

INSPECTION REPORT

DOVERY DOWN LOWER SCHOOL

Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109516

Headteacher: Chrissie Beckett

Reporting inspector: Brenda Iles
12000

Dates of inspection: 21st to 24th January 2002

Inspection number: 195838

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:	Heath Road Leighton Buzzard Bedfordshire
Postcode:	LU7 3AG
Telephone number:	01525 377233
Fax number:	01525 217663
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Bob Corcoran
Date of previous inspection:	9 th June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
12000	Brenda Iles	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities English as an additional language English Science Art and design Design and technology Religious education	The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught How well is the school led and managed What the school should do improve further
13526	Richard Barnard	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils How well does the school work in partnership with parents
20350	Vivien Davies	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Special educational needs Mathematics Information and communication technology (ICT) Geography History Music Physical education	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Doverly Down Lower School serves the market town of Leighton Buzzard in Bedfordshire. With 111 pupils (60 boys and 51 girls) aged from four to nine, it is much smaller than most primary schools. A below average number is eligible for free school meals. Very few pupils come from backgrounds beyond Europe and no pupils speak English as an additional language. Ten per cent of pupils are on the register of special educational needs, which is below average, and three pupils have statements, which is a high number for a school of this size. Six per cent of pupils joined or left the school at times other than the usual admission and transfer times during the last year, which is below average. Children start school at the start of the academic year in which they have their fifth birthday and attend school on a part time basis prior to the term in which they reach statutory school age. Thirteen children were in the reception year at the time of the inspection. There is a range of attainment on entry but overall it is above that of most children of this age. The majority of pupils live in the surrounding area in owner occupied housing and their social circumstances are above average. The school has experienced significant difficulty since the last inspection. The retirement of the headteacher, long-term illnesses and bereavements have led to discontinuity in management and teaching over a period of three years. These issues have now been addressed. The headteacher has been in post for four terms. The school is smaller than at the time of the last inspection.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The new headteacher and governors provide very good leadership and the quality of education has improved rapidly over the last four terms. Teaching is very good in the infants and satisfactory in the Years 3 and 4. Pupils achieve standards at seven that are well above average in reading, writing and science and by the time they leave the school standards are still above average. Despite setbacks, progress has been satisfactory overall since the last report and the school provides sound value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is very good with some excellent features
- Standards are well above average in English and aspects of science by the age of seven
- The headteacher and governors provide very good leadership and the school aims and school plan direct the school's work effectively
- Procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress are very good
- The partnership with parents is very good
- Attendance and punctuality are very good

What could be improved

- Teaching in Years 3 and 4, while satisfactory, is not consistently of a high enough standard
- Timetabling arrangements do not make the best use of available time to support learning across the foundation subjects
- The roles of most curriculum coordinators have not yet been sufficiently well developed.

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 experienced significant changes since it was inspected in June 1997. Staff retirement, illness and bereavement have delayed the pace of development. In the last four terms the new headteacher and governors have initiated rapid changes and very good progress has been made in restoring the school's reputation. Standards are now similar to those at the time of the last inspection.

There have been several staffing changes, the curriculum has been revised to provide clear structured guidance for teachers and the implementation of very good assessment procedures enable specific targets to be set for all pupils. The revised school aims drive improvement and the partnership with parents is now very strong. Parents strongly support the changes that have been made. Satisfactory progress has been made overall in addressing the key issues and restoring standards to those described in the last report. Standards of teaching in the juniors remain lower than the infant classes and the roles of most curriculum coordinators still need further development.

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	C	A	A	A
Writing	A	A	A	A
Mathematics	A	A	B	C

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

Teacher assessments in science in 2001 were also above average. Inspection evidence shows that standards in the current Year 2 continue to be well above average in reading and writing, and above average in mathematics. In science they are improving and achievements are frequently well above average, for example in investigative science. At nine, standards are generally above average in English, mathematics and science. Particular strengths are evident in reading and pupils' ability to articulate their knowledge and understanding across subjects. Across all classes standards in speaking are very high and the quality of reading is very good. The quality of writing in the infants is well above average and the proportion of pupils who achieve the higher levels is in the top five per cent of schools nationally. These strengths have a very positive influence on learning in other subjects. Both seven and nine-year-olds have very good knowledge and understanding of forces and living things.

The school identified underachievement in the juniors due to staffing issues that resulted in discontinuity in teaching and learning. Appropriate measures have been introduced to improve standards. Pupils currently in Year 4 are now progressing at a faster pace enabling them to make appropriate gains in learning by age nine. The issue of underachievement has been addressed. Pupils, including the more able and those with special educational needs, are given work that extends them in the important areas of literacy and numeracy. Standards in religious education are above local age related expectations for seven and nine-year-olds and in ICT they are average at both ages and improving rapidly. In the other subjects of the National Curriculum, standards in history are a strength being well above those of most seven-year-olds and above the expectations of nine-year-olds. In art and design and physical education pupils exceed the expectations for both age groups. In design and technology standards exceed age related expectations by age seven and match the expectations by age nine. Standards in geography match the expectations of seven and nine-year-olds. Insufficient evidence was available to judge overall standards in music; however, singing was joyous and tuneful.

The school has set challenging targets for each year group in its drive to raise standards. Inspection evidence shows the targets are likely to be met. Reception aged children make good progress and are likely to exceed the standards of most children at the end of the reception year. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils enjoy school and are enthusiastic about their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are good, pupils' independence and responsibility for learning is improving. Most pupils show good respect for others.
Attendance	Attendance is very good.

Pupils and adults value the welcoming, caring ethos. Good relationships promote trust and respect enabling pupils and staff to support each other. There are a few occasions when pupils do not use their initiative well enough.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The teaching is consistently good in the reception class. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is a strength of the school; most of the teaching seen was either very good or excellent and the remainder was good. In Years 3 and 4 almost half the lessons were good, a further third were satisfactory and the remainder were unsatisfactory. The teaching of literacy is a strength and teaching of numeracy, while mainly good, it is more variable. Unsatisfactory teaching was observed in the juniors where there are weaknesses in behaviour management and in classroom organisation. Teachers have good subject knowledge and challenge higher attaining pupils well. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught. Target setting for individual pupils is effectively supporting raising standards.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum for all age groups is of good quality. Timetabling arrangements result in lessons in some subjects being too long.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good; pupils are well supported and fully included in school life.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good; staff provide good role models, promoting positive values, self-esteem and care for others.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils are well cared for and adults have a good knowledge of individual needs.

The curriculum is of good quality for all age groups and the national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been implemented effectively. Progress in developing ICT is effective but more time is needed for provision to impact on the standards pupils achieve. Individual targets help pupils to understand what they need to learn next. Parents receive very good information to enable them to support their children's learning and the partnership with parents is very good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides strong caring leadership. She is well supported by staff and teamwork supports school improvement well. The role of coordinators is not well developed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors provide very good support and offer a high level of support and commitment. They fulfil their duties to a high standard.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school plan identifies priorities accurately. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are systematic and thorough.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are used appropriately and effectively support teaching and learning.

The headteacher and governors have effectively moved the school forward in a short period of time. The aims and school plan direct the pace of change and are carefully matched to priorities, realistic timescales and success criteria. The significant budget deficit has been turned around and the school's capacity to succeed is very good. Financial management is excellent. The quality of education is improving rapidly and the principles of best value are applied well. The school provides sound value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school • The standards their children achieve • The strong leadership of the headteacher • The caring ethos and welcoming approach • Good behaviour and the care children receive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities to support the curriculum

Parents feel strongly that the school has improved significantly under the new leadership and direction of the headteacher and governors and are very supportive of the changes that have been made and the improvement in standards at ages seven and nine. Inspectors support parents' positive comments. A very small number of parents would welcome more activities to support the curriculum. The educational and residential visits, sporting opportunities and after school club support learning well and the range is appropriate for a school of this size.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children's achievements when they enter school are above average in the important areas of language and mathematical understanding and in their knowledge and understanding of their environment. In other areas their achievements are similar to those of most four-year-olds.
2. Reception aged children enjoy their learning and make good progress because teaching is imaginative and activities are fun. The most recent baseline assessment results have been used to identify children who are more able and those who may require additional support. This practice supports pupils to achieve highly by the age of seven. Priority is placed on developing social independence. The skills of language and communication, and mathematics are well linked to a broad range of experiences so the children make good use of their learning within practical activities. They cooperate and share and gradually learn to work in collaboration with each other. The children benefit from structured opportunities to listen to stories and join in discussions. Both literacy and numeracy skills are well developed and many children eagerly write their names and simple sentences by the end of the reception year. They count numbers beyond ten and know the names of shapes in their classroom. They have a good knowledge and understanding of their environment and physical and creative aspects are developing appropriately as children practise skills such as cutting and manipulating equipment.
3. The 2001 National Curriculum test results for seven-year-olds showed attainment was well above average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. According to statutory teacher assessments standards in science were also above average. Trends over time show the school performs consistently higher than schools nationally. When results are compared to schools with similar entitlement to free school meals, achievements were well above average in reading and writing and average in mathematics. The proportions of pupils attaining the higher levels were in the top five per cent of schools in writing and also well above average in reading and mathematics. Teacher assessments in science show more pupils than average achieve the higher levels.
4. Following disruptions in teaching and learning, due to serious staffing issues, the school identified underachievement in the junior classes. Steps were taken to address this concern and promote higher achievement. The headteacher, subject coordinators for literacy and mathematics, governors and local authority have monitored teaching and learning in both literacy and numeracy. Teaching strategies have been reviewed and areas for improvement have been identified. Teaching is now very good in Years 1 and 2. The analysis of pupils' work currently in Year 2 shows standards are of the high standard reflected in the test results with improvement evident in science. Pupils' scientific knowledge and understanding frequently exceeds that of most seven-year-olds. Progress is slower in the junior classes because teaching, while mainly good in Year 4, is not of the same consistent high quality. However, teachers challenge higher attaining pupils appropriately and teaching assistants provide good support, ensuring pupils with special educational needs reach their potential. The headteacher also offers very good support and guidance. All pupils achieve at least the expected levels and attainment overall is above average in English, mathematics and science. Inspection evidence confirms that the

