

INSPECTION REPORT

CLIPSTONE BROOK LOWER SCHOOL

Leighton Buzzard

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109521

Headteacher: Carol Hayward

Reporting inspector: Michael J Cahill
19623

Dates of inspection: 8 - 11 July 2002

Inspection number: 194897

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Brooklands Drive Leighton Buzzard Bedfordshire
Postcode:	LU7 3PG
Telephone number:	01525 376085
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Gerald Sandison
Date of previous inspection:	16 June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
19623	Michael Cahill	Registered inspector	Science Information and communication technology Design and technology Physical education	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
9588	Tony West	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
19507	Beulah Andrews	Team inspector	Special educational needs English Art Music	How high are standards? Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
23482	Diana Mackie	Team inspector	Foundation stage Equal opportunities Mathematics Geography History Religious education	How well is the school led and managed?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Clipstone Brook Lower School provides education for children aged from 4 to 9 years. It is located in an area of both private and local authority housing not far from the centre of Leighton Buzzard. About half of the pupils live in the immediate neighbourhood of the school and the rest come from further afield. Ten per cent of full time pupils claim free school meals, which is around the national average. Most children's attainment on entry to the nursery, in the term before their fourth birthday, is broadly average. By the end of the reception class, attainment is in line with national expectations. There are eight classes, including the nursery, some of which have children from more than one age group. There are 190 full time pupils in Reception to Year 4 (103 boys and 87 girls) and another 46 children who attend the nursery part-time; the school is of average size for its type. Almost all pupils are of white UK heritage and there are three pupils who are learning English as an additional language, none of whom is at an early stage. The school also provides education for a variable number of children from the Travelling community. The overall proportion of pupils with special educational learning needs is below the national average while the proportion with full statements is above it.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Clipstone Lower is an effective school where pupils make good progress both academically and in their personal development, as a result of good teaching and organisation. The school maintains a pleasant and purposeful working atmosphere. Pupils achieve standards that are above national expectations in writing and science at the end of Year 2 and in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 4. The school is well-led and managed overall and staff, governors and parents are committed to the further development of the school. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve standards above the national expectation in most subjects, especially in Years 3 and 4.
- The quality of teaching is good and pupils make good progress.
- The school is very successful in encouraging very good attitudes to learning, very good behaviour and very good relationships among its pupils.
- Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is very good.
- There are good procedures for keeping track of pupils' personal and academic progress.
- The school enjoys a good partnership with the vast majority of parents and welcomes the support of a substantial number of volunteers during the school day.
- Very good leadership by the headteacher, supported well by staff and governors, is clearly focused on raising the standard of pupils' achievements.

What could be improved

- Teachers' expectations of pupils in Year 2, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- The contribution that homework makes to raising standards.
- The extent to which the school prepares pupils for life in multi-ethnic Britain.
- Some aspects of the state of the building.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since the last inspection with most of the issues identified in the June 1997 report. The role of the subject co-ordinators has been enhanced and they now make an important contribution to raising standards. Children now read more frequently to adults both in school and at home. There is now a greater emphasis on investigative work in mathematics and science and more able pupils are often effectively challenged. There is more to do, however, in raising teachers' expectations, particularly of Year 2 pupils. The quality of teaching and pupils' attainment in most subjects have improved since the last inspection.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
reading	B	B	B	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
writing	C	C	A	A	
mathematics	B	C	D	D	

Schools are described as similar when they fall into the same band for free school meals, in this case between eight and twenty per cent. At present 10 per cent of pupils claim their entitlement.

Children in the nursery and reception class make good progress in all areas of learning and by the time they enter Year 1 most have achieved the early learning goals.

As the above table shows, pupils at the end of Year 2 in 2001 achieved National Curriculum test results that were well above average in writing, above average in reading and below average in mathematics; the results of the teacher assessments in science were broadly in line with the national average. The dip in mathematics is attributed by the school to a period of over-dependence on a worksheet-based scheme, an unsuccessful experiment with setting and the higher than usual proportion of pupils with special educational needs.

In the view of the inspection team, standards at the end of the present Year 2 are broadly satisfactory in English, the drop from last year being partly due to the unavoidable disruption caused by staff absence. This is also considered by the school to be part of the explanation for the continuing below average performance in mathematics. However, it is also recognised that there is some under-expectation of what Year 2 pupils, especially the more able, could achieve if provided with suitably challenging work. This was identified as a key issue in the last inspection and has been adequately dealt with in other year groups. In religious education, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and the other subjects of the National Curriculum apart from design and technology, pupils achieve better than the expectation for their age. Standards in design and technology are satisfactory throughout the school.

Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are challenged well and achieve above average standards in English, mathematics and science and most other subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education by the time they leave the school.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress against their individual targets. Pupils from the Travelling community and those from minority ethnic groups also make good progress. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy their lessons and are eager to learn. They throw themselves whole-heartedly into all that the school offers, including lunchtime and after-school clubs.
Behaviour, in and out of	Behaviour is very good in class, around the school and in the playground.

classrooms	Pupils respect their own and others' property and take good care of school equipment.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils and teachers support each other very well in maintaining the positive, friendly and caring atmosphere.
Attendance	Attendance is good and there is little unauthorised absence.

Very good relationships are a strength of the school. This owes much to the very good example set by the adults in the school community

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Good	Satisfactory	Good

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

The overall quality of teaching is good and as a result most pupils make good progress in lessons and as they move up the school. During the inspection the teaching in many lessons was good or better, including a substantial number in which it was very good; there was no unsatisfactory teaching. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection. Literacy and numeracy are taught well, not only in English and mathematics lessons but also across the curriculum, for example in science, religious education and history. The skills of ICT and science are also taught well.

Planning for pupils with special educational needs is good, as is the support that they receive from teachers and teaching assistants; as a result these pupils make good progress like their peers, as do pupils from minority ethnic groups and those from the Travelling community.

Other strong features of the best teaching include the way that teachers organise their classrooms and the very pleasant and purposeful working atmosphere that they and the pupils maintain in the classroom. Teachers keep track of pupils' learning well and plan appropriate work. Questions are used very well to revise, extend and check on pupils' learning. The main weaknesses, in a minority of lessons, were the lack of suitably challenging work for more able pupils and failure to use the final part of lessons effectively in terms of consolidating learning.

Because they know what they have to do, pupils generally work well, showing good interest and concentration. They enjoy learning and develop an important confidence in their ability to learn by the time that they leave the school. Pupils respond well to the praise and encouragement that they receive. They take pride in their work and organise themselves well – they are becoming independent learners.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Provision for the areas of learning in the Foundation Stage is good. The school offers a good range of learning opportunities in Years 1 – 4 with an appropriate emphasis on basic skills. The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of visits and visitors to the school.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. It is well organised; teachers draw up appropriate individual educational plans with the support of the special educational needs co-

	ordinator. Teaching assistants effectively support pupils' learning.
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Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is good overall. The very good personal, social and health education programme is well planned and effective. There is very positive encouragement of good behaviour and good promotion of social and spiritual development in lessons, assemblies and other school activities. The provision for cultural development is satisfactory with the weaker aspect being preparation for life in multi-ethnic Britain.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is good overall. The school is a caring community where teachers and other adults who work and help in the school know their pupils very well. There are good procedures for keeping track of pupils' personal development and their academic progress.

Relationships with parents are good. The school provides them with detailed information, including good reports on their children's progress. A substantial number of parents and other members of the community provide help in school and relate well to the children with whom they are working.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	This is good overall. The headteacher provides very good leadership and is very well supported by her deputy. Senior staff work together well as a team to achieve the school's aims. Co-ordinators have been given full responsibility for developing and managing their subjects and do so well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors use their skills well in the service of the school. Those with specific roles fulfil them well. All major statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Staff and governors analyse the school's performance in national tests and assessments and use the information effectively to improve provision for pupils' learning. Priorities are identified, action taken and evaluation planned so that improvements are followed through effectively.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Finances are managed prudently and spending is monitored effectively to make sure that funds are directed carefully to support improvements in provision and standards. The school actively seeks to obtain best value from the financial resources allocated to it.

Staffing is sufficient to ensure that all pupils have full access to the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. Accommodation is spacious but some of it is in a poor state of repair. Learning resources are satisfactory overall.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The views expressed through the 94 returned completed questionnaires and by the 21 parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting with members of the inspection team were taken into account.

What pleases most parents	What some parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching is good and the school has high expectations of children. Their children like school and make good progress. Behaviour is good and children are helped to become mature and responsible. They feel comfortable about approaching the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The amount of homework given. How closely the school works with them Information about children's progress. The leadership and management of the school. The range of activities outside lessons.

school with questions or problems.	
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The inspection team agrees completely with the positive views expressed by parents. Parents are actively encouraged to work closely with the school and many appreciate being able to have daily contact with the teachers. Written reports are informative and helpful. The range of activities outside lessons, at lunchtimes, after school, and including visits, is good for a school of this size and considering the age of the pupils. Improved communication about homework is needed so that parents are better able to support their children's learning. The school is well led and managed by the headteacher, governing body and senior staff.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Almost all children enter part-time education in the nursery with knowledge, understanding and skills at a level that is broadly in line with what is expected for their age. They make good progress across the areas of learning in the nursery and the reception class as a result of planning and teaching that is of good quality overall. Most children achieve the nationally agreed early learning goals by the time that they enter Year 1. There is no significant difference in attainment between boys and girls.
2. In the National Curriculum tests for Year 2 in the summer of 2001, results show that pupils' attainment was above average in reading, well above it in writing but below average in mathematics, both when compared with all schools nationally and also with similar schools. The results in reading and writing reflect good progress and achievement through Years 1 and 2. In the science assessments the proportion of pupils achieving the national expectation of Level 2 was below the national average while the proportion achieving the higher Level 3 was well above the national average. To some extent this reflects the school's success in taking the needs of the more able into account more and improving the quality of the investigative work in response to issues identified at the last inspection. In mathematics, however, the school recognises that past over-dependence on a largely worksheet-based scheme coupled with an unsuccessful experiment with setting in Year 2 and a higher than usual proportion of pupils with special educational needs, contributed to the fall in results over a two-year period. Although 86 per cent of pupils achieved the national expectation of Level 2 in the 2001 mathematics tests, only 24 per cent achieved the higher Level 3 (compared with 43 per cent in science).
3. Expectations of the more able pupils in Year 2 have not been high enough in some areas of the curriculum and so the work set for them has been insufficiently challenging. Provisional results for 2002 suggest that this remains the case. In each of reading, writing, mathematics and science the proportion of pupils achieving Level 3 has dropped. The proportion achieving Level 2 has improved substantially in mathematics and science and dropped a little in reading and writing. The unavoidable long-term absence of one of the Year 2 teachers during the current year has also affected the continuity of pupils' learning. Overall progress through the infant years is satisfactory.
4. Pupils in Year 4 have made good overall progress during their two years in the junior classes. Results of the voluntary tests taken at the ends of Years 3 and 4 confirm that most pupils have made a good level of improvement in English and mathematics compared with their results in the national tests at the end of Year 2. The school keeps good records of pupils' progress in terms of National Curriculum levels in all subjects and these indicate overall good progress. Inspection evidence, based on examination of pupils' work as well as lesson observations, supports this judgement.
5. Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress. They are identified at an early stage in their school life and the school analyses their needs effectively. Well-focused educational plans support pupils' learning and good support is also provided by both teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils on the register of pupils with special educational needs achieve well because their specific needs are well catered for.
6. The inspection team judged that pupils' attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Year 2 is broadly in line with national expectations, a judgement that is supported by the provisional test results for 2002. Attainment in the rest of the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education is above what is expected of pupils this age, except in design and technology. In this subject, it is in line with expectations, although there are examples of good work, for example the puppets made by Year 2 pupils. Overall standards have improved since the time of

the last inspection, due largely to improved planning, teaching and assessment. At the end of Year 4, pupils' attainment in religious education and all of the subjects of the National Curriculum, except for design and technology, is above expectations for pupils of this age. Pupils' overall achievement, relative to their attainment on entry to the school, is good; this is equally the case for the very small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. (For further details of pupils' achievements and progress in the Foundation Stage and in the subjects of the National Curriculum, see paragraphs 65 – 161).

