in writing.
94. In both year groups, pupils with special educational needs make steady but sound progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. Pupils for whom English is an additional language generally make good progress. By the time they are seven, most have made up lost ground and attain the standards expected of pupils of the same age nationally.
95. By the age of seven, most pupils are able to listen with an appropriate degree of concentration during literacy lessons, although the attention of some lower attaining pupils sometimes wanders when introductory sessions are too long. The few higher attaining pupils in Year 2 are articulate and express themselves both clearly and confidently. Some lower attaining pupils are reluctant to answer questions during discussions. When they do speak, their powers of expression are far from secure: often, they lack the skills to organise their thoughts and to put their words in the best order. Many have only a limited general vocabulary, and their pronunciation of both common and more unusual words is often unorthodox. Inevitably, these weaknesses in pupils' speech patterns are also transferred to their writing and spelling, and they account for some of the most significant weaknesses found in pupils' writing.
96. Most pupils aged seven attain the expected standard for their age in reading, and a small but significant number do even better. Higher attaining pupils use a range of strategies to work out the meaning of texts appropriate for their age, whether fiction or non-fiction. They read confidently and fluently. They can talk in an informed way about the characters and about events in a story, and they can use inference to work out hidden meanings in the text or to predict what might happen next. They know how non-fiction texts are organised, and they can use the information they contain to raise their own questions about the content matter. Most of these pupils are competent readers in every respect, but few have well developed reading preferences, and few read widely. Lower attaining readers can usually apply the strategies they have been

taught to use in order to decode texts. For example, they use clues presented by the pictures and the punctuation, and they also draw competently on their knowledge of phonic patterns. Most read accurately, although not always fluently, and their understanding of what they read is often limited by their poor grasp of the meanings of words and by their inability to infer what is implied but not stated explicitly. Library and information skills are not adequately taught. A new school library is being set up, but more able readers are not currently given the practice they need to undertake independent research, for example in history and geography. There are also insufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT in the course of their work in English.

97. Evidence from the range of written work seen shows that, in Year 1, most pupils learn to enjoy communicating their ideas in writing. They learn to produce extended pieces of work, and they develop reasonable control for their age over their handwriting and the presentation of their work. It is in Year 2, when pupils are required to exercise a far greater degree of technical control over their writing across a variety of skills in order to attain the standard expected nationally, that weaknesses become more apparent. For many pupils, the requirement to concentrate simultaneously on structure, organisation, spelling, punctuation, handwriting and presentation, as well as to generate ideas, proves too demanding. As a consequence, they favour some skills, but only at the expense of others; and, as has already been noted, pupils' writing is often adversely affected by poor speech patterns. By the age of seven, most pupils have mastered the basic structure of simple sentences and can demarcate them appropriately with capital letters and full stops. Most are capable of writing at some length, and their ideas are often interesting. However, there are some common weaknesses which occur frequently and which need to be addressed. These include: the use of a fairly limited vocabulary; the lack of agreement between subjects and their verbs; inappropriate changes in the tenses of verbs; an inability to combine ideas successfully within complex sentences and to use a suitably wide range of connectives for this purpose; grammar which reflects speech patterns rather than standard written forms; and, most significantly, an inability to sustain overall coherence in language and ideas when developing a piece of extended writing. Some lower attaining pupils rarely complete pieces of writing, and little of their work is refined and improved. Measures introduced by the school are beginning to bring about much needed improvements in the standard of spelling and of handwriting, but many other weaknesses remain to be addressed.
98. At the time of the last inspection, some unsatisfactory teaching of English was identified. This is no longer the case, and the teaching seen is essentially sound. All teachers work hard to plan and prepare suitable activities and resources for their lessons. They make clear to pupils what they are intended to learn, and they pursue their stated objectives with suitable rigour throughout lessons. The teaching of initial reading skills and provision for guided reading are strengths. All staff manage and support pupils well, including a small but significant number of pupils with special educational needs, some of whom have learning difficulties associated with behaviour. Support staff are well briefed about lesson content and intended outcomes. They work constructively and effectively with pupils and have a significant impact on their attainment and progress. More specialised support, for example for pupils with English as an additional language and for pupils benefiting from the Early Literacy Support, is also effective. Most teachers make at least some special provision for pupils to develop their oral skills. For example, pupils in a Year 1 class performed brilliantly during a class assembly when they presented Roald Dahl's version of 'The Three Little Pigs', and role play is also a common feature of history lessons. Further opportunities for pupils to speak are also planned during circle time and personal, social and health education lessons. However, pupils are rarely

encouraged to initiate or sustain discussion during mainstream lessons, and too little emphasis is given to the development of pupils' general vocabulary and to talking about their learning in subjects such as science. As has already been observed, teachers are generally successful in motivating their pupils to write. However, they do not always intervene sufficiently to ensure that weaknesses are addressed and that pupils give of their very best. Sometimes, they too readily accept work which does not represent a pupil's best effort. Too often, feedback and marking address, quite rightly, 'accessible' weaknesses such as spelling, handwriting and punctuation, but stop short of tackling equally significant weaknesses in organisation, structure, grammar and style. Recent practice, whereby teachers mark work in relation to the specific learning objectives set for a task, has some merits but does not always help pupils to improve those aspects of their writing which are particularly weak and which need ongoing attention.