proportions of pupils likely to achieve the higher levels compare favourably with the prior attainment of pupils when aged seven. Parents provide very good support to their children and homework makes a valuable contribution to learning. All pupils have targets to reach in literacy and numeracy which support raising standards well. The issue of underachievement of more able pupils raised in the last report has been addressed successfully. Standards of pupils currently in Year 4 are well above average in speaking and listening and reading and above average in writing, mathematics and science. Progress since the last report has been satisfactory overall when the disruptions to teaching and learning are taken into account. The school has done well to restore the standards of nine-year-olds to the levels described in the last report.

5. The school is striving to raise standards even higher. The practice of monitoring the progress of groups of pupils is developing well. New, local data is being used to compare and analyse progress from year to year and to review and improve practice. This represents very good improvement since the last report. For example, governors have made a thorough analysis of school results and compared them with local schools in their efforts to provide the best value from available resources.
6. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress across all stages of learning. Progress in lessons is good because tasks are well matched to pupils' differing needs. Pupils who have statements of special educational needs are supported well through the targets set in their individual education plans. The teaching assistants provide valuable help to ensure these pupils are fully included in lessons. They ensure pupils understand what to do and sensitively encourage them to answer questions and complete their tasks, raising self-esteem and confidence. There are no pupils who speak English as an additional language and the school supports well the very small proportion of pupils who are of non-European heritage.
7. Because teaching is of very good quality in Years 1 and 2 the pupils learn at a fast rate. Teachers plan work which is challenging, the pace of lessons is fast and pupils are told precisely what they are expected to achieve by the end of the lessons. Teachers use subject vocabulary precisely and pupils are expected to use these terms in discussions from the earliest stages of their education. The strategies for literacy and numeracy have been implemented effectively and consequently pupils attain standards which are frequently well above average in speaking, listening, reading, writing, mathematics and science.
8. Learning is not as rapid in the junior classes. This is because the quality of teaching, while satisfactory overall and frequently good in Year 4, is not as strong, particularly in Year 3. Timetabling arrangements often result in lessons which are too long, for example in subjects such as science and design and technology and this leads to a slower pace of learning because pupils are unable to sustain high levels of motivation. The allocation of time to teaching science for eight and nine year olds is lower than average and may contribute to the slower pace to learning in Years 3 and 4. Weaknesses in a small number of lessons in mathematics and design and technology were evident in classroom organisation and management and inconsistent approaches in dealing with a small amount of disruptive behaviour. Good use is made of teaching assistants to support learning in the basic skills. Assessment information is also used effectively by teachers to plan lessons and activities and to set precise learning targets with the pupils. This enables pupils to have a good knowledge of their successes and areas to improve. The pace of learning is faster in Year 4 where there is a higher proportion of good teaching. Consequently, standards improve again by the age of nine.

9. Inspection evidence shows that standards in ICT are average at seven and nine. The curriculum is well implemented and teaching assistants provide very good support to teaching and learning. The new computer suite is used effectively, activities are well linked to literacy and numeracy, and as this new practice continues to develop, standards are likely to rise further.
10. In the other subjects of the National Curriculum standards in history, art and physical education exceed the expectations of seven and nine year olds. Standards in history are a significant strength in Years 1 and 2. In design and technology standards exceed age related expectations by age seven and match the expectations by age nine. Standards in geography match the expectations of seven and nine-year-olds. Insufficient evidence was available to judge standards in music. Information about the strengths and weaknesses of pupils' knowledge and understanding in these subjects, is included in the paragraph in 'Section D' of the report.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupils' positive attitudes to school, good behaviour, relationships, and levels of personal development, supported by very good levels of attendance have a positive impact on their achievements. Standards have been maintained at similar levels to those described in the previous inspection report. Pupils are very keen to come to school and talk with friendly enthusiasm about their activities and their learning.
12. The youngest children in the Foundation Stage have settled into school well. They have very quickly adapted to routines and pay very good attention in lessons. They take great pride in their work, for example, when a group eagerly showed their teacher pictures they had produced when working in the computer suite with a classroom assistant.
13. Throughout the school pupils are usually eager to learn and listen and they concentrate well. In the reception and infant classes attitudes are consistently good and in about half the lessons, when teaching is very good, they show even greater enthusiasm. For example, in Year 1 the enthusiasm of the teacher really motivated pupils as they keenly explored books to discover what life was like in the past. In Years 3 and 4 attitudes are not as consistently good. On a few occasions concentration and application wanes when lessons are too long and not sufficiently interesting. Pupils with special educational needs like school and behave well. They have very good relationships with the adults who support them and this makes a very positive contribution to their self- esteem, confidence and pace of learning.
14. Behaviour is good. A small number of pupils misbehave in lessons in Years 3 and 4, where social independence is not as strong and the school's behaviour policy is not consistently applied. Pupils continue to seek adult attention rather than taking decisions for themselves and show disrespectful tendencies to others, for example, calling out in lessons rather than waiting their turn to contribute. This has been a recent focus for improvement. Most pupils have adapted well to the higher expectations that are being made of them and this is a reason why younger pupils now take greater responsibility for their behaviour and learning. No pupils have been excluded over the last two years, a figure well below the national average. Pupils have a good sense of fairness and are developing a good awareness of the impact of their actions on others. Staff, governors and pupils all feel that the school's efforts to increase pupils' personal responsibility are very effective. No bullying, racist or sexist

behaviour was observed during the inspection and pupils show no concerns in these areas. Behaviour at lunchtimes and in the playground is very good.

15. Personal development is good. All pupils undertake duties and responsibilities keenly. Pupils are gaining in self-confidence but a small number continue to struggle to work independently in Years 3 and 4. The use of circle time is having a positive impact in this area. The provision of a "friendship bus stop" in the playground, an idea raised by Year 4 pupils last year, is much valued by the current pupils. Good interactions between pupils and teachers have a positive impact on learning. Pupils are developing a very good appreciation of each others' efforts. In a Year 2 physical education lesson, appreciative applause spurred others on to improve their performance in rolling and twisting floor exercises.
16. Attendance rates are very good being well above the average for primary schools. Pupils arrive promptly enabling lessons to start on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT

17. Teaching was of good quality in nearly half the lessons and similar to that described in the last report. Almost two in ten lessons were very good and one lesson in ten was excellent. The remainder was mainly satisfactory. Where teaching was satisfactory, timing and pace lacked the rigour evident in more successful lessons. Three unsatisfactory lessons were observed in the junior classes. The weaknesses were in inconsistent behaviour management and classroom organisation and management. The teaching of literacy is good and in Years 1 and 2 it is excellent. In numeracy, teaching is good overall, but two unsatisfactory lessons were observed in the teaching of pupils in Years 3 and 4.
18. The quality of teaching is consistently good in the reception class and on occasion it is very good. The teacher plans activities with great care and ensures the needs of all children are well met. Her good knowledge of their needs and calm reassuring manner ensure children settle quickly into their daily routines and enjoy their learning. Expectations are high and very good use is made of the teaching assistant. Very good liaison with the teacher in Year 1 ensures that children who attend school on a full time basis are integrated successfully with Year 1 in the afternoons. The teaching assistants provide very good pastoral support and this ensures very good continuity between morning and afternoon sessions.
19. In the infant classes, two thirds of lessons seen were very good or excellent and the remainder were good. Teaching in these classes is a significant strength of the school. Teachers work in close partnership and planning is detailed and thorough. Learning objectives are communicated very precisely, subject language is used effectively and expectations of what can be achieved are very high. These high expectations and the very good balance of practical and structured lessons provides an interesting range of approaches to teaching and learning. Pupils look forward to their lessons and are frequently disappointed when they come to an end. This was evident in Year 2 when pupils went out to play considering how the story they had listened to might end. In a science lesson in Year 1 pupils investigated changes made to objects by pushing, pulling and squeezing. Through introducing good recording opportunities the pupils independently showed the changes made to these objects. They learned that some objects reverted to their original shapes once pressure was removed and that others did not. The teacher insisted on careful recording, encouraged pupils to predict and describe the outcomes of their tests and helped them to draw conclusions from the experiences. This resulted in pupils

achieving standards which were well above average. Through very good assessment procedures progress in learning is measured regularly and pupils have targets for learning in literacy and numeracy which enable them to understand how to improve. The quality of marking is also very good and shows pupils when the teacher is pleased with their work and areas they need to develop next.