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

7. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good. At the time of the last inspection pupils showed interest in their work and had a confident approach to learning. This situation has been maintained and pupils' enthusiasm enhances their learning. Pupils with special educational needs work purposefully, responding well to planned activities that match their needs. All pupils demonstrate a very positive attitude to their work and are interested in what is being taught. In lessons, pupils apply themselves diligently to tasks set, for example, in a science lesson young pupils worked with attentiveness and curiosity as they observed pond life through a magnifying glass.
8. Pupils quickly learn and sustain good levels of self-esteem. They share their work confidently and are eager to answer questions. However, apart from practical work in science, there are limited opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning or to extend their thinking through discussion of their ideas. There is little evidence of independent work in books. This was the same at the time of the last inspection.
9. Children in the nursery soon adapt to routines and gain appropriate social skills so that they interact well with one another and with adults. They develop the ability to share resources willingly and soon form very good relationships with adults. Children's levels of concentration increase during their time in the reception class and they adapt to the brisker pace of lessons.
10. Pupils from ethnic minorities and pupils who speak English as an additional language integrate well and there is an atmosphere of racial harmony in the school. Traveller children soon resume their friendships after periods of travelling.
11. Behaviour in class and around the school is very good, as it was at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils are polite, courteous and caring for each other. They respect equipment, particularly musical instruments, and help to keep their classrooms tidy. There were no exclusions of pupils in the year before the inspection.
12. At the last inspection, relationships were good and pupils with special educational needs or pupils from minority groups were fully included in the life and learning in the school. Evidence from this inspection indicates that this supportive atmosphere has been maintained. Pupils like and respect adults in the school and get on with each other. They work together in groups as they perform and record their musical compositions. They take responsibility for day-to-day jobs around the school. There is a positive atmosphere in which there is a real concern for the well being of others. Pupils say the school is a happy place and there is no evidence of oppressive behaviour.
13. Pupils' personal development is very good and they work together well. A particularly good example of this was seen in a literacy lesson when a group of pupils agreed to build extra challenge into their work about similar and opposite words. One pupil collected a thesaurus from the class bookshelf. They agreed that one pupil would read out a word, another look up similar words while others of the group wrote down what they learnt. This was most effective in moving learning forward.
14. Pupils' attendance at the school is good and positively reflects the effort spent by the school in monitoring and following up pupils' absences. For the period 2000 to 2001 attendance was higher

than the national average. Unauthorised absence was below the national average over the same period.

15. The school confirmed that the most predominant causes for pupils' authorised absences were illness, medical reasons and additional family holidays. The school records show that a small minority of children are late for morning registration. The registration of pupils at the start of sessions is handled efficiently and pupils settle down to work quickly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. On the evidence of pupils' work and the lessons observed during the inspection, the overall quality of teaching is good. During the inspection it was good or better in more than three-quarters of lessons, including more than a quarter that were very good or better. In no lessons was teaching unsatisfactory overall. This represents a substantial improvement since the last inspection. Reasons for the overall improvement include the successful adoption of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy and a better lesson-planning framework. In addition, subject co-ordinators have been giving more support to colleagues and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning; this has been an effective response to one of the key issues identified in the last inspection report. The teaching of English, including literacy, was never less than satisfactory, in half of lessons it was good or very good. In mathematics, including numeracy, the overall quality of teaching was also always at least good and was good or very good in more than half of lessons.
17. The quality of teaching in the nursery and the reception class is good overall. The teachers provide a carefully planned programme of stimulating activities that extends and enhances children's learning. In the reception class, the teacher introduces literacy and numeracy lessons effectively and adds pace to the lessons so that most pupils reach the early learning goals by the time they move to Year 1. In mathematics, expectations are not always high enough for the more able children. The nursery nurse and the classroom assistant play a valuable role in the teaching programme. All staff have a secure understanding of the needs of young children. In the Year 1 class, teaching was good or better in three-quarters of the lessons observed while in the two classes that contain a majority of Year 2 pupils and a few from Year 1, the quality of teaching was good or better in just over half of the lessons seen. The differences in the quality of teaching are reflected in the progress that pupils make in lessons and their achievement over time. Overall expectations that are too low, especially in aspects of literacy and numeracy, and the consequent lack of tasks to challenge the potentially higher attaining pupils are the main faults. The relatively low proportion of pupils achieving the higher National Curriculum Level 3 is attributable in part to these weaknesses in the teaching in Year 2. The quality of teaching in Years 3 and 4 was at least good in almost all lessons.
18. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well by their teachers, who generally plan well to include them fully in lessons. Learning support assistants work effectively with pupils with special educational needs, making a positive contribution to the quality of their learning and their achievement. Parent helpers play an important part in helping pupils with special educational needs. Teachers draw up appropriate individual educational plans with the support of the special educational needs co-ordinator and are careful to include pupils with special educational needs in whole class sessions. As a result these pupils make the same progress as other pupils. The very few pupils with English as an additional language are taught effectively as are pupils from the Travelling community, few of whom were present during the inspection.
19. The inspection team noted a number of elements, most of which were present in most of the better lessons observed. These included:
 - good lesson preparation and use of resources;
 - skilled use of questions to revise what had been learned earlier, and to extend knowledge and understanding;
 - good use of the final part of the lesson to consolidate new learning;
 - good teamwork between teachers and other adults in making sure that all pupils were fully included in the lesson;
 - well-established classroom routines, very good relationships and management of pupils;

- high expectations were made clear to pupils and there was an appropriate level of challenge for all ability groups;
 - good use of praise and encouragement;
 - the time allocated to the lesson was sufficient to enable the teacher and pupils to spend long enough on each part of it so that progress and the quality of learning were good;
 - frequent changes of activity, for example listening, discussion and written work, to maintain interest and concentration.
 - good use of ICT to support and extend learning.
20. Where lessons were less successful in terms of the learning of at least some groups of pupils, the reasons usually included the absence of some of the above. In particular, on more than one occasion the work did not provide enough challenge for the more able pupils because expectations of them were not high enough. The concluding session of the lesson was sometimes too short or lacked focus so that it did not serve as an effective consolidation of learning and rounding off of the lesson.
21. The quality of marking is variable. At best, teachers encourage pupils, mainly in Years 3 and 4, to enter into a written dialogue about their work. Too often, however, work, especially that done on worksheets, is marked right or wrong without any indication as to what is right or wrong with it and how it could be improved. The use of homework to improve pupils' attainment and involve their parents more in their children's learning is under-developed. There is a need for parents to know more about what is set and how they can help.
22. Because of the overall good quality of teaching, the quality of pupils' learning and the progress that they make in individual lessons and over time are also good. Pupils of all abilities become confident of their ability to learn and to carry out the tasks they are set. This was particularly noticeable in science lessons where pupils were often given responsibility for planning and carrying out investigations. In more than three-quarters of the lessons observed, learning was judged to be at least good. Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour in lessons were good or better in a similar proportion of lessons. Where lessons were planned with the needs of all pupils in mind and presented in a lively and interesting manner, pupils responded by demonstrating good commitment to their work. (For further details of pupils' achievements and progress in the Foundation Stage and in the subjects of the National Curriculum, see paragraphs 65 – 161).

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

23. The quality of the curriculum is good. Pupils of all ages and abilities are provided with a broad and relevant curriculum that meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and the local agreed syllabus for religious education. The school has a very well developed understanding of equal opportunities and inclusion, which are integral parts of the life of the school and are fully reflected in its practice.
24. The national literacy and numeracy strategies have been successfully implemented. Basic skills are taught well, improving standards achieved by pupils. Teachers' planning is good and there is continuity of planning between classes. Subject co-ordinators monitor plans to ensure that the curriculum is fully covered. There is a whole school curricular framework that ensures appropriate time is allocated to each subject, including the non-core subjects. The school is to be commended for maintaining the profile of the non-core subjects despite the many priorities that have rightly demanded attention.
25. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage closely follows national guidance and promotes the 'stepping stones' of learning that it describes. Structured learning activities are well organised, and individual children are watched closely to make sure that they experience all that is offered. Good records are kept of their achievements and these are used when subsequent work is planned.

26. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and for those who are learning English as an additional language is good. Pupils from travelling families are welcomed at the school and effectively helped by a support assistant. All these pupils receive good support and guidance, especially in literacy and numeracy. Effective use is made of the skills of parents and other adult helpers. Careful planning and organisation for pupils with special educational needs ensure that they have experience of the full curriculum. Their programmes of work are based clearly on their Individual Educational Plans. The school makes good use of outside agencies such as speech therapists and ethnic minority support teachers to work with pupils and class teachers to plan appropriate programmes of work. This helps pupils to improve their work and raises their self-confidence.
27. Pupils who are close to achieving in line with national expectations in literacy and numeracy have access to additional help from trained support staff. Support from teaching assistants throughout the school is good. These improved learning opportunities are very valuable and result in greater progress being made by such pupils.
28. The curriculum has improved since the last inspection and there are now a number of strengths. For example, there is a very effective programme for personal, social and health education. These aspects of the curriculum are effectively developed through timetabled lessons and in assemblies. A visit from the County Life Bus offers information lessons about health and drugs to parents and pupils. The school has a policy on sex education and a policy and procedures on substance misuse.
29. The local Pyramid Social Inclusion Project provides excellent support for pupils with specific needs, supporting them in the development of a range of essential social skills. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to develop confidence and self-esteem. Assemblies focus on praise and rewards for pupils' special achievements and efforts. Pupils know that their opinions are valued. This is seen in the recently formed school council that provides a forum for debate and allows pupils to have a voice in school improvement. Under the guidance of the deputy headteacher pupils are encouraged to express their views and contribute to school improvement.
30. A key issue of the last report concerned pupils being withdrawn from lessons for other activities. This has now been addressed and all pupils have equal opportunities and access to the range of activities within the school, which is very inclusive in its approach. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language have full access to the whole curriculum, including the National Curriculum.
31. A good range of extra-curricular activities enhances the curriculum and reflects the teachers' commitment to ensuring pupils' learning extends beyond the formal lessons of the school day. Pupils benefit from opportunities to improve their skills in sport, art and craft, chess and draughts. Activities are well supported. Educational visits are used effectively to enrich the curriculum. They also make a significant contribution to pupils' social and cultural development. Visits are organised to different places of worship, to Woburn Safari Park, Shuttleworth Collection, Bletchley Park and Milton Keynes. Some parents expressed concern that there were too few extra-curricular opportunities offered by the school. Inspectors disagree with this view and found the range and quality of activities are good for the age of the pupils and the size of the school.
32. Visitors are welcomed in school to share their expertise, interests and memories. For example, a local resident shares his memories of the Second World War, and the Fire Service informs pupils about hazards and fire safety. Other first-hand experiences include visits from theatre, dance and music groups. There has been support from business such as book vouchers supplied by a local building society. The school takes part in local inter-school events, such as sport, chess, country dancing and music events. Very good liaison has been established between the local first and middle schools in order to improve transfer arrangements and continuity in learning.
33. The school makes good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is a strength that has been maintained and improved since the previous inspection.

