

INSPECTION REPORT

BEDFORD ROAD LOWER SCHOOL

Kempston, Bedford

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109461

Headteacher: Mrs. P. Peachey

Reporting inspector: Mr. M. Thompson
25372

Dates of inspection: 18/06/01-21/06/01

Inspection number: 195307

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 to 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Hillgrounds Kempston Bedford
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. L. Stewart
Date of previous inspection:	07/05/1997

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25372	Mike Thompson	Registered inspector	English Design and technology Equal opportunities English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? What should the school do to improve further?
9974	Daljit Singh	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
30853	Susan Betts	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Geography Religious education	
8837	Joyce Clarke	Team inspector	History	
4676	Mary Griffiths	Team inspector	Special educational needs Art and design Physical education	How well are pupils taught?
28009	Ruth Dunkley	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage Mathematics Music	How well is the school led and managed?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Bedford Road Lower School is situated close to the centre of the small town of Kempston, which is a suburb of Bedford. There are 350 pupils on roll, aged from 4 to 9. Fourteen per cent are from homes in which English is not the principal language spoken. This proportion is higher than is found in most schools nationally, although only a few of these pupils are in the early stages of developing skills in English. Almost a quarter of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, and this is in line with the national average. Seven pupils have statements of special need. This number is about average for a school of this size. A very small number of pupils are from traveller families. The school serves the Kempston ward of the town. The ward has above average levels of social deprivation. Almost one third of its pupils are entitled to free school meals, a proportion that is above the national average. Children are admitted in the September of the year in which they are five, and start to attend full-time in the term in which their fifth birthday falls. Children attend either for the morning or the afternoon session. The full-time admission of the very youngest children is delayed until the second half of the summer term. At the time of the inspection, 23 children had only recently been admitted full-time. Overall, attainment on entry to the school is well below what would normally be expected of four year olds. At the time of its previous inspection in 1997, the school was judged to have serious weaknesses.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school that provides good value for money. It has made significant progress since its last inspection because of the strong leadership provided by its headteacher. Many of its pupils have disadvantaged home circumstances and, although they do not achieve nationally expected standards in English and mathematics by the time they are nine, they make satisfactory progress from a low starting point. Results of the National Curriculum tests for seven year olds show that over the past few years the proportions of pupils achieving the nationally expected level in reading, writing and mathematics have steadily increased. This achievement is due to pupils' very positive attitudes to school, improved teaching and a secure curriculum. There is a clear commitment to further improvement from all staff.

What the school does well

- Standards are above average in religious education and well above average in art and design.
- Children in the Foundation Stage¹ make rapid progress because of the very good quality of teaching in the reception classes, the high quality curriculum and the very good way in which their progress is assessed and monitored.
- The headteacher provides very clear direction for the school and is ably supported by her senior staff.
- Pupils' attitudes to school are very good, they are very well behaved, and relationships within the school are excellent.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the good quality of help they receive in lessons and the way in which their progress is monitored.
- The school's arrangements for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education are very good.
- The day-to-day arrangements for the care and welfare of pupils are very good.

What could be improved

- Standards achieved by seven and nine year olds in English, mathematics and music.
- The ways in which teachers provide greater challenges for pupils of all abilities, particularly those of potentially higher attainment.
- The quality of monitoring provided by subject coordinators.

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 very good progress since its last inspection in 1997, when it was judged to have serious weaknesses. The extent of its improvement has recently been recognised through an award received from the DfEE². Standards have improved in art and design, geography, history, information and

¹ The Foundation Stage begins when children reach the age of three. Children complete the Foundation Stage at the end of the reception year.

² The Department for Education and Employment, now known as the Department for Education and Skills (DfES)

communication technology and religious education. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and the quality of relationships within the school are all better than they were. The quality of teaching is significantly better than it was, particularly in Years 3 and 4. Curriculum planning is now secure and provides useful guidance to teachers in all subjects. Arrangements for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development have improved and the school now provides a higher quality of care for pupils, particularly those with special educational needs. These significant improvements have been brought about because of the transformation in the quality of leadership of the school, since the appointment of the headteacher.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
Reading	E	E	E	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Writing	E	E	C	A	
Mathematics	E	E	E	D	

The information shows, for example, that standards achieved in reading in the National Curriculum tests for 2000 were well below the national average and below the average for schools in similar circumstances, with about the same proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Over time, the proportion of pupils achieving the nationally expected level in reading, writing and mathematics has steadily improved and is now close to the national average. However, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher level has generally been well below average, and this is the reason for the frequently low overall grading. Inspection evidence shows that results in the most recent National Curriculum tests will be about the same as those of the 2000 tests in reading and mathematics and at a level similar to that achieved in 1999 in writing. While below average overall, the results are likely to exceed the targets set by the school on the basis of the predicted performance of the group of pupils tested.

Inspectors make judgements about the standards achieved by pupils aged seven, and at the age of nine when they transfer to middle schools. Overall, the attainment of seven and nine year olds is below average in English, mathematics and music. However, in art and design standards are well above average. In science, design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology and physical education standards are at the levels expected nationally for pupils at both of these ages. The attainment of seven and nine year olds in religious education is above what is expected in the locally agreed syllabus for pupils of similar ages. From a low starting point, children in the Foundation Stage make very good progress because of the high quality of education provided for them. By the time that they transfer into Years 1 and 2, standards are still below average in literacy and numeracy and average in all other subjects. In Years 1 to 4, pupils make very good progress in art, good progress in religious education and satisfactory progress in all other subjects except music, in which progress is slow.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very positive attitudes towards school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is consistently very good both in class and around the school premises.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships within the school are excellent. When given jobs to do, pupils carry out their duties conscientiously. However, teachers sometimes direct pupils too much. When this happens, pupils have few opportunities to develop skills of independent learning.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

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

During the course of the inspection, 75 lessons or parts of lessons were observed. Teaching was good or better in about a half of all lessons and was very good or excellent in about a fifth. Only two unsatisfactory lessons were observed. The best teaching is found in the Foundation Stage where all lessons were good or better. Overall, the quality of teaching in English and mathematics is sound. The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection, when there were serious weaknesses in Years 3 and 4. Teaching is now at least satisfactory in all subjects; in religious education it is good, and in art and design it is very good. Skills in literacy and numeracy are taught satisfactorily throughout the school.

The best features of lessons are the good teaching of basic skills, based on teachers' generally secure knowledge of what they have to teach and the teachers' skills in managing their pupils. Aspects of teaching which need to be improved further are teachers' management of time in their lessons and the way in which homework is used to develop pupils' learning. At present, teachers often spend too much of their much time talking to pupils in lessons, with the result that pupils do not have enough time for written work. Pupils identified as having special educational needs are generally well taught. However, pupils of potentially higher attainment are not always challenged enough because teaching is often directed towards the needs of average and lower attaining pupils. Good features of pupils' learning are the effort and enthusiasm with which they approach their work and their clear understanding of precisely what they have to do. This occurs because teachers are skilled in enthusing their pupils and always explain the purpose of the lessons to the pupils. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are taught alongside all other pupils, play a full part in all lessons and learn at the same rate. At the time of the inspection there were no pupils from traveller families present.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant, and is greatly improved since the previous inspection.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	These pupils receive good quality help and make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Pupils with English as an additional language are fully integrated into all activities and make satisfactory progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. Arrangements for pupils' spiritual and cultural development are good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The quality of support, guidance and welfare of pupils is very good.

The school works hard to develop a partnership with parents and most parents support the work of the school. The excellent procedures for monitoring attendance have resulted in a steady year on year improvement in attendance rates.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and provides very good leadership and management. She is very ably supported by her senior staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are committed and supportive and are beginning to work closely with teachers to improve standards.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The senior management team, guided by the assessment coordinator, has analysed the school's test results and has a clear view of strengths and weaknesses. These are identified in the school improvement plan, which sets out a concise programme of action for future terms.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses its staff, equipment and premises very well. Grants received for specific purposes, such as social inclusion, are very well spent.

The school is well staffed and the accommodation is generally spacious. There are shortages of resources in mathematics, geography and history. To some extent, the shortages in mathematics are caused by the way in which the timetable is arranged, with the subject being taught at the same time in many classes. In some subjects, coordinators' skills in monitoring and evaluating standards are underdeveloped. The school applies the principles of 'best value' well when comparing its performance against its costs.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Their children are well taught and make good progress. • Teachers are approachable. • Their children are expected to work hard. • The school helps their children to become mature and responsible. • The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's partnership with parents. • The range of activities provided outside lessons. • Homework.

In general, inspectors' judgements support all of the positive views expressed by parents.

With regard to the areas which some parents would like to see improved:

- the school's partnership with parents is satisfactory and is continuing to develop;
- the range of activities provided outside lessons is good and owes much to the commitment of staff;
- homework is not consistently set, and inspectors found little evidence of it being used to support pupils' work in lessons.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- 1 Results of the National Curriculum tests in 2000 show that the average scores achieved by seven year olds were in line with the national average in writing, but well below average in reading and mathematics. When the school's results are compared with those of similar schools, with about the same proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, standards are well above average in writing, but below average in reading and mathematics. Over the previous three years, results have been consistently well below average in all of these three areas reported. However, when the test results are viewed in terms of the proportions of pupils achieving the nationally expected Level 2, a trend of steady improvement can be seen in reading, writing and mathematics. The average scores are low because too few pupils achieve the higher Level 3 in any of the three areas.
- 2 Pupils are not tested in science, and results in this subject are based on teachers' assessments of pupils' performance. These assessments show that in 2000, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected Level 2 was below average, but an average proportion achieved Level 3.
- 3 Results of the National Curriculum tests for 2001 show that the proportions of pupils achieving the expected and higher levels in reading and mathematics were about the same as in the previous year, but fewer pupils achieved the higher level in writing. No conclusions can be drawn from these results at present because national comparative data is not yet available. However, these results exceeded the targets set by the school for this year group.
- 4 Test results over the past three years show that there is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.
- 5 Inspection findings broadly reflect the results of national tests in English, mathematics and science, but also reflect the fact that inspectors' judgements are based on attainment across the breadth of these subjects rather than the comparatively narrow areas tested nationally. Judgements are made at the end of Year 2, when pupils are seven, and at the end of Year 4, when pupils transfer to middle schools at the age of nine. Inspection judgements are that, overall, standards of seven and nine year olds are well above average in art and design, above average in religious education and average in science, design and technology, geography, history and physical education. However, in English, mathematics and music standards are below those expected nationally of pupils of similar ages.
- 6 Shortly after children start school in the reception year, their skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening, mathematics and personal and social development are assessed by means of a nationally accredited 'baseline assessment'. Results of these assessments show that about seven out of ten children enter the school with below average levels of skills in the areas tested. Attainment on entry is, therefore, well below average overall.
- 7 Children make rapid progress in the Foundation Stage because they are very well taught and because the curriculum that they follow is of high quality. Even so, by the time that they transfer to the Year 1 classes, the attainment of the year group, viewed as a whole, is below what is normally expected.
- 8 Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress over time as they move through Years 1 to 4. Progress is very good in art and design, good in religious education, but unsatisfactory in music.
- 9 Skills in literacy develop steadily. Pupils of all ages listen well, but skills in speaking develop more slowly. Pupils are given many opportunities to speak in lessons, and teachers are good at using questions to ensure that all pupils play some part in class discussions. However, not all teachers are consistent in ensuring that pupils, when replying, speak clearly using whole sentences that are grammatically correct. Pupils use their developing knowledge of initial letter sounds and blends of letters such as 'ch' and 'ow' to decipher unfamiliar words when reading. As they become more skilled, they use a wider range of cues such as the context of the sentence. Skills in comprehension are less good, because many pupils have a more restricted vocabulary than normally expected. Correct letter

formation and joined writing are regularly practised, and by the time pupils are in Year 4 most are able to write in ink with reasonable control. Spellings are learned and regularly tested, although the standard of spelling in pupils' unaided writing is generally slightly below average. The range of pupils' writing is generally more limited than in most schools in Years 1 and 2, but broadens considerably in Years 3 and 4 because of the additional time given for this. However, the effects of pupils' limited vocabulary are seen in lack of adventurous and more expressive choices of words used by pupils in Year 4 in their unaided writing. One of the most significant factors inhibiting better progress in writing is the fact that teachers often spend too much time talking and do not give pupils enough time to write. While listening to good quality spoken language is important for these pupils, a better balance needs to be struck between the different elements of lessons, so that there is time for talking, time for concentration on writing and time for review and reflection. A further factor inhibiting progress in writing is the excessive use of worksheets for all pupils, regardless of ability, in some subjects. This practice limits opportunities for higher-attaining pupils to write at greater length.