20. In Years 3 and 4 almost half the lessons seen were good and a further one third were satisfactory. Three unsatisfactory lessons were observed. Weaknesses in teaching, particularly in mathematics lessons in Years 3 and 4 arise because the school's strategies for managing behaviour are not consistently well implemented and classroom organisation is not managed well enough. The pace of learning was not fast enough, interruptions impeded progress and expectations were consequently not met in full. In another lesson in design and technology in Year 3 a small number of pupils rudely interrupted the lesson and the teacher did not deal with this effectively. Interruptions again impeded the pace of learning; the practical task, which involved pupils investigating the impact of applying pressure on syringes, was not organised well enough and resulted in immature behaviour.
21. The headteacher, local authority and core subject coordinators have carefully monitored teaching over the last four terms. Support strategies have been devised and there is evidence that the quality of teaching has improved. The school plans to maintain this support and rigorous monitoring to raise the quality of teaching for this age range higher. An additional factor that inhibits teaching in Years 3 and 4 is the cramped accommodation. Small teaching areas, out of adult vision, create organisation and management difficulties and require review. These weaknesses in teaching are a key issue for the school to address.
22. The teaching of literacy is a strength. Teachers promote a wide range of literature which results in a love of books in all year groups. Writing is of a very high standard in Years 1 and 2. This is because pupils are taught to use a joined style from a very early stage, spellings and phonics are linked to writing practice and pupils are encouraged to use a broad range of language. They understand the important links between reading and writing. Teachers ensure the focus for writing is clear, guidance is specific and consequently work is imaginative and very well presented. In Years 3 and 4 pupils continue to develop subject vocabulary to a high level. Writing for different purposes is also linked to subjects such as history, design and technology and science. Because vocabulary is discussed and reinforced, pupils confidently use terms such as 'air resistance', 'fact' and 'opinion'. The majority of pupils plan their writing independently and understand the importance of structure. While the content of their work is interesting and often of very good quality the quality of presentation is not as consistently high as in Years 1 and 2. Good cross-curricular links are made with other subjects. For example, ICT is carefully linked to work in literacy, numeracy and science.
23. Across the school, teachers have good subject knowledge, although there is room for improvement in mathematics in the older classes. Staff enjoy good relationships with pupils, providing positive role models and encouraging pupils to support each other and to work collaboratively. Teaching assistants support teaching and learning well, ensuring the needs of different ability groups are met. The use of precise questions matched to the needs of individual pupils across the ability range, including those with special needs, enables all pupils to be fully included in lessons and to feel valued.
24. The school meets the requirements of special educational needs pupils well. Teachers understand how to present work at the correct level for the pupils. In all

classes teachers use individual education plans well to set precise targets and detail activities to achieve these targets within a short time span. This is linked to good progress. Teachers and teaching assistants ensure pupils are fully included in school life. Teaching assistants provide valuable support. They work in close partnership with teachers and are clear of the level of intervention and support that is appropriate for pupils. Target setting for individual pupils is supporting raising standards well. A minor weakness lies in the language used in written targets in Years 3 and 4. Words and phrases are at times too difficult for children to understand and need to be presented in language that is more easily understood. In spite of this most pupils understood the progress they have made and the next steps to take because there is a good dialogue between teachers and parents.

25. A weakness in the teaching is the timetabling arrangements. This contributes to the lower standard of teaching in Years 3 and 4. The allocation of time to lessons in subjects such as design and technology and science is frequently too long. Some lessons are over an hour in length and this results in a loss of pace and motivation. This is an issue for the school to review.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS

26. The school has recently developed a broad curriculum of good quality that fulfils all statutory requirements and meets the needs of all its pupils. It enables the pupils to take part in a range of relevant experiences that support their learning and personal and social development. The senior management team has, since the appointment of the new headteacher, devoted a significant amount of time over the last four terms to producing clear policies and planning frameworks for the teaching of all subjects. This is a major driving force in the school's rapid improvement and linked very closely to the school's aims. Effective use has been made of national guidance to revive a previously neglected school curriculum. The provision is now better than that described in the previous inspection report when provision for subjects such as design and technology and religious education was criticised.
27. Appropriate emphasis is placed on teaching English and mathematics. The national literacy and numeracy strategies have been successfully implemented recently and this has resulted in teachers working hard to improve pupils' attainment in both subjects. Literacy has been a school focus since the appointment of a new co-ordinator and the curriculum is secure. The teaching of numeracy has some shortcomings which the school is already addressing. The implementation of new guidance for the Foundation Stage is effective and carefully managed and monitored. The time allocation within the weekly timetables is not always well balanced. Some lessons, such as science in Years 3 and 4 and gymnastics in Year 1, are too long. In addition the allocation of time to science for eight and nine year olds is lower than average and may contribute to the slower pace to learning in Years 3 and 4. The curriculum offers a wide range of interesting activities. In music, for example, Year 4 pupils have formed their own bands. ICT is linked well to other subjects such as art, history and geography. This provides a valuable additional dimension to the pupils' learning. The scheme of work for religious education meets the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus.
28. The range of educational visits is good and provides stimulating first hand experience. Pupils are currently preparing for a three-day field trip to Sayers Croft in Surrey. Recently, Year 4 pupils visited St Albans. This visit made a strong contribution to the understanding of the Roman topic the pupils were studying. The beautiful school

woodland is utilised during the Saxon topic to provide experience of cooking with firewood. Visitors, too, help to enliven aspects of certain studies. For instance, a visitor extended knowledge and understanding of the Island of Tobago with a class of older pupils which enhanced the work currently focussed on St Lucia. These experiences, as well as being enjoyed by the pupils, have made very effective contributions to the development of the pupils' social skills and cultural understanding. A good range of extra-curricular clubs is well supported by the pupils who enjoy sharing interests with others across the age range. Clubs are run by parents at lunchtime and include jigsaw and recorders. There is a lively stay and play club after school which is open to pupils from a neighbouring school. A programme of sporting activities includes a football club, run by parents who have trained as coaches for the purpose. This club meets on Saturday morning and is very well supported. Any child who attends regularly is sure of a game. Parents acknowledge and praise the school's efforts in providing such a varied range of interesting activities. Good peripatetic music tuition is also available.

29. The school is committed to fostering the pupils' all round development. There is provision for sex education and for raising the pupils' awareness to the dangers of the misuse of drugs including medicines. 'Circle Time', where the pupils talk about issues relevant to them personally and to their life in school, has a carefully dedicated slot in the weekly curriculum in all but one class. Provision to ensure all pupils are included in the range of activities the school offers are very good. An exciting new initiative, organised through the local cluster of schools, supports the development of self-esteem well, through a structured programme of discussions with a trained and skilled teacher. Aspects of school worship effectively support the all round efforts to raise the pupils' self esteem through praising their good work and their broader contributions to the life of the school. Celebration assembly is open to family and community members. Pupils can be nominated for special awards through a mention in 'the green book'. Children also have an opportunity to nominate class mates for these awards. Pupils also receive praise for aspects of work and behaviour that are rewarded by stickers.
30. The teachers have a keen awareness of the very wide-ranging needs of the pupils in the school. The provision for pupils with special educational needs, including some with considerable emotional and behavioural difficulties, is good because the school has an ethos that is strongly inclusive. The staff strive to ensure full access to the curriculum for all their pupils. Teaching assistants are very good at anticipating need and supporting and encouraging independence. Pupils' special educational needs are well catered for in literacy and numeracy through skilled support, precise education plans and the setting of achievable targets.
31. The provision made to foster the pupils' spiritual development is good. The pupils have opportunities to focus on some of the larger questions of life during school assemblies where their self-esteem is consistently raised through reference to their personal and academic achievements. Assemblies are held on a variety of themes planned throughout the year. During the inspection, the theme of the week was friendship. There are very good and developing opportunities for reflection and experiencing the awe and wonder associated with the development of spiritual awareness. Pupils celebrate the Christian festivals of harvest, Christmas and Easter, and are made aware of many celebrations in other faiths, for example Diwali, Eid, Holi, and Ramadan. The attention given to artistic displays throughout the school contributes to spirituality and the school's good ethos.