34. The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual development. Pupils are helped to gain insight into their own and other people's values and beliefs. They are constantly encouraged to respect and value the feelings and opinions of others. The ethos of the school promotes respect and consideration for other people and for property. Special assemblies focus on praise and celebration of pupils' personal achievements, while other assemblies provide opportunities for pupils to reflect and explore their feelings. After an assembly on 'fairness', based on Africa's fight for equality, pupils agreed that all people are part of God's family and physical differences do not change that. They sat in silence as the headteacher showed a photograph of Nelson Mandela.
35. Moments of 'awe and wonder' were evident in lessons. For example, when in response to sharing his work during a religious education lesson, a pupil evoked a spontaneous 'wow' from others in the class. The creation of a 'Faith Zone' alongside the library presents a constant visual reminder of the many faiths and cultures that exist in Britain today
36. Provision for moral development is very good. The headteacher, staff and parent helpers provide very good role models. Everyone is treated with respect and fairness, as reflected in the School Code. Each class is also encouraged to develop their own moral code. Pupils treat visitors and each other with respect and courtesy. The school consistently promotes clear moral values in lessons and around school by reinforcing elements of good behaviour at every opportunity.
37. The school promotes social development well. From an early age pupils are helped to relate well to each other and to adults. As pupils progress through the school, the teachers build on and increase these opportunities. For example, the school makes effective use of visits and clubs to help pupils develop a sense of group identity and acceptable group behaviour. The school council has ensured that pupils discuss school issues.
38. The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory, overall, although there is little provision made for pupils to develop an awareness of Britain as a multi-ethnic society. The rich resources available in nearby towns are not exploited sufficiently. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about their own culture and life in the past by visiting local places of interest. The school has a collection of artefacts relating to different religions. There is a collection of books in the library that focus on celebrating differences. This theme is promoted through religious education and other areas of the curriculum such as art, music and geography.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

39. As in the previous inspection, the provision for the care of pupils in the school is good. All members of staff show concern for the well being of pupils, the quality of information kept on each pupil is detailed and comprehensive and members of staff know pupils and their medical and personal needs very well.
40. The school identifies and deals well with any hazards found on site and health and safety checks and inspections are regularly undertaken. The school's health and safety policy is being rewritten and administrative arrangements regarding health and safety are also being improved. The governors and members of staff take their responsibilities in this area seriously and there are routines for safety checks, including a range of risk assessments. Risk assessments are also undertaken for all school trips in accordance with the local authority guidelines. Members of staff are trained to administer first aid and the school's procedures for the care and treatment of pupils are very good. Thorough precautions are in place for dealing with emergencies arising from pupils' medical conditions and for dealing with accidents and injuries.
41. The school's arrangements for child protection are good; the policy and procedures follow the guidelines of the local committee for the protection of children. A teacher is designated as the person responsible for child protection and other members of staff are regularly trained to ensure they understand the school's arrangements and procedures. The school monitors pupils very

well, especially if there is any concern about their welfare. In line with local authority guidance, police checks are undertaken on new staff and helpers.

42. The school's ethos, the good quality of teaching and the consistent use of positive behaviour strategies support the good behaviour seen throughout the school. The monitoring of behaviour is handled consistently well by the staff. The school has good procedures in place for encouraging good behaviour, with staff able to use appropriate rewards or sanctions. Assemblies, class activities and the use of circle time are used well to support this aspect.
43. The school is good at monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour and parents and pupils confirm that the pupils feel safe in the school. Parents also confirm that there are few incidents of bullying or racism and that the school deals with any issues speedily and sensitively.
44. There is a good induction programme for children and parents so that they feel welcome and children soon settle down to school life. All children are assessed when they start in the nursery and statutory assessments are carried out in the reception classes. Regular day-to-day assessments are used effectively to prepare appropriate work for pupils. Support is good for children with special educational needs and any other children who need extra help.
45. Procedures for identifying and supporting pupils with special educational needs meet statutory requirements and are good. The school has a culture of including pupils well and pupils of all abilities are fully valued. The headteacher, who is also the special needs co-ordinator, works closely with parents and with outside specialists. Pupils on the special needs register have good quality Individual Education Plans that clearly identify learning needs. They have measurable targets and are carefully monitored by the staff.
46. The monitoring of attendance and punctuality is good, and this strongly supports the pupils' welfare, learning and progress. The school makes calls home on the first day of any unreported absence and then follows up well on any unauthorised absences and lateness. For day-to-day recording of attendance, the school uses manual registers that comply fully with all requirements for the coding and reporting of attendance. Individual pupils' attendance records are then transferred into the school's computerised analysis and monitoring system for research and follow up. There are incentives to improve pupils' attendance and/or punctuality and the children appreciate the recognition of their efforts to be in school and on time.
47. The school communicates well with parents on arrangements for timekeeping and reporting absences. The school's policy, the home-school agreement and frequent letters are sent to all parents; these documents are well written and clear. The educational welfare officer provides the school with good support and this is helping the school in its endeavours to maintain and improve attendance levels still further.
48. Assessment and target setting are well established in the school. It is particularly commendable that assessment records are kept for all the subjects of the National Curriculum and most records include reference to levels or to performance relative to end of key stage statements. In addition teachers have full reading records for each pupil. Individual pupils' profiles are maintained and enable teachers to produce full and useful reports for parents. The assessments in mathematics feed well into subsequent planning with further assessment at the end of each half term. Overall, assessment information is used well to shape future planning for year groups although there is more to be done to make sure that all groups within classes are appropriately challenged, particularly in Year 2. The school has found it difficult to develop target setting with and for individual pupils. This is partly because records are almost all maintained manually and the potential of information and communication technology in this respect has yet to be realised. In other respects, particularly teachers' good organisation and management of pupils' behaviour, the school is well placed to involve pupils more in their own target setting.
49. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are also good. The teachers and support staff have good knowledge of pupils' needs and they are working in class to improve pupils' personal development as well as their academic progress. The range of rewards

and sanctions, the good personal and social assessment and target setting systems support this aspect well. The personal, social, health and citizenship education curriculum is well designed and implemented.

50. Pupils join in a good range of events in the school that contribute to their personal development including raising money for charities, visits and extra-curricular activities. There are opportunities for pupils to develop independence and to use their initiative, most notably through membership of the newly formed school council.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

51. Parents hold positive views of the school; the school has established good links with them and provides them with good information. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school and their contribution to pupils' learning are good.
52. The Clipstone Brook Association is a very active parents' association, which has raised a substantial amount of money for the school and holds a number of social events for pupils, parents and the community. Parents are actively encouraged to support the school and several were in school helping in classrooms during the inspection. Parents are welcomed to attend assemblies, performances, curricular events, briefing meetings, parents' evenings, Year 4 leaver events, "Mums' and Grans' afternoon" and open school sessions. Parents are able to communicate with the school on a daily basis by seeing members of staff at the beginning or end of the day, by arranging appointments or by using the pupils' reading/contact books. The information provided for parents is good. Parents are provided with monthly newsletters and day-to-day class and school information.
53. Parents confirm that the school handles pupils' start in school well and for pupils entering the Foundation Stage, parents appreciate their careful introduction to the school. Parents have opportunities each term to discuss children's progress with teachers, and parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed of their child's progress. The school communicates with parents on attendance and timekeeping in writing and by telephone, and follows up unannounced absences. Parents agreed that the school is welcoming and that it operates an "open door policy". At the pre-inspection meeting, parents confirmed that they are confident that teachers would respond positively to any suggestions or complaints.
54. Although a significant minority of parents indicated in their questionnaires that they felt they were not well informed about pupils' progress, the inspectors found that the information provided by the school is good. Pupils' annual reports are detailed, and show that teachers know their pupils well. The reports include all appropriate information, list pupils' achievements and include targets and examples of how pupils can make further progress. Pupils and parents are also able to add their comments. Parents confirmed that they found this year's reports helpful and informative and that other documentation is informative.
55. Parents' contribution to pupils' learning at school and at home is good. Comments made by some parents at their meeting indicated that they felt that the setting of homework in the school was inconsistent. Inspection evidence shows that homework is not always used regularly to enhance pupils' work and that sometimes it is not marked.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

56. The headteacher provides very good educational leadership for the school. Good staff morale and a sense of teamwork are the result of her strong professional guidance. In partnership with the deputy headteacher, she works conscientiously to meet the school's aims and raise standards of pupils' attainment further. Teachers with special responsibilities fulfil their duties very well. The staff have confidence in each other and all want to provide for pupils as well as they can. The headteacher, the deputy headteacher and subject co-ordinators monitor teaching and learning, and teachers evaluate their work and plan together in teams. Increasingly, they share the good things that are going on in the school and address any areas of relative weakness. Monitoring has proved successful in Years 3 and 4 and is gradually helping to raise standards in other year groups. Unavoidable staff absence, which the school was able to cover sufficiently well, has nevertheless hindered professional development in Years 1 and 2, but the school has clear plans to focus on aspects of teaching and learning which could be better.
57. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties effectively and governors use their skills well in the service of the school. Recently appointed governors have benefited from training, both from the

headteacher and from the local education authority. The well-informed chair of governors works closely with the headteacher, and all governors work conscientiously to provide effectively for the pupils' education and welfare. The strong partnership between the staff and governors gives the school the very good capacity to succeed with further improvements. There is a well-established system of committees that meet regularly in order to keep in touch with the work of the school. Co-ordinators report to the governors and keep them informed about current developments in their subjects.

58. Governors identify clear priorities for improvement through regular school self-evaluation and progress on the school's improvement plan is monitored rigorously. This enables the school to recognise its strengths and face up to challenges when there are areas for development. Because priorities are well chosen, teachers and governors are able to focus on issues that make a real difference to the quality of provision and the raising of standards. For example, the school's drive to improve standards in writing over the past two years has had a positive effect on raising the school's performance in national tests. Current priorities, to raise standards in mathematics and provide more challenge for higher-attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2, have been identified through rigorous analysis of the school's results in national tests. Challenging targets are set for improvement in the school's performance. The governing body is kept very well informed about the work of the school by the headteacher through discussion and written reports. School documentation, including a wide range of policies and schemes of work, is reviewed regularly in order to meet statutory requirements. The school's aims are detailed. The headteacher has plans to review them and share them more widely with the school community and to emphasise aspects that will help pupils to prepare more effectively for life in contemporary multi-cultural British society.
59. Governors regularly discuss matters concerning special educational needs and the named governor for special educational needs keeps in regular touch with what is going on in the school. The new Code of Practice has been implemented successfully. The headteacher, who is the school's co-ordinator for special educational needs, manages the provision well. Specific funding for special educational needs is spent appropriately to provide pupils with adult support and other appropriate resources for teaching and learning. Governors consider the school's provision for all groups of pupils and ensure that they have access to the full curriculum. The school community includes children from Traveller families, pupils who speak English as an additional language and pupils from ethnic minorities.
60. There are sufficient suitably qualified and experienced teachers to teach the National Curriculum and religious education. Teachers are open and honest about their performance in lessons. The headteacher has a supportive and helpful 'coaching' style; she looks out for areas where teachers could do better and then works alongside them to effect improvement. This is especially helpful for teachers new to the school. The deputy headteacher also plays a significant role in staff development, particularly in providing a very good role model for teaching. The school's improvement plan clearly identifies necessary training for staff during the introduction of new initiatives and in the drive to raise standards. Support staff make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning and have a clear role in the classroom, where they often teach small groups of pupils. Training for classroom support staff is well planned and the governors encourage all members of staff to extend their professional expertise and gain higher qualifications. The appraisal of teachers' performance is fully in place.
61. The school accommodation is satisfactory for the teaching of the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, and includes a spacious field and an imaginatively developed area for scientific investigations. The main building provides enough rooms of adequate size, a well-organised library area and a hall, which is well equipped for physical education. However, some parts of the roof and some window frames are in poor condition and in need of refurbishment. Overall, the school has a satisfactory range of resources for the teaching of all subjects of the curriculum. In science, music, and religious education, resources are good, and in English they are very good. In addition, staff make very good use of the school grounds, the local area, visitors and educational visits to enhance provision for the pupils and bring relevance to their learning.