- 10 Skills in numeracy develop steadily. By the age of seven, most are able to count sets of objects reliably and most know how to multiply by two, five and ten. The concept of division is also consolidated through work on simple fractions. Pupils' skills in manipulating numbers develop satisfactorily as they explore the relationship between simple multiplication and division using the same numbers in each calculation. For example, they learn that $2 \times 5 = 10$, but that $10 \div 5 = 2$. This skill is refined further by the time that pupils reach Year 4, where they are able to check answers to their calculations by using the inverse operation. Skills in numeracy are satisfactorily developed through work in other subjects such as design and technology and science, where skills in precisely measured drawings or the construction of graphs are often needed. However, as is the case in literacy sessions, teachers' introductions are too long. As a result, lower-attaining pupils have difficulty in sustaining concentration and higher-attaining pupils are not challenged enough because they have insufficient time to complete their work.
- 11 Skills of scientific enquiry develop satisfactorily. Science is taught consistently through experimental work so that pupils enhance their learning and understanding of the subject through direct experiences. By the end of Year 4, pupils make sensible predictions, and draw reasonable conclusions from their experiments. However, the use of the same worksheets for pupils of different abilities leaves little room for higher-attaining pupils to develop skills of independent learning.
- 12 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards targets that are set for them. This is an improvement on the previous inspection and is due to early identification combined with good quality support and the excellent coordination of arrangements for these pupils. Good progress is particularly evident when pupils are withdrawn for individual, specialised tuition. In classes, when work is appropriately matched to their individual needs pupils respond well. Appropriate levels of support enable those pupils with statements of special educational need to have good access to the curriculum. Particularly noteworthy is the high quality of help provided for pupils receiving extra help through the Additional Literacy project in Years 3 and 4. Learning support assistants providing this help are skilled and patient. They have good relationships with their groups of pupils and use questioning well to develop pupils' understanding.
- 13 Although one pupil in seven is from a home in which English is not the principal language spoken, very few are in the early stages of acquiring skills in speaking, reading and writing. Those who need help are very well supported in class and all are fully integrated into lessons. Overall, these pupils make sound progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 14 Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent, and pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. These factors contribute strongly to the quality of the school's learning environment.
- 15 Children in the Foundation Stage quickly settle into school because of the very good induction procedures. They quickly understand what the school's expectations of their behaviour are and respond well. Children rapidly develop skills of independence and do useful jobs within the reception classes as 'helper of the week'. They respect others' feelings and begin to understand that their actions often affect others.

- 16 Pupils' positive attitudes are seen in their good concentration, the keen interest that they take in their work and the enjoyment that they show in lessons. In a Year 3 science lesson, pupils listened attentively and eagerly answered questions. The pupils' inquisitive nature resulted in them posing interesting questions and contributing constructively to a lively and challenging debate. This quality of response was also noted in many other lessons, including those in art, literacy and numeracy. Pupils are proud of their school and value the work of their teachers. Many older pupils actively participate in extra-curricular activities during lunch and after school. These opportunities help pupils to think positively about themselves and others, improve their motivation to learn and enhance their confidence and self-esteem.
- 17 Pupils' very good behaviour is also evident in the playground and around the school. They willingly and consistently observe the school rules, and are polite, courteous and friendly to all adults. Older pupils care for younger ones and encourage them to play sensibly. Throughout the school, pupils share equipment without fuss. During the course of the inspection, there were no signs of bullying, or other types of anti-social behaviour. Pupils respect their personal property and the school environment. During the course of the previous academic year one pupil was excluded from school for a short period of time.
- 18 Staff value and celebrate the achievements of their pupils and treat everyone fairly. As a result, pupils learn within a caring and friendly environment, which is appreciated by parents and others associated with the school.
- 19 The exemplary relationships among pupils and with teachers are based on mutual respect and concern for one another. Pupils, teachers and many lunchtime assistants cement their very positive relationships by thoroughly investigating issues and working constructively to resolve disagreements. The school community understands and appreciates the diversity of pupils' cultural backgrounds and the need to promote and develop friendships, which is evident across the school. When opportunities are provided, pupils enjoy learning in pairs and small groups and show a readiness to exchange information and ideas. Pupils immensely enjoy the responsibilities they are given to serve as librarians, and as class and school monitors, and take these responsibilities seriously. However, opportunities for pupils to develop greater independence and initiative in their learning are sometimes missed. This is because in some subjects, such as physical education, teachers direct activities too much and do not give pupils enough opportunities to plan and evaluate their own movements. Worksheets are used too much in some other subjects with the result that pupils, particularly those of potentially higher attainment, are not able to work out their own ways of tabulating their answers.
- 20 Attendance rates have improved steadily over the past few years. Although the rate is currently below the national average, this does not reflect the efforts put in by the school to ensure that pupils attend regularly and are punctual.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

- 21 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It is very good in the Foundation Stage and is satisfactory elsewhere. Throughout the school there are pockets of excellent teaching. A very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was observed. During the course of the inspection, 75 lessons or parts of lessons were observed. Teaching was good or better in about a half of all lessons and was very good or excellent in about a fifth. The best teaching is found in the Foundation Stage where all lessons were good or better.
- 22 The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection, when there were serious weaknesses in Years 3 and 4. In all subjects, teaching is now at least satisfactory. In religious education, teaching is good, and in art it is very good. Skills in literacy and numeracy are taught satisfactorily throughout the school.
- 23 The quality of teaching provided for children in the Foundation Stage is very good. Particular strengths are the very good teamwork and the skills of all staff in managing the children. A very good balance is maintained between activities directed by teachers and those initiated by the children. This occurs because teachers have a very good understanding of the way in which very young children learn.

- 24 In Years 1 to 4, good group planning is evident in English, mathematics and science. For many other lessons, there is a tendency for teachers within year groups to share planning by each taking responsibility for different subjects. While this method of planning is efficient in terms of time, it can create difficulties for teachers when they are faced with the prospect of teaching a topic planned by someone else. In physical education, for example, the result is a very tight structure to the lesson that does not allow for the development of teachers' individual strengths.
- 25 Although there has been a reduction in the number of long-serving teachers since the last inspection, senior teachers remaining at the school are setting a good example with their consistently good teaching. Unfortunately, there are too few opportunities for this good practice to be shared. New teachers have settled in well and there is an air of shared commitment to raising standards throughout the school.
- 26 In the best lessons, good class management is very effective in enabling pupils to learn. Teachers have high expectations of discipline which, in turn, establishes a good working atmosphere. Very good planning, and matching of tasks and resources to pupils' individual needs ensures that they are all able to gain access to the curriculum on offer. Questioning is mostly constructive and purposeful, indicating that teachers' subject knowledge is quite secure, although this is not always true in some aspects of science. Many of the good features are evident in art lessons where some very good teaching enables pupils to develop a depth of knowledge from an early age.
- 27 Shortcomings in teaching are evident where there are low expectations and lack of challenge, particularly for gifted and talented pupils. Many teachers spend too long on the introductory part of lessons prior to getting pupils involved and this occasionally results in pupils becoming bored. Over-long explanations also present difficulties to a large number of pupils who have difficulty in remembering anything other than simple instructions. Inattention and lack of concentration then become concerns. This practice also results in pupils not having enough time for concentrated effort in recording their answers. For instance, in a Year 3 English lesson, the introduction lasted for almost half of the total lesson time and included detail of a number of tasks for the pupils to complete. When pupils finally set to work, many had forgotten their second task by the time that they had completed the first. The consequence was that the teacher then had to explain the task again to a number of individuals, diverting her attention from other teaching. A further consequence was that pupils did not have enough time to complete their work before they were expected to take part in a review of learning at the end of the lesson. In some lessons, activities are too directed by teachers and consequently opportunities for pupils to develop skills of independent learning are not provided. In physical education, for example, pupils are sometimes unable to complete all elements of the National Curriculum attainment target because there are too few opportunities for them to plan their own work or to evaluate what they and others are doing.
- 28 Homework requirements are inconsistent from class to class, and therefore some pupils benefit more than others.
- 29 Very good leadership has identified areas of weakness in teaching following the last inspection, and teachers are now able to link their own training needs with priorities identified in the school development plan. A sharper focus on what pupils will learn has proved to be the turning point in improving the quality of teaching. Teachers are now in the process of setting up their own personal development files. The increase in the numbers of non-teaching assistants is a relatively new initiative, which is already having a positive impact. The Additional Literacy personnel working in Years 3 and 4 are of great benefit to pupils because of the skilled individual and group support that they provide.
- 30 Pupils with special educational needs are generally well taught. They have full access to the curriculum and good inclusion into every aspect of school life. Teachers are well informed about their specific needs and play an active role in drawing up Individual Education Plans and setting targets for them. The special educational needs coordinator works closely with all teachers in order to monitor the progress of pupils. However, apart from Additional Literacy Support, teachers' planning does not always take account of pupils' individual needs. It frequently does not identify the pupils concerned or what they will be doing and so tasks and resources are not always matched to their individual capabilities. There is no specific planning focused only on the needs of pupils for whom English is an

additional language, because it is generally not needed. Instead, the needs of these pupils are accommodated within the planning for all other pupils.

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

- 31 The curriculum offered by the school appropriately meets National Curriculum requirements and the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education. The range and quality of the curriculum have improved since the last inspection, and there are now schemes of work in all subjects. These have largely been developed from national guidance and help pupils to make progress in their academic and personal development. The strengths of the curriculum are in the Foundation Stage, art and design and religious education. The good structure provided in these subjects helps teachers to provide exciting and stimulating activities that develop pupils' skills systematically. The weakness is in music. This is because staff need further training in the use of the new commercially produced scheme. While satisfactory overall, the curriculum for physical education is in need of further development. At present, it results in teachers being too directive and not giving pupils enough opportunities to develop skills in planning and evaluating their own work.
- 32 Each subject is allocated sufficient curriculum time. However, the way in which the timetable is planned leads to shortages of equipment in mathematics, because many lessons take place at the same time each day.
- 33 Pupils with special educational needs are able to follow the same curriculum and full range of extra-curricular activities. When they require help in specific areas they are withdrawn for short periods of specialist teaching. This has a positive effect on their learning. Unfortunately, not all pupils working alongside their peers have work that is specifically planned for their individual needs. This means that at times they struggle to access what is on offer. A typical example of this is in physical education where all pupils are asked to improve a specific skill using the same methods and the same resources. Adaptation of tasks and allowing pupils a choice of resources would ensure greater degrees of success. The specialised curriculum for pupils needing to be withdrawn from lessons is well planned to focus upon a pupil's specific needs. The good quality support provided during these periods enables pupils to make good progress.
- 34 The sound curriculum structure helps to ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils. For example, those for whom English is not the principal language spoken at home are well supported, fully integrated into all class activities, and enjoy full access to the curriculum. Excellent work carried out by the coordinator for pupils from traveller families ensures that these pupils are provided with a good balance of work in literacy, numeracy and science to work at during their periods of extended absence.
- 35 The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been introduced satisfactorily, and are beginning to have a positive effect on raising standards in English and mathematics. Literacy and numeracy skills are developed to some extent in other lessons, but an over reliance on pre-printed worksheets in subjects such as science, geography and history limits opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in writing.
- 36 Extra-curricular provision is good, with activities provided after school in art and design, ceramics, singing, skipping, games and information and communication technology enjoyed by about 100 pupils in all. Further enhancement of the curriculum is provided through peripatetic tuition in string instruments, provided by staff from the local education authority.
- 37 Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is satisfactory. Work on developing pupils' understanding of healthy living and drugs misuse, together with sex education, are fully integrated into the curriculum.
- 38 Links with the community are sound. Visits from members of the local community and visits into the locality help to develop pupils' sense of citizenship as well as enhancing the curriculum. For example, photographic evidence shows that a visit to a local pizza shop helped pupils with their work in design and technology. A display mounted in the school hall by the Royal British Legion, as part of the Remembrance Day tribute proved to be both moving and thought provoking for pupils and staff.

