

INSPECTION REPORT

ST CHRISTOPHER'S LOWER SCHOOL

Dunstable

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109497

Headteacher: Mrs. J. Jeffery

Reporting inspector: Mrs M Britton
17678

Dates of inspection: 24th – 27th September 2001

Inspection number: 195530
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
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Gorham Way Dunstable Bedfordshire
Postcode:	LU5 4 NJ
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs B Howard
Date of previous inspection:	June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17678	Mrs M Britton	Registered inspector	<p>Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage</p> <p>Art and design</p> <p>Music</p> <p>Religious education</p>	<p>How high are standards? The school's results and pupils' achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
19365	Mr G Stockley	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership?</p>
30651	Mrs M Entwistle	Team inspector	<p>English</p> <p>History</p> <p>Geography</p> <p>Information and communication technology</p> <p>Equal opportunities</p> <p>English as an additional language</p>	<p>How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?</p>

28320	Mr R Willey	Team inspector	Special educational needs Mathematics Science Design and technology Physical education	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is for children aged between four and nine years old. There are 215 pupils on roll, most of whom (65 per cent) live in the area close to the school and are from a variety of backgrounds. The remaining 35 per cent of the children are drawn from nearby areas of Luton. Twenty five children (12 per cent) are from minority ethnic groups and three pupils (1.4 per cent) have English as an additional language which is similar to most schools. Fifteen pupils (7 per cent) are eligible for free school meals: this proportion is similar to the national average. Twenty seven pupils (16 per cent) are on the school's register of special educational needs and one pupil with a statement of special educational needs: these percentages are a little below the national average. Children are admitted to the school at the beginning of the school year following their fourth birthday and are taught in classes grouped by age. Each year there is significant movement of pupils in and out of school (18 per cent).

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school that provides good value for money. There are strengths in many important areas of the school's work. Pupils achieve well and make good progress throughout the school so that they reach standards similar to those expected for their age by the end of Year 2 and Year 4. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and standards of behaviour are very good. The quality of education, particularly the teaching, is good. The leadership provided by the headteacher is very strong and has been the driving force in bringing about very good improvement to many areas of the school's work since the last inspection in June 1997.

What the school does well

- The very good rate and extent of improvement in standards and in the quality of education since the time of the last inspection.
- The very good provision for the children in the Four-plus Unit (Foundation Stage).
- The pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership.
- The very good teamwork of the staff and governors.

What could be improved

- The quality of pupils' writing across the curriculum.
- The provision for pupils' personal development particularly their spiritual and cultural development.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning skills and an awareness of their own learning.

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 improvement since it was last inspected in June 1997. The strong leadership provided by the headteacher has brought about significant improvement in the quality of teaching and in the quality of the curriculum. This has had a direct impact on the pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to work and to each other. These are now very good. Because of these improvements, standards in reading, writing and mathematics have improved steadily. There has been very good progress towards the key issues for improvement identified by the last inspection. The school has not only achieved what they were asked to do but, in many instances, improvements have gone further. For example, there have been very good improvements in the standards of behaviour, the quality of teaching and standards in pupils' writing. The school

development planning process is now very effective and involves the staff and governors well. The curriculum is supported by detailed schemes of work for each subject and assessment strategies are very good. There have been improvements in almost every area of the school's work. The accommodation and levels of learning resources have been enhanced and a 'Four-plus Unit' for the children in the Foundation Stage has been very successfully established.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
reading	B	B	C	C
writing	A	B	D	D
mathematics	A	B	C	E

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

When children start school in the Four-plus Unit, the results of assessments carried out in the first half-term are variable. For example, in 2000, most children reached levels similar to those found nationally but inspection evidence shows that in September 2001 many children reach levels above those expected. Almost all the children are on course to reach at least the national early learning goals for children at the end of their first year in school because of the very good quality of the provision. There has been an upward trend in standards at the end of Year 2 in English, mathematics and science from 1997 to 2000 and at the end of Year 4 over the four years since the last inspection. The decline in standards in 2001 is due to the high proportion of pupils joining and leaving the school during the year and their overall lower levels of prior attainment. However, the good quality of the teaching and pupils' efforts meant that the school achieved levels close to the targets it had set. The results of optional national assessments in English and mathematics and teacher assessments in science show that pupils reach the levels expected for nine year olds by the time they leave the school. Inspection evidence and the results of tests in 2001 show that there is a relative strength in the standards pupils reach in reading. The school has identified standards in spelling and writing as areas for further improvement. In mathematics, science, art and design, design and technology, geography, history, information and communications technology, music and physical education pupils in Year 2 and in Year 4 reach the levels expected for their age. Pupils in Years 1 to 4 reach the levels expected by the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Pupils achieve well and there is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls, pupils with English as an additional language or those on the school's register of special educational needs. The school sets realistic but challenging targets for raising standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 2 and at the end of Year 4. These are generally achieved.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes to school. They show enthusiasm for their work and are very interested and involved in many of the lessons.

Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is very good in lessons, at playtimes and in the dining room.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between the pupils and between staff and pupils are very good. Pupils are polite and friendly to other pupils and to adults. They have respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others and a very good understanding of the impact of their actions.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory, being around the national average.

Pupils' very good attitudes and standards of behaviour in lessons have a positive impact on the progress they make and the standards they attain. Pupils' personal development is limited in some respects because they are not given sufficient opportunities to develop independent learning skills or to reflect upon and evaluate the quality of their work.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Very good	Good	Good

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

The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is good through the school. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught satisfactorily across the curriculum throughout the school. The teachers have a good knowledge of phonics and teach the basic skills effectively. A particular strength in teaching across the school is the detail of teachers' lesson plans and the relevant and well matched activities for the pupils. Teachers organise resources and manage pupils' behaviour well and this helps the pupils to get on with their work without wasting time and they make good progress. Sometimes opportunities are missed for pupils to answer questions, make suggestions or evaluate their progress in lessons. This means that pupils are not developing independent learning skills as well as they might. Pupils concentrate well in lessons and work hard. The quality of learning is particularly good when they are challenged and stimulated by the activities. The needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and from minority ethnic groups, are met well in lessons and enhanced by the work of the learning support assistants.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is satisfactorily broad and balanced. There are detailed schemes of work for each subject that have a positive impact on the standards pupils achieve. The curriculum provided for children in the Four-plus Unit is very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs and they are well supported by the learning support assistants.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The three pupils are provided for well and there is no discernible difference between their achievement and that of other pupils.
Provision for pupils'	The provision for the moral and social development of the pupils is

personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	good. This is a big improvement upon the unsatisfactory provision found at the time of the last inspection. The school has maintained the satisfactory provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a good level of care for pupils. There are very good procedures for promoting good behaviour and for assessing and supporting pupils' academic progress.

The school has good links with parents many of whom provide a good level of support for their children's learning. The school keeps parents informed about school life in newsletters and information about class routines, such as when homework is set, is clear. However, despite the school's satisfactory systems for providing information, a significant minority of parents express confusion about day-to day routines. The school has made very good improvements to the curriculum so that long, medium and short-term curriculum plans are now good. The school makes sure that all pupils, no matter what their background or attainment are fully integrated into the life of the school and have full access to the curriculum. The school has effective ways of checking and improving pupils' attendance.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very strong and successful leadership and has been the driving force in raising standards and in improving the quality of education. Other staff with responsibilities provide good leadership for their colleagues.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil all their statutory duties well and provide well informed and strong support for the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school makes very good use of assessment data, classroom observations and samples of pupils' work to judge the success of its provision.
The strategic use of resources	Good use is made of the funding and staffing resources available to the school and the governors fulfil their financial planning role well. They have clear priorities for spending decisions and base these on their knowledge of the school and their vision for its long-term development.

There are sufficient well qualified and experienced teachers whose skills and expertise are well matched to the needs of the curriculum. There are no temporary class teachers and this is providing stability that the school has not enjoyed for some time. The teachers are well supported by a good number of suitably qualified and experienced support staff. There is sufficient accommodation and a good supply of learning resources of good quality to support pupils' learning in most subjects. A major strength of the leadership and management of the school is the way in which the headteacher, staff and governors work together to improve the school. This has had, and continues to have, a positive impact on the rate of school improvement. The school makes satisfactory use of the principles of best value in but has no formal strategy for evaluating the impact of spending on standards or educational provision.

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's positive attitudes to school. • The good quality of the teaching. • The progress their children make. • The way the children behave in school. • That their children are expected to work hard. • The way in which the school helps their children to develop mature attitudes. • The good leadership and management of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of work their children are given to do at home. • The information they are given about their children's progress. • The closeness of the school's work with parents. • The range of activities provided out of lessons.

Over half of the parents responded to the questionnaire sent out by the inspectors and expressed very high levels of support for the school. Inspectors agree with parents' positive views of the school but they do not entirely support the parents' concerns. The inspectors judge that children are given an appropriate amount and variety of work to do at home. Parents are given regular, good quality information about their children's progress and many work very closely with the school to support their child's learning. The school provides a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities given the age-range of the pupils. There is scope for the school to publish some of the information on a notice board so that parents have ready access to the letters they may have missed in the pupil post. There is also scope for the school to gather parent views and consider these in shaping the development of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. When children start school in the Four-plus Unit, the results of assessments carried out in the first half term are variable. They show that, in 2000, most children reached levels similar to those found nationally. By the end of their first year in school, most children reached at least the early learning goals. Inspection evidence shows that many of the children admitted in September 2001 reach levels above those expected for their age in personal and social skills, communication, language and literacy and mathematics and that almost all the children are on course to reach the national early learning goals by the end of their first year in school. Some children already reach levels within the Key Stage 1 programmes of study in reading writing and mathematics. Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage (Four-plus Unit) because of the very good quality of the provision. The Unit opened only a year ago but the impact of the very good provision is beginning to have a positive impact on standards in Year 1.
2. The results of the national tests assessments for pupils at the end of Year 2 in 2001 show that standards in reading close to the national average but were below average in writing and mathematics. When compared with the results of pupils in schools in a similar context, standards were close to the average in reading, below average in writing and well below average in mathematics. The percentage of pupils reaching the higher level (Level 3) in reading, writing, mathematics and science was close to the national average. When compared to the results of schools in similar contexts, the percentage of pupils reaching Level 3 is average in reading, writing and science but below average in mathematics.
3. Although pupils of all levels of prior attainment achieve well throughout the school, results do vary from year to year. For example, the cohort of pupils assessed in 1999 included a much greater proportion of high attainers than the cohorts assessed in 2000 and 2001. Consequently, standards peaked in 1999. However, there has been an overall trend of improvement in standards in reading, writing and mathematics from 1997 to 2000. The results for 2001 show a decline. This apparent decline in standards is due to the high proportion of pupils whose prior attainment was lower. In addition, a significant proportion (18 per cent) of pupils joined or left the school during the year and, of these, several are identified as having special educational needs. Over the three years from 1998 to 2000, boys performed slightly better than girls in reading but girls did a little better than boys in mathematics. The school set optimistic targets for the pupils who were assessed at the end of Year 2 in 2001. Because of the good quality of the teaching and the pupils' positive attitudes the standards were close to those targets.
4. In science, the results of the statutory Teacher Assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2001 show pupils' performance to be close to the national average. When compared to the results of pupils in similar schools, standards are well below average. The percentage of pupils reaching the higher level (Level 3) was close to the national average. The inspection evidence shows that in science the present Year 2 pupils' reach levels that match the national expectations for the age group.