62. The governors have a good understanding of the financial affairs of the school and manage them well. The agreed budget reflects priorities in the school's improvement plan, and governors look ahead and plan strategically to ensure proper provision for pupils. The headteacher and the committee for finance carefully monitor progress through the plan. Specific grants for provision for pupils who have special educational needs and for staff training are used appropriately. There is a very clear understanding of the need to ensure 'best value' in all that the school does, and governors consider the educational outcomes of all of their spending decisions. The headteacher and the finance administrator carefully manage the day-to-day administration of the budget and make good use of the school's computer system to support this work. Office routines are well organised and appropriate financial controls are in place. Recommendations in the last auditor's report have been dealt with effectively. Good systems ensure that secretarial staff deal very efficiently with day-to-day administration so that teachers are not disturbed in the classrooms unnecessarily.
63. Bearing in mind the good curricular provision and pupils' good achievement by the end of Year 4, the school provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

64. **In order to raise standards of attainment and improve the quality of education, the headteacher, the governing body and staff, with the help of the local education authority, should:**

***Raise teachers' expectations of pupils in Year 2, particularly in reading and mathematics, by:**

- greater involvement of teachers in regularly assessing work in relation to National Curriculum levels;
- refining individual target setting by establishing shorter-term goals, related where possible to National Curriculum levels;
- using the services of the local education authority to access examples of good practice in terms of organisation and resources to meet the needs of more able pupils.

See paragraphs 3, 17, 48, 78 – 89, 90 - 99

***Increase the contribution that homework makes to raising standards by:**

- giving parents regular information about what their children are learning;
- making sure that parents know what homework has been set and what is expected;
- extending the use of the reading record as a link between school and home.

See paragraph 55, 88

Improve the extent to which the school prepares pupils for life in multi-ethnic Britain by:

- making sure that this is clearly included in the school's aims;
- bearing this in mind when planning so that opportunities are not missed;
- encouraging more visitors from and visits to nearby multi-ethnic communities;
- using the opportunities presented by the school's developing ICT provision.

See paragraphs 38, 147

***Improve some aspects of the state of the building by:**

- seeking urgent attention to leaks in roof windows;
- seeking urgent attention to long-standing leaking classroom windows that lead to pupils getting wet while they sit at their tables;
- seeing to the internal decoration of the building.

See paragraph 61

In addition, the governing body, with the headteacher and staff, should include the following points for improvement in their action plan:

- Attainment in design and technology and its links with literacy, numeracy and ICT.

See paragraphs 116 – 120

- Building on existing good practice in marking so that pupils (and their parents) receive good feedback on their work and guidance on how to improve it.

See paragraph 21 and 83

* These areas are included in the school's improvement planning.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	35
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	46

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	8	18	8	0	0	0
Percentage	3	23	51	23	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 nearly three percentage points

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	23	190
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	19

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	5	24

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	23
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	14

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.0

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1

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	19	18

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	18	18	17
	Girls	16	18	15
	Total	34	36	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (94)	97 (97)	86 (94)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	17	18
	Girls	15	14	15
	Total	32	31	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	86 (89)	84 (94)	89 (100)
	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	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	169
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.2
Average class size	27.1

Education support staff: YR – Y4

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	93

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	46
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	33
Number of pupils per FTE adult	23

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

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

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	480,728
Total expenditure	477,345
Expenditure per pupil	2,423
Balance brought forward from previous year	21,763
Balance carried forward to next year	25,146

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

45%

Number of questionnaires sent out

213

Number of questionnaires returned

96

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	42	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	40	56	2	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	63	2	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	52	20	3	2
The teaching is good.	45	50	3	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	48	19	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	36	6	4	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	41	54	3	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	29	47	18	3	2
The school is well led and managed.	28	50	13	5	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	29	61	6	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	9	48	23	9	9

Some rows may not add to 100 because of rounding

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

65. Children attend part-time in the nursery and then attend full-time when they are of reception age. Children enter the nursery with overall levels of attainment that are broadly in line with those normally seen for this age group. All children, including those who have special educational needs, make good progress in the six nationally agreed areas of learning for young children and reach the nationally agreed early learning goals by the time they leave the reception class. In personal, social and emotional development and physical development, they exceed the goals. Standards are similar to those reported at the last inspection. Good curricular provision has been maintained and the quality of teaching has improved. Teachers plan well for children to follow the 'stepping stones' of the curriculum for the Foundation Stage. Assessment procedures to measure children's progress through the curriculum are gradually being introduced and used to plan future work.

Personal, social and emotional development

66. With sensitive adult support, children in the nursery concentrate for increasing lengths of time and develop greater levels of independence in dressing and personal hygiene. Most children soon settle into the school's routines. They are guided and supported well and soon learn to be considerate of one another. Their self-control strengthens and they gradually develop an understanding of what is right and what is wrong. Children become increasingly confident in asking for help when they need it, and become more responsible as they help to clear away after activities or get ready for outside play. When children join the reception class, they adapt confidently to the brisker pace of lessons and become more independent. Their developing self-esteem and improved levels of attention help them to acquire skills, knowledge and understanding at a good rate. They play happily with older pupils in the playground and move around the school sensibly; for example, when they go to the school hall for assemblies. Children achieve well and their attainment is above expectations for their age by the end of the nursery and by the end of the reception class.
67. In both classes, the teaching is good. Relationships are very good and children learn to respond positively to gentle reprimands when their behaviour is unacceptable. Routines are soon established. Staff are firm, sensitive and fair as they insist on good behaviour and encourage children to concentrate and persevere with tasks. Because of this, children soon behave very well and there is a purposeful atmosphere in the classrooms. Children are encouraged to use their initiative, become increasingly confident and act responsibly; for example, when they chose three parcels from a large selection and then compared their weight on a balance. All staff take time to talk to children and use praise effectively to raise their self-esteem. They sit with children, read with them, listen to them attentively and help them to sort out their problems. During outside play in the nursery, the staff encourage the children to try hard to improve their skills, such as throwing and catching balls. In class discussions, teachers promote good levels of social awareness as they talk about being fair, listening to the views of other children and recognising the worth of every person.

Communication, language and literacy

68. In the nursery, children enjoy saying rhymes and joining in the repetitive sections of stories. Because staff listen to them patiently, they acquire appropriate speaking skills to express their ideas. By the time they join the reception class, children begin to use appropriate vocabulary, particularly in mathematics and literacy lessons. In the nursery and the reception class, staff provide a wide range of opportunities for children to talk, communicate and extend their vocabulary. Children gradually learn to handle books and turn pages carefully and enjoy reading. In both classes, children gain increasing understanding of how print carries meaning and that it is read from left to right. Very good teaching of letter sounds and shapes begins as soon as

children start the nursery. By the end of the reception class, most children recognise letter shapes and sounds and 'read' stories successfully by referring to the pictures, and quicker-learning children read simple books with repetitive texts. There is a good range of attractive story and non-fiction books in both classes and children develop a love of literature which makes them want to learn to read. Most children make good attempts at writing their names before they move to the reception class. In the reception class, most children form letters correctly, begin to write sentences independently and illustrate their writing with lively drawings, but brighter children could do more. When opportunities are provided, the children do well; for example, when they wrote letters of thanks after seeing members of Milton Keynes' Mounted Police Force. Most children achieve the levels expected by the end of the nursery and reception classes.

69. The good quality of teaching and learning in both classes contributes well to the children's good progress in reading. Skills are fostered through enthusiastic story telling and well-organised reading areas in the classrooms. In the nursery, staff develop children's awareness of print by labelling objects and displays, pointing to the text as they read stories and rhymes and teaching the shapes and sounds of letters of the alphabet. In the reception class, the teacher introduces elements of the literacy hour in a gradual way so that children recognise links between reading and writing as they explore texts together and look for repeated words and patterns of letters. In both classes, the nursery nurse and classroom assistant are actively involved in teaching the children. Staff listen to the children considerately, engage with them and show interest in what they have to say. Children are encouraged to develop language through discussions, stories, writing and role-play. In both classes, staff provide writing areas where children can make marks and practise their writing. In the nursery, the manipulative skills of writing are developed through practice in painting, drawing and play with construction kits.

Mathematical development

70. In the nursery, children develop mathematical skills in practical ways throughout the day. Through a wide range of sorting and matching experiences, they develop a growing vocabulary to express size, shape and colour. They learn about order by lining up to go outside or to go to other rooms, by taking turns in games and carrying out tasks such as icing biscuits and then decorating them. When they play purposefully with sand, children develop mathematical language such as 'more' and 'less'. There are good links with literacy; for example, when children made a simple graph about 'favourite fruit' after hearing the story of 'Handa's Surprise'. Songs and games help children to gain knowledge and understanding of numbers to ten, and higher-attaining children count confidently to 20. Their understanding of sequence and order grows as they sit in groups to work with adults and play with well-chosen puzzles and games. In the reception class, children recognise larger numbers. A child said he had 'hundreds' of books at home. He knew there were hundreds because they wouldn't all go on one shelf. Children begin to add small numbers together and gain early understanding of addition and subtraction as they talk about 'one more' or 'one less'. They name simple two- and three-dimensional shapes. Children's understanding of 'heavier' and 'lighter' develops well in imaginatively organised activities when they wrap parcels and then compare weights on simple balances. Slower-learning children are well supported; they rely heavily on adult support to express their mathematical understanding. With the teacher, most children enjoy answering quick-fire questions, and higher-attaining children begin to develop and record their awareness of addition and subtraction.
71. The quality of teaching and learning is good in the nursery and sound in the reception class. Teachers use an appropriate mix of direct teaching, questioning and stimulating activities to promote children's learning and extend their mathematical vocabulary. In the nursery, staff relate very well to children and help them to learn at a good rate during effective teaching in small groups. Staff prepare appropriate activities so that children learn in a practical way. Non-teaching staff are involved in the day-to-day assessments of children's progress, which are used appropriately to inform the planning of future work. All staff engage well with the children in order to help them to sort out their ideas. Parents help in lessons, and this enhances opportunities for children to talk to adults and acquire a good mathematical vocabulary. In the reception class, the teacher ensures that children develop a good range of mental strategies and encourages them to think hard before they answer questions. An excited child ran to the teacher with three

drumbeaters of different lengths. He put them in order for her, remembering an earlier activity when the class had put tails of different lengths on three paper mice. Children record their investigations in simple ways. However, bearing in mind the more structured lessons and faster pace of work in Year 1, skills of recording could be developed more systematically in the last term in the reception class.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

72. In the nursery, children develop early investigative skills as they explore the school grounds, learn about seasonal changes during the year and find out about their environment. They sow seeds and learn to care for plants. Staff provide interesting activities which help children to develop investigative skills. Children observe insects through magnifying glasses and know that caterpillars turn into butterflies. As they make simple models with construction kits, children reflect their knowledge of the real world; they make cars, lorries and houses. In the 'post office', they use the telephone, collect money and give change. They learn about places further away as they follow the travels of a teddy bear that is taken to other countries. In both classes, children enjoy cooking. Because of good levels of adult support, they acquire an increasing vocabulary to express their ideas and explain clearly what they know. In the reception class, children gain an increasing understanding of different cultures and ways of life. They look at books about children who live in other countries, play with model figures in different national costumes and learn about a girl who lives on an island in Scotland. In cookery activities, children made oat biscuits and sweet Indian biscuits. In religious education lessons, children become familiar with stories such as that of Noah and the Ark. In both classes, children develop appropriate skills in ICT as they explore simple programs on the computers. In both classes, children achieve well.
73. Teaching and learning are of good quality in both classes and, because staff are secure in their knowledge of the curriculum for young children, activities are stimulating and appropriate for the age groups. Staff interact very well with the children, pick up their ideas and take their learning forward effectively. Learning is based firmly on experiences which are relevant to the children's daily lives. In both classes, the school environment is used well to support learning about the natural world. Teachers organise interesting trips to broaden children's experiences and extend their general knowledge. Children in the nursery went for a ride on a narrow-gauge railway, and reception children went to Willen Lake. In the reception class, staff plan tasks which prepare children very effectively for subjects in the National Curriculum such as science, design and technology and ICT.