32. The provision for the pupils' moral development is strong. A clear and consistent ethos permeates the work of the school. The pupils are expected to know the difference between right and wrong and are consistently helped to acquire an appropriate range of moral principles. The teachers have high expectations of their pupils. There are effective policies and approaches for managing behaviour, which are applied consistently with the exception of Year 3. Adults provide very good role models for the pupils. They treat them with respect, provide clear expectations and miss no opportunities to praise them. They also provide small, regular opportunities for the pupils to assume routine responsibilities around the school. Most pupils enjoy giving out resources, tidying book displays and collecting registers.
33. The provision for pupils' social development is good. Social skills are developed successfully during lessons, breaks, clubs, school visits and links with the community. The staff has worked hard to build up an awareness of the school as a community where each member is valued. Pupils are expected to care for their surroundings and to take responsibility for classroom equipment. Pupils of all age groups are encouraged to work in pairs and small groups, and to undertake special responsibilities. Pupils help as monitors in the classroom. The school is building strong links with local nurseries and has strengthened its links with its neighbouring middle school. Previously pupils were fearful of the new school but last year pupils made the move with much greater confidence due to some careful preparation by their teacher. The schools collaborate effectively to ensure that transfer arrangements work well. The school values the personal meetings with the middle school to ensure that they get a clear, well-rounded picture of their future pupils. The school has very good links with the community and has provided an art display for the local library. There are close links with local churches and religious groups who offer very good, lively contributions to school assembly. Local shops and businesses support the school in a variety of ways, for example by telephoning if a pupil has behaved very politely in a shop. Pupils have recently visited a local residential care facility for elderly people to offer entertainment. The school is beginning to develop its links with the wider community through its use of the Internet and e-mail.
34. The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. All pupils are encouraged to appreciate and celebrate their own culture through the work of artists and through listening to and appreciating music and taking part in cultural events including country dancing. The school provides a good range of cultural experiences through visits to places of interest. The literacy hour is successfully introducing pupils to a range of authors from around the world. Through history lessons pupils appreciate how life has changed. The school is working hard to promote the pupils' awareness of other cultures. For example, in one assembly, an African dance troupe, 'the Mighty Zulu Nation', enthralled pupils with their dancing and story telling. Pupils are beginning to use the Internet to find out more about other cultures. This was a key issue at the last inspection and has been addressed well.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS

35. Pupils are well cared for and staff have a good knowledge of individual pupils. The very good level of personal support allows pupils to be secure and develop confident attitudes to learning. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection in spite of the large turnover in staff.
36. Procedures and awareness in relation to child protection are good. The headteacher rightly recognises the importance of regular training to raise awareness of potential issues. Pupils' personal development is monitored very well. Staff know the pupils

and their backgrounds well and this enables them to give very good individual support. Personal needs are managed effectively. Good procedures help pupils to settle well in reception classes. An adequate number of staff is first aid trained and sick or injured children are cared for well. Health and safety procedures and monitoring are very good. First aid and accident procedures are also very good. The school is clean, tidy and secure.

37. The school has a very good behaviour policy. The strong emphasis on developing pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence is having a positive impact especially on the younger pupils. Not all staff are applying the policy consistently in lessons where occasionally standards drop. Initiatives such as 'celebration assemblies', the use of circle time and playground activities are very successful in promoting good behaviour and pupils' personal development. Potential issues are dealt with well and parents and pupils feel confident that the school handles issues such as potential bullying effectively. Any incidents are monitored and recorded very carefully. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very thorough and contribute well to the very good overall levels of attendance.
38. Children in the Foundation Stage are very well cared for. There are very good induction procedures for both children and parents including a recently published starting school booklet. The children settle quickly and happily into the routines of the classroom. Parents have very good opportunities in the mornings to speak informally to staff about any small matters of concern. This continues in Years 1 and 2. The children quickly learn what is expected of them and staff reinforce good work and behaviour with praise. There are very good systems for assessing and monitoring the children's abilities and progress based on careful observation and discussion.
39. Educational support and guidance are very good in nearly every class because teachers are very committed to their pupils, know them very well, respect them and are working with the pupil on an agenda of academic and personal development. Targets are used very well to support pupils in all these aspects. The school focuses very firmly on supporting pupils' personal development. There are very good planned opportunities for focus on personal development during assembly, circle time and personal, social and health education. The school makes very good use of school trips, including residential visits, to enhance provision in this area.
40. Pupils are very clear about how good their work is because teachers mark regularly and write clear comments. The school has recently introduced very thorough procedures for measuring attainment in literacy and numeracy through an annual programme of tests in all classes. Clear assessments, though less detailed, are made for all subjects. The results are used to monitor the progress of individuals and year groups. They also form the basis of the school's target setting procedures particularly in English and mathematics. Gender differences are also noted. The school's analysis of test data is well developed so teachers know which aspects of the subjects pupils find difficult. This information, alongside good lesson evaluation, is used well in planning to improve teaching activities so that they are more effective. Pupils have targets so they know what they need to do to improve. In some cases target language could be more child-friendly. Individual pupil targets are now set each term and reviewed with both pupil and parents. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
41. Pupils with special educational needs take part in all aspects of school life and receive a good level of support, both personal and academic. There are effective links with outside agencies. Statements of special educational needs are fully

implemented. The school takes part in a local initiative to support the inclusion of all pupils in the breadth of opportunities it offers. This is already proving a successful way of raising confidence and self-esteem.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

42. The partnership with parents is very good and has a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes to school and their learning. This is an improvement on the good partnership described at the time of the last inspection, and reflects the considerable efforts of the headteacher, staff and governors over the last four terms to rebuild parental confidence. The success of these efforts is shown in the very positive views given by parents in the pre-inspection meeting and parental questionnaires. They feel their children like school, achieve high standards and behave well. They praise the leadership of the headteacher, the standards of care and the ethos of the school. Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. A very small number of parents wanted more activities to support the curriculum. Inspectors feel the school provides an appropriate range of educational and residential visits, sporting and musical activities and after school play care for the age range.
43. The school provides parents with very good information about their children's progress, the life of the school and encouragement to be involved in their children's education, especially through the regular newsletters and curriculum evenings which have helped parents to understand how literacy and numeracy are taught. Annual reports are very good, especially in relation to targets for development. Pupils' self-evaluations are a very strong feature. For example, a Year 1 pupil wrote; "Now I would like to be able to read chapter books." The school provides an open door to parents. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are given good encouragement to support their children and contribute to formulating statements of special educational needs. The newly appointed co-ordinator has significantly improved this aspect of the provision.
44. Parents are involved very well in their children's education by supporting homework, ensuring their regular and prompt attendance, providing very good help in the classroom, attending consultation sessions and fundraising through the Parents Association. Parents are making a significant contribution to school improvement both through their day-to-day involvement and through the contribution of parent governors.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED

45. The headteacher provides very good leadership and together with the staff and governors the school aims and priorities for school improvement have been reviewed. There is now a clear direction for the work of the school and the pace of change in the last four terms has been rapid. There have been several staffing changes and new appointments have been made successfully. The team of staff and governors now work in close partnership and the commitment and capacity to move the school forward is very good. The school has experienced a falling roll recently but this trend is reversing as communication with the community improves and parents' views of the school are strongly supportive.
46. Management roles and responsibilities have been reviewed and in line with performance management procedures targets have been set to support professional development. Job descriptions and roles and responsibilities have been negotiated and staff are clear of their strengths and weaknesses and the steps which are

needed to maintain and develop their subjects. As in most small schools, staff manage several subjects. Courses have been identified to ensure that staff receive the training they need. They are enthusiastic and well motivated but most have not yet had the opportunity to lead and manage training and development. The school sensibly took the decision to review the important areas of literacy and numeracy and ICT to raise standards higher. The school improvement plan identifies clearly when subjects and aspects such as science and special educational needs will be the focus for development. The coordinators for English and special educational needs provide good leadership and their plans to review provision and make improvements are also of good quality. The headteacher supports new initiatives and encourages staff to manage and develop their roles. The successful revision of the curriculum and introduction of new procedures for assessment by a senior teacher have enabled the school to move forward at a rapid pace.

47. The special educational needs co-ordinator has carried out her responsibilities well. She is inexperienced and looking forward to receiving training so that she can carry out the management and administrative aspects of her role with greater confidence. Monitoring of statements and individual education plans has been effective. Learning support assistants are given good access to training and support.
48. The structured programme for monitoring and evaluation involves senior staff, coordinators, governors and the local authority. Each subject has an action plan to ensure on going maintenance of the foundation subjects and religious education. While the quality of the plans is more detailed for core subjects this practice is successful and provides teachers with a clear time related programme of development priorities over a year. There is a high level of respect for the new headteacher and optimism for the future.
49. Very good progress has been made in the last four terms to restore the school to the position described in the last report. Governors have given a high level of commitment to support the school and address areas of concern. Many are new to their responsibilities but have quickly utilised their individual strengths to address matters such as the large budget deficit. This has been turned around through prudent expenditure and the headteacher's commitment to cover any staff absences. The budget is now in a healthy position to maintain current teaching ratios until the pupil numbers rise again next year. Financial control is excellent. The governors' finance committee and headteacher are responsible for the budget and day-to-day expenditure and is very well supported by the school administrative staff. Spending records and accounts are monitored meticulously. Financial statements are prepared regularly for governors and the school fund is audited annually. All issues raised in the last auditors' report have been addressed.
50. Overall, satisfactory progress has been made in addressing the key issues raised in the last report. The school aims successfully drive the school's work and spiritual and moral provision is now good. Assessment procedures are used well to monitor standards. The quality of teaching in Years 3 and 4 remains below the standard observed in Years 1 and 2 and coordinators have not yet developed their roles fully. There remains room for improvement in these areas and they continue to be areas for the school to address.
51. Governors are committed and enthusiastic and regularly attend training courses to improve their knowledge. They have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and their involvement in monitoring and evaluation enables them to recognise the impact of their decisions on the quality of education.