- 39 Very good links have been established between the school and the local middle school to which most pupils transfer at the age of nine.
- 40 Overall, the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- 41 Arrangements for developing pupils' spiritual awareness are good. In collective worship, which is broadly of a Christian nature, pupils gain an invaluable understanding of the creator and the importance of preserving and valuing God's universe. During assemblies, pupils are encouraged to reflect on why some people act the way they do and why certain events happen. During the inspection there were good daily acts of worship, acknowledging the oneness of God, which is central to all faiths. The truth of God's existence was clearly and articulately set out by teachers and thoroughly explored and illustrated through story and hymns. Opportunities for pupils' spiritual development through activities such as the appreciation of works of art are also a regular feature of school life, and pupils are also expected to appreciate the worth and value of each other. However, plenary sessions at the end of lessons, when learning is reviewed, are not always exploited as a way of enabling pupils to reflect on what they are doing because teachers often do not allow enough time for this part of the lesson.
- 42 The ways in which the school provides for pupils' moral and social development are very good. There is a clear code of conduct and high expectations of good behaviour, which results in consideration and care for others. Pupils are very polite, respectful and friendly and are clearly able to distinguish right from wrong. Through lessons in religious education, pupils are able to develop an understanding of the different cultural elements of our society and thereby increase their social skills. The school also places very good emphasis on developing in pupils the capability to resolve their minor differences between themselves. Pupils are given a variety of responsible jobs to carry out, all of which help with the smooth running of the school day. For example, pupils help lunchtime supervisors with clearing up, they ensure that pupils' lunch boxes arrive on time and help in the daily acts of worship. Their sense of citizenship is enhanced through fund-raising for various appeals such as those for 'Red Nose Day' and for the Royal National Institute for the Blind.
- 43 The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. A very strong contribution comes through art, both within the curriculum and through after-school clubs, and also through peripatetic music tuition and the after-school singing club. Occasional visits to places such as museums further help to develop pupils' awareness of their cultural heritage. Displays of artwork around the school and the study of eminent artists such as Rousseau are a strong feature of the school. In Year 3 and Year 4, pupils are helped to understand, acknowledge and celebrate other religious and cultural backgrounds. In geography, pupils study the lives of people living in India, while in religious education lessons, pupils are taken to the local Sikh Temple to learn about Sikh worship and culture. Through this multi-cultural curriculum, the school does much to discourage racial stereotyping and succeeds in valuing the diversity that is evident in the school and community.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 44 Overall, the quality of care, support, guidance and welfare provided for pupils is very good. Clear priority is given to issues of health and safety and there are very effective procedures for child protection. As a result, pupils are able to learn within a secure environment.
- 45 Teachers and support staff provide effective supervision, particularly during lunchtime. They listen attentively to pupils' concerns, and provide good quality advice and guidance. This ensures that pupils feel secure, confident and self-assured, which in turn leads to good standards of achievement.
- 46 The health and safety policy ensures good practice. A member of its governing body who has a great deal of professional experience of health and safety issues recently assessed the school's provision. All aspects of safety including the procedures and reporting accidents were thoroughly inspected. The school's governing body works closely with the head and site supervisor and regularly monitors all aspects of health and safety. Parents are informed of all accidents, which involve their child. The personal, social and health education programme provides pupils with informed choices about healthy living and hygiene.

- 47 There are excellent procedures in place for monitoring and raising existing levels of attendance. The senior management team and other staff implement an effective system, which ensures that all absences are investigated thoroughly and monitored systematically. This information is used effectively to discourage further absences, particularly extended family holidays, which significantly affect the attendance of some pupils. Most pupils and parents work alongside the school and support their efforts to sustain existing levels of attendance. The educational welfare officer is always available and works closely with the school. A system of rewards for pupils' individual and collective efforts is used well to further improve attendance and time keeping. Many of the recent improvements in attendance have come about through the careful monitoring and systematic use of information by the school's education welfare assistant.
- 48 The ways in which positive behaviour is monitored and promoted are very good. Pupils are always encouraged to follow the school's code of conduct and to behave in an orderly and mature manner. Pupils appreciate and value the reward system that is used consistently and fairly by all teachers and ensures that pupils' attitudes and behaviour are often very constructive and purposeful. Pupils' very good behaviour and attitudes are recorded and celebrated both inside and outside the classroom. Colourful displays of pupils' work not only create a stimulating environment, but also help pupils to take pride in their achievements and raise their confidence and self-esteem.
- 49 Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. The behaviour policy clearly states that bullying is unacceptable and outlines a code of conduct, which ensures the safety and well being of the school community. The policy encourages pupils to report all types of anti-social behaviour. In practice, all incidents of inappropriate behaviour, although rare, are thoroughly investigated. There is a sound system in place for recording, monitoring and reporting to parents. The headteacher has a clear system for recording and reporting incidents of racist behaviour to parents and the local authority. Racism is rarely an issue for the school. Parents and pupils rightly value the school as a place that is safe, secure, friendly and happy.
- 50 Overall, there are good procedures in place for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. The assessment coordinator has worked hard to collate data about pupils' performance so that their progress can be tracked as they move through the school. At the time of the inspection, the school was in the early stages of using a new, computer-based system which is designed to provide the school with a more thorough analysis of information than the present arrangements permit. Work to develop portfolios of examples of pupils' work, to be used as a reference point for teachers' judgements, is not yet complete. Samples of pupils' writing have been collated, following work alongside staff from the local 'cluster group' of schools. However, the annotations on the samples of work are not particularly helpful in guiding teachers when they use the samples to help them to decide which National Curriculum levels to allocate to their pupils' writing. In general, assessment information is used satisfactorily to inform teachers' planning.
- 51 Arrangements for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic and personal development are very good. Praise is very effectively used to encourage efforts and raise pupils' self esteem. Significant achievements, both inside and outside of the classroom are celebrated daily during registration, in assemblies and through informal contact with teachers and parents. The school also supports the learning and individual development of pupils from travellers' families. A designated teacher coordinates, records, monitors, and supports academic and the personal development of these pupils. She ensures that staff are provided with information and strategies, which help to raise pupils' confidence, self-esteem and motivates them to learn.
- 52 Good quality support and guidance is provided for pupils with special educational needs. There are clear systems for identifying pupils' needs and monitoring progress, with which all staff are familiar. Individual Education Plans are in place for all pupils requiring them. Regular monitoring ensures that targets set for pupils are realistic and achievable. The school fully complies with legal requirements in respect of its seven statemented pupils. Regular updating of the special needs register ensures that whenever possible there is movement of pupils off as well as on to the register. Procedures for assessing pupils with special educational needs are clearly understood by all teachers, and they take an active role in providing information for the special needs coordinator.
- 53 Since its previous inspection, the school has made significant progress in improving the quality of its care, support guidance and welfare provided for pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 54 Parents speak well of the school, and value its ethos and the work of the headteacher and staff. Parents' suggestions and concerns are addressed satisfactorily, and most parents appreciate the efforts of staff in responding to them. Inspectors' judgements fully support the positive views of the school expressed through the pre-inspection questionnaire and meeting.
- 55 The school continues to provide good quality information to parents in a number of ways. There are regular parents' meetings, which are attended by most parents and provide opportunities for them to discuss their child's progress and development. Annual reports are easy to read and provide useful information about pupils' achievements. Teachers are very accessible to parents, and are always willing to discuss any problems as they arise. Display boards around the school provide additional information about what is taught and celebrate pupils' achievements. Parents from minority ethnic backgrounds have access to the same information, which has been translated in to community languages and helps to develop and improve communication between parents and staff. Some parents regularly help out in the school. All parents are encouraged to join the Parent-Teacher Association, which works hard to raise funds and to provide social events.
- 56 Every effort is made to establish good links with parents of pupils identified as having special educational needs. These parents are kept well informed about their children's progress; they are fully involved in regular reviews of their children's progress and are consulted regularly. Attendance at annual reviews of statements of special needs is good.
- 57 Most parents have signed the Home School Agreement, but a small minority sometimes fails to encourage the regular attendance of their children.
- 58 Since the last report, the school has worked diligently to improve its relationship with parents.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 59 The headteacher provides very good leadership and management, ably supported by her senior staff. She has a clear vision for building upon the very good work done since the last inspection to continue to raise standards. The present headteacher had only been in post for five months at the time of last inspection in 1997. The senior management team has already ensured that all staff in the school share their commitment and work closely together as a team to achieve improvements. There is a sense of energy and a positive atmosphere within the school community. This reflects well on the aims of the school and makes an effective contribution to the very positive attitudes the pupils have towards each other and their work. Parents are greatly appreciative of the headteacher's efforts and accessibility. All those who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that the school is well led and managed.
- 60 The governors are committed and supportive of the headteacher and the school and are beginning to work closely with teachers to improve standards. The governing body is effectively organised and successfully fulfils its statutory responsibilities. They are kept well informed by the headteacher, and a small number of them work in the school. The governors are active in working alongside the headteacher in reviewing and comparing National Curriculum test results and considering value added year on year. They are active in involving themselves in training for initiatives such as literacy, numeracy and social inclusion and are each responsible for an area of the curriculum or aspect of the school. Regular meetings take place at which policies are reviewed.
- 61 Members of staff such as the special educational needs coordinator and assessment coordinator give presentations to the governing body to keep them informed about the detail of initiatives, and governors' future involvement in the school is clearly outlined in the school improvement plan.
- 62 The governors are greatly heartened by the improvements that have taken place since the last inspection and are confident in the headteacher's very good leadership and management skills.
- 63 Following the previous inspection in 1997 there were several high focus key issues for action as follows:

- 64 Key Issue 1: *'Raise standards in mathematics and English throughout the school.'*
- 65 Standards are steadily improving in these subjects. The headteacher and governors have put a clear plan of action in place to raise achievement. The introduction of the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies has resulted in more cohesive planning across both key stages, a change in teaching styles and a better match of work to the different abilities of pupils. The English coordinator provides sound leadership in the subject, and mathematics is very well led. The new assessment coordinator is developing clear procedures for assessments and for analysing data in order to track pupils' progress as they move through the school. The headteacher and governors applaud the work done so far but are fully aware there is still much to do.
- 66 Key Issue 2: *'Raise levels of attainment in line with those expected in Key Stage 2 in geography and information and communication technology.'*
- 67 Attainment and progress in both of these subjects are now satisfactory, and pupils' attitudes to learning are good. However, resources for teaching geography need to be improved.
- 68 Key Issue 3: *'Improve curriculum provision.'*
- 69 The curriculum has improved and is now satisfactory. A scrutiny of comprehensive planning files outlining long, medium and short-term planning shows a whole school approach to coverage and schemes of work. Clear objectives are outlined in all planning and were made very clear throughout all lessons observed. Curriculum policy documents are comprehensive and show consistency of approach across all subjects. Work is currently underway to improve the consistency of teachers' judgements in English, mathematics and science through discussions about samples of pupils' work at which agreement is reached about the National Curriculum level achieved.
- 70 Key Issue 4: *'Improve teaching skills in Key Stage 1 and 2.'*
- 71 The quality of teaching is significantly better than at the time of the previous inspection. To some extent this is due to the changes in staffing which have taken place since 1997, but there has also been a clear focus on developing teachers' skills through inservice training. There has also been progress in the monitoring of teaching. The senior management team and some coordinators now monitor the quality of teaching. However, the role of coordinators in monitoring and evaluating standards in their subjects still needs to be developed. The quality of monitoring is very good in mathematics, art and design and in the Foundation Stage, and is good in science. However, in many subjects, and in particular geography, history and design and technology, monitoring needs to be improved. Sometimes, where coordinators have more than one area of responsibility, time spent in monitoring one area is at the expense of another. For example, the coordinator for mathematics does not have enough time to closely monitor what is happening in pupils' personal, social and health education. In English, the coordinator has carried out some good, focused monitoring within her own part of the school, but has little knowledge of the quality of teaching and learning in Years 3 and 4.
- 72 The recently appointed assessment coordinator is starting to develop a clear and comprehensive process to ensure that teachers' assessments are used effectively in tracking pupils' progress across the school. This is also another check on the quality of teaching.
- 73 Key Issue 5: *'Continue to improve the leadership and management of the school.'*
- 74 The quality of leadership has significantly improved. A comprehensive school improvement plan is now in place, which has been developed alongside the action plan resulting from the previous inspection. A re-structuring of staff and the appointment of a new deputy headteacher has strengthened the senior management team in the school and allowed effective monitoring and evaluation to take place.
- 75 The development of a strong and committed governing body has helped to bring about sound financial planning in the school to support school improvement plan priorities. All staff have the opportunity to extend their expertise through training, particularly in literacy and numeracy.