Physical development

74. In the nursery, children run, jump, climb and balance with confidence as they play in their own well organised outside play area. Most children move around with an awareness of space and are controlled and purposeful. Both classes have opportunities to dance, play with small equipment, climb and jump in the well-equipped school hall. Children in the nursery respond well to the teacher's instructions and develop increasing levels of control as they run, hop and bounce balls. Children in the reception class play with older pupils during break times and lunchtimes, when they run about and join in games with appropriate co-ordination. In games activities on the school field, children gain early skills for games they will play later and achieve well as they throw and catch a ball and kick a ball to one another. In both classes, children have many opportunities to model with dough, use simple craft equipment, construct models from reclaimed materials, play with model vehicles and build with construction kits.
75. The quality of teaching is good in both classes and staff ensure that all children, including those who have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language learn at a good rate and achieve well. Staff plan well for the children to have regular exercise and to practise with small equipment such as bats and balls. In both classes, there are regular and rigorous assessments of children's progress; for example, their ability to balance and hop confidently. In the reception class, lessons are planned effectively with a warm-up session at the beginning and a cool-down at the end, so that the children acquire proper routines, and children

have opportunities to refine and improve their movements. In the classrooms, teachers plan stimulating activities for children to develop finer manipulative skills for writing, drawing and painting. In the writing area, they write letters and record messages. Regular opportunities for drawing and painting help children to develop increased levels of pencil and brush control.

Creative development

76. Early experimentation with paint and brushes in the nursery leads to bright pictures and models in the reception class as children explore colour, texture and shape in two and three dimensions. The children use a good variety of materials including paint, crayons and felt-tipped pens to make pictures. These often link with topics, and help to reinforce and consolidate learning. In both classes, children gradually learn to make decisions and choices when selecting materials and equipment. This develops their independence and provides valuable opportunities for them to use their initiative and imagination. Children roll, squeeze and shape malleable materials such as dough and papier-mache to develop skills and techniques for model making. In music, children acquire a good repertoire of nursery rhymes and simple songs. Children in both classes sing tunefully and listen well. By the time they leave the reception class, children sing confidently with older pupils in the hall during assemblies. In role-play areas such as the 'vet's surgery', nursery children interact with one another confidently during imaginative play. In both classes, children benefit from taking part in concerts for their parents.
77. The quality of teaching and learning is good in both classes. Staff organise activities well and children are given opportunities to explore materials and to practise techniques in a purposeful atmosphere, without fear of criticism. Because staff listen well to children, creative activities provide valuable opportunities for children to discuss their ideas. Children explore their feelings and develop their imagination. Planning is good and children's artwork is valued and displayed attractively; this raises their self-esteem. In the role-play areas, staff extend dramatic play as they ask the children who they are pretending to be and what they are doing. In the reception class, pupils made simple puppets and performed with them for an audience of classmates. They were accompanied by children playing percussion instruments. The feeling of 'performance' was very evident, and there was a sense of style to the occasion. Because of the good teaching, children, including those who have special educational needs, learn at a good rate and achieve well.

ENGLISH

78. By the end of Year 2 pupils attain standards that are broadly average. By the end of Year 4, pupils are attaining standards that are above average. As at the time of the previous inspection, pupils' achievement is good, and sometimes very good, in reading and writing. There are no significant variations in the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make the same progress as their peers.
79. Most pupils enter school with speaking and listening skills that are in line with those expected for their age and by the time they leave school at the end of Year 4 most pupils have developed good speaking and listening skills. The majority, including those with special educational needs, speak confidently and articulately in response to questions or when reading aloud. They are achieving well as a result of good teaching that promotes effective learning. Improvement in teaching has been promoted through good leadership and management in the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy. Because literacy lessons offer opportunities every day to engage in discussions and because teachers ask a wide range of pupils to answer questions, standards of speaking in Year 2 are at least satisfactory. At the end of Year 4 pupils' speaking and listening skills are good.
80. Pupils in Year 3 are eager to read out loud their paragraphs describing Toad's plan to regain Toad Hall from the weasels. Others listen carefully and spontaneously applaud as one pupil

triumphantly exclaims 'I have a solution!'. Similarly in Year 4, boys become animated as they discuss persuasive features in advertisements promoting foods that are reported to be part of Michael Owen's breakfast menu. Younger pupils enjoy talking about words that are similar and words that are opposites. They use a thesaurus correctly to help them find a range of similar words.

81. Standards in reading are sound at the end of Year 2 and good at the end of Year 4. Most pupils develop good and often very good reading skills because the school recognises the importance of teaching skills, such as phonics, from a very early age. This contributes to the good reading standards ultimately achieved although standards in Year 2 could well be higher if material that challenged pupils' comprehension skills was provided more regularly. The school also recognises the need to enlist parents' help at home more effectively. Pupils enjoy reading. Many pupils read fluently and accurately for their age and talk with understanding about their reading, for example, about plot and characterisation. They recognise the different qualities of fiction and non-fiction and know how to look up information from dictionaries and other sources.
82. The pupils talk freely about their enjoyment of reading and about favourite books and authors, A.A. Milne and Dick King-Smith being particularly popular with Year 2 pupils. Higher achieving pupils in Year 4 read books that are advanced for their age such as 'Artemis Fowl' by Eoin Colfer, while lower achieving pupils have limited comprehension skills. This was evident in a Year 4 lesson when pupils were identifying the purpose of advertisements. Although pupils talked knowledgeably about the advertisements, many were unclear about their precise intention.
83. Pupils' writing skills are generally satisfactory by the end of Year 2 although there are examples of above average work in other subjects, notably in history and science. Work carried out in the literacy hour is sometimes less well thought out or is not complete. By the end of Year 4, pupils' writing skills have improved and the content of their work is good, and some is very good. Pupils improve their technical skills through handwriting and spelling exercises. Some of the most skilful writing is in other areas such as religious education and history. The school has initiated target setting and target tracking systems that highlight for each pupil features that need to be improved. Targets are inserted into pupils' workbooks and regularly updated.
84. By the time they are in Year 2 pupils generally display satisfactory standards of handwriting. However, the quality of handwriting varies widely across the school and in some classes pupils pay insufficient attention to producing neat handwriting. This has been identified by the school as an area for improvement. Pupils in Year 2 have an understanding of basic punctuation and usually remember to use it in their writing. They write about a range of subjects, such as personal experience of a football match, and retell part of the story of Katie Morag. In their writing they retell well-known stories, recount historical events and lists. Higher achieving pupils write persuasively when they state a point of view.
85. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 make good progress in learning to structure their writing, using a range of strategies that allows them to develop and improve a particular section of their writing. This emphasis on good structure is evident in the improving quality of pupils' writing. Higher achieving pupils in Year 4 use good sentence structure and are beginning to write in paragraphs. At best their vocabulary is interesting, precise and well chosen. Spelling of familiar words is good. Less confident pupils struggle with spellings. Pupils have opportunities to write for a range of purposes, in different styles and for a number of audiences, including letters, information text about historical events, and a range of poetry, including Haiku, a Japanese form of poetry that has three lines and seventeen syllables. Pupils of average ability use connectives well but sometimes mix up their tenses. Below average pupils spell only simple words correctly. They sometimes use capital letters and full stops incorrectly. Critical and proof reading skills are developed when pupils read each other's work, offering suggestions for improvement.
86. Attitudes to English are good and pupils, in the main, behave well. They listen attentively and co-operate when working in groups, becoming restless only when tasks are too easy or too long is spent on one activity. The very good relationships between pupils and teachers have a positive effect on standards of attainment.

87. The quality of teaching overall is good and sometimes very good. In Year 1, it is generally good and pupils make good progress. In Year 2, teaching is sound rather than good because there is sometimes not enough challenge for pupils of higher ability. Teaching in Years 3 and 4 is good, and often very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Among the strengths of the teaching is the good knowledge of teachers that enables them to ask questions that challenge pupils to extend their thinking. The preparation of resources chosen to motivate pupils, and the effective use of learning support assistants, also contribute to the good progress that pupils make. Teachers have good classroom management skills. These, combined with the very good relationships in lessons between pupils and teachers, succeed in motivating the pupils, who sustain their concentration well in what are often long lessons. The best lessons move at a brisk pace and pupils are encouraged to think for themselves. In a Year 3 class, for example, pupils were challenged to draft paragraphs for retelling a story within a limited time that was marked by a timer. In good lessons pupils' interest is captured and their behaviour is managed well. In less effective lessons work is not sufficiently challenging for the higher attaining pupils, too hard for the lower attaining pupils and behaviour is not effectively managed.
88. The teachers do not always use the review sessions at the end of the lesson to take learning forwards. Often it is used for pupils to report on what they have done, without advice as how to improve. In a Year 3 class, however, it was used well to examine pupils' work, suggest improvements and set homework that required research before the next lesson. Generally, however, homework is not being consistently used to raise standards, particularly in reading comprehension. The pupils are taught to plan their writing work throughout the school and the older ones know what re-drafting involves but there is little evidence in books of this happening. There is evidence in workbooks that pupils' work is thoroughly marked, often giving helpful advice about how to improve. The best practice is to be found in the workbooks of older pupils where a dialogue about improvement sometimes develops between teacher and pupil. Marking is often less satisfactory during Year 2. Throughout the school marking is, generally, not so helpful for those pupils who are less skilled in literacy. There is work on display that has been produced on a word processor but there is limited evidence of computers being used to support literacy during literacy lessons.
89. Leadership and management of English are good. Considerable effort has gone into planning and improving standards of literacy, analysing pupils' performance and setting appropriate targets for both individual pupils and groups to raise attainment. There is effective monitoring of standards and teaching, contributing to improving standards in English. Literacy skills are promoted in other subjects and this is reflected in the good quality writing produced by pupils in history and religious education. Resources are good and the school monitors the changing interests of pupils in order to provide books that motivate all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language and those from Travelling families are supported well and make good progress.

MATHEMATICS

90. The above average standards throughout the school at the time of the last inspection have been maintained by the end of Year 4 but standards are now only average by the end of Year 2. The progress of one class has been hampered by unavoidable staff changes. The school also recognises the need to raise expectations of potentially higher attaining pupils and provide appropriately challenging work for them.
91. Current standards in Year 2 are broadly in line with national expectations, but brighter pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Pupils in Year 4 have made good progress since they achieved average results in the national tests in 2000. On the whole, the school has implemented the National Numeracy Strategy well, and there are signs that teachers are increasingly providing opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge in practical situations. The brighter picture in Years 3 and 4 reflects the rigour and high quality of teaching and learning in lessons.