99. The literacy co-ordinator is conscientious and hard working. She has been particularly effective in building up suitable resources to support the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy. She organises appropriate staff training related to literacy, and, at the time of inspection, is engaged in setting up the school library and in reorganising the school's resources for reading. She has monitored lessons and has sampled pupils' written work. She is aware of the need to improve spelling and handwriting, and is to produce policies to underpin the teaching of these essential skills. She is also aware of the need to develop the use of ICT to support pupils' work in English, and particularly in writing. Assessment procedures are in place, and teachers routinely predict the levels pupils are expected to attain. However, there is insufficient emphasis on using ongoing assessment information to inform planning and short-term targets. The results of national tests are analysed in order to monitor the performance of different groups of pupils such as boys and girls, pupils for whom English is an additional language, pupils with special educational needs and pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds.

MATHEMATICS

100. On entry to Year 1 at the age of five, the mathematical knowledge and understanding of most pupils are average. The evidence of the inspection is that the attainment of the majority of pupils is in line with the standard expected for their age by end of Year 2. This represents satisfactory achievement. These findings are similar to those of the last inspection. The attainment and progress of pupils in Year 1 are better than in Year 2. This is due in part to more effective teaching in Year 1, but also to differences in the profile of the year groups, there being more pupils with special educational needs in Year 2 than in Year 1. The profile of the current Year 2 group also accounts for the differences in the findings of the inspection and the results of last year's national tests for pupils in Year 2, when the school's performance was above national figures and well above the results of similar schools.
101. The satisfactory progress that pupils make is evident in their work, and is a result of a sound grasp of basic numeracy skills. Their satisfactory knowledge of mathematical facts, such as addition and subtraction up to 100, odd and even numbers and place value, and their ability to count in a range of different ways, contributes to the accuracy of their calculations. For example, pupils in Year 2 applied their skills in solving word problems involving money. They accurately calculated totals and the change that they would receive when buying sweets, and also found out which packet of sweets gave the best value by counting how many sweets in each packet and comparing total costs. In a Year 1 lesson, they demonstrated their mental dexterity by making up their own addition and subtraction sums from the numbers that resulted

from throwing dice; and in another Year 1 lesson they quickly saw the pattern that emerged in answers when they increased one of the numbers that they were adding together by ten. The school's Maths Club, which is held twice a term, offers pupils a wide range of opportunities for problem solving and investigation. Pupils respond well to these and, as a result, the Maths Club makes a considerable contribution to their learning. The school recognises that there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical understanding in problem solving and investigational tasks and for them to ask their own mathematical questions in lessons.

102. Pupils' sound knowledge of the properties of shapes is evident in their drawings of two-dimensional shapes and their ability to distinguish the different properties of simple three-dimensional shapes by identifying the shapes of their faces and the number of sides. They have a satisfactory understanding of reflective symmetry. Pupils estimate, measure and weigh objects using metric measures and also read scales on metric measuring jugs. Although pupils can classify information in the form of simple block graphs, their skills in using ICT to help them to record their ideas and findings, and to communicate them to others in the form of graphs or pie charts, are unsatisfactory.
103. The achievement of pupils who have special educational needs is satisfactory as a result of the good support that they receive, although there is little evidence of the need to develop mathematical skills in individual education plans. Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive good support from a specialist teacher who has a very good understanding of their needs. She uses a wide range of appropriate techniques, both visual and practical, to aid understanding and to ensure that they have full access to learning. As a result, they make good progress.
104. The quality of teaching in mathematics is generally satisfactory. Teachers have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the National Numeracy Strategy and this is a significant factor in the standards that pupils achieve. Long-term planning has improved since the last inspection and is soundly based on national guidance, and short-term planning contains clear learning objectives which pupils understand. This results in well-structured lessons that help pupils to build upon what they already know, to acquire new knowledge and skills; and to consolidate their understanding. In the best teaching there was very good use of focused questions to help pupils develop their ideas to deeper levels, for example in a Year 1 lesson the teacher asked a pupil 'How could you do that another way?', which motivated him to adopt a different strategy for his calculation. There were high expectations of what pupils could achieve in this lesson, and, as a result, pupils worked hard to meet the teacher's aspirations and took a real pride in doing 'big sums'. In the best lessons teachers value pupils' ideas and engage them in 'mathematical conversations' that promote logical thinking. This enables pupils to do most of the talking about the mathematical processes and the strategies that they are using. In these lessons, pupils are fully engaged in learning and sustain intense concentration for extended periods of time. They work at the edge of their capabilities, often achieving at higher levels than those indicated in the set lesson that has been planned. Where teaching is less effective, the teachers' interactions with pupils mainly provide general instruction and follow-up explanations with individuals to clarify the set task. These are often interspersed with frequent interruptions to control or comment on the behaviour of individuals. In these lessons, insufficient intervention is given to help pupils explain their mathematical ideas clearly and logically. There is generally an over reliance on published worksheets which constrain learning. Although work is regularly marked there is insufficient use of constructive comments to help pupils know what they have to do