- 76 The length of the school day has now been changed and time tabling of subjects has been reorganised, although further thought needs to be given to the organisation of literacy and numeracy to allow more effective use of resources.
- 77 The school improvement plan is of a good quality and sets out a clear framework of future priorities. It provides a succinct structure for development with key issues for action. It includes overview aims, curriculum, leadership and culture and ethos. Clear responsibilities are outlined to include staff, governors and the senior management team.
- 78 Leadership by the coordinator for special educational needs is excellent. She is committed to providing high quality support to all pupils with special educational needs. She monitors the writing of pupils' individual education plans and the setting of targets for children with special needs by looking at samples of their work. Feedback is then given to staff as appropriate. A governor with responsibility for special educational needs provides excellent support and works closely with the coordinator. Her expertise enables her to do valuable support work within school. The school enjoys good relationships with a range of external support agencies.
- 79 The school makes very good use of resources. Staff are effectively deployed, and the school makes very good use of learning support staff to help lower attaining pupils, particularly those identified for extra help in literacy. The accommodation is generally good and is well maintained. Books and equipment are in good condition and easily accessible. However, there are not enough resources for history or geography, and equipment for mathematics is in short supply because of the way in which the timetable is organised, since many lessons take place at about the same time. Finances are carefully managed and very good use is made of various grants, such as the funding for social inclusion. The financial administrator undertakes her duties efficiently and responsibly. Administrative procedures are good, and enable teachers to focus on their work in classrooms rather than spending time on secretarial tasks.
- 80 Principles of 'best value' are generally applied well by senior staff and governors through consultation and comparison of the school's performance against other schools when discussing priorities for future development.
- 81 Pupils with special educational needs receive good quality help both within the classroom and when withdrawn from lessons for individual and small group tuition. Support assistants work very closely with classroom teachers. Learning resources are generally good, although some need updating.
- 82 A wide range of indicators, including the high quality of leadership and the very good progress made since the last inspection, show that the school is effective and when its expenditure per pupil is considered, it provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 83 In order for the school to improve further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:
- (1) Raise standards in English, mathematics and music by:
- (In English)
- reviewing the way in which lessons are structured to ensure that a better balance is achieved between time for discussion and time for written work;
 - ensuring that reading and writing tasks in all subjects are designed to match the language needs of all pupils, particularly those with potentially higher attainment
 - taking a more consistent approach to the development of pupils' skills in speaking in all classes, placing an emphasis on the need for clear speech and the correct use of grammar in whole sentence answers; (*paragraphs 9, 27, 100, 104, 107*)
- (In mathematics)
- reviewing the way in which pupils are grouped for lessons;
 - reviewing the structure of lessons to improve the pace of learning and to provide a better match of work to the needs of pupils of higher-attainment;

- improving teachers' skills in judging pupils' work;
(paragraphs 10, 27, 50, 69, 113, 115, 117, 118)

(in music)

- improving teachers' skills and confidence in using the scheme of work.
(paragraphs 166, 172, 173)

(2) Provide greater challenges to pupils of all abilities, particularly those of potentially higher attainment by:

- reviewing the way in which pre-printed worksheets are used as a means of recording answers;
- ensuring that pupils have more opportunities to devise their own methods of working;
- improving the ways in which good practice in teaching is shared.
(paragraphs 9, 11, 19, 27, 31, 35, 105, 125, 126, 127, 148, 152, 153, 154, 162, 175, 179)

(3) Develop a programme of systematic monitoring and evaluation by subject coordinators.
(Paragraphs 71, 108, 132, 145, 150, 165, 174)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	75
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	41

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
8	15	31	44	3	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	Not applicable	350
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	Not applicable	97

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	Not applicable	7
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	Not applicable	78

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	47

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
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Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.6
National comparative data	4.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2000	43	36	79

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	35	40	37
	Girls	33	33	28
	Total	68	73	65
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	86 (73)	92 (76)	82 (84)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	36	37	37
	Girls	32	28	30
	Total	68	65	67
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	86 (79)	82 (90)	85 (94)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	5
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	12
Indian	26
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	4
White	226
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	1	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)	15.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.9
Average class size	25

Education support staff: YR – Y4

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	220

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	Not applicable
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	Not applicable

Total number of education support staff	Not applicable
Total aggregate hours worked per week	Not applicable

Number of pupils per FTE adult	Not applicable
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
	£
Total income	715,987
Total expenditure	685,528
Expenditure per pupil	1,965
Balance brought forward from previous year	-10,931
Balance carried forward to next year	19,528

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	350
Number of questionnaires returned	71

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	59	37	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	63	31	4	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	46	3	1	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	55	11	3	3
The teaching is good.	51	42	4	1	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	48	11	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	37	11	0	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	39	54	4	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	32	41	15	4	7
The school is well led and managed.	42	41	4	1	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	48	6	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	39	18	3	15

Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number

About a fifth of the questionnaires were returned and 19 parents attended the pre-inspection meeting with the Registered Inspector. Views expressed in the pre-inspection meeting were overwhelmingly positive.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

- 84 Children enter the reception class in the September of the year in which they become five years old but do not attend full time until the term that they become five. At the time of the inspection there were 23 children with July and August birthdays who had only been attending full-time for two weeks.
- 85 The Foundation Stage class areas are located within the former Victorian primary school building. There are three full-time teaching staff and two nursery nurses who work together as a cohesive team, totally committed to early years' education. Children are divided into three registration groups, but work in a variety of other groups in various parts of the building and with different staff during the rest of the day. This is organised and managed with precision, and all children's learning is carefully monitored on a daily basis.
- 86 Children's attainment on entry to the school is well below that expected of four year olds. Information from 'baseline assessments' administered shortly after admission shows that about seven out of ten children enter with very few early literacy and numeracy skills, and their social skills are generally underdeveloped. The breadth of the curriculum provided, very good teaching, very secure assessments, very good organisation and excellent leadership by the Foundation Stage coordinator contribute towards high quality learning and starting point for children's learning. Although attainment is below average by the time children transfer to Key Stage 1, children make very good progress and are well prepared for entry to Year 1.

Personal, social and emotional development

- 87 The attitudes and behaviour of children in the Foundation Stage are excellent. All children know and understand all the general 'rules' of organisation, listen attentively, concentrate well and are enthusiastic and excited about learning. Children show considerable independence; for example, through being 'helper of the week' and pouring out drinks for the other children. They all know where resources are kept and put them away tidily. Relationships between children and with adults are very positive and trusting. All activities are well planned to extend children's social skills. For example, there is always music playing as children enter school and dress and undress for physical education sessions, and the register is sung rather than said. Teachers ask children how their lunchtime has gone at afternoon registration and take time to listen to children's responses. In 'circle time' sessions, children pass a teddy around the circle and speak only when they are holding him. All children respect others' feelings, know how to take turns and speak openly about their thoughts, such as how they feel when getting ready for bed and the darkness. Other 'circle times' have focused on the difference between right and wrong, controlling emotions and learning that actions have consequences such as hurting or helping someone. In each registration room, there is a board of targets, for instance: *'In our unit we try to...'*. During the teaching day, children are able to make a choice of activity and move freely from one to another. Outside activities are planned extensively to focus on social skills such as sharing equipment, taking the lead and helping each other, and progress in these is carefully recorded for future use.

Communication, language and literacy

- 88 Although attainment by the end of the reception year is below average, significant progress is made in language and literacy. Children listen very carefully to instructions and questioning and are expected and encouraged to speak in full sentences. At the start of the day, children move into small groups of ten to enjoy a story. When telling these stories, staff often use puppets, and this technique heightens children's enjoyment and improves their response. The way in which stories are told and brought alive is a strength of this unit. For example, when the teacher read the story of 'Clickety Clack, Something to Pack' the children packed a suitcase with the appropriate objects. All the children understand the properties of a book. They know that print carries meaning and know about words such as author, title and publisher through singing the 'book' song. Children are beginning to recognise many sounds and key words through extensive games and activities and can

apply them to their reading. For example, 'Shane the Shark' puppet will only eat 'sh' words. Therefore, the teacher asks the children to find him food. During this activity all the children were entranced. Teaching in this area of the curriculum is very good. Extensive activities are provided in understanding of sounds in words and the majority of the children can recognise and make consonant-vowel-consonant words such as 'bat' or 'sit'. All children take a library book or reading book home every night to share with their families. As children become more familiar with sounds and key words they take some home to learn. The teaching staff are committed to 'emergent writing' in which children are encouraged to use letters and symbols to imitate conventional writing. This technique helps children to become confident as writers, whatever their ability. Children are invited to 'write' in the writing area using a variety of media. They are able to write their own name and more able pupils are able to write a sentence with some structure and spell simple key words. They have had experience of writing menus, shopping lists, birthday cards and poems. Careful records of children's progress are kept to help teachers with their planning. Progress made by children with special educational needs is good and those for whom English is an additional language is very good.

Mathematical development

89 Children make very good progress in this area of learning because they are very well taught. All children have a basic knowledge of numbers to ten and can count back and on, knowing such vocabulary as 'less', 'more', 'bigger', 'smaller', 'add', 'equals' and 'take away'. Colourful resources such as number lines, candles on cakes, shirts on the washing line, birthdays on kites and calculators, clocks and dice all reinforce the everyday use of number skills. Singing number songs such as 'Five Speckled Frogs' and 'Five Currant Buns' also helps children to practise counting skills. Through activities children can sort bears into sizes, measure with hand spans and recognise o'clock. In the current project, entitled 'All About Me', they experience real-life situations in a 'fast-food' restaurant and make up a shopping basket of healthy eating foods. A variety of resources in sand and water play allow for exploration of a variety of measuring techniques. Children are beginning to relate subtraction to take away and recognise numbers to 20. Many opportunities for mathematical experiences are planned for in role-play such as shopping and outdoor activities with construction toys. Careful ongoing records are kept of pupils' progress and achievement.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

90 Although children enter school with a limited knowledge of the world around them, they make rapid progress. Teaching is very good and many opportunities are provided for children to explore their environment and learn new skills. Children have been given the opportunity to look at special clothes from Africa, China and India and have learned about celebrations such as Eid and Diwali from mothers of some of the children coming to talk to them. They have made a display of special occasions and looked at photographs of themselves as babies to see how they have grown and changed. When children go on holiday their photographs are displayed and plotted on a map of the world. The entire unit has made visits to the park and the river, the library and church and children have even been taken to buy their own Christmas tree to decorate. Visitors to the unit have included fire fighters, grandparents, the nurse and librarian. During the inspection, children were making a fruit salad and studying the shapes and colours of the different fruits. Children have used information and communication technology skills to produce sentences and draw pictures.