5. The results of optional national assessments in English and mathematics for pupils at the end of Year 4 show that pupils leave the school well on course to achieve a standard that matches that of other 11 year olds. In English there is a strength in standards in reading, but a relative weakness in writing lowers the overall level of attainment of these nine year olds. In science, the results of teacher assessments show that pupils reach the levels expected for nine year olds by the time they leave the school. Inspection findings in these subjects match the school's assessment results.
6. Inspection evidence shows that, at the start of the school year, almost all pupils in Year 2 and in Year 4 reach at least the levels expected for their ages in English, mathematics and science. This represents good achievement when compared to pupils' prior attainment and indicates that the school is likely to maintain the improvement in standards achieved in recent years. In art and design, design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology, music and physical education pupils in Year 2 and in Year 4 reach the levels expected nationally for their age. Pupils reach the level expected by the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. There is no significant difference in the achievement of different groups of pupils. This is a good improvement on the situation at the time of the last inspection when Year 2 pupils did not reach the expected levels in writing, listening, information and communication technology, history, art and religious education. Pupils in Year 4 did not reach the levels expected in writing, listening, history, art, music, physical education and religious education.
7. Pupils respond well to the demands made on them in lessons because the tasks and activities are generally well matched to their prior attainment: pupils are well challenged. This means that they have to concentrate and persevere in order to achieve success and ensures that they achieve as well as they should in most lessons. As a result, pupils make at least satisfactory and often good progress in lessons and over time, and this contributes to the standards they achieve and the trend of improvement identified in the school's results. This is also an improvement since the last inspection, when pupils were found to be underachieving in many subjects.
8. The school sets challenging targets for raising standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 2 and by the end of Year 4. Teachers make good use of statutory test and other assessment data to review targets. This has a positive impact on standards because of the adjustments that teachers make to the curriculum and to their expectations for individual pupils. The school analyses its test results carefully and finds no significant differences between boys and girls. The small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups do as well as other pupils. However, the movement of pupils in and out of the school is becoming of increasing relevance and has an impact on the school's success in achieving the challenging targets it sets for improvements in standards by the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 4. For example, last year 24 pupils left the school and 12 joined other than at the start of the year. This represented 18 per cent of the school's population and, because many of the pupils joining the school were on the school's register of special educational needs, this had a significant bearing on overall standards.
9. Progress made by pupils with special educational needs was stated to be unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection. This has been significantly

improved and, overall, these pupils make good and sometimes very good progress in relation to their prior attainment. The majority of pupils on the register of special educational needs achieve average scores in national tests at age seven. Pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 make good progress in English, mathematics and science. This is in part due to the good quality of the support provided for them and in part to their positive attitudes and very good behaviour. The quality of the targets set for pupils in their individual education plans is satisfactory. They are mostly specific, realistic and measurable and this enables pupils to make good progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Pupils have very good attitudes to school. They show enthusiasm for their work and are very interested and involved in many of the lessons. For example, in an excellent religious education lesson pupils listened to a story and then worked very hard with minimum supervision to produce, practise and perform their own version of the story.
11. Parents are pleased with pupils' behaviour. They are right to be pleased because it is very good. Pupils sit quietly in lessons and listen to their teacher and to each other. They play well together in the playground at break and at lunchtime even though there are no playground markings or games equipment for them to use. In the dining room, the younger pupils eat their lunch quietly and, even though the older pupils are noisier, they know what is expected of them and are well behaved. This is a considerable improvement on the position found at the previous inspection when behaviour was judged to be unsatisfactory. Parents have no concerns about bullying. They report that the occasional incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively. There has been one recent exclusion for behaviour problems of a pupil on the school's register of special educational needs.
12. Relationships, both between the pupils themselves and between staff and pupils, are very good. This, too, is an improvement since the previous inspection, when relationships were satisfactory. Teachers and other adults show respect to the children who respond well. Pupils are polite and friendly to other pupils and to adults. They have the opportunity to contribute to writing and agreeing class rules. This helps them to understand and respect them. Pupils have respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others and a very good understanding of the impact of their actions.
13. Pupils take responsibility and show initiative by being involved in a significant range of duties such as putting on the music for assembly, helping with younger pupils at lunchtime or working with the youngest children. However, pupils do not generally take the initiative in their own learning and this is an area for development.
14. Attendance is satisfactory, being around the national average. Registers are marked efficiently and lessons begin without delay.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

15. The quality of teaching is good overall. It was good, or better, in 74 per cent of lessons. In the remaining 26 per cent of lessons the quality of teaching was satisfactory. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. This is a very good improvement since the last inspection when the quality of teaching was found to be unsatisfactory in 31 per cent of lessons: the unsatisfactory teaching was at both

key stages. This improvement has had a positive impact on pupils' behaviour and attitudes and on the standards they attain at the end of Year 2 and at the end of Year 4. The quality of learning is good throughout the school. These improvements have been major factors in raising standards since the last inspection.

16. The quality of teaching for children in the Foundation Stage was very good in every lesson observed. A particular strength is the effectiveness of the teaching methods. For example, short periods of large group teaching are interspersed with opportunities for children to learn through attractive and relevant structured play activities. They are very well supported by the staff, who interact with and intervene in the learning very effectively to support and challenge the children. The plans for teaching state what is to be taught and learnt for each area of learning, and areas of the classroom are resourced well to enable the children to learn in a variety of stimulating activities.
17. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 1 is good overall. It is good, or better, in 79 per cent of lessons. In the remaining 21 per cent of lessons, the quality of teaching was satisfactory. There are examples of very good and better teaching in mathematics, design and technology and religious education. The particular strengths of the teaching are the effective lesson planning and the management of pupils. The teachers use praise well to help pupils to understand how well they have done and how they can improve. They make a very good contribution to pupils' progress in lessons. In some lessons, pupils in Year 1 spend too much time being taught as a whole class group and have insufficient opportunities for learning through practical activity and play. For example, in a science lesson where pupils learn that animals change as they grow, they are required to spend long periods listening to the teacher and have too few opportunities to take part in practical activities. As a result, they become restless and the teacher has to work hard to keep their attention. This slows the pace of learning. The quality of learning is generally good because of the good quality of the teaching and the pupils' very positive attitudes and good behaviour.
18. At Key Stage 2, the quality of teaching is good overall. It is good, or better, in 61 per cent of lessons and satisfactory in the remaining 39 per cent of lessons. Teachers' lesson plans are of good quality. There are very specific learning objectives and these are supported by relevant activities, which interest and motivate the pupils. Good use is made of time in lessons. The teachers achieve a good balance of direct teaching for the whole class and for small groups and individual tasks. Teachers intervene effectively to challenge and support individuals, which helps pupils to work productively and at a good pace. For example, in a design and technology lesson at Key Stage 2, the teacher gave a brisk introduction to the lesson and a clear demonstration of a new technique. This enabled pupils to get started quickly. She then worked with individuals and small groups to support and challenge them as they experiment with finding three ways of strengthening card by joining two pieces together. As a result the pupils made good progress in the lesson. The quality of learning is good and pupils show interest, sustain concentration and apply effort.
19. The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is good through the school. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught satisfactorily across the curriculum throughout the school. The teachers have a good knowledge of phonics and teach the basic skills effectively. The quality of teaching is good in science, information

and communication technology and music. In geography and history it is satisfactory. In art and design, design and technology, physical education and religious education there were too few lessons seen to support a judgement on the quality of teaching but other evidence from samples of pupils' work and teachers' plans indicates that it is likely to be at least satisfactory.

20. Throughout the school, learning support assistants play an invaluable role. They are well deployed by the teachers who include them in the plans for teaching and in evaluating pupils' progress. This enables them to make good use of their time in lessons and to take the initiative when they work with groups and individuals. In a few lessons, the learning support assistants seemed unsure of how they were expected to support the pupils during whole class teaching sessions. Where the teachers had made their expectations clear the learning support assistants were able to model the active listening behaviour expected or support individual pupils so that they could take a full part in the lesson. The partnership between the teachers and the learning support assistants is strong and this has a positive impact on the rate of pupils' learning. Overall, this is a good improvement since the last inspection when the use of support staff was identified as a shortcoming.
21. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. Individual education plans are shared with learning support assistants, who are well briefed on what the pupils are to learn. Learning support assistant time is specifically committed to working with pupils with a statement in order that provision for them is fully met. That pupils with special educational needs make good progress is testimony to the quality of support and encouragement that they receive from their class teachers and learning support assistants. Activities and tasks are well matched to the pupils' needs particularly in literacy and numeracy lessons. Teachers know their pupils well, are very involved in setting targets for them and give them well focussed support and guidance.
22. Where the quality of teaching is good, or better, lessons are well planned, organised and managed. The teachers make good links with pupils' earlier learning and the learning aims are challenging. The learning objective is shared with pupils at the start of the lesson so that it is clear to pupils what they can expect to learn. The activities provide good opportunities for the pupils to learn because they are well related to the learning objectives. For example, in a music lesson in Year 3, the teacher shared the aim of the lesson with the pupils and then built their understanding of the pentatonic scale by providing a series of linked activities. These activities involved pupils in listening to music, performing a song and composing an accompaniment. By the end of the lesson most pupils had achieved the aims. They knew that simple songs are often based on a pentatonic scale and can be enhanced by a simple two-note accompaniment. Teachers make good use of the pupils' time in lessons by planning a variety of activities and setting tight time scales. As a result, the pupils sustain their interest and work at a good pace. When pupils carry out independent work, the teachers make good use of their time to teach a small group or to support and challenge individuals. This increases the pace of learning in the lesson. Good subject knowledge and skills in managing groups of pupils enables teachers to be optimistic about the levels pupils can achieve. For example, in a religious education lesson the pupils make good progress in understanding the importance of the Bible to Christians when they act out the story of Mary Jones and her Bible. The use of praise that is directly linked to a learning objective is also a characteristic of good, or better, teaching. For example, the teacher responded enthusiastically to the pupils' investigation into

pairs of numbers that add together to make numbers less than 10. At the end of the lesson, she told them that she was pleased they understood that numbers can be added together in any order and still produce the same total, and that they had achieved the aim of the lesson.

23. Where the quality of teaching is satisfactory, the strengths outweigh the weaknesses, although there are some significant shortcomings. The strengths of the teaching are in the quality and detail of the plans for lessons. These build well on pupils' prior learning and are enhanced with well chosen resources and activities. The management of pupils' behaviour is consistently good. This enables all the pupils to get on with their work and make progress. This is a very good improvement since the last inspection, when pupils behaviour in lessons was sometimes unsatisfactory and slowed the pace of learning. The most frequent shortcomings occur when the pace of the lesson slows because the teacher talks for too long and does not give pupils sufficient opportunities to contribute to the discussion, answer questions or suggest ideas. Similarly, opportunities are sometimes missed at the end of lessons for pupils to evaluate their progress against the learning objective or against personal or group targets.
24. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but comments do not consistently identify for pupils how they might make improvements. Although there are improvement targets for classes and groups in some subjects these are not consistently used with pupils to help them to evaluate the success of their work or what they need to do next to raise the standard.
25. Teachers give pupils appropriate quantities and range of work to do at home. They practise reading, learn spellings and tables, complete tasks and find out information. There is an expectation that the pupils, particularly the older pupils, take responsibility for remembering what they have to do on some occasions and this is therefore not always conveyed in writing to parents. The school's expectations for homework are usually written into the pupils' homework diary. The headteacher is aware that homework was irregular in the summer term because of the number of supply teachers employed by the school and understands why parents had concerns about this. The arrangements for and use of homework to support pupils' learning are satisfactory.

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

26. The curriculum is sufficiently broad and balanced to give pupils a satisfactory range of experiences and opportunities for learning. The school has made significant improvements since the last inspection so that all subjects, including information and communication technology, now meet statutory requirements. At the time of the last inspection there was not a separate curriculum for the under fives. This has been very successfully improved with the introduction of the national Foundation Stage curriculum. This provides very good opportunities for children to make progress in all six areas of learning and links well with the programmes of study of the National Curriculum for pupils in Year 1. Having made these improvements, the curriculum is satisfactory but there is scope for enriching the opportunities provided for pupils in most subjects.
27. Whilst individual teachers work to make lessons interesting, the curriculum itself lacks variety because of the strong emphasis on English and mathematics. For

example, at Key Stage 2 well over 55 per cent of the time is allocated to these subjects. Within this there is a preponderance of time spent on English lessons that is affecting the time available for mathematics and science in particular. However, the school has just introduced a planning sheet for 'additional English' that, if used well, might release some time from English for other subjects. The national strategies for the teaching of literacy and numeracy have been well thought out and have contributed to the improvement in standards in national assessments.

28. At the time of the last inspection curriculum planning was unsatisfactory. The school has made very good improvements so that long, medium and short-term planning are now good. There are co-ordinators for all subjects. Each subject is guided by a policy document and a scheme of work that show how skills and knowledge are to be developed across the school. These schemes operate on a two-year cycle which provide a secure plan for pupils' learning. The use of a common format for lesson planning that sets out units of work for each year group across several weeks is a strength of the curriculum planning. The plans help to ensure that subject skills and knowledge are taught systematically so that pupils can build on their prior learning. In some subjects, opportunities for promoting pupils' awareness of cultures other than their own are highlighted but this is not a consistent strategy in the planning or in the teaching. Opportunities to assess and record pupils' subject knowledge, skills and understanding are not identified. However, the development of assessment strategies is a focus of the current school improvement plan.
29. The school provides a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities given the age-range of the pupils. Parents run a successful football club and there are plans for a computer club to start up shortly. A few pupils in Years 3 and 4 take advantage of opportunities to have violin or keyboard lessons at school. All the pupils in Key Stage 2 have the chance to learn to play the recorder in school in their own time. Taking part in a concert for a local senior citizens group and taking harvest gifts to a centre for the homeless make a satisfactory contribution to the personal development of those pupils involved.
30. The school makes sure that all pupils, no matter what their ethnic or cultural background or attainment, are fully integrated into the life of the school. There are 25 pupils from minority ethnic groups. Three pupils speak English as an additional language and none is at the stage of early language acquisition. Although there is no formally recorded monitoring of their achievement compared to that of other pupils, the head teacher is aware of the standards they reach and has found no discernible differences between the attainment of minority ethnic pupils and others. Their full inclusion and good rate of progress is helped by their families' full integration into the community. The school has identified the need to review its policy for monitoring and supporting pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds if numbers continue to grow. Collective worship and religious education make a good contribution to pupils' awareness of other cultures and faith groups. Nevertheless, the ethos of the school remains largely mono-cultural and the celebration of cultural diversity is not well developed.
31. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to a broad and balanced curriculum. Individual education plans are drawn up for pupils on the school's register of special educational needs at Stage 1 and above. The targets set for the pupils' progress are usually realistic and often well focussed to provide useful

guidance for teachers. In some cases the target is not sufficiently precise and does not give clear guidance on the next step in learning.