The principles of best value are applied very well. Through careful analysis of local data the governors compare the school's standards with local competitors. Links with local companies are also encouraging partnership initiatives which benefit the provision. The committees are organised to make the best use of individual strengths and interests. The chair meets very regularly with the headteacher and there is very effective communication with staff and parents.

52. The school accommodation is clean and well ordered and the new caretaker and cleaning staff have worked conscientiously to restore this level of maintenance. There is a rolling programme of repairs and maintenance drawn up by governors following regular health and safety checks. Some window frames are in poor condition and need replacing and the accommodation for Years 3 and 4 is cramped. The outdoor provision offers a large field and attractive woodland. The adjacent building has a leaking roof and is damp. Governors are seeking funding through an environmental initiative in partnership with local industry to restore the building. Learning resources are generally of good quality and support the curriculum. An active parent and teacher group supports the school's resources through fundraising.
53. The school is improving rapidly, successfully meets its aims and pupils enjoy school and their learning.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

In order to further improve the standards of attainment and quality of education, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- *Improve the quality of teaching in Years 3 and 4 by:
 - ensuring a consistent approach to behaviour management;
 - developing a broader range of strategies for classroom organisation and management;
 - completing the training for and fully applying the National Numeracy Strategy to lessons.
 - ensuring lesson objectives and targets are consistently made clear to pupils so they understand the purpose of their learning;
 - reviewing the use of accommodation to make the best use of the space available.

Paragraphs: 4, 8, 17, 20-24, 27, 32, 40, 70, 76-79, 83-84, 98.

- Review timetabling arrangements to avoid lessons that are too long to sustain the interest and enthusiasm of teachers and pupils.

Paragraphs: 25, 27, 83, 98, 102.

The headteacher and governors should consider the following minor issues for inclusion in the action plan:

- *Review the allocation of time to teaching science in Years 3 and 4.
Paragraphs: 27, 83, 85
- *Develop the leadership and management skills of coordinators by:
 - providing training opportunities matched to their new roles and responsibilities
Paragraphs: 46, 85, 102.

*** Indicates that the school is aware of the issue and has included it in its school development plan**

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	32
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	17

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	6	15	5	3	0	0
Percentage	9	18	48	16	9	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100, use only the first sentence.]

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)		108
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR-Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		10

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	4.7
National comparative data	5.6

	%
School data	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)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	20	11	31

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	18	19
	Girls	11	11	11
	Total	30	29	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (96)	94 (100)	97 (100)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	18	19	19
	Girls	11	11	11
	Total	29	30	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (100)	97 (100)	97 (100)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	1
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	88
Any other minority ethnic group	10

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR-Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18
Average class size	22

Education support staff: YR-Y4

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	70.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	305,970
Total expenditure	275,248
Expenditure per pupil	2,548
Balance brought forward from previous year	(3593)
Balance carried forward to next year	27,129

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	8

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	111
Number of questionnaires returned	62

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	81	18	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	69	27	2	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	71	26	2	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	47	45	6	0	2
The teaching is good.	71	27	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	47	47	6	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	82	18	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	24	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	56	37	6	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	71	29	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	73	26	0	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39	40	11	0	10

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

54. Children enter the reception class in the September of the year in which they are five. They attend part time until their fifth birthday. On entry the majority of children demonstrate standards of attainment that are above average for their age. Most have attended a nursery or local playgroup. The setting is very warm, caring, and has a positive ethos. Their own teacher teaches the class in the morning. In the afternoon the small number of full time children and their learning support assistant join Year 1 pupils. The teaching observed was consistently good with very good examples observed in both the morning and afternoon sessions. The teachers are warm and caring and children relate very positively to them. The curriculum is rich, well balanced and very well planned. The activities are well matched to the children's needs. The teachers direct the choice of activity. Within this framework, opportunities for children to choose for themselves are good. The activities are of very good quality and generally great fun. The planning is clearly focused; it takes into account what the children already know and extends it. The teachers make detailed assessments and with the very effective support of the other staff members ensure that all children are well challenged in their learning. As a result, they receive a very positive introduction to school, and by the time they reach the end of their reception year, all have made good progress. Most of them exceed the levels of attainment appropriate to this age group in all areas of learning. This is similar to the last inspection. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is also good and their needs are identified and appropriately supported at an early stage.

Personal, social and emotional development

55. The good teaching ensures that the children's attainment in personal and social development improves well during their time in the reception class. In one lesson children were able to talk about 'Plop the Owl' and share his feelings while exploring their own reactions. The children are well behaved and enthusiastic, and are able to concentrate hard. Children are kind and caring towards each other. In lessons they demonstrate that they know that pets also need care. They learn to take turns and to listen to each other. They have opportunities for role-play in the "home corner" and in areas such as the 'office'. The teacher creates a stimulating environment and atmosphere where each child is made to feel special. Expectations in regard to their work and behaviour are high, and the children are cheerful and eager to please.

Communication, Language and literacy

56. Encouraged by good teaching, the children's attainment in this aspect of their work is above the expectations for their age. They are confident, articulate and respond well to their teacher's questions. In all sessions, the children are encouraged to develop their vocabulary, to listen carefully and to show respect for each other's views. They recognise many simple words and phonic sounds at the beginning and end of words. They understand the stories and can predict what might happen next, for example when reading 'The Snowman'. Some read simple text fluently and accurately. The children enjoy books and like to talk about them; they know what an author and a title page are. They can write their names and most copy the teacher's writing with few mistakes. They are beginning to understand sentences. The potentially higher attaining children begin to write on their own and make good attempts at spelling 'new' words. Teachers use books very well. Simple resources are used to turn a lesson

on sentences into a game. The teaching of sounds is very imaginative. Sounds are linked to a standard set of movements which are used well as a memory aid. A lively and rich range of activities is provided to encourage listening, reading and writing.

Mathematical development

57. The children's attainment is above the expectations of their age. They learn to count confidently to ten and beyond and they count forwards and back and can recognise simple number patterns and geometric shapes. They can order numbers. Some can use arbitrary measures, estimate and find missing numbers. They are also acquiring and using mathematical vocabulary in an appropriate way. This is all the result of good quality teaching and a wide range of relevant learning experiences. The tasks provided for the children match their needs, and enhance their interest in learning.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

58. The children's attainment in this aspect is good and their knowledge and understanding increase rapidly. They are able to ask their teacher sensible questions about a hamster as part of their day and night topic. Children know how to care for pets; they know that pets need food, water and exercise. They are able to carry out investigations and use computers with confidence. The teachers have high expectations, and through their very good use of discussion they encourage the children to reflect and explain their experiences. This was particularly strong in the group-work during the lesson on pet care related to day and night.

Physical development

59. The children's attainment in this aspect is good. They can make good use of space and are aware of each other. They travel using feet by hopping, skipping and running. In the playground children move confidently, utilise space well, and show a good awareness of others. They ride bikes safely with due concern for others. The different wheeled vehicles provide pupils with a very good variety of experiences. Their manipulative skills are developed well. They also use scissors carefully and hold pencils and brushes appropriately. In the physical education lesson seen teaching was good. Activities were imaginative and challenging. The teacher was very lively and pupils tried very hard. Very good resources were provided to help pupils with difficult aspects of their task. Planning is good. There is good access from the classroom to the outside area. The indoor climbing frame is a very good resource for physical activity and also offers role-play opportunities.

Creative development

60. Attainment in this aspect is good. The children have opportunities for engaging in good range of art activities such as drawing, painting, modelling and printing. They paint confidently, often making bold use of colour. They use a range of techniques. They respond imaginatively to opportunities for using drama, in the form of role-play, in many aspects of their work. The planning for this area takes careful account of both the creative and language development. The children enjoy acting, singing nursery rhymes and there is provision for using musical instruments. Good teaching encourages the children's creativity and careful planning skilfully balances the intensity of some of the language and number activities with creative tasks. This ensures that the demands to develop the concentration skills of these young children are realistic.