next to improve their work. There is satisfactory use of homework to support pupils' ongoing work at school.

105. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and manage their pupils well. As a result, pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. Firmly established routines and procedures ensure that the best use is made of the time that is available for learning. In the best lessons, whole-class teaching sessions involve short sessions of teacher input, followed by discussions in which pupils have a major input, and then opportunities for pupils to try out ideas for themselves. Pupils sustain concentration because they play an active part throughout the learning process.
106. Mathematics is soundly managed. The subject manager has a broad overview of the strengths and weaknesses of subject through looking at test results, observing lessons and sampling pupils' work. There is now a need to develop these checks with greater rigour in order to identify specific issues for development and to set precise targets at year, class and group level, and to inform the school's efforts to improve standards. There are satisfactory assessment procedures in place but more use needs to be made of them to inform planning for progress.

SCIENCE

107. On entry to Year 1, the scientific knowledge and understanding of most pupils are average. The results of the Year 2 statutory assessments were above the national average and the results of similar schools in relation to the percentage reaching the expected level, while the percentage exceeding the standard was in line with the national average and the results of similar schools. Inspection findings show that pupils generally achieve satisfactorily in science, from their starting points at the beginning of Year 1, although the more able pupils could sometimes do better. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress across the school. Overall standards are broadly average in Year 2. While the vast majority achieved the nationally expected standard, relatively few exceed this level. Standards were also average when the school was last inspected.
108. In Year 1, pupils know they use their senses to experience the world around them. They make sound progress when learning that some materials are attracted by magnets, and understand that some toys require batteries to make them work. They are able to describe the properties of materials, using simple terms, but few are able to use more than a very limited vocabulary and opportunities are sometimes missed in teachers' marking to celebrate pupils' occasional attempt to use more expressive language. Most pupils have made sound progress when deciding the most suitable paper for wrapping a present, but the more able pupils should be recording more systematic explanations of what they did and found out. Most Year 1 pupils have a satisfactory grasp of the conditions required for the healthy growth of plants, although a minority are unable to make sensible predictions about the effect of depriving plants of light. In a sound lesson observed during the inspection, more able pupils would have benefited from being encouraged to develop their own hypotheses about conditions other than light which might affect plant growth - and to test, for example, changes in the amount of water provided.
109. In Year 2, pupils make satisfactory progress when learning about simple electrical circuits and most are able to predict, from pictorial representations, whether circuits will work or not. All pupils are developing an awareness about healthy eating, and understand that fruit and vegetables are good for us. They understand that some materials change when they are heated, but more able pupils do not use sufficiently

precise and detailed language to describe the change. Overall, Year 2 pupils are making satisfactory progress in developing their understanding of the need for systematic investigations to test hypotheses. Most have a reasonable grasp of the principle of fair testing but their skills in drawing simple conclusions from investigations are generally underdeveloped.

110. The quality of teaching in science is satisfactory, and results in pupils making sound overall progress in the subject. When the school was last inspected, the teaching varied from good to unsatisfactory. Teachers' planning now consistently identifies what pupils are expected to learn, in contrast to the situation in 1997, but there are still weaknesses in the match of tasks to the needs of the more able pupils, in some lessons. Teachers' subject knowledge is satisfactory, and their explanations and instructions are clear. The good relationships between teachers and their classes also have a positive effect on pupils' learning. As a result, pupils behave well in science lessons and persevere with their tasks. On occasions, however, when work lacks challenge or fails to involve pupils actively in their learning, their enthusiasm wanes. Teachers make broadly satisfactory use of questioning but sometimes need to ask more probing questions to check pupils' understanding and to stimulate their scientific thinking. Evidence suggests there is scope for more emphasis on the introduction and rigorous reinforcement of basic scientific language. In addition, opportunities are missed to encourage pupils to formulate their own hypotheses and to carry out their own simple investigations. This particularly inhibits the progress of the more able pupils. Insufficient use is made of ICT to support pupils' work in science.
111. The science co-ordinator has secure subject knowledge and is highly conscientious. She checks teachers' planning and has recently observed teaching. She has also examined examples of pupils' work, from across the school. These monitoring procedures have resulted in the co-ordinator's broad overview of science, across the school. However, there is considerable scope for more rigour and precision in the monitoring, so that areas for improvement are clearly identified and are targeted. At present, the analysis from monitoring of planning, teaching and work samples is rather too generalised to impact on planning for the subject, including in the recently produced action plan. The co-ordinator appropriately recognises the need to ensure that monitoring makes a more significant contribution to the raising of standards. In similar vein, assessment procedures require improvement in order to impact more beneficially on standards. At the beginning of each educational year, targets are set for pupils' overall standards, in National Curriculum levels, at the end of Years 1 and 2. However, procedures for the systematic analysis of pupils' progress towards these targets, during the year, are not sufficiently established to ensure that teaching is specifically tailored to address identified areas for improvement for individuals, groups or classes in science. Work is consistently marked but pupils often require more focused feedback on their achievements, including how to improve their work.
112. Resources for the subject are satisfactory.