Throughout the school, boys and girls achieve similarly. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily, based on their earlier learning. Pupils from ethnic minorities, Traveller children and pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve in line with their peers.

92. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a basic understanding of place value, addition and subtraction. They add and subtract numbers to 20 mentally and investigate number patterns and sequences, such as using repeated addition to solve simple multiplication problems. Higher achieving pupils work with larger numbers. Pupils know their basic multiplication tables and order numbers correctly up to one hundred. They begin to estimate and recognise the usefulness of being able to halve or double numbers. Teachers help pupils to understand what lists, tables, charts and diagrams are showing them by collecting and organising first-hand information; for example, when pupils investigate favourite foods. Through practical work, they develop their mathematical understanding within the context of real-life situations; for example, when handling money for shopping. Teachers and classroom assistants help pupils with special educational needs to contribute to class discussions and succeed with their individual work. However, teachers in Years 1 and 2 are not sufficiently skilled in making sure that more able pupils are consistently challenged with thought-provoking work during lessons.
93. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 4 exceeds national expectations. Achievement is good because the pupils are motivated and want to do well and the standard of teaching is high. Higher attaining pupils are given challenging tasks in lessons. Pupils have a secure understanding of numeracy, shape and measurement, and they choose and use appropriate operations and efficient calculation strategies to solve problems. They work accurately with simple decimals; for example, when dealing with money. They can explain the use of co-ordinates and locate negative numbers on a grid. In Years 3 and 4, the pupils' positive approach to learning has a direct impact on their progress as they get on with their work quickly and try hard to achieve success. In these classes, there is an atmosphere of enthusiasm and fun in lessons as pupils are kept 'on their toes' by teachers during brisk sessions of mental arithmetic. Teachers add challenge when they see that pupils have absorbed ideas; for example, when the teacher quickly moved on to adding together pounds and pence after ensuring that they added pounds successfully. In the same way, teachers recognise when pupils need more practice, and use the period at the end of lessons to consolidate and reinforce ideas. Pupils are encouraged to estimate answers or to find their own ways of adding numbers which include hundreds, tens and units. Pupils learn because they understand, not just because they have been taught a mathematical drill.
94. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in mathematics lessons are good and relationships are very good. In the best lessons, teachers harness pupils' enthusiasm in order to stimulate learning. For example, in a successful lesson in Years 1 and 2, pupils made good progress when they concentrated hard on trying to complete simple tasks, such as writing their names as many times as possible in a given time. One pupil was delighted to find that he could draw more squares than his partner by making a grid. The teacher built on his enthusiasm by getting him to calculate the total number of squares by adding the number in each row. Pupils worked well with partners, were productive and achieved well. Throughout the school, pupils show pride in their work in exercise books, especially in the older classes, when calculations and explanations are neatly and attractively presented. However, duplicated worksheets, too frequently used in Years 1 and 2, are sometimes untidy and often undated so that pupils' progress is hard to follow.
95. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and better in Years 3 and 4, where it is good, with examples of very good teaching. Throughout the school, teachers use the National Numeracy Strategy well to plan lessons. Lessons have a clear structure which includes mental work, instruction and opportunities for pupils to work in groups at different levels of difficulty. There is also time at the end of lessons for reflection on what has been learnt. Lessons for the older pupils move at a cracking pace and pupils achieve well because teachers keep them alert and keen; pupils respond positively to teachers' high expectations of their behaviour and the good standard of their work. There is regular and helpful intervention by the teacher during lessons to make sure that all pupils are getting on well; for example, when pupils in Years 3 and 4 drew a grid and recorded multiples of numbers. Learning is good because

teachers are particularly adept at assessing how well their pupils are doing. They ask probing questions to elicit pupils' understanding and extend their skills and knowledge.

96. Lessons for pupils in Years 1 and 2 are not so successful because questions are not sufficiently challenging in the introductory sessions, activities are not always matched well enough to pupils' needs and pupils' learning is not clearly consolidated through discussion at the end. Pupils are sometimes told that tasks are difficult, probably to challenge them, but this affects some pupils' confidence and they do not progress as well as they could. When pupils are asked to write answers on their small, individual whiteboards, they are not always given enough time to complete the task and show their answers. As a result, they do not benefit from activities as well as they might. However, throughout the school, teachers and classroom support staff involve pupils with special educational needs productively in activities.
97. Teachers bring relevance to the subject by including opportunities for pupils to draw graphs, explore patterns, measure and make calculations in science, design and technology, geography and art and design. Work in art and design reflects pupils' mathematical understanding of symmetry. Pupils use their understanding of measurement for accurate work in science and design and technology lessons. They understand how to collect data and present it as graphs for analysis or illustration. ICT is used effectively in mathematics lessons, and results from surveys in other subjects are often presented as block graphs, using a computer program.
98. The school recognises the need to improve standards by the end of Year 2 and has made satisfactory use of information from results in national tests. Aspects of mathematics, such as problem solving, are given greater significance and there have been general improvements in planning and teaching. In Years 3 and 4, pupils are challenged throughout lessons. Greater improvement in Years 1 and 2 has been hampered when monitoring of lessons has not always led to sustained changes because of changes of teachers. In all classes, results of the school's own assessments are not used as well as they could be to set targets for individual pupils as an incentive to higher attainment, but teachers record the progress of each pupil carefully. Teachers generally mark pupils' work regularly with helpful comments that indicate what has been done well or what needs to be improved. Homework is set inconsistently. In Years 3 and 4, teachers sensibly allow several days for its completion, so that parents can help their children at convenient times in their family routines.
99. The co-ordinator leads the subject very well and is an exemplary role model for effective teaching. Her leadership has contributed significantly to the high quality of provision in Years 3 and 4. Consistency of provision, leading to improved expectations and standards by the end of Year 2, is the main focus for improvement in the school's improvement plan for mathematics. Resources are satisfactory and they are well organised and stored. Simple but helpful items have been introduced to support the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy; for example, when pupils use small whiteboards to record their answers and show them to the teacher in mental arithmetic sessions.

SCIENCE

100. Pupils in Year 2 and Year 4 attain standards that are above those expected for their ages. In 2001, teachers assessed the standards at the end of Year 2 as below the national average in terms of the proportion of pupils achieving the national standard of Level 2. However, the proportion achieving the higher than expected Level 3 was well above the national average and pupils had performed very well in the experimental and investigative aspect of the subject. This was an area identified for improvement at the time of the last inspection, particularly in relation to more able pupils. The co-ordinator has been very effective in leading this improvement through staff training and support. There is now a very good development of both experimental skills and of recording skills throughout the school. The quality of the teaching of science is good and includes many opportunities for developing and using the skills of literacy and numeracy, for example when writing accounts of investigations or when measuring plant growth. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and the very small number of pupils from minority

ethnic backgrounds, are fully included in all learning opportunities and make equally good progress.

101. Pupils enter Year 1 having been encouraged to observe and investigate in the nursery and reception classes. This was being extended effectively during the inspection in a well planned and presented lesson based on the plants that pupils had planted a month previously and looked after. The teacher encouraged careful observation and supported language development well through labels for the parts of plants. A careful focus on colour and shape enabled pupils to make accurate drawings of their plants and this supported their scientific learning well. Pupils showed good knowledge of the names of the parts of plants and the worksheets provided to help recording enabled them to consolidate this well. ICT was used well in this lesson to support learning, when pupils drew and painted plants.
102. Examination of the work carried out before the inspection by pupils in Year 2 shows that pupils of all abilities make good progress in acquiring a body of knowledge and developing practical skills. Higher attaining pupils demonstrate good recording skills, for example when writing an account in their own words of the experiment on melting ice cubes in different parts of the classroom. There were good examples of pupils of average attainment using drawings and diagrams well to supplement their usually less full accounts. Lower attaining pupils find it hard to communicate what they know in their own words and benefit from the provision of work sheets and other tasks that support their recording.
103. A well-planned and organised lesson promoted well the observation, enquiry and research skills of Year 2 pupils, in relation to habitats. As it was too wet to go to the school pond, the pond was brought to the classroom and groups of pupils were very interested in looking at what there was in the trays of pond water. They used magnifying glasses carefully, described what they could see, how it moved, how big it was and other features in response to the good structure that the teacher had suggested. Another good feature of the lesson, and one that promoted independent learning, was the provision of a good range of reference books and access to a CD-ROM based encyclopaedia so that pupils could try to identify what they had found. The teacher circulated well to different groups during the lesson while the teaching assistant gave continuous support to those who needed it most, thereby enabling them to get a lot from the lesson. Both adults communicated enthusiasm for the enquiry and this was caught by the pupils so that they maintained interest and concentration on the task very well. The concluding part of the lesson was used well to share pupils' findings and one pupil, at least, had recognised the importance of the level in the water that a creature lived at when trying to identify what it was. An earlier visit to Woburn Safari Park had stimulated pupils' interest in the idea of habitats.
104. Pupils in Year 3 made good gains in their knowledge and understanding of different soil types and how they influence plant growth. They were greatly helped in this by their teacher's own very good subject knowledge and her focused questions that enabled them to consolidate what they had previously learned and to extend their learning. Pupils showed good understanding of how to set up an experiment to compare the water-holding properties of soil samples, referring back well to earlier work and pointing out plants growing in the classroom. They showed a good understanding of fair testing and used scientific vocabulary correctly.
105. Pupils in the two classes containing Year 4 pupils were in the middle of a sequence of investigations into the factors affecting plant growth. The lessons observed were notable for a very good balance of listening, thinking, discussing, writing and practical activities and very effectively promoted an atmosphere of scientific enquiry in the classroom. Pupils benefited from being given real and realistic challenges in terms of designing experiments to refine their knowledge of the influence of light in one case, and temperature in the other, on plant growth. They make sensible suggestions and predictions and work together very well on their tasks; this work makes an important contribution to their social development and to learning with an increased level of independence of the teacher. Pupils have been encouraged to think of themselves as scientists and they respond well to this. The pupil who deduced that the compost in one pot had remained moister than another because there were fewer leaves on that plant showed a very good level of understanding of the importance of leaves.

106. The overall quality of teaching is never less than good and is often very good. Teachers are confident with the subject material and their questioning to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding is a very strong feature of lessons. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very positive and the development of a more investigative approach and of more opportunities for independent learning have benefits not only in science but also across the curriculum.