Physical development

91 By the end of the reception year, children make very good progress and the majority achieve the Early Learning Goals³ in this area of development. Children are able to control a ball with their hands and feet and bounce it several times with some precision. They are able to jog, skip and hop and use the space around them very effectively. To develop fine motor skills, children are able to saw a piece of wood in half and nail it together, use tools to cut fruit for a salad and use large construction equipment outside. At the time of inspection, there were no large moveable toys or equipment for outside use although delivery of new equipment was expected. Staff compensate for this shortage by providing an extensive choice of outside activities every day for the children to

³ The Early Learning Goals establish the expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage in six areas of learning.

choose from. Teaching in this area is very good as all the staff use every opportunity they can to extend children's learning through the use of tunnels and tents, hoppers and jumpers, small physical education equipment, sand, water and woodwork.

Creative development

- 92 The overall standard of children's creative development is close to that required for the completion of the Early Learning Goals. Children start from a low level of skills and make very good progress throughout the year. There are a wide variety of resources and media for children to choose from, and an area where they are invited to work creatively, for example by making a kite. Painting and model making is ongoing. Children are now learning to mix their own colours and, through their pictures, drawings and model making they show an increasing control of tools and materials.
- 93 Children listen to music constantly while they come into school and are dressing or undressing for physical education. There are a variety of musical instruments for children to explore. For instance, two children were observed dressed in saris and dancing to the rhythm they were making on the bongo drums. Singing is an integral part of the teaching day, whether it is singing the register, singing the 'book' songs and sounds or singing number rhymes. Opportunities for creative role-play are ongoing. At the time of inspection a 'fast-food' restaurant was open for use. Previous experiences have included a Post Office, a shop, Santa's Grotto and a holiday centre.
- 94 Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. All staff work as an effective team in planning, assessing and monitoring children's progress. There is a good balance between structured activities and children making choices, and the learning environment is attractive and stimulating. Both nursery nurses are extremely effective in supporting children's learning. As a result progress made by the children, including those with English as a second language, is very good. Management of the children is a strong feature and the excellent knowledge the staff have of individual needs results in each child being offered the types of activity that support a very good acquisition of early skills.

ENGLISH

- 95 In the National Curriculum tests for seven year olds in the year 2000, the proportion achieving the national expectation of Level 2 in reading was slightly above the national average, but very few pupils achieved the higher Level 3. For this reason, the average score achieved by the school for reading was well below the national average. The school's performance in writing was better. The proportion of seven year olds achieving the expected level was above the national average and more pupils achieved the higher level than in reading. Overall, the average score achieved by the school in writing was in line with the national average. When the test results are compared against those of similar schools, with about the same proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, standards in 2000 were below average in reading, but well above average in writing.
- 96 While the average score in reading and writing was well below the national average for the previous three years, the underlying trend has been one of steady improvement in the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level. However, the lack of pupils achieving the higher level has been the reason for the low overall average scores.
- 97 Results from the most recent National Curriculum tests show that the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level in reading and writing was about the same as in 2000, but fewer pupils achieved the higher level in writing. No comparisons can be drawn from these results at present because national data is not yet available. However, results have exceeded the school's targets in both reading and writing.
- 98 Inspection findings are that standards in speaking and listening, reading and writing are below average at the age of seven and also at the end of Year 4, when pupils transfer to middle schools. Throughout Year 1 to 4, pupils make satisfactory progress overall. Pupils identified as having special educational needs make good progress because of the extra help that they receive, particularly those pupils in Years 3 and 4 identified for support as part of the Additional Literacy initiative. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are fully integrated into lessons and make sound progress. However, higher attaining pupils are not generally challenged enough.

- 99 When children join the school, most have low levels of literacy. They make very good progress in the Foundation Stage towards the Early Learning Goals in communication, language and literacy, but the wider literacy targets of the National Curriculum expose their limited command of the language, particularly in speaking and writing. Despite the very good progress made in the Foundation Stage, pupils still have below average levels of attainment in English when they enter Year 1.
- 100 Across the school, pupils generally listen carefully to their teachers and to each other. Teachers are largely successful in holding the interest of pupils of all abilities during well-paced introductions to lessons, but the attention of some pupils quickly diminishes when these sessions are too long. They are, however, generally well behaved, so that when they lose interest they tend to sit passively rather than disrupting the rest of the class. In some classes, teachers are aware of the need to challenge pupils to explain their answers clearly rather than giving one or two word answers. When this occurs on a regular basis, pupils make good progress in developing their skills in speaking. However, in many classes this practice is not a consistent feature of teaching. A significant number of younger pupils have difficulty in constructing grammatically correct responses or have immature speech patterns. This in turn affects their spelling. For instance, spellings such as 'shors' (shorts) are commonly seen in pupils' first drafts of unaided writing. Pupils also have a restricted vocabulary. For example, in a Year 2 discussion about swimming, none of the class could provide the word 'strokes' to explain the different ways of swimming.
- 101 Skills in reading develop satisfactorily as pupils move through the school, and the interest that most pupils show in reading helps them to learn. Reading development is supported by progressively graded reading materials, which have improved since the last inspection. In Years 1 and 2, pupils are systematically taught the relationship between letters and sounds. By the age of seven, most pupils read simple passages accurately and express opinions about major events in stories they have read. However, when confronted with unfamiliar words, many pupils only rely on their knowledge of initial letter sounds and blends of sounds to read the words rather than using a wider range of clues such as the context of the sentence. Skills in using books for information are developing slowly. About a half of those pupils heard reading could use of contents and index pages.
- 102 By the age of nine, most pupils are reading with reasonable fluency. When errors are made, pupils generally realise quickly and correct their mistakes, sometimes using the context to help them. They recall the main parts of the story and talk briefly about the important characters. However, comprehension skills are more limited. A number of pupils heard reading were sound in the technical aspects, such as using letter sounds and following punctuation, but did not always understand the meaning of some of the words that they had read. Skills in research are better developed than in Year 2. Pupils are generally able to locate books quickly from the non-fiction library selection.
- 103 Handwriting skills are practised regularly in Years 1 and 2, particularly in Year 2. Samples of handwriting from Year 2 pupils showed that in their practice books script is joined and letters are clearly shaped and correctly orientated, although few books contained writing of an even size. However, in day to day written work, only about one third of pupils are consistently applying the skills learned in handwriting sessions. Much of the work in exercise books takes the form of grammar or punctuation exercises, with fewer examples of pupils' own imaginative writing than are normally found in work produced by pupils of this age. Basic punctuation, such as capital letters, full stops and question marks, is generally used correctly.
- 104 Formal handwriting practice is a regular feature of lessons in Year 3, but is less frequent in Year 4. Evidence of the satisfactory progress made by most pupils is seen in the development from writing in pencil to ink by average and higher attaining pupils in Year 4. Most pupils in Year 4 continue join letters in their writing in their day to day work, effectively using the skills learned in formal practice. The range of writing seen in pupils' books in Years 3 and 4 is much greater than in Years 1 and 2. This is because of the additional time given to writing as part of the timetable for these classes. However, the text produced by average and higher attaining pupils in Year 4 generally lacks the depth and choice of adventurous vocabulary that characterises attainment at the higher level expected for this age group. Spellings in pupils' unaided writing are generally at a lower level than

normally expected. For example, work produced by a higher attaining pupil in Year 4 contained basic errors such as '*diddent*' (didn't) and '*relly*' (really).

- 105 Skills learned in literacy lessons are satisfactorily developed in other subjects. Better progress is inhibited by an over-reliance on pre-printed worksheets in some subjects. While this practice provides much needed structure for lower attaining pupils, the use of the same sheets by average and higher attaining pupils reduces the opportunities for them to develop their skills in writing.
- 106 Pupils enjoy their work in English. They work together happily in groups and share books sensibly. They generally take a pride in their work and try hard to set it out neatly.
- 107 The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 1 to 4. Eleven lessons were observed, six in Years 1 and 2 and five in Years 3 and 4. Teaching was excellent in one lesson, good in four and satisfactory in six. This represents an improvement since the time of the previous inspection, particularly in Years 3 and 4. Strengths of teaching are teachers' knowledge of the subject, the clear way in which basic skills are taught, and the good management of pupils. As a result, pupils get to work quickly and without fuss, because they know precisely what they have to do. Resources are well organised and there are well-established routines in all classes, so pupils know where necessary books and equipment are and are confident in selecting what they need. The most significant weakness is in teachers' management of time in lessons. Introductory sessions are generally too long, and as a result time for pupils to write is severely limited, therefore skills do not develop at a greater rate. Teachers also need to give thought to the way in which they organise 'literacy hour' lessons. At present, they follow the structure recommended nationally, and while this is well suited to most pupils it is not always best for those who have difficulty in remembering more complex instructions. The situation is compounded by teachers' over-long explanations and results in many pupils forgetting all that they have to do by the time that they get to their desks to write. While lessons observed during the inspection provided work designed for pupils of different abilities, evidence from a scrutiny of samples of pupils' books showed that this is not always the case. More use could be made of extended writing lessons to challenge pupils of potentially higher attainment. Apart from reading, there is little evidence of teachers using homework in a regular and consistent way to develop pupils' skills in English.
- 108 The coordinator is enthusiastic and shows a clear commitment to improve standards in English. She has collated a selection of examples of pupils' written work to be used as a reference point for teachers' judgements and has been involved in the development of a weighty policy document. This document should prove useful in forming the basis of an action plan for the coordinator, but is too detailed for easy reference by teachers. She has carried out some good, focused monitoring within her part of the school, but as yet has little knowledge of the quality of teaching and learning in Years 3 and 4. Resources for English have improved. There are good quantities of fiction, well kept library areas and good sets of books for group reading sessions.

MATHEMATICS

- 109 Pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests for seven year olds in 2000 were well below the national average. When compared with the results achieved by schools with pupils from similar backgrounds they were below average. In the previous inspection in 1997, standards were well below national average and remained well below average from 1997 to 2000. However, evidence from school data shows that there has been a significant increase in pupils' achievement with the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy in 1998 and a gradual increase in the proportion of pupils achieving the nationally expected levels. Results in the 2001 National Curriculum tests show a further improvement in attainment at the expected level for seven year olds. However, no national comparisons can yet be made with these results.
- 110 Raising standards in mathematics was a key issue for action from the previous inspection. The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy has had a strong influence on the way mathematics is taught in the school. The benefits of improved mental recall and systematic development of mathematical knowledge and understanding are evident in the school's planning and lessons observed. However, there were significant factors evident in all lessons observed to show that further review and development is required in many areas in order to raise standards to the expected level for each age group.

- 111 'Baseline assessments' of pupils entering school in the reception class show that seven out of ten are well below the expected level of mathematical knowledge and ability. This has a significant effect on attainment throughout the school.
- 112 Inspection findings are that attainment is below average at the end of Year 2 and also when pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4. However, pupils make satisfactory progress. The proportion of pupils achieving nationally expected levels is close to the national average, but not enough pupils are achieving higher levels of attainment.
- 113 By the end of Year 2, pupils understand division and can use vocabulary such as 'divide', 'share' and 'equal'. They know how to multiply by 2, 5 and 10 and are able to present multiplication facts in different forms such as $2 \times 5 = 10$, $5 \times 2 = 10$, $10 \div 5 = 2$ or $10 \div 2 = 5$. Their knowledge and understanding of fractions such as whole, half, quarter and three-quarters is sound. The very good teaching in the Year 1 classes ensured that most pupils' learning progressed from the introductory sessions to their recorded work. However, in Year 2, teachers are not always providing enough challenge for pupils of different abilities. The introductory sessions are too long, in some cases 35 minutes in length, and lower attaining pupils in particular find it difficult to concentrate during these sessions. A consequence of the over-long introductions is that not enough time is allowed for pupils to practise the skills taught in their books, and higher attaining pupils in particular are not stretched enough. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress when they are given extra help.
- 114 By the end of Year 4, pupils can describe the properties of two-dimensional shapes and can use a protractor to measure given angles. They are familiar with compass directions and can use them to estimate angles and support their understanding of half and quarter turns. Most pupils can check the results of their calculations.
- 115 Overall, the attainment of pupils in Years 3 and 4 is below average. As in Years 1 and 2 this is due to the fact that the oral sessions are too long and time for recorded work is too short. Oral and mental work is often too difficult for lower attaining pupils and too easy for the potentially higher attainers. Although written tasks are planned to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities, pupils are given little time to consolidate learning or present their work in any structural way. Many pupils were observed in Year 2 writing wrong answers and, because of lack of time, these were not corrected or discussed.
- 116 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Eleven lessons or parts of lessons were observed, and of these two were excellent, one was very good, three were good and five were satisfactory.
- 117 Teaching in Year 1 is very good. Here, teachers generally have good subject knowledge and use lively and interesting strategies and resources to hold pupils' attention. Pupils are challenged and encouraged to explain strategies, and are focused throughout the lessons on skills being learned. Tasks are clearly differentiated to meet the needs of all pupils, and in one class the teacher marked the work with the children. Teaching in Year 2 is satisfactory. Although pupils make satisfactory progress the management of time is unsatisfactory. While different levels of written work are provided, there is too little time given for pupils to extend their knowledge and present their work neatly. In one lesson observed, pupils showed a lack of understanding of the skills being taught and in another pupils' recording was inaccurate and not followed through by the teacher. The plenary sessions, where learning is reviewed at the end of lessons, are often rushed and not always used appropriately.
- 118 Teaching in Year 3 is satisfactory overall. Planning shows a good knowledge and understanding by the teachers and all three lessons observed showed good use of resources and teaching strategies to ensure that new concepts were understood by pupils. Teaching in Year 4 is good. In these lessons, good planning ensured that all pupils were challenged, but unsatisfactory management of time meant that the more able pupils were unable to extend their learning and less able pupils had little time to consolidate any new skills. Homework provided for pupils is sporadic and intermittent.