ART AND DESIGN

113. Pupils' achievements in art and design are satisfactory, overall, and their standards are generally in line with national expectations in Year 2. While there is some evidence of above average work, standards are not as high as when the school was last inspected and they were above national expectations.

114. In Year 1, pupils achieve satisfactory standards when creating collage pictures using paper which has been folded or crumpled; and have made sound progress when using the designs from commercially produced fabrics to inspire a range of abstract pictures. They have benefited from discussing the work of Andy Goldsworthy and have created their own pictures that reflect elements of the artist's work. They achieve sound standards when assembling leaves, twigs and other natural materials to create images, and interpret these in pastel and collage pictures. In Year 2, pupils study the work of Monet but derive limited benefit when making rather mechanistic imitations of his painting of poppies. However, Year 2 pupils make sound progress when creating interesting textures using a range of simple weaving techniques, and their bold paintings of the Great Fire of London represent satisfactory achievement. Their drawings of plants, rocks and shells are mainly satisfactory for their ages, although a significant minority need to develop their observation skills to include more detail in their work. Pupils in Year 1 and 2 achieve well when creating pictures of the late Queen Mother. These pastel pictures are expressive and characterful.
115. The quality of teaching in art and design is satisfactory and enables pupils to make sound overall progress. Teachers are making sound use of the national guidance provided by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, and their planning is satisfactory. In the lessons observed, pupils would sometimes have benefited from more specific questioning to help them to evaluate their work and to develop their artistic understanding. A strong feature was teachers' good organisation skills, which successfully enabled pupils to undertake a range of tasks in an orderly atmosphere. The teaching captured pupils' interest and they persevered with their work well. Evidence suggests that little use is made of ICT to support pupils' work in art.
116. The co-ordinator appropriately recognises that procedures for monitoring and promoting the subject are underdeveloped. There has been no systematic analysis of pupils' standards and progress, or of the quality of teaching in art and design.
117. Resources for the subject are satisfactory.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

118. Standards in design and technology are mainly in line with national expectations in Year 2, and are similar to those found when the school was last inspected. Pupils' progress in the subject is satisfactory overall, although there are some examples of pupils' work which demonstrate good achievement.
119. In Year 1, pupils achieve sound standards when using recycled materials to make simple models, and demonstrate satisfactory skills when joining card and paper. They create simple designs for moving pictures, and their finished pictures show they understand how to incorporate simple levers to facilitate movement. Some completed pictures are embellished with attractive collage work, and are finished to a good standard. Year 1 pupils also create simple puppets, and know how to use paper fasteners to move the arms and legs. In Year 2, pupils' designs for model vehicles are mainly satisfactory but a minority achieve well when including considerable detail as well as information about the materials that will be used in their construction. Their finished vehicles have simple axles and demonstrate sound making skills. Year 2 pupils have designed toys that use a simple winding mechanism, and some are quite ingenious. They make sound progress when designing a many-coloured coat for Joseph and learn a range of methods for joining patches of material.

120. Due to timetabling arrangements, only one design and technology lesson was taught during the inspection, and it was only possible to observe this lesson for a brief period. As a consequence, it is not possible to make a secure judgement about the quality of teaching in the subject. However, a careful analysis of pupils' completed work confirms the teaching is enabling pupils to make mainly sound, and sometimes good, progress. In the short observation in Year 2, the pupils were deeply involved in their task of experimenting with different methods of joining material, and the lesson was well organised. Parent helpers, as well as support staff, were utilised effectively to benefit pupils' learning. All teachers are making sound use of national guidance to inform their planning.
121. The co-ordinator has a sound overview of teachers' planning but needs to analyse work samples more systematically to judge pupils' performance in the subject. She has benefited from observing some design and technology lessons, but appropriately recognises there is scope to make her observations more evaluative and less descriptive. At present, teachers' strategies for assessing the standards and progress made by pupils in the subject are underdeveloped.
122. Resources for design and technology are satisfactory.