32. The school is in the process of formalising the arrangements for the teaching of personal, social and health education. The production and implementation of a scheme of work is progressing well. The senior teacher, who has responsibility for the development of this aspect of pupils' education, has begun to identify how links can be made with the subjects of the National Curriculum. The allocation of time for personal, social and health education and a newly introduced planning format are helping to give the subject status and value. Guidance for teachers on teaching drugs awareness and anti-bullying strategies are in preparation. A school council is planned as a way of involving pupils more in taking responsibility for the school community. The governor's policy is that sex education is not taught.
33. The school welcomes people from the local and wider community from time to time. They make a useful contribution to pupils' learning. For example, religious leaders regularly speak to the pupils in collective worship and, during the inspection, a local football team carried out a training session with Year 3 and 4 pupils that very much raised their expectations of themselves! At other times, musicians and theatre groups visit the school. There is also a programme of visits to local museums, such as the Cecil Higgins museum and the Chiltern Open Air museum. These provide some enrichment for the history and geography curriculum but are not extensive. The school does not make as much use in lessons as it might of the more immediate community of parents and grandparents. The school has sound links with local schools and with all the support agencies for care and welfare.
34. The school makes good provision for pupils' personal development including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
35. The provision for the moral and social development of the pupils is good. This is a big improvement since the last inspection when provision was judged to be unsatisfactory. The improvement has had a positive impact on pupils' attitudes and behaviour and has contributed to the improvement in standards.
36. The school has maintained the satisfactory provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development identified at the time of the last inspection. Spiritual development continues to be mainly through collective worship and religious education. In religious education lessons, pupils gain an understanding of other religions and faiths and this is reinforced through the teaching of stories and special events from other faiths as part of planned programme for collective worship. A calm, secure ethos is promoted through collective worship and pupils are asked to think about issues such as friendship or 'changing things for the better'. However, in general there are limited opportunities for pupils to experience wonder or to reflect on their beliefs and feelings and those of others. The development of self-knowledge is not a strong strand of school life.
37. The school does a great deal to promote pupils' moral development. The school is a moral environment where pupils learn the differences between right and wrong. The code of behaviour is clear and is understood and accepted by pupils. All teaching and support staff deal with the rare examples of poor behaviour in the same way so that pupils are helped to distinguish for themselves the differences between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Adults provide very good role models for the pupils and treat them with kindness and respect.

38. The provision for pupils' social development is also good. Pupils are given many opportunities to take responsibility such as helping younger pupils at lunch time, managing the music centre in assemblies or collecting and storing lunch boxes. Teachers encourage them to work together in groups in many lessons and they respond very well to these opportunities. The good model of teamwork and collaborative effort presented by the teachers themselves enhances this aspect of the curriculum. At playtimes pupils mix well and understand the need to be sociable and act responsibly. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to show initiative and to take on responsibility for managing some of their own work.
39. The provision for pupils' cultural development is sound. The curriculum offers a satisfactory number of activities to develop pupils' local knowledge and cultural awareness. They visit a mosque, develop mapping skills in the local environment and learn about their local cultural heritage through visits to museums and arts centres. Although the schemes of work for art and design and for music make a satisfactory contribution to pupils' cultural development the arts, literature and music curriculum has not been developed to the point where it spills over into the overall life of the school and captures the hearts of its pupils. The provision for multi-cultural education is a similar story. There are missed opportunities to include multi-cultural examples and resources in subject teaching. Wall displays do not strongly reflect cultural diversity and the overall ethos of the school is mono-cultural rather than multi-cultural. This means that pupils are not sufficiently prompted to become aware of other traditions and beliefs or to appreciate and value their essential differences as a basis for racial tolerance and understanding.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

40. The school has satisfactory arrangements for child protection. There are appropriate procedures and staff have written guidance about how to identify signs of possible abuse and neglect. There is a member of staff designated as responsible for child protection and staff are aware that she must be informed about any concerns. She has had training in child protection matters and briefs other school staff at staff meetings. There are good arrangements for providing first aid and informing parents where appropriate. Safety checks are carried out regularly and a comprehensive range of risks has been assessed. A report on health and safety matters is made to each meeting of the governing body.
41. There are good procedures for monitoring and improving attendance. Parents are contacted if pupils are absent without explanation and registers are monitored regularly so that patterns of absence are identified and followed up. The school receives good support from the education welfare officer where necessary.
42. The school has very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. The behaviour and anti-bullying policy is good with an emphasis on rewarding good behaviour and encouraging mutual respect and self-discipline. At the time of the previous inspection it was reported that standards of expected behaviour were not consistently reinforced across the school. Now all staff apply the policy consistently and this helps to ensure the very good behaviour seen during this inspection. The very good procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour work well to create a school where bullying is minimal.

43. The school has good procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development. Teachers keep appropriate records and progress is reviewed regularly. Parents are consulted if there are concerns about their child's development. Pupils' achievements are celebrated by the awarding of 'well done' certificates. These are presented at a special assembly to which parents are invited. Personal support plans are developed for pupils with particular problems concerning their personal development.
44. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into the caring environment of the school. The school identifies early those pupils with special educational needs. When a concern is first raised, either by a parent or by a class teacher, the pupil is monitored and, if necessary, placed on the appropriate stage of the school's register of special educational needs. Pupils requiring specialist help with speech therapy, physiotherapy or a specific learning difficulty are provided with the necessary support and guidance. The school values the advice and guidance provided by visiting specialists and uses it well between reviews by providing learning support assistants to help the pupils through the programmes devised for them.
45. There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility by looking after younger pupils and carrying out routine tasks such as taking registers to the office. Some pupils have made a 'friendship stop' sign that is taken into the playground at lunchtime so that anyone who wishes to have a friend to play with can stand by the sign. The children host a 'Grandparents' afternoon' where they serve tea to their visitors. Pupils are encouraged to think of the needs of others by supporting a range of charities. For example, they fill shoe-boxes to send to eastern European countries at Christmas and deliver harvest gifts to a local centre for the homeless.
46. The policy for personal, social and health education is currently being reviewed by the new co-ordinator. There is not a school council at present, although one is planned. Pupils' work in lessons is often very teacher-directed. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for some of their own learning.
47. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science are very good. This is a very good improvement since the last inspection. Teachers assess pupils' attainment and progress well and keep detailed and useful records of the levels the pupils attain and the progress they make. This is achieved through good use of testing and end of unit assessments. Very good use is made of this information to set challenging targets for raising standards in the national tests and assessment. The results of tests and assessments are also put to good use in identifying areas of relative strength and weakness in the curriculum or in the quality of teaching. Action is then taken to adjust schemes of work, change pupil grouping or develop teaching strategies in order to make improvements. Annual targets relating to the national tests and assessments are set for pupils in English and mathematics and these have had a positive impact. However, targets have not been developed to match the needs of groups or individual pupils over shorter periods. This is identified as an area for improvement. Assessment information is used to track differences in the attainment of boys and girls but has not been developed to identify the progress of other groups of pupils. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is tracked satisfactorily through their individual education plans.

48. The assessment and recording of pupils' attainment and progress in the other subjects of the national curriculum is less well developed. Teachers keep records of pupils' progress linked to the schemes of work, the format is not consistent throughout the school. However, the recording of pupils' achievements, judged to be an area for concern by the last inspection; is now satisfactory. There are still weaknesses in the way in which assessment information is used to adjust the plans for subsequent lessons in the topics for each half term. Although targets are set for pupils, the assessment of their progress towards these targets tends to be carried out by the teachers independent of the pupils. This means that pupils have insufficient understanding of what they need to do to improve or the progress they have made. The school development plan highlights assessment in subjects other than English, mathematics and science as a priority for improvement in this academic year and work has begun.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

49. The school has good links with parents and they are generally satisfied with the school and the education that their children receive. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire feel that the teaching and behaviour are good, that the school expects children to work hard and achieve their best, and that their child is being helped by the school to become mature and responsible. However, a significant minority of parents have some concern about the range of out-of-school activities, the information they receive, how closely the school works with them and the amount and regularity of homework. Inspectors agree with parents' positive views of the school and share some, but not all, of the parents' concerns. Those relating to homework are dealt with in the teaching section and those concerned with out-of-school activities in the curriculum section of this report; the other concerns are dealt with later in this section.
50. The school keeps parents informed about school life and forthcoming events in newsletters, which are issued about twice a term. This is less frequently than in many schools, but additional letters are issued from time to time about specific issues and events and there is a good level of information provided. At the beginning of each term parents are sent written information about the work their children will be covering during the term. This is good practice as it enables parents to prepare any help and support that they are able to give. Many parents responding to the questionnaire sent out by the inspectors and at the meeting feel, however, that the school relies too much on pupils passing on information about class routines, such as when homework is set and when reading books are to be changed. This information is available in the homework notebooks that the children take home each day and the school is trying to help children learn to take responsibility for some of the routine events. There is scope for the school to publish some of the information on a notice board so that parents have ready access to the letters they may have missed in the pupil post. There is also scope for the school to gather parent views and consider these in shaping the development of the school.
51. The school has a good relationship with parents of children with special educational needs. Parents are informed immediately the school has a concern and are kept informed at every stage. Those parents whose children have individual education plans have regular contact with the special; educational needs co-ordinator and the class teachers to review the children's progress towards the targets set.

52. There are two formal occasions each year when parents are able to discuss their children's work and progress with teachers. There is also an open afternoon when children's work is on display. Pupils' annual written reports are good: they are written individually for each child and show clearly how much progress has been made together with pupils' strengths and weaknesses and targets to achieve. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection. The annual written report is issued after the consultation meeting in the summer term. Some parents feel that it would be more valuable to have the written report in advance of the meeting. However, parents can request a meeting to discuss the report if they wish, and they are encouraged to speak to the teacher or to the headteacher at any time if they have any concerns about their child. Teachers are accessible to parents and make arrangements to meet with them at a mutually convenient time to discuss children's progress.
53. Admission arrangements to the Four-plus Unit includes the offer of a home visit by staff. The school encourages parents to become involved in their children's education and invites them to help in school. Parents are invited to class and school assemblies, including the sharing assemblies where they are able to celebrate their child's achievements. Many parents supply artefacts to support work in English and history.
54. Parents are expected to oversee pupils' homework and to listen to them reading at home. The vast majority of parents undertake this task well, making a good contribution to their children's learning. The school helps them to understand what is taught by arranging curriculum evenings but the response of parents is variable. There is an active parents' association which holds a programme of social events for parents and children to raise additional funds for the school. It has recently provided the money for new hall curtains. Parents are invited to help in school and a number do so, providing valuable additional support for the teachers. Parents also help on educational visits, and with the running of football teams. Overall, parents' involvement has a good impact on the work of the school. Despite this level of parental participation in the life of the school, however, a significant minority of parents feels that the school does not work closely with them. In the circumstances, there may be scope for making a member of staff responsible for parental liaison so that the school could identify the areas of concern and, where possible, put them right.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

55. The headteacher was appointed to the school in the academic year following the last inspection in June 1997. She has provided very strong and successful leadership and has been the driving force in raising standards and in improving the quality of education over a period of significant changes in staff at the school. She makes very good use of assessment data, classroom observations and sampling of pupils' work to identify the areas of improvement and to set targets for further improvement. The school improvement plan has been used very well to implement a programme of significant change in every area of the school's life. The success of her leadership is evident in the very good rate of improvement that the school has made towards the key issues set at the time of the last inspection and in many other areas of its work.

56. The senior teacher, appointed last term, is beginning to establish her role in providing professional support for the headteacher in the leadership of the school. Their complementary skills have the potential to strengthen the leadership further. The headteacher has given positive professional support and guidance to all the staff, and, as a result, there is a strong sense of teamwork between all those who work at the school. The staff team show a strong commitment to school improvement. There is a very good capacity to succeed.
57. The headteacher has established and developed the roles and responsibilities of the subject co-ordinators and they now provide good leadership for their colleagues. This was part of a key issue for improvement at the last inspection and very good progress has been made. The subject co-ordinators examine their colleagues plans for teaching, sample pupils' work from across the school, analyse pupils' performance in assessments and tests and are beginning to develop skills in classroom observation in order to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in their subject. Some subject leaders have had opportunities to observe their colleagues teach and have fed back to them following the lessons. They take an active part in drawing up the school development plan. The priorities for improvement are drawn directly from the information gathered through their monitoring activities. There are appropriate plans to continue to develop these roles and responsibilities. Subject and other responsibilities are appropriately delegated and there is a good match to teachers' skills.
58. The co-ordination of provision for pupils with special educational needs is better than reported in the last inspection. The policy affords clear guidance in procedures for identification and support of pupils on the special educational needs register. A new special educational needs co-ordinator has been in post only a few weeks but has a good understanding of what needs to be done to further improve the provision and to implement the new code of practice next term. For example, the co-ordinator has highlighted the need to improve the quality of the targets set for pupils in their individual educational plans, developing a system for tracking pupils' progress and reviewing the learning resources. In a period of four years, the school has moved from a position of unsatisfactory provision for pupils with special education needs at the time of the previous inspection, to good provision. This represents very good improvement.
59. The school has set out its aims in the prospectus and is well on its way to achieving them especially its intention to provide a disciplined and well-ordered school and to place an emphasis on the acquisition of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy within a broad and balanced curriculum. The aims are reflected very well in the day-to-day life of the school.
60. The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities well and governors have a clear understanding of the division of responsibilities between the headteacher and the governing body. The governors are led well by the chair of governors. They provide strong and well informed support for the headteacher and staff. The role of the governing body has developed well since the last inspection. For example, the governors now play a strong part in shaping the direction of the school through their involvement in the school development planning process. They take strategic views of the development of the school and base their decisions on first hand information and from the detailed reports provided by the headteacher. The priorities for change are well supported by financial planning. This is good improvement since the last inspection when there was no established planning

process and governors were not involved in identifying priorities for improvement or allocating funding. Another improvement is the way in which the governors carry out their monitoring duties. They closely monitor pupils' performance in the end of Key Stage 1 tests and optional assessment for Year 4 and make good use of the data to challenge and support the school to further raise standards. At each of their meetings, governors monitor progress towards the school's priorities for improvement and receive detailed reports from the headteacher. Many governors visit the school regularly and this provides them with first hand information upon which they base their decisions about school improvement. The governors work well in four committees that take responsibility for areas including finance, personnel, curriculum and premises. The finance committee has delegated powers that enables it to make decisions and recommend a course of action to the full governing body. The committee structure is used well to make the best use of governors' individual skills and expertise and efficient use of meeting time. In addition, named governors take responsibility for monitoring the provision for special educational needs, literacy and numeracy. The recent development of links between individual governors and subject co-ordinators is valued by governors and staff. The governors understand the role of 'critical friend' well. They provide teachers and other staff with a good level of challenge and support.