ENGLISH

61. Test results for pupils aged seven in 2001 showed standards were well above average in reading and writing. The proportions of pupils who achieved the higher levels in reading and writing were also well above average and within the top five per cent of schools in writing. There has been a steady upward trend over time and the very good teaching pupils receive in Years 1 and 2 enables them to achieve their best. Comparisons with similar schools show standards are well above average. The work of pupils currently in Year 2 continues to be well above that of most seven-year-olds. The very high quality of writing is a significant strength and supports pupils' learning in other subjects well. A feature of this high quality is the use of a fluent, legible, joined hand from a very early stage. Phonics are linked to writing practice and consequently spelling skills are also very good. Pupils speak clearly and articulately, they quickly learn the vocabulary taught in lessons and their writing is interesting. Teaching is a strength and the literacy strategy is very well implemented.
62. Standards have improved since the previous report and by the age of nine continue to be well above average in speaking, listening and reading and above average in writing. Speaking and listening skills are strengths in all classes. Pupils confidently respond to questions using well-structured sentences and put forward their ideas and opinions in discussions. They listen well and show interest in different points of view. In a science lesson pupils in Year 4 eagerly discussed the effect of air resistance in a parachute investigation. They refer to their personal experiences when talking about artists and religions, eagerly comparing events in the past to the present day. They locate evidence and give reasons for their ideas, confidently presenting their work at the end of lessons and in assemblies. The use of drama and pupil involvement in assemblies provides good opportunities for pupils to perform to an audience and the quality of their presentations is very good.
63. Reading is fluent and expressive and pupils read widely. Both younger and older pupils express a love of books, know that non-fiction books support research and enquiry and make good use of contents and index pages to locate information. Younger pupils read regularly at home, have very good phonics awareness and self correct if errors are made. Parents make a very effective contribution to their children's learning in this aspect. Pupils change their books frequently, read a wide variety of text including poetry and non-fiction and are enthusiastic to read their own writing. Dictionary skills are well developed and by the age of nine pupils access the Internet to extend their research. Good use is made of the ICT suite and home computers, which support learning well. Year 4 pupils look up information independently, using glossaries and index and understand how to locate library books. They have favourite authors and refer to aspects of books they like best, for example, J.K Rowling's 'Harry Potter' books, the work of Roald Dahl and Jacqueline Wilson. They say why the text and characters are exciting and explain how the use of language makes the book interesting for the reader. They understand the importance of reading expressively so characters come to life and the text sounds exciting. Pupils say they enjoy books introduced and shared during their literacy lessons. They also enjoy writing together and reading their own work. The links between reading and writing are well developed.
64. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of a range of writing, for example, poetry, stories, reports and instructions. Pupils in Year 2 understand the appropriateness of different styles of writing for different purposes, for example writing instructions and directions linked to making a puppet in design and technology. Pupils use description well, using their own language and words introduced by the teacher which they have

learned. They learn to word process and understand the importance of sequencing instructions accurately. They show very good application of the skills they have learned in writing in other subjects. They retell stories in their own words and compare versions, for example 'The Three Pigs' and 'The Three Wolves'. Spelling is mainly accurate and well supported through a structured programme and regular homework. Handwriting is neat, joined, fluent and legible and of a very high standard for seven-year-olds. This is because the skills are taught effectively from the earliest days in the reception class and teachers have high expectations of presentation. This results in books that reflect pride and very good progress in learning.

65. By the age of nine pupils know how to use capital letters, full stops, question and exclamation marks and inverted commas appropriately. There is evidence of paragraphing in some final drafts and pupils know how to plan and improve their work because they have been taught these skills. There is a good range of writing and some is of very high quality. It is well-organised and covers a broad range, for example, letters, stories, poems, pamphlets, recipes, book reviews and plays. There is a good balance of creative and factual writing, which meets the needs of gender groups well. Stories and plays develop characters, setting and sequences of events. Progress is good, as pupils write with greater independence using words that add interest and description. They have opportunities to express their opinions for example, when considering; 'Should the government tell parents how they can punish their children?' Handwriting is neat, legible and mainly consistent in size but less well structured and formed than in Years 1 and 2. This is because the teaching of the joined hand has been introduced at an earlier stage in learning and older pupils have not benefited from this new approach. There is good evidence that the national literacy strategy has been implemented effectively and work is suitably challenging.
66. The teaching of literacy is excellent in Years 1 and 2 and good in reception and Years 3 and 4. This reflects the success of recent training and development initiatives and ensures pupils become confident readers and writers by the time they are nine. In a lesson for reception aged children the teacher brought excitement and enthusiasm to learning through a discussion of 'The Owl who was Afraid of the Dark'. This engendered a keen interest in language and illustrations and made a very good link to personal and social development. The children talked about their fears and those of the owl in the story developing a range of words to describe emotions and feelings. In Years 1 and 2 the pace of lessons is fast, pupils are told precisely what they will learn in the lesson and review their progress and achievements at the end. This very good evaluation is supported by very good marking and pupils consequently have a very good knowledge of their own learning.
67. Good strategies were observed in Years 3 and 4 when the teacher provided a good role model for reading with expression and specific vocabulary was used and reinforced well. This enabled pupils to use this language in discussions and in their writing. In another lesson which was satisfactory in Year 3, the teacher taught the skills of writing a character portrait appropriately, and pupils were expected to use inverted commas and independently correct spelling and punctuation errors. They achieved the learning objectives but the end of the lesson was rushed and pupils did not have the chance to present their work independently.
68. Those with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment and receive good support from teaching assistants. They are fully included in lessons and receive the appropriate level of intervention to promote self-esteem and confidence. Teaching assistants work in close partnership with teachers and this team approach is very successful. Pupils' performance is carefully monitored and regularly reviewed with parents. The use of teacher assessments, spelling and

reading homework enhance learning and achievement. Staff, governors and external professionals monitor teaching and learning regularly. This is the reason why standards are very high in Years 1 and 2. As the practice is built upon in subsequent years, standards are likely to rise in Years 3 and 4. Pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education. A minor weakness lies in the limited space available in the library.

69. The very high levels of achievement by the age of seven are the outcome of consistently very good teaching, the very good partnership with parents, the successful implementation of the literacy strategy and the good application of skills and knowledge to other subjects. This practice is developing in the junior classes but the school's practice is not yet as firmly embedded in these year groups and needs more time to build on the revised teaching and learning approaches that have been introduced. The coordinator leads and manages the subject very well. She has received time to monitor standards and teaching in partnership with the headteacher and local authority and there is a very clear awareness of the progress that has been made and the improvements that can be made in the future.

MATHEMATICS

70. Mathematics is the priority area of focus for school improvement. Pupils enter school with above average levels and by the ages of seven and nine standards continue to be above average. Standards since the last inspection have been maintained. National results for seven-year-olds also show pupils achieve above average levels by the age of seven and more pupils than average reach the higher levels. Non-statutory test results for older pupils in Year 4 confirm that pupils are achieving similar standards by the age of nine. Local and school data and analysis show pupils make appropriate progress by the age of nine but the pace is faster in the infants and slows down in the juniors. This is because teaching is good in Years 1 and 2 and there is a balance of good, sound and unsatisfactory teaching in Years 3 and 4. The variable quality of teaching in Years 3 and 4 slows the rate of progress. There are no significant differences between the attainment of girls and boys.

71. The performance of more able pupils shows improvement from the last report when there was a lack of challenge. The analysis of pupils' work in the current Year 4 and data from the school's assessments and tests confirm pupils achieve higher standards than the average. The majority are achieving the expected standards with a significant number reaching the higher levels. Able pupils are performing at an appropriately high level. The pupils with special educational needs are supported very well and make good progress.

72. By the age of seven, the pupils recall basic number facts and are developing accurate, reliable mental methods calculating with two digit numbers. Most of them have appropriate knowledge of addition and subtraction facts and can count on in twos and tens from different starting points. They carry out routine tasks well; most have appropriate spatial and statistical knowledge. The skills they need to use and apply their mathematical knowledge are developing well including problem solving. The younger pupils count to ten and read and write the numbers involved; some can add and subtract numbers to ten and count on mentally. Most pupils have a good grasp of mathematical language and good understanding of number operations; many are beginning to understand place value well. Pupils are beginning to understand that subtraction can be used to 'reverse' addition. Most pupils use standard units for measuring length and can tell the time. They can construct simple graphs and show a good knowledge of the names and properties of shapes.

73. The pupils increase their capabilities well and by the time they are in Year 4 they have acquired accurate, reliable methods for adding and subtracting three digit numbers. They can multiply and divide whole numbers by ten and a hundred. The average pupils multiply and divide accurately and use simple fractions. The higher attaining pupils multiply large numbers using grid multiplication. Year 4 pupils identify shapes through a description of simple attributes. Mental arithmetic is developing well. They make good use of informal methods and jottings when appropriate. Pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons and take a pride in their work. Standards of presentation in books are high throughout the school.
74. The teachers use informal observations and regular tests to assess the pupils' rates of progress and attainment. They also evaluate carefully the impact of each lesson. The marking of pupils' work is thorough and provides them with additional, good information about progress and areas for improvement. The school makes effective use of a range of other tests and assessments and has established good procedures for tracking the progress of individual pupils and cohorts as they move through the school. The results are analysed carefully. This information is used in the planning of subsequent work and setting targets.
75. The pupils' ability to use ICT to develop their mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding is developing well; for instance Year 3 pupils select and draw appropriate graphs and charts to plot information about animals. The school has audited its resources and has a sufficient range of software including a turtle and 'Superlogo' to support teaching and enrich mathematical learning. Links between mathematics and other subjects of the curriculum, particularly science, are good. Problem solving techniques are developing appropriately. For example, pupils are expected to use systematic approaches to investigate the range of shapes which can be made by joining four multi-link cubes. Although problem solving and investigational work featured in lessons there was no direct teaching or discussion of problem solving techniques observed.
76. The teaching of mathematics is variable. In Years 1 and 2 it is good. Very good features were observed in Year 1. There was a very good interactive oral and mental starter. The counting stick was used to help pupils to visualise while counting accurately. Able pupils were extended by extra questioning and achieved counting beyond a hundred. There was very good attention to mathematical vocabulary and the hundred square was well used to point out the pattern made when ten is added to a number. Teaching of new concepts was very thorough so by the end of the lesson pupils were clear that numbers between 10 and 20 are made up of tens and units. The teacher focussed effectively on partitioning the numbers. Pupils used rods and cubes to secure their understanding but the real gains were secured because pupils talked about their emerging understanding with talking partners. Teachers' subject knowledge and teaching of the different elements of the daily numeracy lesson is good. Planning is very thorough in Years 1 and 2 and linked to very precise learning objectives that teachers adhere to. They share the objectives with their pupils and expect them to evaluate their success in meeting them by the end of the lesson.
77. In the three lessons observed Years 3 and 4, there was a mixture of good and unsatisfactory teaching. The analysis of teachers' plans, pupils' work and discussion with pupils indicates teaching is satisfactory overall. Evidence from the pupils' books indicates that they are working at a good pace. Marking is regular and helpful so pupils know when they have made errors and how to correct them. Sequences of lessons are logically presented and teaching helps pupils to understand the reasoning