GEOGRAPHY

123. There is sufficient evidence from the two lessons observed, from work on display around the school and from pupils' written work, to show that pupils aged seven attain standards which are broadly average by the end of Year 2. They make satisfactory progress in lessons and over time, and they gradually extend their knowledge and understanding of places, of geographical patterns and processes, and of environmental change.
124. Pupils are involved in geographical enquiry from an early age. Pupils in Year 1 study the school's immediate locality and are aware of changes that occur. For example, they note where diseased trees have been cut down and are to be replaced, soon, by healthy young saplings. They know that a mobile classroom, recently demolished because it had become dilapidated, has been replaced by a new classroom, and can explain the reasons. They can talk about the area around the school and identify places they find pleasant and unpleasant. For example, they are attracted by the yellow roses in the school grounds, by the open expanse of the school field and by the recreation area in the park, but they find the 'smelly dump' a much less inviting place to be. They can describe, in simple terms, the features of the local environment, and, when questioned, they can think of very practical ways in which they can take care of it. For example, they know it is important to clear up and dispose of rubbish, whether by taking it home or consigning it to the 'garbage lorry'. More importantly, perhaps, they understand that the environment belongs not just to humans but to all forms of life and they believe, as one pupil so aptly put it, that the environment needs to be shown 'loads of love'.
125. Pupils in Year 2 show broadly average attainment in the comparisons they make between their locality in Letchworth and a locality of similar size in Hitchin. They note key differences between their own Garden City, with its grass verges, trees and lush gardens, and the more industrial area of Hitchin near the station. In a second study, they are able to draw convincing comparisons between Letchworth and the island home of Katie Morag, a fictional character who 'lives' on the Isle of Struay off the Scottish mainland. They can identify many significant ways in which the island in the story differs from Letchworth. For example, they comment on the style of houses,

the coastal features and the landscape, the agricultural use of the land, the leisure activities and the occupations of the islanders; and, not least, they identify significant differences in the volume of traffic in Letchworth and on Struay. Evidence in pupils' written work shows that they gain a satisfactory level of experience in the use and construction of maps and plans. They have devised simple picture maps of the Isle of Struay showing key physical features such as the mountains, the sea and the distant mainland; and they have mapped routes and identified man-made or 'human' features such as the police station, a zebra-crossing and a church, on a printed town plan of Hitchin. They have also devised simple colour keys to identify those places they have visited. Pupils are also familiar with outline maps of the world showing the position of the British Isles, while their knowledge and understanding of life in 'places further afield' are enhanced by the study of photographs from holiday destinations and by listening to staff and visitors talking about their own experiences of other countries and cultures.

126. Evidence from pupils' work and the lessons seen shows that the teaching of geography is satisfactory. Pupils are made aware, at the outset, of what they are intended to learn, and teachers 'revisit' their learning objectives whenever necessary, to make sure the pupils understand the key points. In one lesson, a little time was lost to behaviour management when some pupils lost concentration temporarily while out of doors, and in the other, an art activity planned as a curriculum 'link' did little to enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding of geography or of art. Overall, however, the range of evidence available shows that lessons are generally well planned and that the teaching is having a sound impact on pupils' attainment and progress. The geography curriculum is effective in encouraging pupils to care for the environment and, in this way, it makes a good contribution to their moral and social development.
127. At the time of the last inspection, the teaching of geography was judged to be unsatisfactory. Since that time, identified weaknesses have been addressed, and there is now no evidence of unsatisfactory teaching. The geography co-ordinator has had no designated time in which to monitor the teaching of geography. However, she has been instrumental in introducing and overseeing the implementation of national guidance for the subject, and she has monitored curriculum coverage by scrutinising teachers' plans. She is in the process of building up a satisfactory range of resources, including CD-ROMs, to support the geographical topics taught in different year groups, and she has familiarised herself with work done in the Foundation Stage as a basis for the future study of geography. She is aware that she now needs to observe lessons in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning, and that there is scope to improve the use of assessment in geography. The school is currently in the process of upgrading its library. It will be important to ensure that new resources support the planned curriculum for geography and are suitable for more able readers, at least, to pursue some geographical research independently. There is also scope to extend the use of ICT to support work in geography.

HISTORY

128. Only three history lessons were observed during the inspection, one involving a Year 1 class, and two involving Year 2 pupils. Further evidence is drawn from the scrutiny of pupils' work, from displays and from teachers' planning. When the school was last inspected, standards were below average, and progress unsatisfactory. This is no longer the case. Indeed, all available evidence shows that pupils make mainly sound,

but sometimes good progress, and that, by the end of Year 2, most pupils attain the standards expected nationally of seven year olds.