61. The headteacher carries out a rigorous programme of classroom observations to identify where support or challenge is needed. This has been very effective in improving the quality of teaching and learning and the quality of the curriculum. This strategy has also had a very positive impact on the consistent use of behaviour management strategies and this, in turn, has promoted a very good improvement in pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning.
62. The school makes good use of all available data from formal tests and assessments to identify areas for further improvement and to set challenging targets for raising standards. The rising trend in standards indicates that they take effective action to achieve these targets. Similarly, the targets in the school development plan are monitored by the governors and good progress is made in implementing the planned change. The rate of the school's progress towards the issues identified at the time of the last inspection, is very good.
63. The school development plan provides a long-term view of improvements to be made in a manageable number of areas. This a well structured and useful working document in which financial and other resources are appropriately linked to the targets for improvement and the timescale and tasks are precise. However, the success criteria are not sufficiently measurable. Consequently, evaluation of the impact of the planned change on quality and standards is difficult. Although governors and the headteacher carry out informal evaluation of the changes made, there is no secure measure of the educational value of the developments. This shortcoming was identified in the last inspection.
64. Good use is made of the funding resources available to the school and the governing body fulfils its financial planning role well. Educational developments are supported and the governors have a good understanding of the current budget. They have clear priorities for spending decisions based on their knowledge of the school and their vision for its long-term strategic development. For example, the governors' commitment to providing a good number of learning support assistants is having a positive impact on the quality of learning throughout the school. Prudent management enabled the governors to resource the Four-plus Unit and to

develop a computer suite that are both beginning to have a positive impact on standards. A planned contingency fund in the current financial year is identified as the funding for the development of the outdoor area. Specific grants are used well. For example, funds allocated to the school for special educational needs are used primarily to support pupils with statements and an element for learning support assistants. An additional 90 per cent of the funding required for learning support assistants is provided from the school's budget. This reflects the school's strong commitment to pupils with special educational needs and has a strong impact on the progress pupils make. The governors make satisfactory use of the principles of best value but have not developed a strategy for evaluating the impact of their financial decisions. This shortcoming is directly linked to the shortcoming in the school development plan.

65. The office manager operates secure, efficient and effective systems for financial control. Administrative tasks are carried out very efficiently and the day-to-day organisation of the school runs smoothly. Good use is made of information and communication technology to support the management of finances and administrative tasks. The administrative staff provide very good support for the headteacher and staff enabling them to focus on their work with the children.
66. There are sufficient well qualified and experienced teachers whose skills and expertise are well matched to the needs of the curriculum. There are no temporary teachers with full-time class responsibilities. This has provided stability in staffing which the school has not enjoyed for some time. The teachers are supported by a good number of suitably qualified and experienced support staff. There are good arrangements for the appraisal of teachers and performance management procedures are fully in place. Teaching, particularly in English and mathematics, has been well monitored by senior staff and subject co-ordinators through a range of procedures including lesson observations. When lessons are formally observed, written feedback is provided that identifies strengths and areas for development. This has been instrumental in improving the quality of teaching and in raising pupil attainment. Induction of teachers new to the school and also those in their first post is good. Teachers feel well supported by the thorough range of procedures that are in place. Similarly, learning support assistants similarly feel well supported by the headteacher, teachers and colleagues even though no formal induction procedures are in place for them.
67. Accommodation is sufficient for the number of pupils currently in school. There is, however, little space beyond the classrooms. The library has insufficient space for a class to sit within it and the computer suite is accommodated in a corridor. Lessons in both areas have the distraction of people regularly passing through. This is not conducive to the best conditions for learning. There is a good, secure outdoor learning area for the youngest pupils. There is good provision of playground and grassed areas and plans to develop these are in the current school development plan.
68. The range and quality of learning resources is generally good. In subjects such as geography, history and physical education and to support pupils with special educational needs, resources are sufficient to fulfil the requirements of the curriculum. The school is very conscious of these shortcomings in resources and improvements are planned within the school development plan. Most resources are accommodated in module boxes and space for central storage is restricted.

Since the last inspection improvements have been made to the library and computer provision and the Four-plus Unit has been developed and resourced.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

69. In order to raise standards and improve the educational provision further, the headteacher, staff and governors should work together to:

- 1) Further develop teaching strategies to improve the quality of pupils' writing across the curriculum by:
 - teaching five to seven-year olds to use a wider vocabulary;
 - teaching pupils in Years 3 and 4 to use a wider range of sentence and text structures;
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to evaluate and improve their writing;
 - providing more planned opportunities for pupils to write for a variety of purposes in subjects other than English.

Paragraphs: 2, 5, 86, 90, 91, 92, 124, and 141

- 2) Enrich the broad and balanced curriculum by including more opportunities for pupils' personal development, particularly their spiritual and cultural development.

Paragraphs: 26, 30, 32, 36 and 39

- 3) Enable pupils to develop greater awareness of their own learning by providing opportunities for them to:
 - take the initiative in some of their learning and to develop independent learning skills;
 - reflect upon and evaluate the quality of their work;
 - monitor their progress towards individual targets for improvement.

Paragraphs: 13, 23, 36, 88, 92, 93, 94, 102, 117, 123, 124, 130, 136, 139 and 166

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	46
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	26

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	9	22	11	0	0	0
Percentage	2	21	51	26	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	215
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	15

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	27

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	24
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.34
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	26	17	43

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	23	23	24
	Girls	13	14	13
	Total	36	37	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	84 (90)	86 (81)	86 (95)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	22	24	23
	Girls	13	14	14
	Total	35	38	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	81 (88)	88 (95)	86 (95)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	10
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	147
Any other minority ethnic group	8

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26
Average class size	30

Education support staff: YR– Y4

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	169

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	4	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	413,184
Total expenditure	386,657
Expenditure per pupil	1,833
Balance brought forward from previous year	70,305
Balance carried forward to next year	96,832

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	202
Number of questionnaires returned	114

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	63	33	2	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	47	4	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	45	52	2	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	54	15	4	2
The teaching is good.	54	39	2	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	47	22	4	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	37	12	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	50	45	3	3	0
The school works closely with parents.	22	44	25	7	2
The school is well led and managed.	38	49	4	2	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	55	3	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	14	28	30	13	15

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

70. There is one class in the Foundation Stage that is referred to as the "Four-plus Unit". Children are admitted at the start of the academic year following their fourth birthday. Those who have their fifth birthday in the autumn term start full time education at the start of the autumn term. Those who will be five between January and the end of the following August start school on a part-time basis. The children then attend full time from the beginning of the term in which they have their fifth birthday. Eighteen children attend full-time and a further 32 attend on a part-time basis. The provision is very good and is a strength of the school. It is not possible to assess the rate of improvement in the provision for the age group since the last inspection because no judgements were made that related directly to the age group.
71. The results of baseline assessments carried out in the children's first few weeks in school are variable but show that the majority achieve at, or a little above, the levels expected in the county. The quality of learning in the Four-plus Unit is good and the children make good and sometimes very good progress and are on course to reach at least the nationally agreed early learning goals by the end of their year in the Four-plus Unit. Many children already attain levels within those expected nationally for pupils in Year 1, particularly in some areas of their communication, language and literacy skills and mathematical development. The staff use the results of assessments well to provide the children with well matched tasks and this enables them to make good gains in all six areas of learning.
72. At the time of the last inspection children started school following their fifth birthday and this situation continued until the Four-plus Unit was opened in September 2000 to replace the reception class. The provision has developed very well in a short time. This is because of the enthusiasm, clear vision and very good knowledge and understanding of the learning needs of the age group of the headteacher, teacher and nursery nurse. A detailed policy, scheme of work and guidelines are the basis for the very good quality of the provision. The staff have developed strong and effective links with the parents who are very pleased with the education their children receive. Meetings with parents, home visits and liaison with play and toddler groups prior to the children's admission to school are well organised and are effective in helping children to settle into school quickly. Parents are welcomed into the classroom at the start of each session and as voluntary helpers and relationships are warm and relaxed.
73. The curriculum is well planned and ensures that all six areas of learning are promoted in each of the resourced areas in the classroom and in the outdoor classroom. The plans for teaching are based on the areas of learning of the national Foundation Stage curriculum. They make good links with the programmes of study of the National Curriculum for children in Year 1. The children are well challenged by the stimulating and relevant learning activities and are able to make good progress towards the early learning goals and beyond. The adults challenge and inspire the children and are optimistic about what they can achieve. This is a particular strength of the provision and contributes well to the good quality of learning in all six areas of learning. Children have very good attitudes to learning and they behave very well. This contributes to the progress they make.

74. The teacher, the nursery nurse and the learning support assistants work very well together and provide very good quality teaching. They provide well thought out play activities that enable the children to reinforce and extend their learning in a relevant way. The children concentrate for long periods because they are interested by the activities and this contributes to their rate of learning. Volunteer parents also provide a good level of support for the children because the staff make clear to them what the children are expected to learn in each activity and how they can support and challenge them. The outdoor area is used well but is not fully developed as a teaching area and is identified for further improvement. The classrooms are used imaginatively to make good use of the space available to provide children with a well organised and rich learning environment.

Personal, social and emotional development

75. At the time of the inspection, children had been in school only a few days but were well settled and related well to adults and to each other. This is evidence of the carefully managed induction procedures that help children to make a smooth transition from home to school. They choose confidently between a stimulating range of activities and many sustain their interest for long periods. They have positive attitudes to learning and enter every activity with enthusiasm. The children are confident to try new activities and suggest their own ideas. For example, children put their hand inside a 'feely box' without fear and describe with excitement what they can feel. While some younger children still play alongside others, most are beginning to relate to each other in their play. For example, younger children play independently using small world play while others talk to each other as they use the water and share the resources. Two boys collaborated to build a tower in the sand tray. They were very proud of it and invited other children and adults to come and see it. They returned to it several times to improve it. In whole class sessions and small group discussions the children eagerly and confidently offer their ideas and respond to questions. They are beginning to listen to each other and respond appropriately taking turns in conversation. This is because of the well planned opportunities the adults provide and the sensitive way in which they value each child's response.
76. Children follow instructions promptly. Behaviour is never less than very good and often excellent. Because the adults consistently make their expectations clear, the children have quickly learnt what behaviour is acceptable in the classroom and in the outdoor area. Almost all undress and dress themselves independently for physical education and outdoor play and demonstrate a good level of independence as they select or put away activities and tools. The quality of learning in personal, social and emotional development is very good. The children are making rapid progress in this area of learning. Almost all have already reached most of the early learning goals and the remainder are on course to achieve those goals by the end of the school year. The quality of teaching is very good because the adults have a very good knowledge of the stepping stones and early learning goals in this area of learning and create learning opportunities that meet the needs of all children. The adults have high expectations for the children's achievement, provide them with good levels of support and challenge as they interact with them in activities. Their enthusiastic and sensitive approach encourages children to take part in new activities and helps them to gain in confidence.

Communication, language and literacy

77. Most children have language skills that are typical of the age group. However, a significant minority are articulate and their speaking and listening skills are beyond those expected by the early learning goals. Most children talk readily to adults about their activities and increasingly take part in conversations in which they take account of the other speaker. Many are beginning to talk with other children as they play and negotiate some of their plans and ideas. For example, those sharing the wheeled toys in the outdoor area negotiate the route they will take. They enjoy listening to the well chosen stories and rhymes and sustain their attention well. This is evident in the comments they make about the stories and in the way in which they remember and follow instructions. Some children make up their own stories as they play with small world resources or play with others in the role-play area. The adults provide the children with frequent and relevant opportunities to speak and listen in small and large groups. Most children have already learnt the convention of putting up their hand if they have something to say in a group discussion. For example, when one child told the teacher that he had been to a particular theme park, another child made a comment relating to it and the first speaker asked, "Have you been there too?" A brief conversation followed between the two children.
78. Progress in reading is good and the children turn to books for enjoyment. Most know that print carries meaning and handle books carefully. They use the pictures to help them tell the story and can suggest how the story might end. Many recognise familiar words in books, on labels around the classroom and on the computer screen. They hear and say initial sounds in words and can give the name of the letter as well as the sound it makes. For example they know the sound 'g' and know its name is G. They suggest words that begin with the sound and recognise the letter within words. The teaching of reading is well structured and the teachers have a very good knowledge of phonics. They use every opportunity to reinforce the children's knowledge of letter sounds and symbols. This enables children of all abilities to make good progress and develop positive attitudes to reading. Almost all the children are on course to reach at least the early learning goals for reading by the end of their first year in school. Many are likely to achieve higher levels.
79. Children make good progress in writing. A sample of work from last year's class revealed that all the pupils achieved at least the early learning goals by the end of the year in the Four-plus Unit. Some reached levels within the programmes of study for children in Year 1. They write simple sentences such as 'Postman Pat saw the goat eat the jumper'. using capital letters and full stops to demarcate the sentence. Letters are correctly formed and oriented and there are spaces between the words. Children in the Four-plus Unit are learning to hold their pencil comfortably and to form letters correctly. Many can write their own name and are beginning to use the letters they know when they write as part of their play. The adults provide opportunities for children to use writing for a variety of purposes. For example, after looking at objects made of wood and of plastic and sorting them into groups, children are invited to take a clipboard outside to write (or draw) a list of all the things they can see that are made of wood.