- 119 Pupils in Years 1 to 4 are enthusiastic about mathematics. Behaviour is good and all pupils concentrate and listen in lessons. Pupils are particularly caring for each other and work well together in small groups.
- 120 The mathematics curriculum meets statutory requirements. All pupils have equal access to mathematics lessons including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. The subject contributes well to the pupils' social development when they are required to work in pairs or groups. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory, but the data gathered from assessments is not always used effectively to raise pupils' attainment.
- 121 The quality of leadership and management in the subject is very good. The subject coordinator has a strong commitment to raising standards and is proactive in promoting the subject through the school, including the introduction of termly target setting. He has monitored the implementation of the Numeracy Strategy and provided support for staff through training and lesson observations. He has a clear plan of action for future development of the subject to include greater use of information and communication technology in mathematics, increased classroom resources, developing the use of assessments and continued staff development.
- 122 Resources for the teaching of mathematics are inadequate, because many numeracy lessons are taught at the same time and the school does not have enough equipment to go round.

SCIENCE

- 123 Attainment in science is average at the end of Year 2, for pupils aged seven, and at the end of Year 4 for pupils aged nine. This is an improvement on the National Curriculum assessments for 2000, when standards achieved by seven year olds were below average in comparison with all schools nationally. This improvement is a result of much development that has taken place in science since the time of the last inspection in 1997. There is a good science policy that provides guidance for teachers on the aims and objectives of science. The scheme of work addresses all aspects of the National Curriculum, so that all pupils have the opportunity to learn about a broad range of science topics. Science is also taught consistently through experimental work so that pupils enhance their learning and understanding of the subject through direct experiences. In particular, the subject coordinator leads science well, and has a clear view of further developments that need to be made.
- 124 One area of improvement has been in pupils' attainment in the study of Life and Living Processes. Examples of learning in this topic seen in Years 1, 2 and 3 during the inspection showed that pupils were making satisfactory progress. Pupils, in Year 1, were thinking about growing cress seeds. Most could compare healthy and unhealthy plants by making relevant observations and suggestions, and one pupil knew the meaning of the word 'germinate'. In Year 2, pupils enjoyed going to the environmental area to examine local plants *in situ*. They were encouraged to describe orally a 'mind picture' of the leaves so that they could improve the accuracy of their observations, with the result that they learned the salient features of the leaves of many common plants. Scientific skills of observation and careful drawing were also practised as part of this valuable experience. Year 3 pupils investigated the amount of water needed for healthy growth of plant, giving them the opportunity to further develop their knowledge of how plants live, and at the same time, increasing their understanding of scientific method.
- 125 Pupils are developing their skills of scientific enquiry satisfactorily in all science lessons. Sometimes, whole investigations are carried out. In a lesson about forces, as part of their work in a unit about Physical Processes, pupils in Year 4 were enthusiastically testing how far balloons attached to a straw would slide along a string if the balloons were 'let go'. Most pupils could explain why only one factor could be varied, demonstrating their knowledge of 'fair testing'. Pupils made sensible predictions for their age, some suggesting, for example, that that the string with the roughest surface might present more friction so that the balloon would not travel so far. After conclusions had been drawn, the reasons for them were explored with the pupils and, with guidance from the teacher, the most likely reason chosen. This method of working helps pupils to understand scientific concepts. In this lesson, recording sheets adapted to the needs of pupils were available, but in pupils' books, most worksheets are the same for all classes and pupils, leaving little room for pupils of potentially higher attainment to use their initiative. In addition, although progress in

scientific enquiry is satisfactory, there is not much evidence of pupils using simple charts or graphs to look for trends and patterns in results.

- 126 Scrutiny of pupils' work also shows that pupils make satisfactory progress overall in most areas of science. In Year 2, for example, pupils can describe a circuit using drawings of the components and can suggest a reason why the circuit might not work. By Year 4, pupils can draw circuit diagrams using some symbols, and can carry out a whole investigation in response to the problem: 'What might happen to the brightness of a bulb as we change the circuit?' Likewise, when they are learning about Materials and their Properties, pupils in Year 1 can draw pictures or write words relating changes that might happen to substances such as ice cream. Year 4 pupils can record the temperatures of melting ice in a pre-prepared table, using the correct units. Once again, however, because of the 'worksheet' approach, even though these are often of a good style, the higher attainers have limited opportunities for independent learning such as research, or to demonstrate their greater understanding of a concept.
- 127 The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Of the six lessons observed during the inspection, one very good lesson was seen in Year 4 and one good lesson in Year 3. All other lessons were satisfactory. A feature of the best lessons is the careful, knowledgeable explanation of difficult topics such as forces, thus improving pupils' understanding. Another is the tailoring of the means of recording to pupils' needs, which allows all pupils the opportunity to proceed at their own levels. Experiments are interesting and equipment is well chosen to give achievable results. Generally, good features of all lessons are the management of pupils, and the clear objectives and instructions given to pupils, which keeps pupils on task and promotes good behaviour. Long and medium-term planning are sound. Development is needed in making science work suitable for pupils' individual needs so that higher attainers are stretched and lower attaining pupils can better understand the work. Currently, attempts to do this are often based on literacy rather than on science. For example, in one class some pupils were asked to explain the observable differences between two leaves to a friend, others were asked to complete a worksheet on the same task, while the remainder wrote about this. Support teachers are valuable in enabling pupils of lower attainment and also those pupils for whom English is a second language to take a full part in activities. Throughout, there is good attention to safety and lesson plans all have risk assessments. For instance, pupils were asked to wash their hands after handling plants. There is some useful marking of pupils' work, but it is not consistent across the year groups. During the period of the inspection, there was no evidence of homework being used to support learning.
- 128 Speaking and listening skills are practised regularly in lessons during discussions and group work. Pupils listen well, though their skills in explaining are less well developed. Numeracy skills were very necessary in a lesson seen in Year 3 where certain volumes of water had to be poured out, and the height of plants measured. This needed guidance from the teacher before accurate measurements were made.
- 129 Pupils' attitudes to learning in science are good throughout the school. Pupils are interested and enthusiastic about experimenting, and respond positively to challenges when they are given to them. For example, in one lesson pupils keenly suggested ideas of how an experiment about watering plants might be carried out once the teacher had reminded them about what plants might need to grow. Pupils work very well together in group work, helping each other and sharing where necessary without argument, improving their social skills. Behaviour is consistently good.
- 130 The curriculum in science is satisfactory. The step by step development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding is set out in the scheme of work, which is closely based on nationally recommended guidance from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. Targets are being drafted in conjunction with other schools. Some interesting information and communication technology work is displayed in Year 3 in which pupils have used an interactive program to investigate the best angle for a water slide, or the amount of water which a particular material will let through. However, information and communication technology is generally under-used in science, and the school is aware of this. Scientific language such as 'prediction', 'conclusion', 'method', 'units of temperature' and 'volume', are used increasingly by pupils in Years 3 and 4. Resources are good, kept mainly centrally and labelled appropriately. The very useful environmental area has a pond, and is laid out with paths for use by pupils.

- 131 Arrangements for assessing pupils in science need some consideration. They include end of unit assessments which are matched to the National Curriculum statements of attainment. The use of data gained from assessments to inform teachers' planning and the development of teachers' skills in judging pupils' levels of attainment are the main priorities for development.
- 132 Science is well led by the coordinator. She has produced good documentation including the policy, a useful scheme of work for the whole school, and an outline of future developments planned for science. She is in the early stages of developing a science portfolio, and has monitored teaching on two occasions so far, using an agreed agenda. Inservice training has been provided for staff to improve knowledge and understanding, and individual teacher's needs are addressed as they arise. The coordinator has ensured that science is taught through practical work, and has addressed most of the issues raised at the time of the last inspection leading to good improvements in science since that time.

ART AND DESIGN

- 133 Standards in art and design are very good. This is a further improvement on standards of the previous inspection. Attainment during lessons observed was very good throughout Years 1 to 4. Overall, standards are judged to be very good on the evidence of pupils' finished work and their understanding of the subject. Pupils enjoy a wide range of experiences and the quality of their work is high. Progress of all pupils is similarly very good, a factor which is largely to do with the high level of teachers' commitment and enthusiasm. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress because tasks are often planned with their needs in mind. They are also well supported, not only by teachers and classroom assistants, but also by their peers.
- 134 By the age of seven, the majority of pupils have developed good observational skills. They are willing to discuss how ideas can be incorporated into their own work. For example, after looking at jungle murals, pupils in Year 1 see endless possibilities that can be used in their own jungle collages, such as the use of vines, exotic birds and animals among the trees they have already created. They use colour effectively, mixing, matching and blending to create backgrounds to their work. Drawing, cutting and pasting skills are well developed with only a minority of pupils experiencing difficulties. Good links between subjects are established early. For instance, pupils engaged in a study of Mexico in geography, examine the work of Mexican craftsmen to design masks. They all have clear ideas of what they want to achieve during the course of a lesson and to a large extent are successful.
- 135 By the time pupils reach the age of nine, they have had a wide variety of experiences. Although only one lesson was observed in Years 3 and 4 the quality of pupils' work was evident in the excellent displays in classrooms and around the school. Egyptian mummy masks are of high quality as are Monet-inspired compositions and wax relief paintings. Work inspired by Picasso and Kandinsky is in photographic evidence of pupils' work. Pupils in Year 4 show great maturity when experimenting with clay techniques to construct amulets as part of their ancient Egypt topic. Through the encouragement of observation of the work of others, they are able to offer advice about how ideas might be improved. The use of sketchbooks as 'ideas books' is particularly successful because teachers go to the trouble of actually teaching pupils how to use them.
- 136 Pupils' attitudes to their work are very good. They respond well to challenges imposed by teachers, showing a great deal of respect for each other's ideas. Interaction with their teachers and with one another is well developed as this respect and appreciation is nurtured. Behaviour is always good as pupils demonstrate a growing interest and commitment for the subject.
- 137 The quality of teaching is very good. Five lessons were observed during the inspection. One of these was excellent, two were very good and two were satisfactory.
- 138 The teaching of art and design has improved since the last inspection and is the key to the high standards of work seen. Lessons are well planned and the very good level of pupil motivation is undoubtedly the result of teachers' enthusiasm for the subject. By setting high standards, teachers have been able to influence the quality of pupils' work. They encourage a very good level of knowledge and understanding from an early age, including the place of information and communication technology skills. Clarity of instructions and good reinforcement of techniques leads

to purposeful learning and understanding. By encouraging evaluation of each other's efforts teachers raise pupils' awareness and provide them with additional ideas.