behind methods of calculation. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils so standards of presentation in books and the difficulty level are high. Teachers are helping pupils to acquire appropriate mental strategies so a pupil in Year 3 made good use of a quickly drawn blank number line to explain her thinking to the class. However, during the inspection two of the three lessons seen were unsatisfactory. In both lessons there was a lack of direct teaching so pupils' knowledge was not advanced. There was insufficient attention paid to subject language so terminology was muddled and pupils were unsure how to proceed with a shape activity. At some points, behaviour management strategies were weak, pupils shouted out answers and were slow to respond to the teacher; consequently the pace of the oral and mental starter was too slow. Some common resources, like the hundred square are not fully exploited. These factors reduced the progress that pupils made in these lessons. These factors, while not consistently weak reduce the rate of progress that pupils make. In a good quality lesson for this age range good use was made of a multiplication sentence and pupils deduced division facts quickly. Support staff gave very good support to groups of pupils especially those with special needs. Despite the unsatisfactory lessons seen during the inspection work in books indicates that pupils are systematically taught and progress at a satisfactory rate. Homework is set regularly and parents make valuable contributions to their children's learning. The teaching assistants also play a valuable role in supporting groups of pupils.

78. Due to the severe staffing difficulties experienced over the past three years, teachers are still acquiring familiarity and understanding of some aspects of the numeracy strategy. Teachers have attended some parts of the five-day intensive training and gained knowledge of interesting mathematical activities that now need to link more closely to lessons. The oral and mental starter is sometimes too long or insufficiently focussed on reviewing and sharpening pupils' mental skills. The headteacher is aware that additional training to reinforce the principles of the national numeracy strategy would be beneficial. The school is receiving good local support to address these issues.
79. The management of the subject is satisfactory. There is a subject action plan but success criteria could be more strongly linked to improvements in learning. The co-ordinator, supported by the headteacher, is monitoring the quality of education effectively through checking planning and looking at pupils' work. The school is addressing the weaknesses.

SCIENCE

80. The 2001 teacher assessments for seven-year-olds showed standards were above average and more pupils than average attained the higher levels. The school's results are about the same as schools with a similar free school meals entitlement and similar to those described in the previous report.
81. There is evidence of recent improvement in investigative science and pupils' knowledge and understanding of scientific facts by the age of seven. This is because the quality of teaching is of a high standard. Teaching was excellent in Year 1 and very good in Year 2. In Year 1, the focus for learning was precise and pupils learned the scientific application of the terms 'push' and 'pull' before investigating and recording how objects change under pressure. They worked conscientiously and with enthusiasm, supported well by the teacher, support assistant and parent helper who enabled them to predict, experiment and record with increasing independence. The lesson had a very good balance of discussion, activity, simple recording and sharing of experiences. Consequently, all pupils made very good progress.

82. Pupils aged six and seven have a very good awareness of how to carry out an experiment and conduct a fair test. Discussions indicate that their knowledge of forces and the environment and use of scientific vocabulary are well above average. Year 2 pupils describe and group materials such as glass, wood and metals and know the movement of objects is affected by pushing and pulling on different surfaces. They make comparisons and understand that only one variable in an experiment must be changed to make a test fair. They confidently present their ideas and opinions and in a lesson in Year 2 described how changing the surface area of a weight might alter the time taken for a parachute to reach the ground. Year 1 pupils explain how objects change when they are pushed, pulled or squeezed. They also recognise those that return to their original shape and those that do not.
83. Pupils of all ages use scientific vocabulary well because teachers expect pupils to use new words in their questions and answers. This is a strength across all age groups. By the age of nine pupils' knowledge and understanding is above average but the pace of learning is slower than in Years 1 and 2. In Years 3 and 4 the quality of teaching, while satisfactory in the two lessons seen, lacked the same pace and rigour observed in the younger classes. Lessons are too long and this creates difficulties for teachers to sustain high levels of motivation and a consistently fast pace. Lesson objectives were not reinforced frequently enough to sustain the pace. Pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy science lessons. Many describe science as their favourite subject. In Year 4, pupils' understanding of force and pressure developed well through an experiment in which they learnt about air resistance. Pupils' eagerness to describe their investigations and knowledge reflects a high level of interest and desire to understand cause and effect. They know the names of bones in the body, for example, tarsals and meta-tarsals, and locate main body organs, describing their functions. For example, they describe how the heart pumps oxygenated blood around the body, that the kidneys filter waste products and the stomach digests food. They have a good understanding of the properties of different types of materials including those that attract and repel magnets. They classify materials into those that are man-made and those that are natural and explain why some fabrics are better suited for cold climates. Pupils understand the principles of fair testing and understand the importance of predicting what might happen before carrying out the test. They apply the skills learnt in literacy, numeracy and ICT well, suggesting ways of recording their findings using reports, graphs and tables. They explain how their work in design and technology is sometimes linked to science, for example, when investigating designs of syringes and pumps. They know that diagrams must be labelled and that instructions should be sequenced accurately and clearly. Literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are well applied. Pupils explain how they look up information in books and are competent to use dictionaries, glossaries and the Internet to further their research. Good use is made of the local environment to support learning. In Years 3 and 4 pupils with special educational needs are very well supported by staff who ensure their inclusion in activities and enable them to make good progress in relation to their prior attainment.
84. A weakness in Years 3 and 4 is the lack of social independence necessary to enable pupils to plan and carry out experiments independently. Although teachers encourage independence, pupils continue to rely on adult direction and attention. This slows down their modes of enquiry and consequently they do not make the rapid progress evident in Years 1 and 2. This issue is being addressed through the school's behaviour policy and has been a focus for improvement. Older pupils have not benefited from the drive to develop independence and personal responsibility for a long enough period of time for it to have had a substantial impact on their learning.

85. The coordinator has recently taken over the management of science. She has not yet received the appropriate training to enable her to fulfil her role. An action plan is in place and development in science is included in the school's long-term plan. Curriculum planning is secure and pupils' progress is monitored regularly. The assessment and monitoring information is used well to inform lesson planning. The allocation of time to science for eight and nine year olds is lower than average and may contribute to the slower pace to learning in Years 3 and 4. This minor issue is one to review when the subject is prioritised for development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

86. Standards were in line with national expectations in the two lessons seen in Years 1 and 2. More able pupils are working at a higher level. Evidence available in books and records suggests that pupils in Year 4 are working in line with national expectations. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory and over the past year it has been very rapid. The school has increased the number of computers, set up a suite, trained teaching staff and appointed a school ICT assistant who supports classes and manages school data including assessment. This is an area which has improved rapidly and is lead by an enthusiastic co-ordinator in her second year of teaching.
87. In Years 1 and 2 pupils use programs and tools to create their own Jackson Pollock drawings. They change the thickness of a line, undo and fill independently and save and print their work with help. The work sample showed that pupils in Year 4 are working in line with national expectations and that more able pupils are working at a higher level. Pupils connect to the Internet and use a search engine. Their word processing skills and data presentation including bar and pie charts are good. Their skills are well used in history to support independent research connected to the topic on Romans. Skills and knowledge are developing quickly as the use of the new resources and curriculum are effectively taught and standards are likely to rise quickly.
88. Teaching in the lessons seen which were all in Years 1 and 2 was good. While no specific lessons were observed in Years 3 and 4 the quality of support for groups of pupils to develop ICT skills through subjects such as literacy was good. A knowledgeable learning support assistant, who makes good use of teachers planning, supports lessons very well. There is very good use of whole class and group teaching to demonstrate skills and procedures and to help pupils understand the general application of their work. Pupils use resources effectively and work well using the keyboard and mouse. Planning is thorough. A self-evaluative computer skills questionnaire helps teachers to acquire knowledge about previous and home-learning skills. Teachers can thus build effectively on prior learning. Strengths in the lessons include clear and focussed teaching to the whole class before pupils work on the computers. In each lesson more able pupils were given more challenging tasks and pupils with special educational needs offered extra support so all made good progress. Work off the computer was related well to the theme of the lesson.
89. The introduction of a new scheme of work based on the Qualification, Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCA) materials is successfully raising standards. New equipment and new software have been introduced and staff are trained and sufficiently confident to teach the curriculum. They are very well supported by the co-ordinator. The school has adopted a simple and effective assessment procedure. ICT is effectively linked with other subjects so that it is purposefully used and pupils

acquire a good understanding of practical applications. These links have been established as part of the policy review which has taken place in all subjects over the past four terms. ICT resources for each subject are carefully identified. The rapid progress made in the subject is due to the very good management, particularly the setting of clear priorities by the co-ordinator, in partnership with senior staff and the teaching assistant. The school has invested heavily in a new computer suite; more computers are to be purchased shortly. This has enabled teachers to work with whole classes in order to bring knowledge and skills up to an appropriate level after a period of neglect.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