Mathematical development

80. The adults plan exciting and relevant activities to promote children's mathematical development. The work is well planned to build on children's knowledge and

understanding and, as a result, they make good progress. The children know a variety of number songs and rhymes which involve counting forwards and backwards within five. For example, when the youngest children sing 'Five Currant buns', they count accurately and confidently to say how many 'buns' are left in the baker's shop. On a 'number walk' around the school they count objects and say number names to 22. One boy counts 11 lunchboxes on a trolley and then the children sort them into groups by colour. They make sensible estimates of the number of balls in a basket and say numbers to 16 as they are counted. Most of this group of younger children recognise numerals to five and can put them in the correct order. The children are on course to reach at least the early learning goals by the end of the school year.

81. Many of the older children in the class recognise all or most of the numbers to 9 and some write most of them correctly. They sort numerals to 10 and put them in the correct order. They use words such as 'more' and 'less' when they compare groups of objects. Evidence from a sample of work saved from the previous class show that by the end of their first year in school children recognised regular geometric shapes such as circles, squares, rectangles and triangles and identify the hours on an analogue clock. In a physical education lesson the children have no hesitation in forming a circle at the start of the lesson. The adults promote the use of mathematical language well in many of the activities both indoors and outdoors. For example, children are encouraged to describe their position on the climbing frame using everyday words such as 'up', 'down', 'higher' and 'lower'. Children using the dough to make snakes compared them saying that they were 'long' or 'short' and that one was longer or shorter than another. The adults use every opportunity to promote counting activities and use mathematical language as they intervene in children's activities. This enables the children to make good progress in using and understanding number and mathematical ideas. These children are well on their way to achieving at least the early learning goals by the end of the school year.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

82. The adults plan very effectively for this area of learning and, as a result, children make at least good progress. They are on course to achieve at least the levels described by the early learning goals by the end of their first year in school. The scheme of work provides opportunities for children to learn about their locality, past events and other cultures but, at the time of the inspection, the focus was on scientific ideas and the use of computers. The activities are stimulating and children are eager to become involved. The children use the computer confidently. They control the mouse well to locate icons on the screen and, when they use a drawing and painting programme, show that they know how to change the tools from a brush to a spray can. They create pictures on the screen and some experiment successfully with the flood fill tool.
83. The children are fascinated by the 'feely box' and are eager to put their hand inside to feel the materials. They describe the objects saying that they feel "hard" or "soft", "smooth" or "rough" and several return to this activity to explore it independent of an adult. They sort objects into a set made of plastic and a set made of wood and give good reasons for their decisions. For example, one child said that some of the wooden objects "have lines like a tree". When they go outside to list all the things they can find that are made of wood they do so enthusiastically and sustain their interest over a long period. They correctly

identify, for example, the fence, table-tops, the shed, a tree and the gate as being made of wood. The children make good progress during the session. Children enjoy and work imaginatively with construction toys to build and adapt models. They explain clearly how their models work. Those using wheeled toys understand, through pushing and pulling, how and why things move. There are some missed opportunities to provide children with daily opportunities to use card, paper, fabrics and a range of joining methods to investigate and create models.

Physical development

84. The children make good progress in this area of learning and are on course to achieve levels that at least match the early learning goals by the end of their first year in school. Many children already reach the levels described by the early learning goals. The adults promote this area of learning very well by ensuring that a range of activities is provided for children to practise and refine their skills. In the classroom and in the outdoor area the children move with confidence and show an awareness of other children's needs for space. In the classroom, children demonstrate good control of small pieces of equipment such as jigsaw pieces and small world figures. They show good control when they pour water, make tiny models from dough or use glue to stick wooden items on to a sheet of paper. Most children hold a pencil comfortably and control the marks they make on the paper to form letters or numbers. In the outdoor area the children generally show good control and coordination when they climb up, over and through the climbing frame. Many balance well on flower-pot stilts and walk considerable distances along a pathway. In a physical education lesson children showed that they knew that exercise has an effect on the body and said that exercise makes them hot. They follow instructions carefully to carry out stretches to prepare their bodies for exercise. They move imaginatively in response to music and work hard on stretching and curling their bodies. When they use the wheeled toys in the outdoor they control the speed and direction well and show an awareness of safe distances.

Creative development

85. This area of learning is well planned and resourced. The adults are enthusiastic partners with the children in imaginative play. For example, when some children choose to dress up, the nursery nurse responds appropriately to help them develop imaginative ideas about who they might be and where they might be going. The children respond with excitement when the teacher uses a puppet to reinforce the teaching of letter sounds. This makes a positive contribution to the progress they make in learning. Most children are at the stage of playing independently and creating stories, for example about the characters in the small world area. They often talk to themselves as they play. Children often initiate this independent play for themselves. For example, a girl spent a long time 'ironing' in the home corner and a boy, working in the outdoor area, explained that he had loaded up the truck he was pulling because he was moving house. Some older children are beginning to share their ideas with others. For example, a group of children collaborated to bury all the toy animals in the sand. They explained that, "They are hiding because they are afraid of the bat". When children choose to paint they concentrate and show enjoyment of the colour and texture of the paint. Some are fascinated by what happens when colours are mixed together on the paper. They enjoy songs and sing a good number from memory and match movements well to those songs that have actions. In a physical education lesson the children moved imaginatively

to the music to act out the story of the poem 'John had great big Wellington boots on'. The children make at least good progress in this area of learning and almost all are on course to achieve at least the levels described by the early learning goals by the end of the year in the Four-plus Unit.

ENGLISH

86. Standards in English have risen significantly since the last inspection and, in some years, have exceeded expectations for seven year olds in the national tests. Results in the 2000 national tests for seven-year-olds continued the steady improvement of the previous two years and showed that reading and writing skills in this year were above the national average for their age. Compared to similar schools, standards in writing were also above average although in reading they were about the same. During the past year standards have levelled off so that test results for Year 2 pupils in 2001 are now typical for pupils of their age in writing and below average in reading. Standards are a little below the target figures set by the school. This is due to the high percentage of pupils joining and leaving the school during the year. At the end of Year 4, results in nationally standardised tests for this age group show that pupils leave the school well on course to achieve levels at the end of Year 6 that match that of other 11 year olds. There is strength in reading but a relative weakness in writing that lowers the overall level of attainment of these nine-year-olds. The school analyses its test data carefully and finds no significant differences between boys and girls. The small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups do as well as other pupils. Inspection findings reflect the test results.
87. Progress in lessons is better than in the last inspection and pupils now learn the basics of English at a good rate across the school. This is partly the result of the very good start given to them in the Four-plus unit and the time and attention given to reading and writing throughout the school. Good teaching of the basic skills ensures that pupils read and write accurately and efficiently enough to support their learning in the other subjects. The poorer standard of the group of pupils who have joined the school since the start of Year 1 illustrates the good achievement of the rest. Progress is slower in the development of more sophisticated reading and writing skills, especially of the higher attaining pupils, and this is holding down the school's standards in relation to other schools. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in English.
88. When pupils start school they are confident speakers. These skills are developed well in the Four-plus Unit and in Years 1 and 2. Pupils speak clearly and openly and enjoy the drama and role-play that teachers plan into lessons. By Year 2 pupils discuss together in small groups as in a lesson in which pupils worked together to produce a tape-recording of their class 'seaside poem' accompanied by musical effect. However, lessons like this in which talk is part of learning, do not happen enough across the school. Opportunities for pupils to speak and listen to each other are often lost in the closing stages of a lesson. They listen politely to teachers' questions and readily answer them but do not learn how to present their findings orally or to evaluate their own and each other's learning. This is because teachers over-direct the feedback instead of helping nominated groups of pupils to describe and justify what they think they have achieved.
89. Pupils make good progress in the early stages of learning to read and, until this last year, the number of pupils failing to reach the

expected level was below average. This is because the teachers create a positive attitude towards reading and involve the parents in the daily one-to-one sharing of books and reading together in Years 1 and 2. Learning support assistants are used well to help to manage the checking of home reading diaries and the prompt changing of completed books. The smooth running of this system is helped by the readily accessible and suitable sets of reading scheme books. There is sound teaching of phonic skills during whole class literacy lessons. Until recently, this has been sufficient to meet most pupils' needs. However, a small but increasing number of pupils has difficulty in matching words and sounds. For instance, Year 1 pupils were not all confident in hearing the difference between 'ig' and 'ug' when they were asked to listen and match these sounds to 'flash cards'. The more systematic teaching of letter sounds, blending strategies and spelling patterns has begun and, if followed consistently, has the potential to improve standards again. The existing reading record for each pupil is not used sufficiently to indicate specific difficulties in sounding out unknown words so that they can be taught and practised. Teachers in Years 3 and 4 make good use of the small-group 'guided reading' part of literacy lessons to directly teach pupils to read for meaning. However, this strategy is not used consistently throughout the school. Higher attaining pupils read fluently and accurately but their skills in reading for meaning are not sufficiently extended. For instance, in one Year 3 and 4 class, the teacher questioned and probed the pupils' understanding of the meaning of one of Aesop's fables, asking, "Why was he unsure about going to see the king? What words make you think that?" This modelled well strategies for combing a text for meaning beyond the literal.

90. Pupils of all ages appreciate stories as part of the literacy hour and enjoy borrowing books each week from a new library funded by the Friends of the School. Although still small, this a great improvement on the library space at the time of the last inspection. A recent audit by local education authority library staff has found it to be well stocked with a good range of fiction for all ages and abilities, although some of the reference texts are rather out-dated. A drawback is the limited space within the library itself for groups of pupils to work together or for teachers to teach a significant part of a class library and reference skills. As a result few pupils are able to explain exactly how they would find information in the library. The revised library policy includes the teaching of reference skills but this is at an early stage of implementation. Limited space makes it hard for teachers to tempt children into adventurous choices of good quality books. This prevents capable readers of all ages from becoming 'book addicts' and to appreciate the language of books and use it in their own writing.
91. The standards of writing of all pupils in the school have significantly improved since the last inspection. By the end of Year 2, most pupils are able to write independently because they are encouraged and expected to 'have a go'. For instance, a group of higher attaining pupils at the start of Year 1 managed to write two or three sentences of a rhyming poem for themselves because of the teacher's on-going encouragement. Teachers take every opportunity to use a recently introduced project for the teaching of spelling patterns. As, for example, when older Year 1 and some Year 2 pupils wrote an 'acrostic poem' about the sea. This approach is already improving pupils' attention to spelling and their readiness to try to write new words. Learning support assistants give effective help during writing lessons because they know the pupils well and have been well briefed about what to look out for in their work. By the end of Year 2, pupils are well on the way to producing a joined script. Throughout the school pupils pay good attention to

neatness and layout of their work right across the curriculum. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 present their writing well and continue to improve their punctuation and spelling.

92. The weak spot in writing that is preventing standards from rising further is in the imaginative use of words by the five to seven year olds and in the quality of language expression and sentence structures of the older pupils. Yet, when they are shown how to write in a certain form and to play with words until they create the right effect, they do well. This happened in two successful lessons on writing poems about the seaside. Where the teacher explained clearly and provided pupils with good guidance on how to achieve success. There is evidence that by the end of Year 4 the most capable writers produce a well-crafted piece of writing with a touch of humour, in which ideas are linked together skilfully. One version of "The Three Little Pigs" read: "One built a house of sticks. One was going to make a house of bricks but he lost the instructions so he spent a whole day drawing up new ones. Then he was able to build his house". However, in general teachers do not intervene sufficiently in the process of writing to demonstrate just how different types of writing can be structured and improved. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to learn to evaluate their writing in discussion as a class or in pairs. This means that they do not learn to edit and improve their writing and this limits the progress they make. Although there is some good evidence of pupils using their writing skills in a variety of ways in other subjects this is not well developed. Marking of work, although done regularly, does not often tell the pupils how they might make their writing better. The use of computers for drafting and editing writing is under-developed.
93. The National Literacy Strategy is well embedded across the school. Teachers are comfortable with the structure of the Literacy Hour and understand the teaching programme well enough to be flexible when necessary. The quality of the teaching is good in both age groups because lessons are well planned. Lessons in Years 1 and 2 include some practical activities such as matching games which help to maintain pupils' interest in learning about phonics. Teachers use the technical language of English well in lessons and are beginning to insist that pupils use terms such as 'phoneme' and 'grapheme' in reply to teacher questions. Questioning techniques are used to involve and generally the pace and timing of lessons is accurately judged. In some lessons, pupil concentration slackens during the whole class introduction because teachers do not use interactive techniques and resources such as 'show me' cards, 'phonic fans' or individual whiteboards often enough. However, pupils usually complete their tasks because teachers avoid keeping them seated for too long and have high expectations for what must be achieved. The concluding part of the lesson is where the missed opportunities for pupils to explain and ask questions of each other occur and where teachers do not consistently show pupils how to appraise and improve their work.
94. Teachers use the results of assessments to group pupils and often change membership of these sets of pupils during the year. They set tasks matched to three different levels in the class or set. It is too early yet for the school to evaluate the success of the new setting arrangements for Years 3 and 4 against any loss of continuity in reinforcing English skills in the other subjects. There are good whole school procedures for recording and tracking pupil progress against national criteria. These are used well to develop curriculum targets for each age group and for each pupil. Parents and children know about these targets but pupils do not have a way of checking their achievements. For instance, marking does not refer the pupil back to his or her personal targets and pupils have no kind of record to

mark off progress. This misses opportunities to create a sense of personal responsibility for pupils' own learning. In some lessons, teachers make good use of assessment as a basis for subsequent lessons. In a Year 3 class, the teacher kept back a group that she judged had not understood the previous lesson on direct and indirect speech and taught them again as a separate group to good effect. However, such assessment is not yet influencing planning on a wider scale. Assessments of pupils' specific weaknesses at class and individual level are not sufficiently influencing termly planning and teaching, or contributing strongly enough to individual pupil targets for improvement.