129. Pupils in Year 1 make good progress as a result of effective teaching and achieve standards which are above average for their age in a lesson where they investigate household objects from the last century and compare them with their more modern equivalents. They understand that there have been significant advances in the materials used to produce such items as bed-warmers and carpet beaters or cleaners, as well as changes in the mechanisms and power sources used. Higher attaining pupils are able to give reasoned explanations for the chronological order in which they arrange the artefacts, and they are also able to suggest the social status and occupations of those people most likely to have used such objects. For example, they quickly decide that a glass chandelier, with its complex workmanship, was probably too expensive for all but the richest of households, and that poorer people of the time must have had to rely on simple candles and candlesticks for their light.
130. Pupils in Year 2 have a good level of knowledge and understanding of the Great Fire of London. They know that the fire started in a baker's shop in Pudding Lane in 1666, when an oven maid forgot to sweep out an oven, and they can describe the conditions that allowed the fire to spread so quickly. They also know something of the immediate consequences of the fire, and can empathise with the feelings of those caught up in its path. When questioned, they give detailed answers to questions which explore their knowledge and understanding of events. They are also aware of, and can name, many of the different sources of evidence which can be used to find out about the past. Most pupils are able to draw on pictorial evidence satisfactorily to find out about the past, and many lower attaining pupils do particularly well in terms of historical knowledge and understanding when account is taken of their starting-points and capabilities. However, more able pupils are less practised, and therefore less skilled than they should be, at using written sources of information to find things out for themselves. This weakness is also apparent in other work seen, for example in work related to the study of Florence Nightingale and to other famous people.
131. Evidence available, including that from the three lessons observed and from the scrutiny of work shows that the teaching of history is at least sound, and often good, with some very particular strengths. Teachers and teaching assistants enjoy the subject and are well informed about the topics they teach. They communicate their enthusiasm to their pupils, and the teaching approaches they use readily engage pupils' interest. Some teachers invest considerable time and effort in creating exciting centres of interest within their classrooms. For example, a role-play area in one Year 1 classroom has been cleverly converted into 'a 1930s house', complete with 30s' style clothes, a cooking range and 'stone' sink. Pupils enter fully into the spirit of the period as they bath the baby, rake out the coals, hang up the washing and prepare meals. This emphasis on practical, investigative approaches is a real strength of much of the best work seen, although evidence also suggests that some work relies too heavily on structured worksheets. In a class assembly seen during the inspection, pupils from Year 1 were encouraged to share their learning with the rest of the school by talking about household objects from the past and demonstrating their use. They did so capably, and clearly enjoyed the experience. In the best practice seen, in both years, pupils are encouraged to communicate their 'findings' in a variety of ways, for example through writing, painting, talking, drama or role-play. Such provision is particularly effective in enabling pupils of all abilities to play a full part in lessons, and a further strength of the teaching is the inclusion of all pupils in sharing their work with others. Evidence from the scrutiny of pupils' written work shows that teachers and pupils also respond very positively to 'historical occasions'

as they arise, and nowhere is this more apparent than in work recording the recent death of The Queen Mother.

132. While teachers always ensure that pupils think about the differences between 'then' and 'now' in relation to the topics they cover, too little attention is paid, overall, to developing pupils' awareness of the passage of time within, and between, the periods studied, and there is little evidence of the use of time-lines.
133. The history co-ordinator has only recently taken responsibility for the leadership and management of the subject. She has both expertise and a strong personal interest in history, and her teaching sets a good example. She has not yet had time to monitor teaching, but she has already appraised herself of the quality of pupils' work throughout the school and has reviewed resources. She is already well informed about what needs to be done, and her findings have informed her action plan. For example, there is a need to improve the range and quality of resources so that all classes in each year group are adequately resourced. The curriculum for history has improved since the last inspection with the introduction of work based on national guidance, and there is now clear evidence of progression in pupils' learning. However, learning would be further enriched by planned visits to places of historical interest, including museums, and also by extending the use of visitors who come into school to talk to pupils about their own experiences of the past. Links with the local education authority's museum service could usefully be developed, and greater use should be made of ICT to support work in history than is currently the case.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