ART AND DESIGN

107. Pupils' attainment in art and design at the end of Years 2 and 4 is above average. It was possible to observe only one lesson during the inspection; the judgement is based on that lesson in addition to evidence from displays of pupils' work, talking to pupils and examining a portfolio of pupils' work. The standard of work displayed in classrooms and around the school is of a good quality, providing pupils with a measure of the standards that teachers expect and demonstrating the value attached to their efforts. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in art and design. This is an improvement since the last inspection when standards were judged to be broadly in line with expectations, and pupils made sound progress. Pupils achieve better than at the time of the last inspection because teaching, generally, has improved. Art is a favourite subject with a number of pupils talked with during this inspection. No overall judgement on teaching can be made.
108. Year 1 pupils experiment with mixing colours, using pencils, pastels and texture. In a well-prepared lesson, with plenty of vases of flowers, pupils develop their skills of observation as they are encouraged to focus on the details of the flowers before they record their observations. Their skills are further developed in a science lesson where they make good representational drawings of different parts of a flower.
109. In Year 2 pupils develop their observational skills further as they use a viewfinder to focus on a small area. The school grounds provide an effective source for first-hand observation where pupils record, then reproduce their designs in a variety of media, for example tissue, charcoal and paint. A combination of these is used effectively to produce an eye-catching collage of an under-water garden, displaying brightly coloured sea life against a delicately coloured background of blue and green.
110. In Year 3 pupils create computerised flower pictures in powerful colours that demand attention. They too use a viewfinder to sketch a small area of the school field that forms the basis of a detailed and brightly coloured collage. The standard of work is good.
111. In Years 3 and 4 information and communication skills and artistic skills are developed together. Pupils learn to understand that lines enclose shapes, producing bold and attractive pieces of work by flooding the shapes with colour. A particularly good example of this combined skills work is displayed in pictures based on the style of the famous artist Mondrian. Pupils throughout the school work with a range of materials to produce two-dimensional and three-dimensional works of art.
112. Pupils' attitudes to learning in art throughout the school are good because teachers praise effort and clearly value the contributions of all pupils. Many pupils cite art as a favourite subject.
113. In the art lesson observed, the teaching was good and all pupils were well supported, enabling them to succeed. Pupils with special educational needs, those from travelling families and those with English as an additional language are fully involved in these lessons and receive effective help from adult helpers.
114. The co-ordinator is managing the subject well. Monitoring procedures have highlighted the areas needing further development; these include the use of sketchbooks and monitoring teachers'

plans. Resources are adequate but funding constraints do not allow for the wide range of consumable materials and books necessary to continue to raise standards in art.

115. There has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection. Teaching throughout the school has improved. The use of sketch books in Years 3 and 4 needs to be developed. An effective recording and assessment strategy has yet to be developed. Computers are used well to support learning and pupils have a good understanding of how to use paint and graphics programmes.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

116. At the time of the last inspection it was judged that pupils at the end of Years 2 and 4 were achieving standards in line with national expectations. This has been maintained. The subject has not had a high priority in the development plan and the new co-ordinator recognises the need for improvement on several fronts. For example, although there are some examples of good projects in individual classes, there is not a planned development of skills in designing, making and evaluating throughout the school. The attempt to adopt a national scheme was not successful because the school did not adapt it sufficiently to build on what was good about its own scheme and on the skills and expertise of the staff and to make it fit into the overall planning framework for its curriculum.
117. Before the inspection, pupils in Year 2 had made *Jumping Jack* puppets, using card and split pin fasteners for the basic construction. There was evidence of good planning, including the promotion of pupils' research skills and pupils talked with understanding about how they had approached the task and the choices they had made. The finished articles were of a satisfactory standard with a few that were more adventurous and imaginative in terms of scale, choice of materials and decoration. Pupils from Year 1 had contributed to a class project on constructing Joseph's coat, that was well connected to a theatre visit and other areas of the curriculum. Design, cutting and sewing skills were promoted well through this.
118. During the inspection, Year 3 pupils made good progress with constructing the net-based containers they had designed. They had also designed product labels including some that had involved the use of pupils' computer skills. The whole project had been planned well to promote understanding of the design process as a whole as well as improving particular making skills. Pupils had looked at a variety of commercially produced packages in terms of material, colour, shape, dimensions and what it holds. Learning and progress were good because of the teacher's good planning and organisation and the good support provided by her and her volunteer helper, which enabled all pupils to be fully involved in the lesson.
119. Money containers made by pupils in Year 4 displayed sound skills of cutting and stitching and the attachment of press-stud fastenings. Designs and drawings were often of good quality, showing that there had been a good level of discussion and thought about fitness for purpose.
120. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to the development and use of literacy and numeracy skills but there is the potential for much more in this respect as there is in terms of the use of and links with information and communication technology.

GEOGRAPHY

121. Since the last inspection, standards have improved by the end of Years 2 and 4. The school has adapted the curriculum to meet national requirements introduced in 2000 and now has effective schemes of work that take into account the needs of pupils in mixed-age classes. Scrutiny of pupils' work and observation of lessons indicate that pupils throughout the school achieve standards that exceed those expected for their age.

122. By the end of Year 2, pupils acquire geographical knowledge and develop skills that promote their interest in the area in which they live and increase their understanding of the wider world. In work on 'Where do you live?' pupils learned about the landscape by looking at aerial photographs which show a bird's eye view of the locality. They drew detailed maps and, using a key, identified specific buildings. They also drew a large, perceptive and detailed map of the school. Pupils become more aware of differences in landscapes and ways of life when they study contrasting environments. Their skills of geographical enquiry were used well when they contrasted the seaside town of Tenby with Leighton Buzzard. They found that, although there were many differences, there were some similarities because people need similar services such as schools and shops. Teachers draw on pupils' own experiences and gain their interest by involving them in meaningful enquiry. In their writing about travel, children wrote about the different currency and language in France, and a child wrote, 'There's loads of countryside in Wales'. In these studies, pupils learn about different climates and contrasting environments.
123. By the end of Year 4, pupils achieve well. Work done by the older pupils shows that teachers build effectively on what pupils have learned earlier in the school. In Years 3 and 4, pupils explore environmental change and consider the use of plots of land. In an imaginative exercise, they explored ways in which the grounds of the school and the surrounding area might be developed. Initially, this required a survey of what was already there, and pupils drew detailed maps of the field and ground beyond the brook. In art and design, they created an attractive collage of the area. Their ideas for the future included a bridge, a hospital and a sports complex. The teacher extended pupils' understanding very well as she encouraged them to consider whether people really needed the developments and whether there was appropriate access to them by roads and paths. This work links well with the school's increasing provision for pupils' learning in citizenship, and makes them more aware of the impact which humans are having on the landscape. Discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of building a by-pass around Leighton Buzzard gave pupils the opportunity to conduct a well-organised survey which revealed what is important to people living in the area. They found that traffic, noise and the destruction of the countryside were significant factors. Pupils' view of the wider world was extended when they wrote about their favourite places and drew postcards to send to friends and relatives. The locations varied from exotic foreign lands to British resorts. Pupils' knowledge of world geography is demonstrated when they correctly label the continents and oceans on a map of the world and name countries on a map of Europe.
124. Pupils enjoy geography and take pride in the presentation of their work. Charts, diagrams and illustrations are carefully executed. Teachers use the subject well to reinforce the importance of people living in harmony with and caring for the environment. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers, and pupils who speak English as an additional language benefit from the school's emphasis on the development of specific subject vocabulary.
125. The quality of teaching is good. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that lessons build clearly, in a step-by-step way, on what pupils already know and can do. Teachers make the work interesting because they know what they have to teach and have good lesson plans. They recall earlier work briefly and make objectives clear at the start of each lesson. Consequently, pupils are quickly engaged and are able to contribute their ideas as they realise what they should be learning and what is expected of them. In a lesson for pupils in Years 3 and 4, no time was wasted and the teacher ensured that pupils maintained the pace and quality of their work as they drew maps of the school field. Behaviour was very good because of the teacher's high expectations and vigilant monitoring of the activity. Pupils responded very well to this, and there was a feeling of trust and enjoyment. Teachers link work well to study in other subjects. Study of the local area links well with pupils' exploration of local heritage in history, and pupils' artistic skills are practised and used effectively for illustrations. Literacy and numeracy are promoted appropriately as pupils practise their reading, writing and research skills. Pupils' written reports are good, and skills in numeracy are developed during surveys, when looking at scales on maps, measuring distances and in comparing temperatures. ICT, including the use of CD-ROMs and digital cameras, is a growing feature in the subject, and pupils' use of photographs to investigate changes in land use

over time has added considerably to their knowledge and understanding of how Leighton Buzzard has developed.

126. The subject is led well. The co-ordinator has been active in preparing and promoting a clear policy to guide teachers in teaching geography more effectively. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress are in place and teachers work well together to ensure that information is passed to the next class. Resources for teaching and learning are satisfactory. Very good use is made of the school grounds, the local area and field trips to enhance provision and bring relevance to pupils' learning.

HISTORY

127. Standards have improved since the last inspection and they are now above national expectations by the end of Years 2 and 4. Pupils achieve well because they are encouraged to become enquiring young historians. Teachers bring the subject to life with visits, visitors and the use of artefacts.
128. By the end of Year 2, pupils develop a growing sense of chronology by thinking about their own lives and those of their families. They develop their understanding through the careful use of artefacts, from first-hand information from their families and from visits, books and pictures. Pupils benefit from being able to handle old artefacts, such as toys, when visitors bring them into school. They recognise the changes over time in the way people dress and travel, and know that horses were important before there were trains and cars. Teachers link work effectively with what pupils are learning in other subjects, such as geography and art, and pupils' displayed work is attractive. It values and reinforces what pupils know and understand. During the recent Golden Jubilee celebrations, pupils have become more aware of the importance of the Royal Family in British history. They have explored the way the royal arms have been used; for example, as a symbol of reliability and pride in government services.
129. By the end of Year 4, pupils develop a good knowledge and understanding of a range of historical periods and have a broad view of history. They know that the Romans invaded Britain and recognise the key features of Roman dress and everyday life. Pupils studying the Stuarts have an appropriate understanding and knowledge of the main events, people and changes during the period. In their study of the First World War, pupils showed sensitivity and a mature approach as they learned about life in the trenches. A pupil wrote, 'One soldier shouted Happy Christmas and the other soldier shouted back Happy Christmas and that man walked out of the trench and held a red flag up to mean Don't shoot me!' Another wrote, 'He had a bottle of wine. They had some of it. Then they played football'. During their study of the Second World War, pupils gained information from local residents who came into school. They also benefited from reading original letters, written by evacuees to their parents.
130. Literacy is very well developed and used in history lessons. Pupils' writing is of good quality, and pupils remember to use the ideas taught in literacy lessons; for example, when a pupil enhanced her description of a dress seen in a museum by adding adjectives. She wrote, 'The wedding dress was turquoise and it was very delicate.' The school has a good range of books, including simpler texts for pupils who find reading difficult, so that skills for research are well supported and extended. A chart, showing a sequence of significant dates, is displayed in the school hall so that pupils see the unfolding of British history and can use their mathematical skills to calculate how long ago events took place. Skills in ICT are extended as pupils use CD-ROMs and the Internet effectively as sources of information.
131. The overall quality of teaching is good, with some very good teaching in Years 3 and 4. Teachers ensure that all groups of pupils are included fully in all activities. Lessons are carefully prepared and teachers are clear about the historical concepts they want pupils to understand. Teachers plan topics well so that there is a good balance of acquiring knowledge and practising skills of historical enquiry. They ensure that pupils know about significant figures from the past, such as Guy Fawkes and Louis Braille. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and they ask searching

questions that extend pupils' learning during discussions. There is an emphasis on investigation and discussion so that all pupils, including those who have special educational needs or who speak English as an additional language, make good progress and enjoy their historical investigations. Teachers bring relevance to pupils' understanding of history; for example, when they asked them to name significant events during their own lives. Pupils suggested the death of Princess Diana and the collapse of the Twin Towers.