95. The co-ordinator manages to keep abreast of developments in the subject and to share these with colleagues. She has begun to monitor lessons and has the skills to help teachers to become more comfortable with the techniques of modelling and teaching writing to the whole class and to individuals. She recognises the improvements made and accurately identifies the next steps for improvement.

MATHEMATICS

96. Pupils' attainment at ages seven and nine matches the levels expected nationally. This is a similar picture to that described at the time of the previous inspection. Between 1996 and 2000 the results of national tests for pupils aged seven have been variable but there has been an overall trend of improvement. The results of Year 2 assessments in 2001 show an apparent decline in standards to below average. However, this is partly due to the high proportion of pupils with lower prior attainment and on the school's register of special educational needs. In addition a significant proportion (18 per cent) of pupils joined or left the school during the year. A restricted sample of Year 4 pupils' work from the last school year confirmed that standards at least matched those nationally. Pupils make steady progress between the ages of five and nine. By the end of Year 4, pupils attain levels that match the national expectations. There is no significant difference in the achievement and progress of different groups of pupils.
97. The factors that have contributed to improvement are: improvements in teaching; setting arrangements; early involvement in introducing the National Numeracy Strategy; better resources; good, and developing, assessment procedures and effective leadership from the subject co-ordinator. Because the school identifies setting as having a positive impact on standards there are plans to use this strategy to include pupils under the age of seven.
98. By age seven, pupils have a secure grasp of number facts and their skill in manipulating numbers mentally is developing well. Pupils recognise odd and even numbers, know the two, five and ten multiplication tables, and divide by two. Through engagement in practical tasks, they are developing a good understanding of the mathematical ideas of multiplication and division as, respectively, repeated addition and subtraction. They identify many two- and some three-dimensional shapes and explain some of their properties. Pupils understand some basic measures. For example, pupils tell the time on digital and analogue clocks and are developing a more secure understanding of simple fractions such as halves and quarters. Mathematical vocabulary is developing well; pupils understand and correctly use words such as 'subtract', 'minus', 'length' and 'width'. They have learned to collect data, often in tally form, which they then use to produce simple graphs and tables. Skills in reading and interpreting such data are developing well. Lower attaining pupils order numbers to 100 and have a basic understanding of

hundreds, tens and units. They add coins to a value of ten pence and understand the concept of halves.

99. By age nine, most pupils have developed sound strategies for manipulating numbers mentally. They have a secure understanding of the four mathematical operations and the relationship between them. They know all the multiplication tables 2, 3, 4, 5 and 10, multiply three-digit numbers by two-digit numbers, add whole numbers and fractions and understand the processes of long division and multiplication. Pupils' knowledge of shape and space is secure. They understand lines of symmetry, reflective symmetry, area and perimeter. Pupils collect and use data to produce pictograms and bar graphs. They have a developing knowledge of metric units of measurement. Lower attaining pupils round numbers to ten, use simple co-ordinates appropriately and multiply three-digit numbers by single-digit numbers.
100. The quality of teaching throughout the school is good and there are examples of very good teaching in one third of lessons. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. This is a significant improvement upon the previous inspection. The most significant strengths of teaching emanate from detailed planning that incorporates clear learning objectives and different work for pupils of different attainment. Learning objectives are often shared with pupils at the beginning of the lesson and, in good and very good lessons used in the plenary to evaluate progress in the lesson. This helps pupils to understand the purpose of the work and reflect afterwards on how well they have achieved. Good questioning and use of ongoing assessment are also strong features of the most effective lessons. For example, teachers give pupils many opportunities to explain the strategies they use and, from this, assess how well they have understood new ideas or acquired new skills. They then modify their questions to individuals in order to provide relevant challenge and opportunities for all to achieve success. Teachers promote good mathematical thinking amongst their pupils through a range of probing, challenging questions. For example, in a Year 3 and Year 4 lesson with lower attaining pupils, the teacher asked, "Show me how that works?" and "Why doesn't that work?" The questions focused pupils' attention and promoted careful and thoughtful answers.
101. Throughout the school, teachers use and promote mathematical vocabulary very well. For instance, Year 2 pupils knowledgeably used the terms '*doubling*', '*halving*', '*total*', and '*equals*', whilst Year 4 pupils spoke of '*symmetry*', '*co-ordinates*' and '*digits*'. Teachers make very good use of resources. In particular, classroom assistants make an effective contribution to teaching and learning. Teachers brief them well about their roles and check on the effectiveness of their input during lessons. Marking is consistent and regular homework supports work done in class. The only area that needs sharpening is the provision of more practical tasks to promote pupils' use and application of mathematics. Currently, much of the work in this area is set in the context of 'pencil and paper' problem-solving tasks. Few examples of mathematical investigations were seen in the sample of pupils' work. Because teachers teach enthusiastically and make learning interesting, pupils' have very positive attitudes to the subject. Pupils answer questions and explain strategies, without fear of being wrong or ridiculed by others for giving wrong answers. As a result of the good quality of the teaching and pupils' positive attitudes, the quality of learning is very good at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2. The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory.

102. Numeracy skills are effectively developed within other subjects. For instance, in art and design, pupils learn about symmetry, pattern and shape; in design and technology, measuring skills are developed; work in geography reinforces pupils' understanding of co-ordinates and data handling skills are also promoted. Information and communication technology is beginning to have an impact upon standards in data handling. Assessment in mathematics is very good and has played a significant part in raising standards. Teachers know what pupils have achieved and record keeping is thorough and useful. This was a weakness at the previous inspection. Assessment information is used to determine strengths and weaknesses within the mathematics curriculum. However, it is not used well to plan what pupils need to learn next and this is a weakness. Pupils' performance is tracked to identify differences between the attainment of boys and girls but this has not been developed for other groups of pupils. Ambitious targets are set for the school in relation to national tests. Individual targets are set for pupils in each year group and are recorded in pupils' books and reviewed regularly. These have the potential to involve pupils much more in their own assessment and to promote their knowledge and understanding of their own learning.
103. The co-ordinator is experienced in the role, leads the subject well and is thorough and well organised. She monitors teachers' planning and pupils' work and has observed teaching. Evaluations of teaching observations are fed back to the teacher concerned. The co-ordinator has focused resource spending well and learning resources are now good. This has improved since the last inspection, when resources were reported to be adequate.

SCIENCE

104. The national end of Key Stage 1 Teacher Assessments for 2001 show that pupils' attainment is below the national average for seven year olds. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher level (Level 3) is close to the national average. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress and by the age of nine their knowledge and understanding matches the levels expected nationally for nine-year-olds. This is reflected by the quality of work seen in pupils' books from the previous school year. Standards of attainment have been maintained since the time of the last inspection.
105. Pupils in Year 1 know that living things change as they grow. For example, they compare adult and baby animals and identify changes in size, colour and shape. In Year 2, pupils learn about the parts of a flowering plant and consider the habitats they need for growth. They learn to make a simple electric circuit and know that a battery is used as a power source. They look at the changes that occur when ice melts and hypothesise about what makes good bubbles. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 understand that changes in state are reversible or irreversible and that friction slows moving objects. When they study 'living things' they know some of the conditions

required for healthy growth. From their work on light, they can explain the difference between 'transparent', 'translucent' and 'opaque' and know that 'things getting in the way of the light make shadows'.

106. Many activities in science involve investigation and experimentation. This is an increasingly strong feature that is well used in all areas of science and is a very good feature of the curriculum. For example, Year 4 pupils made good gains in understanding when they tested the effects of moving a light source around an object to investigate what happens to the shadow. They are encouraged to predict outcomes, for instance, when pupils in Year 3, were encouraged to predict what would happen to the shadows created by objects blocking the sunlight when they looked again later. This is effective because of the way it challenges pupils' thinking and develops good scientific methodology.
107. The quality of teaching is good. In all lessons seen the teaching was at least satisfactory. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. The improvement in the quality of teaching has yet to have an impact upon pupils' progress in terms of raising standards in national assessments. There is a very good focus on the accurate use of vocabulary in lessons and this reflects the good subject knowledge of many teachers. Pupils, as well as teachers, use scientific vocabulary well. This is a good feature. In lessons with Year 3 and Year 4 pupils, scientific vocabulary is used effectively when, for example, pupils talk of light "being reflected", a torch being a "light source" and of objects being "translucent". In this lesson there was a good level of challenge for pupils because of the use of open-ended questions and opportunities for pupils to hypothesise and predict events. Although teachers' lesson plans are well focused on the learning objective, not enough thought is given to activities in order to suit the different abilities within the class. However, there are examples of good practice. For example, pupils in Year 4 were provided with four different investigations matched to pupils' prior attainment. Teachers know their pupils well but do not always use this knowledge to guide different groups of pupils learning from lesson to lesson. The sample of pupils' work reveals that all the pupils often undertake the same task. This places demands upon the teacher to support lower attaining pupils' literacy skills rather than extending their understanding of science.
108. Pupils enjoy science, respond enthusiastically to investigations and co-operate well in pairs or groups. They value each other's opinion and work with confidence. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. Teachers hold high expectations of pupils' behaviour and performance and, as a result, pupils respond well to the challenges set for them. Pupils are confident in class discussions and question and answer sessions. They make predictions and discuss conclusions articulately.
109. The science policy was updated in July 2001 and curriculum plans follow the latest national guidelines. This has improved the quality of the provision for science since the last inspection. The requirements of the national curriculum for science are met. Teachers plan collaboratively within a two-year cycle of topics and this ensures that pupils are taught all the programmes of study in a systematic way. The time allocated to science is slightly less than that allocated in most schools, but this does not detract from the quantity of work that pupils produce. At the time of the last inspection there was no system to record and check on pupils' attainment and progress. This has been improved and records of what pupils do, know and understand are in place. Assessments are carried out at the end of topics or units of work and at the end of the school year. Significant achievements

are recorded as and when they happen and are used well in annual reports to parents to highlight pupils' progress during the year. Teachers make effective use of the results of end of unit tests and assessments to measure and track pupil's achievements. The next focus for development identified by the school is to provide annual targets for improvement for each year group.

110. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. Their learning is enhanced by the high quality of the work of the classroom assistants who support them in small groups in the classrooms. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' speaking and listening skills and gives opportunities for them to use their skills in reading, writing and mathematics.
111. The science co-ordinator provides good leadership, guidance and support for her colleagues. She monitors planning and examines samples of pupils' work and has observed some lessons in order to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to develop links with other subjects, particularly with design and technology and information and communication technology. Resources for science have improved since the last inspection and are now good. Although there are limitations in storage space and access is not always easy, resources are stored safely.

ART AND DESIGN

112. Judgements are based on one lesson Key Stage 1, two lessons at Key Stage 2, an examination of teachers' planning, the scrutiny of pupils' work in photographs and displayed in the school and a discussion with the co-ordinator.
113. Pupils make satisfactory progress and reach the levels expected nationally by the end of both key stages. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when pupils' attainment was judged to be satisfactory at Key Stage 1 but unsatisfactory at Key Stage 2. There are no significant variations in the attainment of pupils of different gender and background, and pupils with special educational needs are appropriately supported and make satisfactory progress.
114. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 use a range of skills to plan and carry out their ideas. For example, pupils in Year 1 observe carefully and record in detail what they remember when they use pencils and crayons to show what computers are used for. They create attractive and well controlled illustrations of seaside holidays from memory and imagination. In Year 2, pupils develop their drawing skills by creating a 'sampler' of the variety of effects they can create when they use soft pencils. They draw from direct observation and produce well-proportioned and accurate drawings of birds. When they experiment with geometrical shapes, they show a developing awareness of pattern. This is also evident in a lesson where they experiment with folding, curling, rolling and tearing paper to create a paper sculpture. They arrange the shapes they make showing an understanding of symmetry and balance.
115. At Key Stage 2, pupils continue to develop their skills at a satisfactory rate and have a good knowledge of colour mixing. This is an improvement since the last inspection when these skills were judged to be unsatisfactory. In Year 3, pupils use powder paints in warm or cool shades to create the impression of fire or water. They mix the colours with confidence and use words such as "crimson", "peach", "gold" and "ochre" to describe them. Most use paintbrushes satisfactorily but a

significant minority tend to scrub the paper with the brush and this spoils their work. Pupils in Year 4 use pastels with good control. They respond imaginatively to an Australian aborigine story about the origin of fire and use warm tones to create very effective pictures. In contrast, they have used cold tones to create landscapes including an expanse of water. The pupils have used reflections to give the impression of distance and depth in their pictures. Throughout the key stage, pupils show interest in the work of other artists and, for example, know something of the work of artists such as Monet and Picasso. For example, pupils in Year 3 look carefully at a seascape by Van Gogh and notice that he uses white, blue, green and yellow to paint the sea. They are influenced by this in their own work and achieve some interesting results. They make good progress because of the way in which the teacher draws their attention to this feature of the painting.