- 139 There is very good coordination of the subject. Assessment is now consistent and visual evidence is recorded, indicating further improvement since the last inspection. Display is of high quality and is enhanced by the subtle use of drapes where appropriate. Improved resources have had a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes and standards of work. This is evident in the interest shown by pupils in attending after-school activities in art and ceramics.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 140 Standards in design and technology are broadly in line with what is expected nationally of pupils aged seven and nine. Throughout the school, pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are fully integrated into lessons and also make satisfactory progress. Standards achieved by nine year olds in Year 4 are about the same as those reported at the time of the last inspection, but standards achieved by seven year olds are lower than before.
- 141 Four lessons were observed during the period of inspection, three of which were in Years 1 and 2. Further evidence was obtained from a detailed scrutiny of pupils' books, displays of work and planning. Displays of pupils' work show that a good emphasis is placed on the important elements of design and the evaluation of completed work as well as the task of making items as varied as puppets, wheeled vehicles and photograph frames. This is because the scheme of work, based on nationally recommended guidance, provides a clear structure for teachers' planning.
- 142 The quality of teaching was satisfactory in all of the lessons observed. In Year 1, pupils were working on a food technology task of preparing a fruit salad. To do this, they first referred to the plans that they had previously made so that they would know which fruits to choose from the selection available. They showed levels of skill appropriate to their age when peeling and slicing. Teachers generally placed a good emphasis on hygiene and safety and taught the pupils how they should hold the fruit so that they could cut it safely. However, the number of pupils able to work under the supervision of the teacher or class assistant at any time was limited, and pupils waiting their turn needed to be interested in and challenged by the tasks set for them. This was not always the case, with the result that some of the teachers' attention was diverted away from the main activity to ensure that these other pupils remained on task. As a result, the pace of learning slowed. Pupils, in Year 2, were making cardboard models powered by a winding mechanism. In this lesson, all pupils were involved in the activity at the same time and generally concentrated hard on their work. The pupils knew precisely what they had to do and knew where to find the equipment that they needed. This enabled the teacher to move from table to table to check progress without needing to spend time reminding pupils about what they should be doing. Again, good emphasis was placed on health and safety issues; for instance, pupils were told how they should hold scissors when they needed to carry them to their place. Pupils carefully used their designs as a reference point when making their models and showed satisfactory levels of skill in cutting, shaping and joining pieces of cardboard.
- 143 In the single lesson in Year 3, the clear structure provided by the lesson plan, together with the teacher's good subject knowledge, resulted in pupils successfully developing their understanding of basic rules of hygiene and the need for safe food storage. Evidence from planning and photographs of previously completed work show that pupils in this year group have also experienced a satisfactory range of 'design, make and evaluate' tasks including the use of pneumatics to power moving parts of model monsters. Owing to the way in which the timetable was arranged, no lessons were observed in Year 4, but evidence of previously completed work shows that pupils' skills have developed satisfactorily within this year group. Tasks of greater complexity, such as the production of a 'steady hand game' involving the use of simple electric circuitry, are successfully completed.
- 144 Work in design and technology provides satisfactory opportunities for pupils to practise skills learned in mathematics, science and art and design in completing their assignments. For example,

work in Year 4 to design a paper template for a money container, involved pupils in careful drawing and measuring.

- 145 At the time of the inspection, there was little leadership or coordination of the subject. This is because of staff changes. The coordinator for art and design is ensuring that essential materials are replenished, but had carried out no monitoring of teaching or standards.

GEOGRAPHY

- 146 Attainment in geography for pupils aged seven is in line with national expectations. No lessons in geography for pupils aged eight and nine years could be seen during the inspection because units of work are half termly, and are alternated with history. Much evidence was gained from the scrutiny of pupils' work, discussion with pupils and with the coordinator, from teachers' planning and from display work. The indication from these is that standards in geography are satisfactory for pupils aged nine. This represents an improvement since the time of the previous inspection in 1997. The improvement is mainly due to the revised scheme of work. This provides a clear progression in the way in which pupils' skills and knowledge are to be developed from Year 1 to Year 4, and is firmly grounded in the programmes of study of the National Curriculum. In particular, it caters for the teaching of geographical skills, which were an area for development mentioned in the previous inspection report.
- 147 Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school. Their attitudes to learning are good and they behave well in lessons. Pupils usually concentrate satisfactorily during some long afternoon lessons. They steadily gain knowledge of the nature of other parts of the world, and improve their skills in using maps of different scales. In a lesson seen in Year 1, pupils successfully learned to recognise England as part of an island on a map of the world. Scrutiny of pupils' work in Year 3 shows that pupils have used a detailed map of Kempston as part of their work on the local area. During discussions with pupils in Year 4, pupils demonstrated that they know of the whereabouts of many other countries, including Australia, Africa and countries in Europe. They can describe the climate in India, and have made a more detailed study of Chembakoli, a village in India. Pupils gradually learn more about the physical and human features of places. In Year 2, work in pupils' books shows how they compare Kempston with Tenby, thinking about seaside characteristics and the lives of people there. Pupils learn well how people can affect the environment. In a display in Year 3, pupils demonstrate how the view from a window changes over time, noting the effects on the environment. Pupils, in Year 4, are willing to express their views on recycling and on disposal of rubbish.
- 148 The quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory. Three lessons were observed during the course of the inspection, one of these was of good quality and two were satisfactory. In the good lesson, the teacher made helpful use of prior learning. Pupils in Year 2 were comparing the day in the life of a child in a Mexican village with their own day, so previous work on the nature of the village of Tocuero was important, and was duly emphasised and used by the teacher. Pupils are generally well managed. Skills in reading, writing and speaking and listening are practised regularly in lessons. Though the resources available are usually put to good use, more artefacts and resources would give a livelier and more authentic feel to lessons. The regular use of worksheets, however well produced, tends to limit the higher attainers to one task. It also reduces the geographical character of the lesson.
- 149 The curriculum is satisfactory. The scheme of work is adapted from nationally recommended guidelines to the needs of the school. All pupils have access to the curriculum. Pupils' fieldwork takes place in the immediate area of the school, which is used well for this purpose. There is an assessment scheme in place in which pupils' achievements are recorded against statements in the National Curriculum. Resources in geography are unsatisfactory, mainly because there are too few of them. They are kept together in a central place. There are a limited number of books in the school library areas. Resources were an area of concern in the last inspection, so that this is now an important issue for development.
- 150 The coordinator has been in post for a year and leads the subject satisfactorily. She sees her role, commendably, as guiding and helping other teachers. She sees teachers' planning and ensures that the objectives match those in the scheme of work. Procedures are in place for the quality of

teaching to be monitored, though this is in its early stages. The coordinator is aware of the need for more resources, and is awaiting funding.

HISTORY

- 151 Owing to the school's cycle of topics, teaching of history could only be observed in Years 3 and 4. Further evidence was gathered from looking at teachers' plans, analysis of pupils' previous work, discussion with the subject coordinator and with some Year 2 and Year 4 pupils. The evidence indicates that attainment in history is in line with expectations at the end of Year 2 and when pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4. This is an improvement at Year 4 on the last inspection. The school has successfully addressed most of the weaknesses indicated in the previous report with the exception of resources.
- 152 By the age of seven, pupils can compare the characteristics of Celtic homes with their own homes. They can name several notable personalities such as Samuel Pepys, and know that he wrote a diary. Pupils have good knowledge of Florence Nightingale and how she improved the nursing of patients and the cleanliness of hospitals. They can make good comparisons between hospitals in Victorian times and today. Using pictures, pupils are able to place events into the correct chronological order and to use appropriate words and phrases to describe the passing of time. No teaching was observed in Years 1 and 2, however, pupils' work books show that they are encouraged to ask questions and find answers, and they make satisfactory progress. There is an over-use of preprinted work sheets which limit the opportunities for pupils to use written English to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.
- 153 By the end of Year 4, pupils are attaining the expected level in history. This is an improvement on the previous inspection when work in Years 3 and 4 was described as below national expectations. This was because the work did not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. This shortcoming has been addressed as the school has adopted nationally recommended guidelines as a scheme of work, and these have been adapted to better match the needs of pupils in this school. Pupils can talk about the Second World War and suggest some of the causes of war. They understand some of the effects on people's lives through rationing and evacuation. When given the opportunity, the average and higher attaining pupils can write very well, describing the reasons for the rise of Hitler's Germany between the wars and the main events of World War II. Pupils give reasons for government decisions about rationing and evacuation and describe children's experiences when moved away from home and family. Pupils have used books, artefacts and a visiting speaker and role-play to contribute to their learning. They have learned how to make deductions from the evidence available about people's possessions. Pupils have some understanding of ancient and modern history and can name some periods of history, for example the Tudors, and describe some characteristics of the period. They are less confident when asked about dates. Pupils know that information can be gained from a range of sources including the use of CD-ROM, and they make satisfactory progress. However, the use of the same preprinted worksheet for the whole class does not give pupils the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding at appropriate levels.
- 154 Teaching is satisfactory overall. In the two lessons observed, teaching was satisfactory in one and good in the other. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and planning is effective because of clear learning objectives and a balance of activities. There are good question and answer sessions. Teachers plan for group or independent research, but the range of resources to provide pupils with artefacts and books for this type of work is unsatisfactory. Tasks are not planned to match the needs of all pupils and as a result the more able are not always challenged and the less able do not always complete enough work.
- 155 Pupils have good attitudes to their work. There is a brief, but concise, policy document. The coordinator is aware of the need for more resources, but accepts that core subjects have taken precedence. At present there is no specific history development plan to prioritise the requirements of the subject. The coordinator satisfactorily supports colleagues and monitors teachers' planning. To date she has been able to monitor teaching in one lesson.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

- 156 Attainment in information and communication technology is satisfactory for pupils aged seven, as it was at the time of the last inspection. For pupils aged nine, standards have improved since the last inspection, when they were judged to be unsatisfactory. These pupils are now achieving levels expected for their age nationally. Requirements for information and communication technology have changed considerably since the last inspection, and the school is addressing these steadily.
- 157 Improvements are mainly due to the timetabled use of a compact computer suite that has increased the range and frequency of skills offered to pupils. Staff have almost completed their government funded training, and their confidence and familiarity with the use of computers is gradually increasing. The high quality of the presentation in displays around the school gives credit to this. One example is the clear way in which word-processing is used to explain and organise a display about sculptures, which pupils had made in the environmental area at school.
- 158 Currently, it is possible for pupils in some classes to be divided into two groups for information and communication technology lessons, since an extra teacher is available to help with these lessons. This means that a smaller group of approximately 20 pupils can work, mainly in pairs, in the limited space available in the computer suite. This allows more time and opportunity for pupils to hone their information and communication technology skills.
- 159 Progress is just satisfactory overall for pupils aged between five and seven years. Pupils are familiar with using computers in the suite. During one lesson in Year 1, pupils made colourful pictograms from three simple statements prepared by the teacher. In discussions with pupils in Year 2, pupils described how they could use computers to write sentences, erase mistakes, and how to save their work to a folder, indicating that they are improving their skills in manipulating text. Pupils know how to make a computer 'say' the sentences they had written since they are clear about using the icons on the toolbar. They recalled how they had made charts in geography, but admitted that they would need help to do this again. In an information and communication technology lesson seen in Year 2, most pupils were able to program a 'turtle' successfully to move backwards and forwards, showing that they were in the early stages of developing some knowledge of control technology. Work displayed in classrooms shows that pupils can share their ideas in pictures and text. They have used an interactive program successfully to design a house, and made repeating patterns using a graphics program. Those pupils who do have computers at home are very willing to talk about what they could do with them, and their skills are supplemented accordingly. For example, one pupil described how he was able to insert and use a CD-ROM at home to use a wide range of programs. There was little evidence during the inspection of the use of databases, though these are planned for in the scheme of work for Years 3 and 4.
- 160 Between the ages of seven and nine years, pupils continue to make satisfactory progress. Pupils in Year 3 develop their skills in searching databases using information relating to a real world situation. They were seen in lessons using a database to move through preprepared records containing information about houses. They could search for specific records, and enter new data into a straightforward record by the end of the lessons. In Year 4, pupils are tackling more sophisticated tasks using databases. They prepared questionnaires containing various styles of questions for later data entry. Most pupils improve their skills in entering text and organising questionnaires. Some clear attractive well presented displays in Year 3 show how pupils have used simulations to investigate, for example, how quickly water drains away through various materials. This program had been used well to help pupils find things out and solve problems. Graphics programs have been used satisfactorily to make tiled patterns. Word-processing is used on many occasions. In a scrutiny of pupils' work in Year 4, for example, one pupil had combined text and graphics to produce a short report on the tornado in Bedford. Pupils continue to develop their skills in giving sequences of instructions. Evidence in pupils' topic books in Year 4 showed the use recently of a screen turtle to produce crystal shaped flower patterns. Discussions with pupils in Year 4 revealed that they could remember using a web site on the Internet, and electronic mail on one occasion, but there is no evidence of the frequent use of electronic mail.
- 161 Pupils throughout school enjoy using the new suite as well as the classroom computers. They work happily in pairs, helping each other and discussing work sensibly on most occasions, and improving their social skills. Pupils display increasing confidence in using information and communication technology, and work hard to solve any difficulties they encounter. All pupils, including those with

special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, have access to the information and communication technology curriculum.