134. Standards in ICT are below average and have declined since the last inspection. Pupils' achievement in the subject is unsatisfactory. This is in part due to changes in national expectations for the subject but also because of insufficient teaching of specific skills and limited opportunities for pupils to use computers in the course of their work. Particular areas of weakness are pupils' skills in accessing information from a range of sources, and in their use of ICT to generate, amend and record their work and share their ideas in different forms, including text, tables and images. There is some evidence of pupils making limited use of ICT to develop their ideas and make things happen, for example, there is planning for giving instructions to a programmable toy. However, no use was seen of this during the inspection. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is unsatisfactory and there is insufficient use of ICT to support their learning needs.
135. All staff have received national training and as a result of this have started to plan for the teaching of basic ICT skills. These teaching sessions are very short and because few of them were seen during the inspection there is insufficient evidence to form a secure judgement about the overall quality of teaching in ICT. In the lessons seen, however, teaching was largely ineffective because explanations and demonstrations involved the use of one computer that could not be seen by the majority of pupils. There were insufficient opportunities for pupils to try the techniques for themselves either during the sessions or afterwards. Planning for ICT is unsatisfactory because it takes insufficient account of the knowledge and skills that pupils already have and there is insufficient planning for the use of ICT as a tool for learning in other subjects of the curriculum.
136. The management of the subject is satisfactory overall. The subject leader is relatively new to the post and has taken the subject from a low base. She recognises a great

deal needs to be done and has well-developed plans for this which include the development of an ICT suite. The new policy is still in draft form and needs to be ratified by governors. It incorporates the statutory requirements but its aspirations are not yet evident in practice. There is useful guidance for using ICT in nursery and reception, and a draft long-term plan for Years 1 and 2 together with national guidance and assessment formats. They include opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own progress. The use of this documentation has not yet been embedded in practice, however, and as a result progression and continuity in the subject are insecure.

137. The subject manager has developed a broad overview of what is happening in the school by looking at teachers' plans and at lessons. These checks are not sufficiently rigorous to give the school the precise information that it needs to plan for improvements in standards, teaching and learning. The action plan appropriately recognises the need to improve computer provision but does not include clearly defined targets for improvements in attainment and in the quality of teaching.
138. The school has improved its stock of computers since the last inspection so that each classroom has at least one computer and six are networked with Internet access. However, insufficient use is made of these resources. The school has recognised the need for an ICT suite and has a well thought out plan for its installation. The range of software is adequate for the needs of the National Curriculum and is being improved. There has been appropriate involvement of external expertise from the local authority.

MUSIC

139. Pupils' achievements in music are mainly satisfactory, and standards are in line with national expectations in Year 2. These judgements match those made when the school was last inspected. However, there is some evidence of good achievement.
140. Pupils usually sing with clear diction and satisfactory control of pitch and dynamics. In both Years 1 and 2, pupils make satisfactory progress when learning new songs but sometimes would benefit from more specific guidance to help them to improve their performance. Pupils' skills in recognising and maintaining the pulse of music are broadly average and, in a lesson taught by the music co-ordinator in Year 1, they achieved well when using their body percussion and instruments to accompany their singing. All pupils are given the opportunity to sing in concerts and performances and all pupils in Year 2 are able to attend lunchtime recorder clubs, and the more advanced of the two groups demonstrated good achievement during the inspection.
141. The quality of teaching in music is satisfactory overall, and includes some good teaching by the music co-ordinator. In all lessons observed, the teaching motivated pupils well but sometimes praise was too readily given, and obvious areas for potential improvement were overlooked. In the Year 1 lesson, taught by the music co-ordinator, pupils were deeply engrossed and achieved well as a result of effective teaching.
142. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic, has good subject knowledge, and readily provides her colleagues with useful advice. She also makes a valuable contribution by teaching singing sessions for all pupils in Years 1 and 2 and, with the help of a colleague, by running the recorder clubs. In-service training sessions, in the current educational year, have helped staff to develop their confidence and skills in teaching music; and they are making sound use of the national guidance provided by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority to inform their planning.

143. Resources for music are satisfactory, and are well organised.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

144. Pupils' achievement in physical education is satisfactory and standards are about average by the end of Year 2. This is not as high as the findings of the last inspection. However, a great deal of focused work has taken place to improve teaching in the subject. This has involved staff training, checks on lessons and improvements in resource provision. This has resulted in better planning for most lessons and less use of pre-recorded commercial materials. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress as the result of the good support that they are given by teaching assistants. Pupils with English as an additional language also make satisfactory progress.
145. Lesson observations and photographic evidence indicate that floor work in gymnastics is developing well. Pupils demonstrate increasing control of their bodies, curling and stretching with grace and agility. They work closely with a partner to plan, share and demonstrate their ideas and skills when developing their ideas on symmetrical patterns. Older pupils show good control and increased skilfulness when combining their movements in sequences, for example, in selecting and holding a balance, and then devising a method of moving across the floor prior to holding a different balance. When exploring different ways of travelling they develop skills in moving on different parts of their body effectively, for example, changing the speed, direction and level of their movements. In the course of games activities, pupils develop their skills in controlling small apparatus, for example, beanbags, quoits and balls, travelling with them and sending and receiving them in different ways.
146. Pupils become increasingly aware of the effects of exercise on their body and the importance of warming up and cooling down as part of the exercise routine. They learn how to keep themselves safe in the course of physical education, for example, moving apparatus with care, being aware of their own space in relation to others and jumping from apparatus with safety and control.
147. Pupils respond imaginatively and enthusiastically to ideas suggested by their teachers when moving to music, for example, travelling, jumping, turning and gesturing to represent the movements of flames and smoke as a fire grows and then slowly dies. When pupils are given the opportunity to work collaboratively and to devise their own dance movements, for example in producing an African style dance to the music of Labi Siffre, they do so with style, grace and imagination.
148. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have a generally satisfactory knowledge of the subject as a result of their training, the support of the subject leader and the very good support given by the local authority adviser. Lesson objectives are evident in most planning and closely reflect national guidance. Explanations and instructions are clear and, as a result, pupils know what is expected of them. Where weaknesses occur it is because there is insufficient coaching and development of skills as pupils are working. There are also sometimes insufficient opportunities for pupils to plan their movements in advance and to evaluate them in the course of their work. Little use of the large apparatus was seen during the inspection.
149. The subject is well managed. The subject leader has a good overview of the curriculum and has implemented a sound plan to improve teaching and learning. She has collated a useful portfolio of photographic evidence, and developed a sound policy