116. Pupils have very good attitudes to the subject. For example, Year 2 pupils work carefully and are absorbed by the task when they create paper sculptures. Pupils at both key stages work very well in pairs and in small groups. They share resources and ideas and evaluate one another's work sensitively. Behaviour in lessons is very good and the pupils relate very well to one another and to their teachers. This is a very good improvement since the last inspection, when pupils' response to the subject was judged to be mostly unsatisfactory.
117. The quality of teaching was good in the lessons observed at both key stages. An examination of the plans for teaching and pupils' work indicates that the quality of teaching is likely to be at least satisfactory throughout the school. This is a good improvement since the last inspection, when the quality of teaching was generally unsatisfactory. Teachers have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the subject and manage the pupils and resources very well. The plans for teaching describe precisely what the pupils will know, understand and be able to do by the end of the lesson and each lesson builds successfully on the previous learning. The lessons are well structured to include opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own and others' work, to learn new skills and to experiment and practice new techniques they are taught. The tasks are challenging and stimulating and provide opportunities for pupils to make progress towards the learning objectives for the lesson. Because of the good teaching, pupils work hard, sustain concentration and persevere to complete their tasks. As a result, they make good progress in developing their knowledge and skills. Strategies for assessing pupils' progress are being developed.
118. The quality of leadership provided is good. This is a big improvement since the last inspection when no one took responsibility for the subject and there was no policy or scheme of work. The subject co-ordinator has taken a thorough approach to planning the curriculum and although not a subject expert, has taken steps to enhance her knowledge and skills and now leads her colleagues with confidence. She has a very clear picture of further development needs in the subject. Since the last inspection, the co-ordinator has developed and implemented a policy and detailed scheme of work and has provided advice and support for her colleagues. She has monitored the implementation of the scheme of work by examining teachers' planning and through visits to the classrooms to see the work the pupils have produced. The activities are helping the co-ordinator to adjust the curriculum

to the needs of the school. Assessment procedures are not fully developed and consequently do not yet have an impact on the curriculum or on raising standards in the subject.

119. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides pupils with well planned opportunities to build on their knowledge and skills through the school. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development. For example, pupils have many opportunities to consider the work of artists from the western European tradition and from the wider world. The subject is used well to support pupils learning in other subjects. For example, in science, Key Stage 2 pupils observe carefully and draw to show their understanding of shadows and pupils in Key Stage 1 make detailed pencil drawings of animals such as a cheetah or a giraffe. Pupils' work is valued and is attractively displayed throughout the school. There are sufficient resources of good quality and range. Some use is made of computers to develop pupils' ideas about design.
120. Improvement in the subject since the last inspection is good overall.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

121. Only two lessons were observed: one lesson with six-year-old pupils and one with seven and eight year olds. Judgements are, based on a scrutiny of pupils work, work on display, discussions with the subject co-ordinator and pupils, an examination of teachers' planning and two lesson observations.
122. Pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 reach the levels expected nationally for their age. Insufficient work for pupils aged nine was seen to make a secure judgement on standards. The National Curriculum requirements for design and technology are met.
123. Pupils in Year 2 are beginning to develop their ability to use simple tools to cut and shape materials such as fabric, paper and card. In Year 1, pupils have mastered the skills of cutting straight, zigzags and along wavy lines. They are aware of safety aspects when using tools such as scissors. These skills will be developed to make pop-up cards and finger puppets. They know how to use hinges and levers through work done on card teddy bears with moving arms and legs. Pupils make decisions about the materials and tools they use. Evaluation of work with pupils aged seven and under is done in discussion with their teacher.
124. By the age of nine, pupils are beginning to design for a particular purpose. Year 3 and Year 4 pupils were finding ways to make a freestanding structure by strengthening paper. They fashioned tubes and flaps, strengthening them by using tape, paper clips and card. Pupils were encouraged to explain their designs and the problems they encountered. They explained clearly how they had modified structures and evaluated what they had done. By the age of nine, pupils have designed structures, tested materials for strength and permeability, constructed models and come to informal judgements about the strengths and weaknesses of the product. Pupils' designs are well drawn and labelled, and materials and tools carefully chosen. However, as at the time of the last inspection, little formal, written evaluation is done.
125. Pupils throughout the school respond enthusiastically to tasks. They discuss their work with interest and talk confidently about the processes involved in designing

and modelling. They enjoy working in pairs and small groups. They understand about using tools safely and the importance of hygiene when working with food.

126. Too few lessons were observed to support a judgement on teaching. The teaching observed was in the range of good to very good. The quality of teachers' lesson plans is good. Teachers' good subject knowledge ensures that pupils are challenged by the questions they are asked and the tasks they are asked to do. Pupils build on what they have done and skills develop systematically.
127. Since the last inspection, the scheme of work has been replaced by a scheme based on recent national guidance. Teachers' plans for lessons are detailed and learning objectives are well related to the new scheme. Assessment procedures are linked to the scheme of work and record what pupils do, know and understand. Future planning is not yet effectively informed by assessment and this is a weakness. The co-ordinator is involved in monitoring planning but has no strategic role in observing classroom practice, exemplifying good practice, improving teacher knowledge and understanding or raising pupil attainment. This is a weakness. There is little evidence of the use of computers within design and technology. Resources are good and are securely and safely stored.

GEOGRAPHY

128. Standards in geography in Years 1 to 4 are comparable to those in most schools.
129. During Years 1 and 2, pupils gain a sound geographical knowledge and understanding. The work in their books shows that they understand how the location of the school relates to their locality. They draw a simple bird's eye view and map their route to school. Following a walk from school to Katherine Drive they are able to draw and label pictures of local buildings and distinguish between houses, shops, churches and styles of houses. They compare and contrast living in Dunstable with living in a seaside town and are beginning to locate on a map places at home and abroad that are outside their locality. Their books show that they can organise what they have learned in a lesson in formats such as comparison charts. The higher attaining pupils in Year 2 attempt regular pieces of independent writing. Pupils work is mostly fully completed and of a neat and careful standard. Older pupils learn fieldwork techniques from a walk to the Downs. They make plans and use maps of the local area and name different types of land use. They show of the differences between village, city and town and record these clearly. In a study of Tenby as a contrasting locality, last year's Year 4 pupils used the Internet as a source of investigation and synthesised their findings into a 'brochure' for the resort.
130. The quality of teaching is satisfactory throughout the school. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and make supportive comments but do not consistently tell pupils clearly how they might have made their work better. In the lessons seen, teachers made the best use they could of resources that were sufficient but not highly stimulating. The introductory phase of lessons is generally interesting to the pupils and over a term teachers offer a good variety of activities. In Years 3 and 4 there are not enough opportunities for pupils to find out for themselves rather than being told by the teacher.
131. The scheme of work follows the nationally recommended guidance. The medium term planning sheets prepared by the co-ordinator break down each unit into

weeks to give good guidance to teachers and to ensure that key aspects are covered within each unit. Weekly plans set out key assessment questions at the end of each week and unit. However there is no formalised monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress over time. Teachers make some entries in the pupil profiles but this is not an effective check on what each pupil has learned or not yet learned by the end of each two-year cycle. The school acknowledges that resources for this subject are in need of up dating and extending.

132. The co-ordinator is new to the post but has a clear vision for the development of the subject. She has already made a positive impact on the quality of teachers' plans for each term and for each lesson. She takes a professional yet sensitive approach to the rest of her colleagues' professional development and existing expertise.

HISTORY

133. Standards in history are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 2 and also in Years 3 and 4. This is an improvement upon the last inspection findings.
134. At the time of the last inspection there was no subject co-ordinator and this resulted in a lack of guidance throughout the school and an over-reliance upon the individual enthusiasm of teachers. The topic based approach led to the unsatisfactory teaching of key historical ideas. Now, history is taught as a separate subject and has a newly appointed co-ordinator who has made a good start. For example, teaching plans for each term have already benefited from her knowledge and understanding of the subject. This shows in the lesson objectives. The plans for each term give teachers ideas for teaching, list resources and indicate potential assessment questions. This directs the teaching and helps with individual lesson planning. At the time of last inspection, it was found that pupils were given too many unchallenging worksheets to complete. Now teachers provide interesting activities and present pupils with a variety of ways of recording their learning. Behaviour in lessons is good in contrast to some of the lessons seen four years ago. This is good improvement since the last inspection.
135. In Years 1 and 2, pupils learn to tell the differences between past and present by examining photographs and other historical evidence. In Year 2, pupils picked out the differences between photographs of the present-day seaside and from past times. They noticed features of everyday life that were different from today and made progress in observation and hunting for historical 'clues' during this lesson. Higher attaining pupils experimented with a range of ways of recording their findings such as comparison charts and an 'ideas web'. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have a satisfactory knowledge of the historical facts of the period that they are studying. Work in their books shows some use of secondary sources although too much of the writing involves direct recall of the teacher's introduction rather than finding out for themselves. However, the older pupils are beginning to understand the value of first-hand evidence. For instance, in a Year 3 lesson, the teacher made good use of a letter written by a pupil's grandmother who had been evacuated during the London Blitz. She used it to illustrate the experience of evacuees but also to value the significance of first hand evidence. The postcards the pupils wrote showed that they had achieved a sound understanding of what it was like to live in wartime Britain although the pupils' sense of change over time was not well developed.

136. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have sound subject knowledge and plan well to introduce work that meets the needs of the pupils. Lessons now show a concern for developing historical understanding through an enquiry-based approach. Pupils struggle with this because, at present, the subject is poorly resourced. Not many of the 'topic boxes' of resources have an extensive range of sources of evidence and there are not enough artefacts or computer resources available. This makes it more difficult to develop independent research skills and follow-up tasks often rely on recall of the first part of the lesson rather than a selection from additional resources.
137. The co-ordinator has produced during recent weeks the beginnings of a thoughtful, easy-to-follow scheme of work. She approaches the task of developing the subject with enthusiasm and a good understanding of how to encourage other teachers to look at ways of improving their provision.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

138. There has been significant improvement in the provision for information and communication technology and in the standards achieved. Attainment by the age of seven has risen from below the levels expected nationally at the time of the last inspection to being similar to the national expectation. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are maintaining average levels of attainment.
139. The subject has moved forward rapidly in the past two years. The biggest stimulus to improvement has been the installation of a suite of 16 computers with access to the Internet. Classes are allocated time in the suite each week for the teaching of skills and there is opportunity for teachers to book the suite at other times so that computers can be used to support the wider curriculum. The co-ordinator has made a good job of moulding a nationally recommended scheme to the needs of the school and staff motivation has been re-vitalised. Their renewed enthusiasm and confidence is buoyed by the support that they all give to one another. The school employs a technical assistant for four hours a week. The assistant helps in lessons and with the inevitable hardware problems. Her expertise is much valued by the staff and she makes a positive contribution to pupils' progress.
140. In Years 1 and 2, standards are in line with those expected nationally. Pupils manipulate the mouse, find their way around the keyboard and use the correct terminology to describe the functions. Most pupils are confident as they work even when the software presents problems. For instance, during a lesson for pupils in Years 1 and 2 the external server was not fully functioning, but pupils remained interested and unafraid of what the computer might do next. This positive attitude was helped because the teacher had sufficient skill to intervene swiftly and raise pupils' self-esteem. Year 2 pupils know which icons activate the programs they want and use the mouse to move the cursor across menus. Pupils work independently to log on, locate a painting program and open it up. They learn to use the flood fill tool and by the end of the lesson have made good progress. They use this facility with confidence and develop more ambitious sketches and use the flood fill tool confidently. By age seven pupils understand the use of information and communication technology for finding things out and are confident at making things happen and developing their ideas on screen. They are less good at reviewing and evaluating their work and at communicating through information and communication technology. This is because the recent focus has, sensibly, been on skill teaching through focussed tasks and less on finding things out.