- 162 Teaching is satisfactory overall. One good lesson was seen in each of years 2, 3 and 4. In these lessons, teachers gave very clear explanations and instructions, so that pupils knew what to do and understood, for example, the meaning of 'field' in the context of information and communication technology. Teachers are competent in these lessons and can deal, in the main, with questions or any difficulties that arise. Where groups are split into two, learning support assistants can solve problems successfully with their groups, showing the increasing familiarity of all staff with information and communication technology. Further work is needed in information and communication technology on matching tasks to pupils' abilities. Generally, all pupils work at the same task in the suite, which limits the more skilled pupils who work more quickly. For example, pupils who completed the addition of a record to a database could then have moved on to using the database to answer questions so that they had a more indepth knowledge of the ways information is stored. More independent research work is desirable, as is the use of information and communication technology in teaching in other subjects. This should be possible when more computers and software are available in the classroom and in the suite.
- 163 The curriculum follows nationally recommended guidelines, adapted where necessary to both the pupils and to available equipment. Skills are enhanced by an after-school club held for 12 pupils in Years 3 and 4. Some additional skills are developed through teaching in other subjects involving the use of computers, though this is an area which needs development. Assessments are currently recorded using a chart related to criteria from the scheme of work and to National Curriculum statements. The coordinator collates an overall picture of the attainments of all pupils, though this is not yet used to guide teaching.
- 164 A new, larger computer suite is to be constructed in the near future so that whole classes can improve their skills more easily. There are plans to purchase a wider range of software and more computers for classrooms for use in teaching in other subjects. Internet access is available in the suite, but is not yet used frequently. Some thought is needed about the time for which the suite is used overall. Although each class has a timetabled lesson and each year group has the freedom to use the suite for one extra lesson, this expensive resource is not used for much of most mornings.
- 165 The coordinator of the subject provides satisfactory leadership in the development of information and communication technology. He has written a policy, and adapted a scheme of work to the needs of the pupils in the school. He is competent in the use of computers and gives guidance to staff wherever possible. The monitoring and evaluation of the subject is in its early stages. The coordinator is aware of the developments that need to be made and hopes to address these as soon as equipment and funds become available.

MUSIC

- 166 Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 4 are below average and are lower than those reported at the time of the previous inspection, when they were judged to be satisfactory. To some extent this decline may be due to changes in staffing and loss of subject expertise. Over time, pupils generally make slow progress. Since the last inspection, the school has purchased a commercially produced scheme of work which is used alongside other supporting material. However, this scheme has been introduced with little training and support given to staff in how to use it effectively and provide the appropriate challenge for pupils. The coordinator, although enthusiastic, has had little time to monitor its effectiveness across the school or give the appropriate support needed to less confident teachers as was highlighted in the previous inspection report.
- 167 Although the planning suggests that the National Curriculum programmes of study are being covered, very little of this was observed during the inspection. At the time of the previous inspection, planning was reported to be insufficiently detailed to cover all of the attainment targets, and this is still the case.
- 168 By the end of Year 2 pupils can satisfactorily sing using loud and quiet voices and an echo recall. Pupils are able to identify a maraca and cabassa, but when given the choice of instruments to

match the sounds of animals many pupils use them aimlessly with little knowledge of a rhythm or beat.

- 169 In Year 3, pupils can sing along with a tape, but find it difficult to keep in time or in tune. Too few instruments are provided for any effective extension work and a number of pupils are unable to use them for the purpose for which they were intended.
- 170 In Year 4, pupils are familiar with the music of Bizet and can recognise sections in the music. They are able to work in groups to compose a 'melodic' ostinato and the majority of pupils can use the instruments appropriately. The attainment in this one lesson was satisfactory.
- 171 Pupils sing well in assembly and in Singing Club that Years 3 and 4 can attend. Pupils also have the opportunity to choose the music to be played in assemblies.
- 172 Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Seven lessons were observed, and of these one was good, five were satisfactory and one was unsatisfactory. In Years 1 to 3 teachers show a lack of confidence and subject knowledge. As a consequence, lessons observed lacked challenge or excitement, and pace and timing was slow. In contrast, the teaching provided by peripatetic staff for groups of Year 3 and 4 pupils learning to play the violin is very good. Good quality support is given to pupils and very good opportunities for cultural and social development is provided.
- 173 Pupils' response ranges from barely satisfactory to good, overall it is satisfactory. In most lessons, pupils begin by listening well but often find it difficult to concentrate when listening to the tape and are unsure about pitch and rhythm. Lack of challenge means that they lose interest, for example on one occasion when only eight instruments were distributed amongst 25 pupils.
- 174 Resources are satisfactory but under used due to teachers' lack of confidence. The subject coordinator is enthusiastic but has had little time, due to other pressures, to monitor and evaluate either the implementation of the scheme or pupils' progress and attainment in the subject. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are given the opportunity to learn to play the violin or cello and take part in the County 'Fiddle Fiesta', and all classes contribute to all annual Christmas Concerts.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 175 Standards of attainment are satisfactory by the time pupils reach the age of seven and remain so at the end of Year 4, when pupils are nine. This judgement has been reached by observing pupils engaged in games and athletic activities. Standards remain the same as reported at the time of the previous inspection. Nevertheless, to some extent pupils' development of skills is restricted. This is because the scheme of work has been rigidly accepted and has not been sufficiently adapted to suit the needs of the school or individual pupils. This results in too tight a structure within which teachers must work. There are too few opportunities for pupils to plan their own activities and to evaluate what they and others are doing in terms of how they might improve. Progress is generally satisfactory, except for pupils who are particularly talented as well as for those with special educational needs. This is the result of tasks and resources not being planned with their particular needs in mind.
- 176 Having made a good start with their development of physical skills in the early years, pupils develop their basic skills slowly. By the time pupils have reached the age of seven, kicking skills are developing well, particularly among boys. Girls try hard and are equally enthusiastic, but they tend to use their hands too readily to control a ball rather than their feet. Their overall aiming skills are also not as good. On the other hand, when developing skills with a bat and ball, girls have a greater degree of accuracy while boys are less controlled.
- 177 By the age of nine, pupils are able to throw and catch a beanbag with either hand. Some are able to adapt their actions for specific types of throws, showing a good level of understanding of how the whole body is involved. Most pupils are able to throw a ball over a long distance, particularly with two hands. They are competent runners, able to retrieve a number of objects, placed away from them, in a given time.

- 178 Pupils' responses to physical education improve as they move through the school. Some are well disciplined and concentrate carefully. They show enthusiasm for their activities, particularly when competing 'against the clock'. Lapses in concentration are almost always due to inactivity, as teachers talk for too long. Where challenges are set pupils apply themselves well.
- 179 Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. One of the six lessons observed was very good, two were good and three were satisfactory. In general, the best teaching is to be found in Years 3 and 4. Clear explanations and instructions and good class management ensure that time is often used effectively for pupils to acquire knowledge of basic skills, and the subject knowledge of most teachers is secure. Where teaching is good or very good, increasingly difficult challenges are presented to pupils, and this has the effect of motivating them well. Overall, relationships between teachers and pupils are good, and most pupils are willing to listen and carry out instructions. A weakness in teaching is the use of a commercial scheme of work that has not been adapted to suit the needs of pupils. Activities are too directed by teachers and there are few opportunities for pupils to plan their own activities and to comment upon what they and others are doing. In lessons where they are given these opportunities, they respond very well. A limited range of extra curricular sporting activities is on offer and these are very popular. Much interest is currently being generated by the skipping activities associated with a promotion linked to the British Heart Foundation. The school continues to make good use of its accommodation, both inside and out. Since the last inspection the school is now complying with all National Curriculum requirements following the introduction of swimming.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 180 Standards for pupils aged seven and nine years are above average, and pupils make good progress throughout the school. At the time of the last inspection standards were average. The improvements are due to a number of factors. There is a rich curriculum, which provides opportunities for all pupils to gain a knowledge and understanding of a range of faiths. There are a variety of approaches to teaching, which promotes interest in the pupils. The coordinator leads the subject well. Assemblies have a spiritual element, enabling pupils to reflect on moral issues. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural elements inherent in the teaching of the subject are reflected in the caring ways that pupils treat each other, adults and the school environment. This contributes strongly to the harmony that exists between different cultures within school.
- 181 Pupils in Years 1 and 2, develop an understanding of God, what the Bible, the Torah and the Qur'an are and why they are important in religions. Pupils recognise that people worship differently. In Year 1, they compare a church and a gurdwara, for example. These pupils learn about some of the stories that are told, and of the festivals associated with faiths. They learn about the story of Moses, and of Noah, and can describe the festival of Easter using a series of words and pictures. Older pupils develop a secure knowledge of Sikhism. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 made a visit to a nearby Sikh temple. This helped them understand the reasons for some of the customs observed. Pupils learned about the artefacts and history associated with this faith. When pupils are learning about religious or moral issues they show a clear understanding of right and wrong.
- 182 The quality of teaching is mainly good. Of the lessons seen, one was very good and one unsatisfactory, and the rest good. In the very good lesson there was a clear focus on the lesson objective. The resources the teacher used interested pupils and complemented a lively discussion about the story of Noah. In good lessons, teachers prepared interesting activities well. Pupils in Year 3, for example, enjoyed writing small books to compare and contrast artefacts or important people in two religions. Lessons involve much discussion with pupils, encouraging them to express their ideas and listen to those of others. Pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in lessons. Throughout school, teachers make effective links with literacy, telling stories, showing pictures and emphasising the meaning of words.
- 183 Pupils' attitudes to religious education are good, which is mainly in response to good teaching. Pupils' interest and enjoyment in the subject are apparent in their involvement and interest in lessons. They listen respectfully during assemblies and answer questions readily.
- 184 Assemblies are held daily, sometimes separately for younger or older pupils. During these, clear moral messages are sent to pupils, and there are moments for quiet thought. In one excellent and

interactive assembly, pupils became involved in a story, then reflected on being sensitive to the needs and feelings of others, and left the hall still singing!

- 185 The coordinator, who was appointed last September, provides good leadership. There is a helpful policy to guide teachers. The curriculum is good and is based almost entirely on the local Agreed Syllabus, which has a useful handbook. Teachers also have access to nationally recommended guidelines, using them only if they wish to supplement lessons. Assessment arrangements are currently satisfactory. Assessment sheets are available for teachers to use. The coordinator plans to review these shortly. Resources are well organised and labelled. The coordinator has collated a comprehensive folder for the subject which includes current developments in religious education in school and in Bedfordshire. An area for consideration is the issue of where pupils record their written work. Currently this is in a book alongside design technology and other subjects, where it seems out of place. The coordinator is aware of this shortcoming and is looking for a solution.