132. The scheme of work supports learning effectively and the co-ordinator works well with other staff to share her enthusiasm for the subject. The school is fortunate in being able to borrow a very good range of historical materials and artefacts from local people. Visits to museums and places of historical interest such as Bletchley Park and Shuttleworth extend opportunities for pupils to learn about life in the past. Nearer to home, pupils visit an old village school and look at the village church.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

133. At the time of the last inspection it was judged that pupils' attainment in information technology (as it was then known) at seven and nine was in line with national expectations. These standards have been improved and the school has successfully enhanced its provision of computers and the use made of information and communication technology (ICT) to support and extend learning in other subject areas. All pupils have equal access to the school's provision and all make good gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding.
134. Evidence from full lessons and other occasions when pupils were being taught indicates that the teaching of the skills of ICT is good. Pupils in Year 1 have successfully programmed a floor turtle and during the inspection were learning how to set up a maze on a computer through which a screen turtle could be navigated. They understood the basic idea and those selected showed good mouse skills. However, the time allocated was too short and it would have been better to locate the activity in a place where there was more than one computer. Earlier learning includes the use of a simple word processing package to write about a visit to the local church and the use of painting and drawing programs.
135. Pupils in Year 2 had access to three computers when they were learning how to use the spray tool in a paint program, while a fourth was set up to allow them to continue research related to their science work. This was good organisation and the teacher had allocated sufficient time for all pupils to develop their skills. When the teacher checked on what they already knew at the start of the lesson, pupils showed that they were familiar with what *undo* does, how *flood* and *fill* work and how to change the size of a brush. Adult support was used well when the teaching assistant worked with six children at a time while the teacher led a well related and useful task designed to stimulate pupils to compare the pictures created on the computer with the spray effect pictures that they produced using felt tips and wax crayons. Some pupils showed that their computer skills are developed well when they imported pictures from other sources to combine with what they were creating on the painting program. Their final pictures were composed well with good use of colour.
136. Pupils in Year 3 demonstrated a good level of understanding when they were exploring a simulation program and some readily made the connection with their science work when they realised the need to alter only one value at a time if they wanted to identify what made the difference to how the duck flew. They showed good use of the mouse when altering values using a slider control. Other pupils in one class explored other simulations focused on designing a house, planning a garden and exploring a Roman villa. They have a good understanding of the nature and use of simulations.
137. Examination of pupils' work shows that pupils in Year 4 have used word processing packages with confidence and have worked successfully with control applications, databases and the Internet, including sending e-mails.

138. The school is awaiting delivery of additional modern computers and this will further improve access for all. There is a need to share the best practice in the school in terms of organising ICT sessions, especially in terms of extra skilled adult support and access to sufficient computers at the same time. The school is between co-ordinators at present but clearly there has been good leadership and management over a period of time that has brought about the improvements noted.

MUSIC

139. Evidence for the judgements made comes from the observation of one lesson in Year 3, observation of string playing in assembly, recorded performances of pupils' compositions and conversations with pupils and the co-ordinator. Standards attained by pupils in Year 2 and Year 4 are above average. This is an improvement since the last inspection and is due to initiatives introduced to address the areas of concern from the previous inspection. These included the need for a general improvement in teaching, increased opportunities for pupils to experiment, compose, perform for an audience, and the provision of a wider range of resources.
140. Pupils throughout the school have opportunities to compose their own musical scores and to perform in class as well as to other audiences. Right throughout the year, pupils perform in seasonal concerts to a variety of audiences including each other, parents and senior citizens.
141. A number of pupils take advantage of the opportunity to study an instrument with a specialist teacher and gain in confidence in their talents by performing with other schools before a large audience. For example, some pupils took part in 'The Fiddler's Fiesta', performing as a small group and also as part of the larger group consisting of other local schools. They also perform in special assemblies where their expertise inspires others to musical ambitions.
142. In Year 1 the pupils show real enjoyment as they accompany a radio lesson, learning to sing 'Tiny Little Seed'. Pupils take turns with the radio singers, to repeat musical phrases from the song. They sing tunefully, maintaining the rhythm and keeping good time as they accurately 'echo' a part.
143. Year 2 pupils learn songs in order to perform to an audience. The recorded background music is lively, providing an exciting backdrop for them to create shapes and sounds that conjure up an appropriate atmosphere. They respond well to the task, authentically portraying the spirit of 'rap' in their rendering of 'Rock Pool Rap'. They capture contrasting moods as they accompany songs such as 'We're the Tough Guys' and 'He's a Star'.
144. In Year 3 pupils sing tunefully, articulating the words clearly as they sing 'The Gypsy Rover'. They use graphic symbols as a form of notation to record their instrumental compositions. Electronic background music effectively enhances the musical pictures created of a *Rainforest* and a *Dark night*. The work is of a high standard, demonstrating a skilful use of dynamics and speed to evoke atmosphere. Discussions with pupils confirmed that they have a good understanding of dynamics and the different structures used in their work.
145. Year 3 and 4 pupils portray *Guy Fawkes Night* and a *seaside visit*. They experiment with a variety of ways to produce sounds. For example they whistle, sing and chant; they rattle a 'cabaca' which is made from a gourd, covered with a mesh of steel beads, and slide pebbles backwards and forwards to represent sounds of the seashore. Recorders and a variety of pitched and unpitched percussion instruments are used skilfully to symbolise a variety of fireworks.
146. In the one lesson observed, the teaching and learning were good. Pupils co-operated well in groups. They recorded their compositions using graphic notation. They practised and performed, evaluated the effects, timing and dynamics and as a result revisions were made. At the end of the lesson, work was recorded and compared with a previous performance. Once again points for

development were identified and recorded for future use. This good practice ensured effective learning and good achievement. No judgement can be made on the overall quality of teaching.

147. Pupils listen to music as they enter assembly and there are planned opportunities for them to appreciate live music when the school is visited by a brass band or the Indian Dance troupe. However, this is an area that needs to be developed, in order to increase pupils' breadth of musical knowledge. It is particularly desirable that pupils have opportunities to listen to and appreciate a range of music from different cultures and periods.
148. The co-ordinator monitors teaching and learning. She has used her observations to identify what is necessary to improve standards in music further. Pupils' progress and achievements are assessed and recorded. The National Curriculum programme of study is taught systematically.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

149. The attainment of pupils at the end of Years 2 and 4 is above national expectations. This is an improvement compared with the judgement of the last inspection team. Physical education has a high profile in the school with all classes having at least two sessions per week, including swimming for Year 4. Most pupils leave the school able to swim. The focus of the curriculum during the half term of the inspection was on dance, games skills and gymnastics. Evidence of the quality of teaching and of pupils' attainment was obtained from lesson observations and from discussions with pupils and members of staff.
150. The curriculum is regularly enhanced by extra-curricular activities; all pupils have good opportunities to be involved in all that the school provides and they make good progress in developing their skills in the different aspects of the physical education curriculum. Pupils are actively encouraged to be involved in physical education activities outside school and a significant number join local clubs, particularly for gymnastics.
151. Good routines had clearly been established when pupils in the Year 1 class warmed up by moving more slowly or quickly to number signals; they moved and stretched well. The lesson had good pace and focus on improvement and pupils became better at accurately bouncing a ball to a partner via a hoop on the floor. Most pupils also showed good skills at throwing and catching a beanbag and controlling a ball with a foot. Pupils in a Year 2 class made the most of the space and walls in one of the playgrounds when they developed their ball skills through dribbling with hand or foot and then playing football squash in pairs. The teacher's instructions were very clear so pupils knew exactly what they had to do and made the most of their opportunities. Most of them showed good control and anticipation when playing football squash.
152. Pupils in Year 3 showed good skills in throwing and catching a tennis ball, including some pairs who threw well over-arm and caught on the move. The teacher used pupils well to demonstrate good attainment and encouraged other pupils to make critical comments; she also demonstrated skills herself. There was a very good focus on improvement from which all pupils benefited. Most pupils made good progress when they moved on to work in pairs where one threw a ball for the other to hit back with a tennis racquet.
153. The teacher of one of the mixed-age classes for pupils in Years 3 and 4 showed good skills at breaking a lesson up into sections and working through each new task with a small group of pupils before giving everyone plenty of time to practise. As a result most pupils made good progress in throwing, catching and invasion game team skills. Other pupils from Years 3 and 4 enjoyed country dancing, showing good ability at sequencing movements, keeping in time to music and clapping along. A good level of concentration was very evident.
154. The co-ordinator provides good support to colleagues and her monitoring of apparatus-based work in gymnastics indicated that good standards were being achieved. Teachers are confident about teaching physical education and set a good example to pupils by dressing appropriately for

lessons. The overall quality of teaching is good. The subject made a contribution to multicultural understanding when pupils in Years 3 and 4 worked with Indian dancers.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

155. Standards have improved since the last inspection and they are now good by the end of Years 2 and 4. Pupils' attainment exceeds the expectations of the local education authority's agreed syllabus. All groups of pupils achieve well. The principal reason for the good standards is the specialist expertise of the co-ordinator, who has ensured that the scheme of work is followed systematically. Appropriate importance is given to the subject so that teachers have time to teach religious education properly.
156. By the end of Year 2, pupils know a range of stories from the Old and New Testaments. They know the story of Moses in the bulrushes and the events that surrounded Joseph's coat of many colours. They relate the stories to their own lives, become involved and recognise feelings such as jealousy. A pupil wrote, 'Joseph was boasting about his dreams. Then he forgot the last bit of his dreams so they said it wasn't real so they put him in the well.' In work about 'special people', pupils thought about families and the special place of every person within the family. Pupils know that there are special religious scriptures, such as the Bible, the Qur'an and the Torah. They recognise that the writings give guidance on how people should behave. They know that the story of the Good Samaritan gives a message about how to treat people who need help. Pupils compose prayers and know that prayer is important in a range of faiths.
157. By the end of Year 4, pupils have a deeper understanding of events such as the Easter Story, and know that the Last Supper has particular significance for Christians. Through their study of Bible stories, pupils gain understanding of features of Jewish life, such as worship in the synagogue. Pupils know that the Bible was translated long ago, and this accounts for the 'old fashioned' English which it contains. Throughout the school, pupils become more aware of other religions such as Judaism and Hinduism and recognise that each faith has special places of worship and holy writings. They recognise that special events, such as marriage, are celebrated in other religions. They know that important milestones in life are celebrated as part of many faiths; for example, baptism in Christianity and the bar mitzvah for Jewish boys.
158. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of a good range of religions, including Christianity, Judaism, Sikhism, Hinduism and Islam. Their good attainment in language and literacy helps them to express their opinions and develop ideas in their writing. There is a good supply of books about a wide range of faiths and although pupils do not record every lesson in writing, where they do, their writing is thoughtful and it is illustrated with lively drawings. Literacy is promoted well in the subject, and teachers encourage pupils to use skills practised in literacy lessons. A teacher reminded pupils of how they could draw 'speech bubbles' to add interest to their drawings of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.
159. Pupils show positive attitudes in lessons and their behaviour is very good. They are sensitive and thoughtful and respect the views of others. They are generous with their praise and appreciate when other pupils do good work. On seeing an attractive drawing done by a friend, a pupil said, 'Wow!'
160. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers question the pupils effectively to develop their understanding and broaden their knowledge. They listen well to the pupils and respect their views and ideas. Teachers' expectations of pupils are high and classes are managed very well. There are good links with other subjects; for example, with history when pupils visit local places of worship. Teachers use events in pupils' lives to help them to understand features in Bible stories. For example, when talking about the procession on Palm Sunday, a teacher reminded pupils of the carnival procession in Leighton Buzzard, when people cheer as the floats go by. Teachers provide a good balance of knowledge and understanding in lessons, so that pupils know a great deal about the Bible and also have opportunities to discuss how the stories relate to their own

lives. A sense of awe and wonder is promoted in the 'Faith Zone', created by teachers to provide a quiet area where pupils can read and reflect about a wide range of religions.

161. Resources for the subject are good, and the co-ordinator supports colleagues well with appropriate advice. Assessments of pupils' progress are recorded well and used to plan future work. In addition to the school's good supply of books, there is a good range of artefacts to support teaching in a range of religions. Teachers make good use of local churches and the mosque in Milton Keynes to help pupils to understand the importance of religion in many people's lives.