that gives broad guidance on teaching, learning, assessment and planning. Assessment is not yet fully secure throughout the school, however. When checking on lessons she has already provided useful observations on how lessons have gone. She recognises that this now needs to be refined further so that there is greater focus on specific elements of teaching, learning or standards, and the headteacher has given useful advice on this.

150. The subject makes an effective contribution to pupils' personal, social, moral and cultural development. Pupils grow in confidence as they acquire increasingly complex skills in movement and balance, develop a better understanding of their physical health, and use the opportunities that are given to express their feelings and emotions imaginatively. When working together in games, dance and gymnastics, they become increasingly aware of the needs and movements of others and respond appropriately, often working together to share and exchange ideas. When playing games they learn about fairness and how to resolve differences amicably. They learn about traditional dances from England, India and Africa by both observing and taking part in them.
151. Lunchtime challenges from play leaders, for example the 'Hula Hoop Challenge' contribute effectively to pupils' physical development and their ability to control their movements, as does provision for outside play equipment and playground markings.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

152. Pupils' achievement in religious education is satisfactory and pupils attain standards in line with those expected by the end of Year 2. This is an improvement since the last inspection and is a result of better use of the locally agreed syllabus and better resources. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress.
153. Pupils have a sound knowledge and awareness that the religious traditions of the United Kingdom are mainly Christian. They also recognise that other religions are also represented because of the good range of opportunities to hear stories from different faiths and to meet people who belong to different faith groups, particularly those from within their own community. They increase their knowledge of the richness and diversity of religions through a wide range of opportunities to hear authentic accounts of different religious celebrations and to hear the stories that lie behind them. For example, pupils know the names of the special books that are important to Muslims, Christians and Sikhs, and something about the stories within them. They also know the names of the different places of worship.
154. Pupils' understanding of the distinctive features of religious traditions and their application to everyday life of believers is evident in their work about some of the practices regarding the code of dress of Muslims, the concept of giving at Christmas for Christians, and the importance of special clothes and food for Sikhs at Diwali. They have an understanding of why Florence Nightingale gave up a comfortable lifestyle to nurse soldiers. Pupils' understanding of religious concepts and symbolism is appropriately developed through visits to the local church where they learn about the significance of the cross and candles. Their studies of how a new baby is welcomed into the home are developed appropriately to extend their understanding of how Christians welcome a new baby into the family of the church through baptism, and the symbolism of the water used in the ceremony. They know something about the events of Easter week and have represented them in the form of Easter gardens. They are also aware of the symbols that represent new life that are given on Easter

Sunday. They have some understanding of the concept of prayer and reflection and their importance to the different faiths. The school has a satisfactory collection of artefacts from the different faiths and these are appropriately used to aid pupils' understanding of their significance and also to help pupils to understand and use appropriate terminology during discussions.

155. Few religious education lessons were observed, but evidence from these and from pupils' work shows that teaching is satisfactory. This is an improvement since the last inspection and comes as a result of a better understanding of the subject and improved planning. The school's policy for religious education is firmly rooted in the school's values of mutual respect and understanding that underpin all its work. There is appropriate emphasis on the importance of belonging to a community that is comprised of different cultures and, because of this, the subject makes a substantial contribution to pupils' social and cultural development. The scheme of work includes very clear unit plans that give good support to teachers. Assessment and its use to inform planning has yet to be developed. The subject is soundly managed.
156. The subject leader has looked at some lessons and teachers' planning and, as a result, gained a broad overview of the subject. These checks now need to be developed with greater rigour to give the precise information that the school needs to inform planning for improvements in specific areas of teaching, learning and attainment.