90. No lessons in religious education were observed during the inspection. Standards have been judged through discussions with pupils and teachers, the analysis of work, displays and teachers' planning. The quality of the work is above the standards expected locally at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. The pupils study a range of world religions that are well supported by educational visits and strong local links with the local churches. The subject is planned using the local syllabus. A new syllabus has just been published and the headteacher, who is also the coordinator, has appropriate plans to review the provision.
91. By the age of nine pupils have a good understanding of the customs, beliefs and festivals from a range of religions and cultures. They talk about special places and have a good understanding that churches and places of worship including mosques and synagogues are important to the people whose religions they represent. They know the names of special books such as the Tora and Bible and relate stories from both the Old and New Testaments knowledgeably. Pupils recognise that New Testament stories tell us about the Life of the Christ and that stories from the Old Testament represent beliefs before His birth. Pupils show good empathy for the feelings of others, for example recognising that rituals such as prayer should be respected and that people pray in different ways. They compare and contrast Christian festivals to those of other religions, for example Divali and Christmas, recognising the importance of the symbols of light in both festivals. They point out divas they have made, retell the story of Rama and Sita and describe the artistic decorative Mendhi patterns they have enjoyed creating. Younger pupils in Years 1 and 2 regularly discuss people and places that are special to them. They learn the importance of prayer and have a good knowledge of Bible stories such as Noah and the flood and Jesus feeding the crowd with loaves and fishes.
92. Assemblies make a very positive contribution to religious education. They introduce pupils to forms of worship, create opportunities for reflection and celebration of individual successes with friends in school and within the wider community. Through good storytelling pupils are helped to develop understanding of why people behave in particular ways and the importance of forgiveness. The headteacher takes a strong role in leading this work and it has a very good impact on the positive school ethos. Local visiting church groups also make a very good contribution to pupils' religious and spiritual understanding. They regularly lead assemblies and involve pupils in acting out the stories they tell. These assemblies foster respect and good relationships within the community. Celebration assemblies are a highlight of the school week and enable pupils to recognise the importance of praising and valuing others regardless of age, gender, or ethnicity.
93. The pupils' attitudes to religious education are good. There is a high level of interest in researching world faiths. Pupils are eager to learn, listen well and are happy to

share in discussions about special occasions and events. The headteacher has had a very positive impact on the teaching of religious education and pupils' understanding of Christianity and world religions has improved from the time of the last report.

ART AND DESIGN, DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY, GEOGRAPHY HISTORY, MUSIC, PHYSICAL EDUCATION.

94. Twelve lessons were observed in these subjects overall. Additional evidence was gathered by talking to pupils and teachers and looking at pupils' work and displays and teachers' planning. Insufficient evidence was gained to judge overall standards in music but the quality of singing was joyous and tuneful in assemblies and made a positive contribution to the spiritual dimension of the occasions. In the one very good lesson taught in Year 2, standards were above expectations for the age range and pupils were able to distinguish between pulse and rhythm. In this lesson the teacher had a very good level of subject expertise.
95. Standards are well above national expectations in history by age seven and above the expectations of nine- year- olds. In art and design and physical education they are above average at seven and nine. These are strengths of the provision. In design and technology standards exceed expectations at the age of seven and are about average by age nine. Standards in geography match age related expectations for both age groups. Standards are similar to those described in the previous report with improvements evident in art and history.
96. Despite the difficulties the school has experienced, provision overall has been maintained. Strengths in learning in these subjects are particularly evident in Years 1 and 2 where pupils are consistently well challenged, enjoy their learning and make good progress. This is because teaching is frequently very good and teachers have strong knowledge and expertise across the range of subjects. In physical education pupils in Year 1 benefit from clear coaching so they polish their performance and really try hard to balance on a tight rope as they step along a skipping rope at floor level. Strength in dance is apparent in Year 4. Pupils co-operate well and work constructively together as a group to produce a lively sequence of movements which they perform well. The teacher models good questions to help the class evaluate constructively. As a result performance and pupils' ability to feed back improves during the lesson.
97. Pupils with special educational needs achieve their potential because their needs are identified at an early stage. Support is well matched to specific needs and staff encourage independence and celebrate successes. All pupils are fully included in lessons and the school's policy is well implemented. In a physical education lesson in Year 3 a pupil was given very good support to enable him to take part in a swimming lesson. This raised self-esteem and supported pupils' personal and social development well. Lesson plans indicate precisely what children are to learn and indicate the level of support that they need. For example, classroom assistants give very good support and help pupils to achieve success with reading and writing in history and geography.
98. Teaching is mainly very good in Years 1 and 2. Objectives are defined and communicated clearly to pupils and good evaluations at the end of lessons ensures pupils know how well they have met the high expectations made of them. Because teachers are enthusiastic pupils are interested and well motivated. In Years 3 and 4 teaching is satisfactory and good examples were observed in Year 4 in art and design and physical education. However, the overall pace of lessons is slower. Lessons are

often too long and lack the precise detail and timing which support the faster progress observed with the younger age groups. On the rare occasions when teaching is unsatisfactory, in design and technology in Year 3, the teacher did not manage pupils' behaviour well enough and the lesson was disrupted. This was a pity because the level of knowledge and expertise was good. Rude, persistent interruptions from a small number of pupils affected the learning of the class adversely and pupils did not make the progress of which they are capable.

99. Strengths in the teaching in all year groups are the good relationships which staff have with pupils. They have a good understanding of pupils needs and planning indicates the precise focus for learning. Subject knowledge is strong in history. In Year 1 the very good teaching was enhanced by a very good selection of Victorian and modern artefacts brought into the school by members of the community. Pupils in this class worked independently using books and the artefacts in their enquiries. Due to topic cycles there were no history lessons in Years 3 and 4; however, discussion with pupils indicated a good understanding of the Romans following last term's topic. They were aware that the Romans ate a healthy diet that was not dissimilar to present day diets. However, as the pupils pointed out table manners including the use of a vomitorium were very different. There is evidence that teaching in Years 3 and 4 in this subject is good. Work is interesting and teachers encourage independent research including the use of ITC. A field trip to St Albans was another highlight. This leads to positive attitudes and a high level of interest.
100. Subject management strategies are consistent across subjects and age ranges. All policies have been reviewed and provide good guidance. They link closely to the school's aims and intentions to promote a broad and balanced range of activities that enable pupils to extend their interests and experiences. Good links are beginning to be made with literacy, numeracy and ICT. Although the school experienced a period of significant discontinuity good progress has been made in the last eighteen months to review teaching and learning, curriculum planning and assessment procedures. The school sensibly uses national guidance as the basis for planning lessons and action plans indicate a good level of awareness of the priorities that will raise standards to those evident in English and mathematics.
101. Cultural awareness is strongly promoted through art and design, design and technology, history and geography. Displays reflect the attention paid to this important aspect of learning. Visitors to the school are important resources who support and enhance teaching in these subjects, local community members talk to pupils about life during the war and their childhood memories. Year 3 pupils benefited from a talk about Tobago which gave depth to the St Lucia topic which they are beginning to study. These opportunities bring history and geography to life and encourage pupils to undertake independent research, to ask questions and to question evidence. An African drama group recently visited the school and pupils talk with enthusiasm about the music and stories which they created. This linked well to aspects of geography and supported understanding of life beyond the immediate environment and the similarities and differences of people living in different cultures. In discussion pupils have a good knowledge of the work of famous artists and by the time they are nine independently choose to work in the style of artists they have studied, for example, Georges Seurat and Claude Monet. Colour mixing techniques and observational drawing are particular strengths. Seven-year-olds produced attractive pastel still life pictures of a pineapple which reflect mature attention to detail and shading. By the age of nine pupils sketch features of their environment and choose to interpret them using both natural and contrasting colours, drawing upon the range of techniques to which they have been introduced. There is pride in displaying work in the local library.

Other strengths include the commitment to sporting activities that enhance provision for physical education, for example football, country dancing and the availability of small equipment to practice skills during break times.

102. While planning and work sampling are regularly monitored and the headteacher has a very clear overview of planning and curriculum provision, coordinators for these subjects have not yet had the opportunity to observe lessons across the age ranges. This is an area for future development as each subject becomes the focus of the school improvement plan. The approach to developing subjects as a team is working well and ensuring a good understanding of what is to be taught at each stage. Lessons in some subjects are timetabled for very long periods. This invariably leads to some lack of pace.