141. Because of timetabling arrangements no full lessons were observed in Years 3 and 4. However, evidence from teachers' lesson plans, discussion with the co-ordinator and an examination of some completed work shows that pupils reach average levels for their age. The Year 4 pupils who left the school in July 2001 were competent users of the Internet. They were able to find, select and use information about the resort of Tenby, decide which detail was the most relevant and assemble it into a 'holiday brochure'. They had been introduced to databases and had used computers to create graphs and pie charts. The current Years 3 and 4 pupils are learning to combine pictures and text. They use the computer as a writing tool and are able to undertake simple editing exercises such as replacing over-used words, for example 'nice', with more interesting adjectives. However, there is not enough use of word processing to teach pupils how to draft, edit and re-draft their own writing. As in Years 1 and 2 and across the curriculum, pupils are not good at reviewing what they have done or at comparing the effectiveness of electronic communication with other methods. Similarly, using computers to 'make things happen' is not experienced at its more ambitious levels, for example, when using the computer to control external devices such as light sensors.
142. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers use their subject expertise well to plan interesting lessons and to support the pupils. They provide a clear focus at the start of the lesson and remind the pupils from time to time what it is expected they will learn. Because teachers they make their expectations clear, pupils work hard and make good gains in their learning during the lesson. They use praise well to build pupils' self-esteem. They make good use of their time in lessons to spot pupils having difficulties and provide support or to provide additional challenge for those who are making good progress.
143. In order to raise standards in the subject, it has been necessary to focus on helping pupils to make fast progress in acquiring skills. As a result, there have been few opportunities to develop the use of computers in other subjects. The opportunity for additional class or group time in the computer suite is not regularly taken up. This is an area for development.
144. The co-ordinator has developed a two-year cycle of curriculum plans based upon national guidance. The plans help to ensure that pupils make progress throughout both key stages. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' lesson plans each term and provides good advice and support for her colleagues. Her role in observing lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning is to be developed in this academic year. There is no formalised system of recording individual pupils' progress over time and this means that teachers have little to guide them in planning accurately for the skill level of each group.

MUSIC

145. Judgements are based on a sample of two lessons at Key Stage 1 and one lesson at Key Stage 2, an examination of teachers' planning and a discussion with the co-ordinator. Inspectors also heard pupils sing in collective worship and hymn practise and observed small group instrumental tuition.
146. Pupils achieve levels in line with national expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. This is an improvement since the last inspection when pupils' attainment in Key Stage 2 was below expectations. There is no significant difference between

the attainment of boys and girls. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, acquire, use and extend musical skills, knowledge and understanding at a satisfactory rate in both key stages.

147. Pupils in Key Stage 1 enjoy songs and rhymes and sing rhythmically and enthusiastically. Pupils in Year 1 identify high and low sounds correctly and select percussion instruments to represent them. They understand that instruments can be played in different ways to create a different effect. When they clap and play instruments, they keep a steady beat. Pupils in Year 2 enjoy a song about the 'Three Bears', move in time to the beat and use high, medium or low-pitched voices to emphasise the meaning of the song. They select appropriate percussion instruments to accompany each part of the song. When they perform using percussion instruments, they control them well to create loud and quiet passages. Throughout the key stage pupils listen attentively and show pleasure in singing.
148. Pupils in Year 3 listen attentively to music and identify, for instance, stringed instruments and the flute. When they listen to music from the Chinese tradition, they respond appropriately by saying that it makes them think about birds, or snakes or even dragons. They know that the music is based on the five notes of the pentatonic scale. When they sing 'L'il Liza Jane', they sing in two parts sustaining a two-note accompaniment using notes from the pentatonic scale. They compose a simple accompaniment on chime bars and are beginning to be able to keep a steady beat as they accompany the singing. Pupils throughout Key Stage 2 sing enthusiastically and, because they listen carefully to the piano and to each other, the tuning improves during the lesson. Their diction is clear and they are beginning to add some expression to their singing to bring out the meaning of the song. This was particularly so when they in hymn practise. When Year 4 pupils perform this song for the rest of the school, they sing tunefully and expressively.
149. Pupils have very good attitudes to the subject. They show enjoyment in playing and in singing and sustain their concentration for long periods. They behave very well in lessons because of the variety of interesting activities and the opportunities they have to take an active part. This is an excellent improvement since the last inspection when pupils' response to the subject was judged to be unsatisfactory and, in some classes, behaviour was also unsatisfactory. Pupils throughout the school are eager to take part in musical activities: they concentrate and work hard to understand new ideas and to improve their performance. Because they listen attentively and respond enthusiastically, generally make good progress in the lessons. They respond well when others perform. For example, when Year 4 pupils sang in hymn practise, the rest of the pupils broke into spontaneous applause at the end. Pupils say that they enjoy performing for their parents and friends in special concerts and performances.
150. The quality of teaching is good. The learning activities are well planned to include a variety of interesting tasks that involve the pupils in practical activities. This helps them to sustain their interest throughout the lessons with the result that they make at least satisfactory progress in the lessons. Teachers organise the pupils and resources well and this means that the lesson moves at a good pace and no time is wasted. In lessons at Key Stage 1, pupils improve their ability to discriminate between the pitch of the sounds made by percussion instruments because of the way in which teachers build on pupils' earlier learning and make good use of a variety of activities to reinforce the pupils' understanding. The careful choice of recorded music to listen to and songs to sing is an important factor in the way that

pupils at Key Stage 2 gain confidence in listening to and appraising music and develop their singing skills.

151. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Since the last inspection, the co-ordinator has developed and implemented a policy and scheme of work and has adapted this in line with national guidance. The scheme of work provides a clear and detailed programme of work for each year group and enables pupils to build on their prior learning. It is well balanced and provides pupils with opportunities to listen to and appraise music as well as to perform and to compose music. This good guidance enables every teacher to take responsibility for class music lessons with confidence. The co-ordinator has good subject knowledge that enables her to provide training and support for her colleagues. She monitors lesson plans and hears pupils perform and is aware of the strengths and areas for improvement in the subject. There have been no opportunities for the co-ordinator to observe her colleagues teach music, but the headteacher has monitored some lessons and reported back to the co-ordinator. The co-ordinator provides good leadership for her colleagues.
152. The curriculum is enhanced by many opportunities for pupils to perform for their parents and friends in end-of-term concerts, a pantomime and special assemblies and services. Musicians visit the school to play for the pupils. Most recently, a percussion group have played. The pupils hear recorded music from many traditions. This makes a good contribution to their awareness of other cultures.
153. The curriculum is further enhanced by opportunities for all pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 to learn to play the recorder. A few pupils in Key Stage 2 learn to play the violin. This is very good quality provision and the pupils make good progress because of the teacher's high expectations. The school also provides facilities at the end of the school day for private keyboard lessons. The pupils receive a good level of individual attention during the group lessons and this enables them to make good progress. The pupils attending these instrumental lessons read convention notation and have a developing knowledge of musical terms. Some reach levels above those expected for their age.
154. There is a good range of resources of good quality. Every class has a box of percussion instruments and access to a wide range of tuned percussion and keyboards.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

155. During the inspection, it was possible only to see games and gymnastics lessons. Other evidence from teachers' planning, photographs and discussions with teachers and pupils shows that all aspects of the National Curriculum are taught. No athletics or dance lessons were observed. Swimming is not part of the school's provision but is taught at the middle schools.
156. By ages seven and nine, pupils appear to reach the levels expected nationally for their age. This maintains the position reported at the last inspection. In a gymnastics lesson, pupils in Year 2 suggested a variety of ways of travelling around the hall. They developed, for example, 'walking and bouncing' in which they demonstrated their understanding of needing to bend the knees to land safely. They worked successfully in small groups to try out, evaluate and modify sequences of movements. By the end of the lesson pupils had made good

progress and performed a simple sequence involving travelling, bouncing and jumping. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 worked very hard during a lesson taken by a coach from the local football club. They were very active and improved their skills in controlling the ball while moving into a space during the lesson.

157. As only one lesson taken by a teacher was observed, it is not possible to make a secure judgement on the quality of teaching but in the gymnastics lesson the quality of teaching was good. The lesson was well structured and there was good attention given to pupils' health and safety with the provision of 'warm up' and 'cool-down' activities. The teacher's good control of the pupils helped the lesson to move along at a good pace so that the pupils were physically active throughout. She used pupil demonstration well to show what she expected from the pupils and this helped to raise standards of performance in the lesson.
158. Pupils show enthusiasm for the subject. They work hard during the lessons and express enthusiasm in discussion. All pupils in the classes observed took part in the lessons energetically, dressed appropriately for both indoor and outdoor sessions and no pupils forgot their kit. This reflects their positive attitudes towards the subject and represents a significant improvement since the last inspection.
159. The subject policy has recently been reviewed to include changes made to the scheme of work. The scheme of work, derived from national guidance and commercial schemes, provides teachers with excellent support materials and guidance to help them to develop pupils' skills sequentially. The curriculum meets the statutory requirements.
160. The subject co-ordinator has been in post for one year. In this time documents have been redrafted to reflect and direct the practice and shortcomings in learning resources identified. The subject co-ordinator is aware that there are no formal assessment procedures in place to measure pupils' attainment and achievements. Work has started on producing a manageable assessment system by the end of the school year. Teachers make useful, informal notes of pupils' attainment that they use effectively to support their comments in the written reports to parents.
161. Although resources are adequate, the school development plan identifies a need to enhance the range and quantity of apparatus. Parents run after-school football sessions but there are no other extra-curricular opportunities for sporting activities. The school has good outdoor spaces for games and athletics and a good sized hall for gymnastics and dance.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

162. Judgements about standards and quality in religious education are based on the observation of two lessons at each Key Stage 2 and one lesson at Key Stage 1, the scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, an examination of teachers' planning and a discussion with the subject co-ordinator. Three acts of collective worship also contributed to the evidence for the subject.
163. Pupils at both key stages achieve levels in line with those expected for their age by the locally agreed syllabus. This is a good improvement since the last inspection, when pupils did not achieve the expected levels. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Most pupils, including those with special

education needs, make satisfactory gains in subject knowledge, skills and understanding throughout both key stages.

164. Pupils throughout Key Stage 1 appreciate what it means to own a special book. They know that the Bible is the religious book of all Christians and that it is important to believers. Pupils in Year 1 show good understanding when they dramatise the main events in the story of Mary Jones and her Bible. They learn about the importance of the Qu'ran to those of the Muslim faith and how they show respect for the holy book. There is evidence from the sample of pupils' work that the major Christian festivals are taught and that the children know the significant stories from both the Old and the New Testaments. For example, Year 2 pupils draw and label the key features of Christian celebrations and seasons. They write their own version of the parable of the lost sheep. They know some of the key roles of an Anglican vicar and the significance of the special clothes that priests wear. They know that there are important festivals for followers of other faiths and, for instance, learn about the Hindu festival of Diwali and some of the special ceremonies linked with it.
165. At Key Stage 2, pupils visit the Priory Church of St Peter, Dunstable and learn about the features of the church and their significance in worship and the Christian life. They draw and label diagrams to show features such as the font, the aisles, the altar and lectern. They also know that artefacts such as the Menorah lamp, the Torah and the star of David have significance for followers of Judaism. They know the main events in the story of Christ's baptism and that there are ceremonies involving water in other religions. For example, they learn the importance of washing rituals to followers of Islam and the use of water in the name ceremony in the Sikh faith. They extend their knowledge of Christian festivals including all Hallows and learn something of the story of Saint Christopher and how Christians see him as the protector of travellers.
166. Because it was only possible to see three lessons, no overall judgement on the quality of teaching is made. The quality of teaching in the small sample of lessons ranged from satisfactory to excellent. Where the teaching is excellent, the teacher has particular strengths in managing the pupils and in using questions to extend and assess pupils' understanding. As a result, pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 make excellent gains in understanding that the Bible is a guide to a Christian's way of life through dramatising the story of Mary Jones and her Bible. In all the lessons seen, teacher's planning shows what the pupils are to learn and the lessons build well on pupils' prior learning. Explanations are clear and teachers adapt the story of St Francis well to emphasise the main learning points for the lesson. At Key Stage 2, teachers sometimes miss opportunities to involve pupils in discussion or to challenge them through question and answer sessions. This slows the pace of learning. However, there is good improvement since the last inspection when the quality of teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory.
167. Pupils respond well to the teaching and have positive attitudes to the subject. They concentrate well and are confident to answer questions and to offer their ideas in discussion times when they are given the opportunity. When they have a written task to do, they work hard and present their work with care. This is an improvement since the last inspection when pupils response to teaching was satisfactory. Behaviour in the lessons seen was never less than good. Where the quality of teaching was excellent, the pupils' attitudes and behaviour were also

excellent because of the brisk pace of the lesson, the teacher's high expectations and her excellent rapport with the pupils.

168. The curriculum is well planned and meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. There is detailed guidance for each half term that is broken down into very useful weekly plans for each age group. What the children are to be taught is very clearly identified and there are helpful suggestions for activities to promote the learning. Each lesson builds well on the previous one ensuring that pupils have access to all parts of a well structured curriculum. There has been a marked improvement in the quality of the curriculum since the last inspection when plans for teaching were judged to be vague and inadequately related to the agreed syllabus.
169. The subject co-ordinator has worked hard and provided good leadership to bring about these improvements in the curriculum. She checks teachers' planning and examines samples of pupils' work to identify areas of strength and relative weakness in the provision. There have been a few opportunities for lesson observations and feedback to teachers on the quality of the teaching and learning, and this is targeted for development. Her very good subject knowledge enables the co-ordinator to provide her colleagues with good advice and support. She has developed a good range of resources of good quality to support the scheme of work.
170. Collective worship is used well to provide additional opportunities for pupils to reflect upon some of the religious themes they learn about in religious education. For example, during this term, Key Stage 1 pupils are learning about 'special books' and 'special things' and these are also used as themes for collective worship.
171. Overall there has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection.