

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **DOWNSIDE LOWER SCHOOL**

Dunstable, Bedfordshire

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109589

Headteacher: Mrs C Hard

Reporting inspector: Mr R Fry  
OIN 21073

Dates of inspection: 2 – 4 July 2001

Inspection number: 196121

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 (Lower school)

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 – 9 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Oakwood Avenue  
Dunstable  
Bedfordshire

Postcode: LU5 4AS

Telephone number: 01582 661778

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr T Anketell-Jones

Date of previous inspection: 17 June 1999

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21073	Roger Fry	Registered inspector	English as an additional language Mathematics Science Geography History	What sort of school is it?  How high are standards? The school's results and pupils' achievements  How well are pupils taught?  How well is the school led and managed?  What should the school do to improve further?
11437	Anthony Anderson	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils?  How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22058	Christine Richardson	Team inspector	Equal opportunities Special educational needs English Music Physical education Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
24031	Iris Idle	Team inspector	Foundation Stage curriculum Information technology Art Design and technology	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.

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## **GLOSSARY of terms**

Foundation Stage – (young children up to the age of 5+) The curriculum includes the ‘Areas of Learning’ - language development, mathematical understanding, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative, physical and social development.

Key Stage 1 – pupils 6 to 7 years old.

Key Stage 2 – pupils 7 to 11 years old.

Curriculum – everything the school teaches pupils in and out of class, such as English, science and health education, visits and visitors.

Scheme of work – courses of lessons in eg. English, for teachers to use when planning lessons.

ICT – information and communication technology.

Baseline assessment – tests for young children when they join the school or in their first year.

Co-ordinator – teacher in charge of organising a subject, such as English or physical education.

School development plan – set of plans that show how the school will improve over the coming year or longer, what its priorities for action are and how it will spend its money.

National averages – refer to National Curriculum test results and teachers’ assessments in English, mathematics and science where there are national comparisons with all schools and similar schools.

National expectations – most pupils are expected to reach Level 2 in all National Curriculum subjects at the age of 7 years and Level 4 at the age of eleven.

## **REPORT CONTENTS**

Page

### **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

**7**

Information about the school  
How good the school is  
What the school does well  
What could be improved  
How the school has improved since its last inspection  
Standards  
Pupils' attitudes and values  
Teaching and learning  
Other aspects of the school  
How well the school is led and managed  
Parents' and carers' views of the school

### **PART B: COMMENTARY**

#### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

**12**

The school's results and pupils' achievements  
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

#### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

**16**

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

**18**

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

**21**

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS**

**22**

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

**22**

#### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

**25**

### **PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS**

**26**

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

**30**

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Downside Lower School is a small sized school for boys and girls aged between four and nine years. The school serves the Downside area of Dunstable and has steadily grown in size. It has 134 pupils on roll, including the youngest children who attend the reception class part-time. The school has a high turnover of pupils. Children's attainment on entry to the school is well below what is typical of children nationally. Forty six per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, a figure which is well above average. Thirty six per cent of pupils have special educational needs, which is above average. A small number of pupils have Pakistani, Caribbean and Greek backgrounds. Some of this group of pupils do not have English as their first language. All pupils speak English.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Downside Lower is an effective and caring school. It makes good provision for pupils from all backgrounds, including those with special educational needs and for those who have English as an additional language. Pupils have made satisfactory progress in the past and pupils' achievements are improving. All staff work well together and they have successfully improved the standards of pupils' work this year at the end of Year 2. The teaching is consistently good and the work that pupils are set is usually demanding and interesting. The cost of educating pupils is above average but similar to other schools of this size nationally. The school provides good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Pupils make good progress and standards are improving, such as in mathematics and science in Year 2 this year.
- Young children make a very good start to their education in the Reception class.
- The curriculum is good and pupils acquire a wide range of skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Teaching and learning in lessons are good across the school.
- The headteacher, governors and staff manage the school effectively and progress has been good since the last inspection.
- The school evaluates progress towards its targets for improvement very effectively.
- Pupils' spiritual and cultural development has improved.

#### **What could be improved**

- Pupils' standards of work in English across the school are below the national averages.
- Pupils' standards in mathematics and science in Years 3 and 4 are below national expectations.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was first inspected in July 1997. The school at that time was placed in 'special measures,' which meant it was failing to provide a satisfactory education for pupils. Her Majesty's Inspectors made six further checks on the school. By June 1999, the school had made good progress towards achieving the improvements required of it. Her Majesty's Inspectors felt that the school was providing a satisfactory education and 'special measures' were lifted. Over the last two years, the school has continued to raise the standards of pupils' work. Teachers use many suitable ways to teach different subjects. They use investigative, experimental and creative approaches in many lessons. The quality of teaching has improved and it is now good throughout the school and very good in the Reception class. Pupils' progress in lessons has improved. Often teachers' targets for lessons are clear and well thought out. The provision the school makes for pupils with special educational needs is now good. Pupils' cultural and spiritual development now forms an important part of the curriculum. The school's development plan provides a longer-term view of all the school wishes to do to improve further.

### **STANDARDS**

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	Downside compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
reading	D	E	E*	E	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
writing	E	E	E*	E	
mathematics	D	E	E	D	

Young children’s attainment on entry to the school is well below the standards typically found in schools nationally. This year children attain standards at the age of five which are close to those of children nationally and they make good progress in the ‘Areas of Learning’ they study. At the end of Year 2 last year (2000), pupils’ National Curriculum test results in reading and writing were in the lowest five per cent compared with all schools nationally. Mathematics standards were well below average. When compared with similar schools, reading and writing standards were well below average and mathematics standards were below average.

Differences in results are often found year on year between small year groups, and at Downside pupils’ standards of work have varied. National Curriculum test results in reading, writing and mathematics declined between 1998 and 2000. **Year 2 results in 2001 show a significant improvement** and all pupils met their targets. Inspection findings confirm that most pupils work at or close to the nationally expected levels for their age in all subjects except English by the end of Year 2. Teachers and pupils are seeing the benefit of the hard work put in over the last four years to improve standards. The improvement in results has occurred because, for example, pupils are usually set work that is well matched to their varying capabilities and the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been put into action effectively. Results in Year 4 also show improvement. Test results in 2001 show that about two thirds of nine year old pupils have gained the nationally expected standards in English, mathematics and science. Standards are below national expectations but still show that pupils have made good progress.

Across the school, an above average proportion of pupils has special educational needs. Despite this, good teaching raises the standards of pupils’ work. All pupils with special educational needs succeed with their individual work targets. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress because teachers and staff give them extra help. Pupils across the school attain the standards expected in information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education. Boys and girls achieve similar standards of work at seven and nine years old. Overall, pupils achieve well and their achievement is improving.

## PUPILS’ ATTITUDES AND VALUES



Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most pupils show a keen interest in school life and make the most of lessons, special events and clubs. They enjoy, for example, the after school activities on Tuesdays.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Pupils mostly behave well in lessons and at playtimes. Movement around the school is good. Most pupils are reliable and helpful. Some boys do not listen well, which slows their progress and other pupils' progress.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils like the chance to show initiative as members of the school council. Girls and most boys progress well in lessons because they make friends easily. Some boys do not always co-operate fully with classmates or teachers.
Attendance	Below average but improving because of the very good checks made by staff.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-9 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Good	Good

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

The teaching is consistently good across the school. The teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to very good. In 73 per cent of lessons the teaching was good, and in 11 per cent it was very good. English and mathematics are effectively taught. The good organisation of work set in literacy and numeracy lessons has led to pupils' better progress and an improvement in results in Year 2 this year. Young children in the Foundation Stage and older pupils are taught progressively more difficult ideas in a logical order. All pupils, for example, learn to read and write successfully, to find out things in science and to work with numbers in mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language make good progress and teachers meet their needs effectively. The capacity to learn of all pupils is extended and teachers meet the needs of all pupils in many lessons. Teachers keep good records of pupils' progress in, for example, English and mathematics.

Teachers have a wide spread of knowledge and skills. In the Reception class, the teacher's attention to young children's individual needs is very good. The teacher has a quiet and very purposeful manner. Children concentrate well and learn much. All teachers explain ideas well, give pupils clear instructions about their work and teach them important new skills and knowledge. Pupils' work is mostly well matched to their needs. Support staff throughout the school make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, for example, by working with small groups of pupils on their individual targets. Pupils with particular needs make better progress when they have adult help. Teachers establish a purposeful atmosphere in classrooms. Most young children and older pupils enjoy working hard and receiving praise for what they have done. Lessons are less successful when teachers are not entirely clear in their planning what pupils will learn or if some pupils become difficult to manage. Procedures for improving pupils' behaviour are good but they are not always used consistently by teachers to improve the behaviour and progress of, for example, some boys.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught consistently. High priority is given to teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Pupils have many opportunities to investigate and experiment with ideas. The multi-sensory garden is used very effectively to develop work in many subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The provision is well managed. Pupils make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. Teachers and support staff help pupils effectively in lessons and in small groups. Pupils with statements of their special educational needs are well integrated into all lessons.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. All pupils are well integrated and have few difficulties with English. Teachers ensure that pupils who are learning English receive extra attention, such as small group work in mathematics, to improve their rate of progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. All pupils have the opportunity to take part in everything that the school does. Good displays of pupils' work enhance classrooms and many parts of the school. Arrangements to help pupils make friends in the playground are very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Procedures for assessing and recording what pupils know, understand and can do are good in English and mathematics. Procedures for improving pupils' behaviour are good. The creation of the school council develops a caring approach amongst pupils for one another.

The school has an effective and good partnership with parents.

## **HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher has a very strong positive influence on the school. All teachers manage their responsibilities for subjects effectively, such as by checking other teachers' lesson plans. The school has made several successful appointments of staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governors are effective in helping to manage the school. Many governors are closely involved with the school and they understand its strengths and what still needs to be done. Committees are active and well informed.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Since the last inspections, the school has evaluated its successes and followed its very good timetable for improvement closely. Consequently, the teaching and pupils' standards of work have improved.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school has made good use of the money available to it and it makes sure it gets the 'best value' for all major purchases. The office is efficiently managed.

The school is generously staffed. The accommodation, books, and equipment for lessons are good.

## **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

18 questionnaires were returned and 6 parents attended the meeting for parents

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children like going to school very much and they make good progress with their work.</li><li>• Behaviour is good.</li><li>• The teaching is good.</li><li>• Parents feel comfortable when they approach the school with a question or problem.</li><li>• The school has high expectations of children.</li><li>• The school is very well managed and led and works closely with parents.</li><li>• The school helps children to mature and become responsible.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some parents feel there are too few extra-curricular activities.</li><li>• Some parents of young children also feel that they do not have enough work to do at home.</li></ul>

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities and young children have enough work to do at home.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

## HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

### The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Since the last inspection, pupils' attainment and achievement have improved. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below what is typical for young children nationally. At the end of Year 2, pupils reach the standards expected in all subjects except English. Pupils currently leave the school in Year 4 with standards of attainment in reading, writing, mathematics and science below those expected nationally. Nevertheless, pupils across the school make good progress in relation to their prior attainment and achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress towards their targets and achieve well. Some of the main reasons for pupils' good progress are the consistently good teaching and the very good start pupils make in the Reception class. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been implemented effectively and are having a positive effect on standards as well. The school has begun to see the results of its hard work over recent years in the improving attainment of pupils.
2. By the time children are ready to enter Year 1, most attain standards close to those expected in language development, mathematical understanding, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative, physical and social development. All children make good progress because the curriculum is very well organised, there are enough adults to give children extra attention and the staff understands the needs of young children very well.
3. At five years old, most children work independently and they respond well in lessons. They gain good social skills and work with a partner or in a small group successfully. The teaching of basic skills is very good and children learn, for example, the names and sounds of letters and many read and write their own simple sentences. Most children understand 'one more than' and 'one less than' and count to twenty using their fingers. Children know the names of different animals and study closely the behaviour of snails outside and in the classroom. Children paint successfully and the teacher makes good links between, for example, creative and mathematical activities. Children draw the number five and paint five objects. They make models of spiders from screwed-up tissue paper. The school provides a very good range of experiences for young children and they have many chances to play using models, cycles and scooters. Children grow in strength and skill in a good safe play area.
4. National Curriculum test results for seven year olds have varied between 1998 and 2000. Pupils' results in 2000 compared with all schools and with similar schools in England were very low in reading and writing and well below average in mathematics. However, this year's results have improved and it is likely standards will be average in reading, writing and mathematics when compared with schools nationally. Pupils' standards of work at the end of Year 4 are below national expectations in English, mathematics and science, although they have also improved. Two reasons for the improvement in standards are that the school continues to organise the curriculum better and teachers track pupils' progress closely. Teachers take remedial action quickly if a pupil's progress is less than expected. Boys and girls overall attain similar standards of work. However, the progress of a small number of pupils, often boys, is compromised because at times they do not pay attention.

5. The school places considerable emphasis on the good teaching of basic skills. The success of teachers' work and many pupils' efforts are reflected in pupils' improving achievements this year. At the age of seven and nine, pupils' speaking skills have developed well. Teachers help less confident speakers effectively by giving them time to prepare answers to questions that they understand and can answer. At nine, many pupils make, for example, deductions about what they have read and say clearly what they have found. Some pupils' listening skills are weak and teachers do not provide enough activities that develop pupils' capacity to listen.
6. The National Literacy Strategy has been implemented well. In Year 2, many pupils understand what synonyms are. Most know how to use a thesaurus and they use their knowledge of alphabetical order to find spellings and meanings in dictionaries. At the age of nine many pupils read fluently and with some expression. In Year 2, pupils' writing standards reflect the positive extra emphasis that teachers have given this area. Most pupils know how to read their work successfully to find errors they may have made. They use capital letters and full stops with some consistency. By Year 4, many pupils write letters, stories, poems and lists of instructions competently.
7. The National Numeracy Strategy has also been implemented effectively. At the end of Year 2, many pupils add numbers to 100 together successfully. All pupils know some lines of symmetry in basic shapes and most measure accurately in centimetres. In Year 4, pupils add numbers to one decimal place and use graphs to explain the results of investigations successfully. Most pupils measure angles with reasonable accuracy and know the eight points of the compass.
8. Seven year olds show an appropriate knowledge and understanding of all aspects of science. They know that chocolate can be melted and will solidify when cool. They know where insects and small animals can be found. By the age of nine, higher attainers make consistently accurate predictions in their experiments. Pupils record the evidence of their investigations and experiments clearly because teachers show them a good method and pupils find it helpful. Teachers skilfully develop pupils' interest in the subject, which has a beneficial effect on standards.
9. The school is effective in teaching skills that improve pupils' understanding of English. Pupils write facts in history or about other faiths in religious education. Pupils find things out from non-fiction books to help them in history and geography. In design and technology and science, pupils accurately record evaluations of their findings. In science lessons pupils record several sentences in, for example, conclusions to experiments. Pupils use the library confidently and they are learning to search for information on the Internet as well as in books.
10. Other subjects help pupils develop wider mathematical skills. For example, in science lessons pupils measure force and time experiments. In ICT lessons, pupils draw graphs on computers and display their results attractively. In design and technology pupils measure the dimensions of materials they need to make things. Early understanding of dates in history and religious education helps pupils to understand four digit numbers. Pupils find places using co-ordinates in geography.
11. At the age of seven and nine, pupils' standards of work in information and communication technology match those expected nationally. Older pupils know how to search for information and how to program a floor robot. Pupils reach the standards expected in the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Year 2

pupils know stories in the Old and New Testaments. At nine, pupils have a good understanding of other religions.

12. The very good management of the school by the headteacher and teachers has been an important factor in bringing about a consistency of approach to work by all staff. Schemes of work for subjects are clear and help teachers plan lessons effectively. Pupils' standards are enhanced by the good organisation of the curriculum. Most pupils work at the standards expected at age nine in the following subjects.
13. In art, pupils' develop a good understanding of great artists, such as Vermeer and Monet. The school has a growing collection of reproduced paintings that it uses to stimulate pupils' understanding. In history lessons, pupils analyse changes that have occurred over time and have some knowledge of what it was like to be rich or poor in the past. Pupils use a range of sources, such as textbooks and artefacts, to find evidence about times past.
14. Teachers give an appropriate amount of time and attention to all subjects, which is reflected in the standards achieved. In design and technology, pupils have designed, made and evaluated a range of projects. In geography, teachers make good use of comparative studies to broaden pupils' understanding of how others live. Pupils sing tunefully and they take part in extra-curricular events. In physical education, pupils know how to make up a game successfully. Many pupils practice team games further after school at the sports clubs.
15. Pupils effectively gain skills and develop their knowledge and understanding in all subjects because of the good teaching and pupils' mostly positive attitudes to work. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and they are clearly aware of the progress all pupils make. Pupils reach the challenging predictions made by the school when they are seven and nine years old. In literacy and numeracy lessons, pupils are often placed in groups within their class with others of similar capability. Teachers challenge pupils with work at an appropriate level. Often in literacy lessons and in other subjects, higher attainers are challenged with tasks that allow them to take their thinking forward faster. However, teachers of older pupils do not always extend higher attainers fully with the work they have in mathematics and science.
16. The school ensures pupils have equal opportunities and that all pupils are included in every activity. Pupils who learn English as an additional language achieve as well as other pupils because the school ensures that they are given additional support in English and numeracy. No significant differences were observed between the attainment of boys and girls. Boys make good progress up to the age of seven in English and the attainment in English of boys in Year 4 shows significant improvement from their National Test results in Year 2.
17. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans, and in the development of self-esteem and confidence, because of the good teaching they receive and the suitability of their targets. The school makes good use of assessment information for target setting on individual education plans and for the formation of groups. The result of this is that pupils who need additional support are identified as soon as possible.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

18. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are good and make an important contribution to the standards pupils achieve. Their behaviour is satisfactory. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. During the inspection, no bullying was observed or any other form of harassment. Parents confirm that their children like school very much.
19. Pupils have good attitudes and enjoy coming to school. They are interested in their work and are keen to take part in the activities prepared for them. For example, in Year 2, pupils are attentive, keen to respond and eager to share their knowledge when they use a CD- ROM on the computer to find information about mini-beasts. In lessons, they concentrate on their tasks, maintain good levels of interest and listen well to their teacher. For example, in Year 3 pupils are keen to participate in discussions and to answer questions. They are clear about what is expected of them and most settle quickly to their work. There are occasions when some boys, in both key stages, do not apply themselves to their work. They are restless and easily distracted and this behaviour affects the quality of the work they produce. Overall, however, most pupils work hard and have good levels of personal motivation. Pupils' attitudes make a positive contribution to the progress that they make because pupils want to do well and they like school.
20. Most pupils behave well in school and in lessons. Around the school, pupils are clear about the expected standards of behaviour and move sensibly around the building. They are friendly and polite and make visitors to the school feel welcome by greeting them, holding doors open and talking readily about their work and life in school. For example, older pupils are keen to show visitors their Garden 2000 and talk with confidence about the different areas within the garden. In assemblies, pupils enter and leave the hall quietly. They listen quietly to the music and settle with little fuss. In the playground, pupils play well with each other in a lively and happy atmosphere.
21. Pupils make good progress in their personal development. Relationships are fostered well through the caring atmosphere promoted by the school. Children start to develop confidence at an early age in the Reception class and they become more confident as they grow older. Pupils and all staff work well together and show a marked respect for each other. Pupils respond well to opportunities for taking responsibility. For example, two pupils from each class attend the very good school council. They have an agenda that includes raising money for playground benches where pupils who need to be cheered up or have no friends can sit. One of the council members supports these pupils. They publish a newsletter for the rest of the school. This is a very successful council and it offers very good personal development for its members.
22. Attendance at the school is below the national average. However, the incidence of unauthorised absence has significantly decreased since the last inspection. The school has developed a successful policy to ensure that every pupil is made welcome and has the chance to make progress. Because of this positive approach, current average attendance levels are higher than for the whole of the last school year. The successful social inclusion programme has also reduced the number of pupils who arrive late for school.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

23. The teaching is consistently good across the school. The teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to very good. In 73 per cent of lessons the teaching was good, and in 11 per cent it was very good. The good quality of teaching has a positive effect on the learning that takes place and has raised standards of pupils' work this year. Throughout the school, there is a particular strength in the teaching of basic skills. In all subjects, such as English, mathematics and science, the practical approaches, very good use of adult support and the enthusiasm and expertise of teachers have positive effects on pupils' interest and motivation to learn. Pupils enjoy school because the teaching is interesting.
24. The teaching in the Reception class is very good. Staff have created a warm, supportive atmosphere for learning where children feel secure and they are, therefore, able to work enthusiastically and enjoy their learning. Thorough day-to-day assessment is undertaken in language and mathematical work and this is used to plan extension activities for higher attainers and to reinforce very specific skills pertinent to each child. These assessments ensure that the activities provided challenge individual children without causing any lack of confidence. There is a very good match of work to children's needs and all children achieve well. The staff in the Reception class work very well together and all ensure that every child's achievement is recognised. The standards in Reception have improved since the last inspection.
25. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach, and they plan lessons effectively. For example, in geography pupils' research skills develop well and they use a range of sources, such as textbooks, surveys and library books to find evidence about specific topics. The teaching was criticised two years ago for its inadequate range of teaching styles. Teachers now use a wide range of suitable teaching styles in all lessons. In science, investigative and experimental work is common. In art and English, teachers set creative work that develops pupils' own ideas. Teachers plan lessons well and in most pupils' learning is clearly stated. However, on occasions this is not the case, lessons are likely to drift, and pupils make less progress than they might.
26. Teachers throughout the school are competent in teaching basic skills in English and mathematics. They have effectively implemented the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. Pupils gain new skills and build on their previous learning well. For example, teachers set individual targets for pupils to attain in English, and the consistent teaching of spelling and letter formation helps pupils to develop confidence in their own ability to spell correctly. As they grow in confidence, they learn to write interesting stories and reports. Teachers encourage children to find different ways of solving problems in mathematics and they value any contributions made by individuals. Pupils learn that there are many ways to find the right answer to problems. They learn also to estimate whether their answers are possible or not. Teachers plan group work carefully and take account of the different needs of lower attaining pupils particularly well.
27. Adults who provide support in lessons are very well briefed and they make a very good contribution to lessons and pupils' learning. The school is sufficiently well staffed to allow more than one adult to be present in many lessons. The support staff often work with pupils who find learning difficult or have problems with concentration. When pupils are in groups with an adult they invariably make good



progress. Ideas are repeated for their benefit as required. Many instances were observed of the success of this provision and it is a very efficient use of funds.

28. Teachers use time well. Their careful planning and organisation mean that lessons are well balanced and pupils usually achieve what the teachers plan they should. A good pace to lessons keeps pupils involved. For example, little time is wasted in lessons at changeover times. Most pupils are keen to get on with their work and this reflects in their progress. For example, in physical education, pupils start their work with enjoyable activities to warm up their muscles before strenuous exercise and there is a corresponding relaxation of muscles at the end of lessons. Pupils enjoy lessons and the activities that give them opportunities to learn and practise new skills.
29. Teachers' management of pupils is generally good. There is a purposeful working atmosphere in classrooms, which helps pupils to concentrate and learn. Pupils mostly respond well to teachers and adults and they concentrate well. Teachers have high expectations of the kinds of behaviour to be accepted but are sometimes inconsistent in their approach to the inappropriate behaviour of some pupils. The guidance in the school behaviour policy is good, but it is not always followed. There were instances where the good lesson preparation that teachers had made was hindered by a few boys who called out or who were restless. In these lessons, pupils' progress was less than it might have been.
30. An important part of the school's improvement plan has been the sharing of good practice. Teachers have learnt much from each other as they have made checks on lesson planning and have seen their colleagues teach. However, in the key area of behaviour management, the very good procedures and styles of teaching, appropriate for all ages, used by the Reception teacher have not been fully explored with other teachers. Methods that are used in Reception are relevant and useful with all pupils, such as the seamless changes of activity that are present in this class.
31. Teachers know their pupils well and they make accurate assessments of their attainments, particularly in English, mathematics and science. Careful records are kept and information from assessments is used for grouping pupils. Teachers mark pupils' work in a way that helps pupils to learn from their mistakes. However, on occasions higher attaining pupils do not start lessons with work that is harder than that set for the average pupils in mathematics and science in Years 3 and 4. Consequently, some pupils do not always progress as fast as they might. Homework is used to reinforce ideas learned at school. Parents are mostly in favour of the type and amount of homework that the school gives pupils.
32. Teachers and support staff take good account of the targets for pupils with special educational needs in their planning, especially in English. Targets in individual education plans are clear and achievable. Pupils are grouped according to their prior attainment and particular needs in numeracy and literacy. This ensures that tasks are matched well to pupils' capabilities. Pupils have skilled support from committed teachers and support staff, either on an individual or small group basis, as well as receiving additional care and attention whilst working with the rest of their class. Staff maintain good records and there is regular, relevant sharing of information between all staff who work effectively together as a team. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and pupils achieve well.

33. Teachers manage the extra support for pupils with English as an additional language well and pupils work in groups with other children who need a similar level of work. Where there is a high percentage of pupils with special educational needs and additional needs in the class, there is good extra non-teaching support for literacy and numeracy lessons.

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

34. The curriculum reflects the school's aims well and makes a valuable contribution to the learning of all its pupils. The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils. It provides good opportunities for pupils, including those with special educational needs and pupils who learn English as an additional language, to achieve well. Since the last inspection there has been an improvement in the curriculum in that the national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been fully implemented and developed. The effect of the very good management and teachers' hard work is evident in the recent improvement of standards in literacy, numeracy and science.
35. There have been significant improvements in the teaching and organisation of the National Curriculum since the last inspection. Enough time is now allocated to all subjects and all aspects of the information and communication technology programmes of study are taught. This ensures that the school meets all statutory requirements, including the teaching of religious education according to the locally agreed guidelines, and the arrangements for collective worship. The National Curriculum is taught in an interesting and stimulating way, with good attention paid to the investigative and creative aspects of all subjects. Teachers encourage pupils to write their own ideas in most subjects. For example, in science, Year 3 pupils learned about the effects of different drinks on their teeth by testing different liquids on eggshells. An investigative approach stimulates pupils' interest greatly and helps them learn in an exciting way so that they produce good written work.
36. Teachers make good use of nationally recommended guidance for the curriculum and supplement it with the school's own guidelines for each subject. There are good links between subjects, such as science and numeracy, religious education and literacy, and history and art. Teachers plan their work systematically and well. Co-ordinators and the headteacher check that plans are put into action and regularly examine pupils' work to see the progress they are making. The result of this is that all aspects of the curriculum are taught in suitable depth and detail. Assessments of pupils' successes and failures are used to amend weekly and termly planning, especially in English, mathematics and science. Pupils make better progress because of this work.
37. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage (Reception class) is very good. It is planned to make sure that every child has experience of all the 'Areas of Learning' and there is a particular emphasis on developing children's use of language and social and personal skills. There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to learn things and activities are well prepared and challenging.
38. Since the last inspection, the provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved and it is now good. Pupils are treated as individuals and, because teachers and support staff know their pupils very well, they make sure their individual needs are met. The caring and supportive atmosphere in the school has a major

impact upon the progress pupils make in lessons. Boys and girls, pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are included in all aspects of the school's life. They are happy and learn well.

39. Pupils' horizons are broadened effectively because the school provides a good range of extra activities, such as clubs. Clubs run for short periods each term and cover a wide range of interests. Younger and older pupils show wholehearted enjoyment of line dancing and team games in which they learn new skills, especially those of working together as a team and observing rules. The gardening club is always well attended and the school is considering a homework club for next term. Visits and visitors into school enrich pupils' learning in for example, religious education, history, art and English.
40. Pupils of all ages and capabilities benefit from a curriculum that meets their personal and social needs well. The content and organisation of the curriculum ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to experience all that the school offers. The school provides well for pupils' personal, social and health education, based on the guidelines used throughout the school. This is an improvement since the last inspection. "Good health" topics are taught in science and in specific lessons. These are supported well by the annual visit of the 'Life Education' bus. The curriculum includes a sensitive approach to growing, sex education and drugs awareness. Teachers deal thoughtfully with any issues that arise and at a level of understanding suitable for all pupils. The personal development of pupils is rightly considered very important. Pupils have good opportunities to discuss and consider many difficult issues, such as their fears and friendships, at special times during the week when they sit quietly in a circle to discuss them. The effect of this work is that pupils are happy at school and learn well.
41. There are good arrangements for children to visit the Reception class before they start school and for children to transfer into Year 1 at the end of the reception year. The school is developing effective links with the newly established playgroup and with the middle schools to which pupils transfer. Pupils and staff benefit from increased contacts between schools, for instance when taking part in music festivals and when joining for carol singing and sharing the Christmas traditions of the community. These events have a positive effect on pupils' learning and social development.
42. The school has established good links with the community, all of which provide valuable opportunities for pupils' social development and their appreciation of the historical events that occurred in the area. For example, there are good links with several of the churches and the Priory in Dunstable. The school joins in Dunstable's Tudor Day and the procession of floats through the town, as well as the local community tree dressing. The school is developing contacts with a school in Australia and pupils have begun to exchange e-mail messages. Pupils go regularly to the nearby centre to sing for members of the Luncheon Club.
43. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is relevant for all pupils with additional needs. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in all aspects of the school's life. They receive specific support in literacy and numeracy lessons and carefully planned programmes support pupils with emotional and behavioural or physical needs very well. Teachers and support staff prepare and review individual education plans. There are regular reviews of pupils' individual education plans and suitable new targets are set. This is an improvement since the

last inspection. There is only one pupil with a statement. There are individually appropriate and challenging extension activities for higher attaining pupils, particularly in English.

44. The school's attention to equal opportunities is very good. There is good provision for pupils who have English as an additional language. Pupils receive well-targeted extra help with, for example, technical language in mathematics. Boys and girls have equal access to clubs and additional activities. All pupils in Year 4 play recorders and the visiting music teacher tests pupils in Year 3 if they express a wish to play the violin, but only those with good potential for learning the instrument are selected. Pupils do not miss lessons, as most music lessons take place at other times.
45. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development is good. The school council makes a particularly strong contribution to pupils' personal development and teaches them many important aspects of citizenship, such as exercising the right to vote, and how to discuss the needs of others. For example, pupils raise funds by organising sales of items. They think of good ways to help others in school, for example, by providing 'cheer up' benches. Pupils sit on these during breaktimes if they are unhappy and they find new friends. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development have improved since the last inspection. Spiritual development is good and it is developed through assemblies, religious education and many other lessons. Teachers and visitors make good use of assemblies to develop pupils' spiritual awareness and encourage them to reflect on the world around them, to learn stories from other faiths and to develop their understanding of right and wrong. Assemblies are calm, orderly occasions, and make a strong contribution to the warm, supportive atmosphere of the school, providing an important sense of belonging to the community. Each week pupils' achievements are celebrated and pupils are proud to think that their efforts have been recognised and that everyone is sharing in their success. Pupils are pleased to see one another's success.
46. On all occasions, adults encourage pupils to think about how their actions affect others. There is a clear code of behaviour in classes and throughout the school, which helps pupils to have a clear idea of right and wrong. It is used mostly effectively to promote moral and social development and pupils know that the rules are important if the school is to run smoothly. Good relationships provide a firm basis for the good social development of pupils. Pupils develop social awareness through visits and through tasks, such as preparing the equipment for lunchtime and physical education activities. They work together well in, for example, art and science.
47. Pupils' cultural development is good. Pupils have regular opportunities to learn about their own and other cultures. Pupils visit places of interest in the local area and further afield. People come in to school to share their own experience and knowledge with pupils. Pupils have a rich experience of music from around the world in music lessons and in assemblies each week. The religious education curriculum, geography, history, art and music offer good opportunities for pupils to learn about other faiths and cultures. Lively, interesting displays around the school provide opportunities for pupils to celebrate the diversity and richness of society and to reflect upon the beauty of the world around them. The sensitive and thoughtful development of the sensory garden has made a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

48. The procedures for child protection and pupils' welfare and educational support are good and the monitoring of pupils' personal development is very good. Child protection procedures are in place and are effective. The staff knows the pupils very well and as a team provides a positive level of welfare support and guidance. During the inspection, a few pupils received minor bumps in the schoolyard and the lunchtime supervisors and administrative staff were quick to offer an appropriate level of care. This good level of support also applies to health and safety matters. For example, pupils were told not to stand on the outdoor wooden tables for their own safety. The school maintains detailed records of all accidents and parents are kept informed as required. The school conducts regular health and safety checks of the site and there is a very accurate record of evacuation drill times each term.
49. The present system of monitoring the individual levels of pupil absence is very good and is linked to a wider programme where the school ensures all pupils are valued, happy and can join in everything. The school is very ably assisted by the education social assistant who is currently a daily visitor to the school. The school uses a good reward system to encourage regular attendance and pupils receive certificates during the regular merit assemblies.
50. The school has a range of good ways for monitoring behaviour following a recent period when two pupils received fixed-term exclusions from the school. The supervisory staff has also been trained to apply the code of conduct for behaviour and the consistency of its application is now beginning to have the desired results.
51. The school acknowledges pupils' individual achievements through the praise given to pupils in the classroom and, more formally, during merit assemblies in which pupils' successes are shared with the whole school. Pupils receive awards for good work, good behaviour and good attendance. The school gives pupils many opportunities for personal development. Pupils take responsibility for various tasks around the school, such as for the school council. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, which also allow pupils to enhance their personal development.
52. Teachers and support staff know pupils very well. Assessments of pupils with special educational needs are carried out sensitively and thoughtfully and adults are fully aware of pupils' targets and programmes. The support for pupils with any additional needs is good. Relationships between pupils and staff are good and learning takes place in a purposeful and inclusive atmosphere. Staff work well together to ensure that any information about pupils' work and progress is shared effectively. The school fully complies with the Code of Practice and liaises very effectively with external agencies, such as the local education authority.
53. Assessment procedures of pupils' progress and attainment have improved since the last inspection and the school now has systems and procedures for the assessment and tracking of pupils' work, which are good all subjects. These systems are used consistently throughout the school. Teachers make good use of the information from assessments to identify pupils' needs and to adjust teaching programmes. For example, the school identified the need to provide more opportunities for pupils to have formal handwriting practice each week and to write for a wider range of purposes. There are now additional English lessons for all groups each week. The setting of individual and group learning targets provides pupils with valuable

opportunities to develop insights into their own learning. Target setting is well established and targets, particularly in English, match well with the overall purpose of lessons.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

54. Parents' views of the school are positive, as are the school's links with parents. The parents' meeting with the registered inspector was not well attended by parents and the proportion of questionnaires returned was low. Most parents who completed the questionnaire are very supportive of the school. Parents feel that their children like school and that they are making good progress. However, a significant number of parents of young children were dissatisfied with the amount of homework, and some other parents with the range of extra-curricular activities available to pupils. Inspectors found that young children have suitable tasks to do at home and there is a good range of extra-curricular activities.
55. School reports provide a satisfactory amount of information for parents. They provide details of what their children have studied over the past year. Pupils' targets for improvement in science are not detailed enough. Parents have good opportunities to discuss targets and reviews with the school. The information provided by the school in the prospectus and annual governors' report to parents conforms to statutory requirements. The school also sends out regular information letters to keep parents informed and they are detailed. They include curricular topics and other relevant domestic issues.
56. Parents' involvement in the work of the school is satisfactory. Some parents work hard for the school. They help to prepare and maintain areas of the school where some necessary duties are too heavy for pupils. Parents, for example, support the garden development and have helped with the new summerhouse. Few parents, for example, act as classroom supports or hear pupils read. The school provides adequate homework to supplement pupils' work at school and this includes a variety of reading activities and other topics. The school operates an 'open door' policy and parents are always welcome to discuss any particular areas of concern about their children. A wide range of visitors visit the school and they provide academic, medical, behavioural and pastoral support to both pupils and parents.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

57. When the school was last inspected, Downside provided satisfactory value for money. Since then, it has made good progress in two years and has improved further. Pupils' standards of work are higher this year in Year 2 and meet national expectations. Teachers now use investigative, experimental and creative approaches in many lessons. The quality of teaching has improved and it is now good throughout the school and very good in the Reception class. Pupils' progress in lessons therefore has improved. Often teachers' targets for lessons are clear and well thought out. The provision the school makes for pupils with special educational needs is now good. Pupils' cultural and spiritual development forms an important part of the curriculum. The school's development planning process provides a longer-term view of all the school wishes to do to improve further. The school now gives good value for money.

58. The governing body has very effectively overseen the necessary changes since the last inspection. The governing body makes a very good contribution to the smooth and effective running of the school. It fulfils its statutory responsibilities. A named governor, for example, checks the register for pupils with special educational needs regularly and other governors make helpful health and safety checks. Governors record their checks on the school's work in writing so that all governors are kept well informed. The chair, vice-chair and other governors have a very clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and of the many influences on the school. They know how high pupils' standards of work are and how much progress pupils make. They provide very good support and direction for the school and know it very well. Governors have made sure that the school keeps to the timescale for change in its plans for improvement. The headteacher receives very good support from the committees in virtually all areas of the school's work, such as in making financial decisions and developing links further with parents. The contents of the school's prospectus and annual report to parents meet statutory requirements.
59. The school is very strongly led by the headteacher. Together, the headteacher, governors and senior staff have provided the drive to improve the school over the last two years. The headteacher has provided a very clear sense of direction in dealing with the key issues from the last inspection. The headteacher promotes a very supportive working atmosphere that has allowed the improvements in school performance to occur. Improvement is based on very good relationships between adults in school, close teamwork amongst new and existing staff and very clear expectations of what needs to be done. The school is keen to improve further and the staff shares the vision for the school. There is no hint of complacency. The headteacher feels that the following points have contributed strongly to the school's improvement:
- Improvement is never-ending.
  - 'Second best' is not good enough and there needs to be high expectations in all areas of the school's work.
  - All staff in the school need to embrace change.
  - Relationships are built on no one being better than anyone else; therefore, a sense of collegiality is necessary.
60. Teachers have good opportunities to develop the school's quality of work. Teachers have written good action plans for developing their responsibilities over the year. Teachers who are responsible for subjects watch colleagues at work in classrooms when their subject is the focus for review. They know what is happening and know what needs to be done next to improve how subjects are taught. The headteacher and teachers in charge of subjects are responsible for many checking activities, for example, of teachers' lesson planning. Teachers receive helpful comments and points for development and standards of teaching are better. Strengths and weaknesses in the school's results and in teachers' assessments are carefully evaluated in, for example, English, mathematics and science. These analyses guide plans effectively and standards have risen.
61. A governor with responsibility for special needs is in regular contact with the special needs co-ordinator. The co-ordinator manages the provision well and ensures that special educational needs matters are discussed at governing body meetings. Any additional funding for special needs is spent prudently and the school uses money from the general budget to supplement the costs of the provision. Money has been well spent on the provision of high quality support staff to work alongside the

teachers and appropriate resources. The school manages the provision for pupils with English as an additional language equally well. Pupils' needs are assessed quickly and extra small group work is provided as appropriate.

62. There is a strong focus on raising standards further. The school seeks to minimise the effects on attainment at seven and eleven of, for example, the well below average attainment of children on entry to the school. The school's development plan is good and it takes several forms. There are priorities for the coming year allocated to each term with criteria for success, so that the school knows when it has achieved a target. All aspects of the school's work are covered, including social inclusion. The policy for social inclusion lists, for example, improving attendance further and the reduction of disruptive behaviour of some pupils. Each teacher in charge of a subject has prepared detailed targets for their subjects. For example in English, the purchase of additional resources for reading such as 'big' books is listed. There is a list of courses and they fit in well with the plans the school has. Few costs are included in the plan. The school has begun to record plans for developments over a three-year period and these are clearly displayed as a working document in the staff-room.
63. Funds are allocated to ensure that the school maintains its good provision. The headteacher and finance committee are fully aware of the school's likely future costs and any implications that might require action. The school has been unable to spend all the funds allocated for staffing, because of a lack of applicants for some jobs. Therefore the underspend is larger than intended. The headteacher and governors have made considerable efforts to appoint new staff. The use of resources, including funds for teachers' courses, is effective. The school follows the principles of 'best value' effectively. The efficient administrator and headteacher, for example, check the value for money that contracts for services provide. Pupils benefit from the care and attention given to financial efficiency and proper use is made of new technology to save time.
64. The accommodation is very good. The school has a good hall, sufficient classrooms, a garden and a large field set amongst mature trees. The library is large and easily accessible. Resources and equipment for use in lessons are satisfactory. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good. There are sufficient well-qualified and well-inducted teachers to meet the demands of the National Curriculum. The school is generously funded. All these features have a positive effect on pupils' work. The school is an effective provider of initial teacher training. The school conducts its business with a good level of effectiveness.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**



65. The governing body, headteacher and staff should continue to implement the plans in place and:
1. Raise pupils' standards in English throughout of the school by improving:
    - Pupils' listening skills. (Paragraphs 5, 81,88)
    - The provision for quiet reading. (Paragraph 84)
    - Pupils' confidence with handwriting. (Paragraphs 87)
  
  2. Raise standards in mathematics and science in Years 3 and 4 by:
    - Improving the quality of lesson targets so that they always specify what pupils will learn. (Paragraphs 25, 96, 104)
    - Challenging smaller groups of pupils with different tasks. (Paragraphs 31, 96, 107)
    - Sharing good practice amongst teachers such as about the presentation of work and the consistent use of the behaviour policy. (Paragraphs 29, 30, 81, 95, 106)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

31

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

30

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	11	73	16	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	134
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	62
Special educational needs	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	48
English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2
Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.1
National comparative data	5.2

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.0
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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	17	12	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	11	13
	Girls	4	5	7
	Total	15	16	20
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	52 (64)	55 (68)	69 (72)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	13	12
	Girls	5	8	8
	Total	16	21	20
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	55 (60)	72 (64)	69 (64)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	122
Other minority ethnic group	2

*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)	6.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.3
Average class size	26.8

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y4**

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	115

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000 / 2001
	£
Total income	298949
Total expenditure	273964
Expenditure per pupil	2045
Balance brought forward from previous year	9261
Balance carried forward to next year	34246

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	125
Number of questionnaires returned	18

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	61	33	6	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	67	28	0	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	67	27	6	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	39	17	11	5
The teaching is good.	56	44	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	67	22	11	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	72	22	6	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	33	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	61	33	0	6	0
The school is well led and managed.	72	28	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	33	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39	44	11	6	0

### Other issues raised by parents

Parents talked positively about the strong links with the church and local community. Parents feel that the school projects a happy atmosphere in which there is mutual respect between children and teachers.

## **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**

66. At the time of the inspection, twenty three children attended the Reception class on a full-time basis and six attended on a part-time basis. Children enter the Reception class in the term after their fourth birthday. The attainment of most children on entry to the Reception class is well below what is typical for children of this age in all the six 'Areas of Learning.' Boys and girls, including children with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs, make good progress across the 'Areas of Learning' recommended for young children. Children achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. By the time children leave the Foundation Stage, most are close to the expected levels of attainment in the six 'Areas of Learning.'
67. The teaching in the Reception class is very good. There is a warm and supportive atmosphere for learning where children feel secure. They are, therefore, able to work enthusiastically and enjoy their learning. Teachers carry out thorough day-to-day assessment of children's attainment and progress in language and mathematical work. Teachers use the information to plan extension activities and to reinforce very specific skills suitable for each child. These assessments ensure that the activities provided challenge individual children without causing any lack of confidence. There is a very good match of work to children's capabilities. The staff in the Reception class work very well together and they recognise children's achievements. The standards of children's work have improved since the last inspection.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

68. By the time children leave the Foundation Stage, they have reached the expected standard in personal, social and emotional development because of the very good teaching they receive. They achieve well. When they arrive in the Reception class many children require constant support to enable them to take part in the activities planned by staff, because they often prefer to work alone. They quickly develop the social skills to work with a partner or in a small group activity. For example, a small group of older children acted the story of 'Farmer Duck' using puppets. They all listened carefully to make sure they joined in when it was their turn and made the appropriate actions, comments and noises. The older children form good relationships with each other and with their teacher and other adults working with them. The teacher and support staff know the children very well and respond quickly and sensitively to children's personal, social and emotional needs. Teaching is carefully organised so that the youngest part-time children and a very small group of the youngest full-time children can work in a small group with good adult support. This sensitive support enables children to feel secure and settle into the Reception class quickly. Older children work well in pairs when completing a jigsaw and when they work on the computer, taking turns to use the mouse.
69. Some of the youngest children find it difficult to select and work for a time on a self-selected activity but respond better when working with an adult. Some are hesitant to speak and offer answers but they quickly gain the confidence to contribute because they are happy and know that their ideas will be appreciated. They all listen well to stories and contribute their own ideas about the characters in a story. For example, older children talked about the character 'Robber Red' in their story while

they worked with word building puzzles. They decided that, 'He is naughty' and they 'hope he gives the things back.' They are very thoughtful and imaginative when they engage in role-play with teddies as they construct their models. The very sensitive teaching encourages children to realise that each one of them is special. All the older children think of something they do well and write this down. For example, they are good at swimming, painting, helping, counting or doing their shoelaces. All their ideas are collected together and displayed in the "I am special" book.

## COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

70. Many children enter the Reception class with very limited language and communication skills. Children make good progress in their learning because the teaching of basic skills is very good and most children are close to the expected standard by the time they leave the Foundation Stage. They achieve well. Teachers use questions very skilfully to help children understand stories and older children confidently respond and extend their language skills. The teacher uses rhymes and songs very well to introduce letter recognition and their sounds. All older children make the shape of 'r' in the air with their fingers and understand the difference between small and capital letters. They give the names of objects beginning with 'r' correctly as they come out of the letter bag but find it hard to identify rhubarb on a tin of fruit. One child happily explains that, "Tin starts with a 't'." The older children settle quickly to their activities and work hard to please the teacher. Many of these children write and read their own simple sentences clearly. Some write one or two-word sentences with prompting while other children overwrite or write under the teacher's writing. They can sort a sequence of pictures of Humpty Dumpty into the correct order and cut and paste frequently used words to create their own simple sentences.
71. In their reading, higher attaining older children read simple sentences with confidence. They all talk about the pictures and many remember the sequence of events in stories. All the older children identify the letters and letter sounds but are not yet building words when they read. Some parents actively help their children at home, by helping them to learn key words or listening to them read.

## MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

72. By the end of the Foundation Stage, most children are close to the expected level for their age. Children achieve well because of the good teaching they receive. The teacher and support staff plan carefully and make careful assessments of early mathematical understanding. In the Reception class most children's mathematical language and understanding are very limited when they come into school and the teacher clearly plans both her questions and the activities the children do to enable all the children to have success. Most older children understand "one more than" and "one less than". Most count up to twenty using their fingers as aids. They add two numbers together, again using fingers and numbers to reach ten. The children can all count from one number to another given number. The numbers given vary according to the understanding of the individual child. For example, one higher attaining child counts from 14 to 19 whilst another counts from 7 to 11. Higher attaining older children have a clear understanding of 'tallest' and 'shortest.' They use plastic blocks to find out how many they need to measure the height of two giraffes and two trees. They write the number of blocks used for each object. They then decide which is the tallest giraffe and the tallest tree. These children worked independently for most of this activity. The younger full time children can, with

support, measure their own height and begin to put in order the tallest and shortest in their group.

73. Teaching and learning in the Reception class are very good because the teacher plans effectively and runs well organised and managed numeracy lessons. She uses a range of teaching methods including direct teaching, independent learning and problem solving. All the Reception staff are confident and knowledgeable about teaching basic numeracy skills. They make good use of suitable mathematical language and provide tasks that are matched well to the children's prior understanding. The teacher uses well focused questions effectively to assess children's understanding during lessons and good records are kept in order to assess their progress before they move into Year 1. Songs and number rhymes are also used well to reinforce the children's understanding of their number work.

#### KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

74. Children's attainment in knowledge and understanding of the world is close to that expected by the time they join Year 1 and they achieve well. The theme during the inspection was 'Mini-beasts' and the children had been in the school garden searching for them. They had identified different kinds of mini-beasts in the wild part of the garden including a snail. In one lesson seen, the full time children remembered that snails live under stones, knew that they move slowly and that they live in a shell. They sing a snail song that reinforces what they know, for example, that snails have eyes on stalks. They listen to a story about a bad tempered ladybird and learn from the story various animals' names such as the skunk, hyena, gorilla and rhinoceros. They are fascinated when the teacher shows them a wasps' nest. A snail environment is created in the classroom for the children to observe the snails closely. Children can tell you that, 'Snails live in the grass and climb up leaves and twigs.' Their interest in snails is extended when they make clay coils and use them to create model snails. One child counted the number of snails she had made and said, 'There are fourteen.' Good resources are available to support the children's learning, including books, pictures, a tank containing tadpoles and a stimulating wall display.
75. Children extend their knowledge and understanding of the world effectively by using a wide range of manufactured construction kits to create a variety of vehicles, including one to carry teddy. Older children use the computer without adult help, pressing the mouse to change or add to pictures on the screen. They also type in the numbers confidently when working with a mathematics program. They use the mouse well and 'pick-up' and 'drag' (move) items when selecting the appropriate clothes for Spot to wear on a rainy day. Many children can print the pictures they have made.

#### CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

76. Children make good progress and are close to the expected standard by the time they leave the Foundation Stage. Their progress is good because the teacher plans a wide range of lessons and the teaching is also very good. Children explore a range of art materials independently on a regular basis. During the inspection, children used paint and this was part of the daily provision of activities for them to choose. Easels are available for children to enjoy such activities as finger painting and painting their own pictures. For example, after numeracy work, one child drew the number five and painted five objects on her paper. The youngest children make



realistic spiders using black paper. They carefully add long folded legs that they fasten to a circular body and complete the spider by painting its eyes and mouth. These children have also made attractive bees using screwed up tissue paper in yellow and black to make the body stripes. For wings, they used shiny foil ribbon with holes in it.

77. All children make interesting collages with a variety of textures and shapes, using glue purposefully and efficiently. For example, children looked carefully at a soft spider toy and looked at the texture of its coat. They make a collage of their own animal and decorate this with feathers, fabric and glitter. Most children use scissors to cut paper, though the younger children still need help. All children sing a range of action songs and rhymes. They really enjoy them, sing enthusiastically and remember the words accurately.

#### PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

78. No physical education lessons in the Foundation Stage were seen during the inspection. Judgements are based on the observation of outdoor play and evidence gained from the teacher's plans. Children make good progress and are close to the expected standard by the time they enter Year 1. Children achieve well because the teacher plans interesting lessons and maximises the use of the two timetabled sessions for physical education. There are good facilities for children. There is a secure outdoor play area with both hard and grassed areas and plenty of equipment to enable children to develop their physical skills. They ride cycles and scooters safely. A large plastic barrel is available for them to climb into, through and over. They enjoy climbing into the barrel and hiding in it. The younger children play with toy planes and helicopters. They develop their language skills during their play. For example, they say, 'We can't go because the passengers are getting on,' and, 'The steps are up so we can go.' A small group of girls painted the school fence using brushes and a bucket of water. Three boys played co-operatively with the pram, one sitting inside whilst the other pushed him round the playground. Children play successfully with bats and balls, construction kits, a trampoline and a seesaw.
79. From the time they enter the Reception class, children learn to use tools effectively to work with paint, play dough, clay and a range of other materials. They use tools with increasing dexterity and demonstrate satisfactory co-ordination when they empty and fill containers with sand and water. They have plenty of opportunities to use scissors, pencils, crayons and brushes. Children use a wide range of construction equipment to build and make objects, which enables them to develop their manipulative skills well.

## ENGLISH

80. The findings of the inspection are that most pupils attain standards that are below average at the age of seven and nine in speaking and listening, reading and writing, but they are improving in each aspect of English. National Curriculum test results for 2001 indicate that standards at the age of seven are likely to be below national averages, although there are currently no figures with which they can be compared. However, the results are likely to be a significant improvement since 2000 when results were well below national averages. The downward trend in standards over recent years has been reversed. Two of the main causes of low standards in the recent past were the variation in the size of groups and the fact that that some year groups had a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in them. The school had identified the need to provide more opportunities for the practice of handwriting, spelling and extended writing, and has received additional support for the teaching of literacy from the local education authority. Some of the main factors that have brought about improvement in 2001 are:
- The additional lesson time for English and the employment of additional classroom assistants to provide more opportunities for small group work.
  - The careful analysis of results this year and this has enabled the school to identify ways of raising pupils' standards higher.
81. Pupils of all capabilities, including those with special educational needs and those who learn English as an additional language, achieve better in speaking than in listening. Standards in speaking are close to those expected nationally for pupils aged seven and nine, but standards in listening are below expectations. At seven, many pupils talk confidently about their work and their interests. They begin to use technical vocabulary to explain their work. They retain much of the vocabulary they learn in other lessons. Many pupils make comments that are relevant and show that they have listened to others. For example, pupils were heard asking questions to clarify their understanding of what teachers said in many lessons. However, some pupils do not listen well or make suitable responses to, for example, other pupils' contributions in lessons.
82. Many pupils aged seven to nine give relevant and correct deductions about the texts that they read together. Often, pupils read out their work at the end of the lesson and speak clearly. In Year 4, some pupils engaged in a discussion of Hilaire Belloc's poem about Matilda. They talked about her way of life and the fact that she told lies. They were quite certain that she deserved what happened to her. When someone is praised for his neat work, another child says, "But look at this girl's writing. It is beautiful, too." Pupils talk confidently to visitors. Some pupils do not listen well, for example, during teachers' explanations of the work to be done at the start of lessons.
83. Attainment in reading is below average at seven and nine, although there have been significant improvements in reading and pupils make good progress. A greater proportion of pupils now attains above average results than in the past. Thoughtful teaching of letter sounds and patterns enables pupils to read simple texts by themselves, so that they make good progress with their reading. Pupils in Year 1 understand why information is often easier to see and understand when it is presented in chart form and recall the different methods they have used during the year. Lower attaining pupils build up their own chart, using letters and sounds from a

line of letters to help them. One pupil is thrilled when he spells 'rabbit' with very little help from the support assistant, building up the sounds of the letters well. Pupils in Year 2 learn about 'synonyms' for words used in the story of 'The Lion and the Mouse' and think hard about alternatives for 'big'. One pupil suggests 'giant' and another pupil immediately adds, "If you put a *g* in it and add *ic* you can make *gigantic*." Pupils know how to use a thesaurus and use alphabetical order correctly to find spellings and meanings in dictionaries. Well labelled displays and the use of written questions around the room give pupils additional opportunities to practise reading and give answers to questions.

84. By the age of nine, the number of pupils who are reading well is rising because of the good teaching of basic reading skills. Teachers lead the reading of texts the class are sharing very well, encouraging pupils to use expression and intonation. Higher attaining pupils read fluently, accurately and mostly expressively, especially when there is dialogue in the text. Most pupils have a good attitude towards reading because the school has chosen books that appeal to boys and girls very carefully. Some pupils read regularly at home and the school has thoughtfully included a period of quiet reading time for all classes on the timetable. However, at times pupils do not fully understand the purpose of the sessions. This time for quiet reading is not used purposefully enough to develop pupils' reading skills.
85. At the ages of seven and nine, pupils' standards in writing are below average but standards are improving and pupils make good progress. Boys in Year 4, have made very good progress in writing and spelling since last year because of the additional time given to all aspects of written work and teachers' imaginative planning. All pupils learn to improve their formation of letters and write legibly and higher attainers learn to write in joined script during Year 2. They now read their work back successfully at the end of a lesson and see any errors they make in their writing. Pupils use capital letters and full stops more consistently and use speech and exclamation marks for emphasis. Year 3 pupils find limericks amusing and work well in pairs. The teacher introduces the subject well so that pupils are enthusiastic. They manage to attain a good rhythm for lines they complete.
86. Pupils write a range of letters, stories, poems and instructions and use these skills effectively in other subjects for example, for writing facts in history. Pupils find things out from non-fiction books to help them in history and geography. In design and technology and science, pupils accurately record evaluations of their findings. In science lessons pupils record several sentences in, for example, conclusions to experiments. Information and communication technology is included in the planning for most lessons. Pupils use the library confidently and they are learning to search for information on the Internet as well as in books. Teachers promote literacy skills effectively through stories and the study of a range of religious writing. Pupils are encouraged to write independently and practise the skills taught in the literacy hour.
87. The use of individual targets for pupils to attain, and the consistent teaching of spelling and letter formation, help pupils to develop confidence in their own ability to spell correctly. Many pupils try hard with their writing and cannot yet write fluently and legibly at the same time because they put so much effort into the actual writing. As they grow in confidence, they write interesting stories and reports. The school is aware that there is a need to build on the good practice already established and to maintain the focus on the development of handwriting so that pupils develop more fluency in their writing.

88. The teaching is good and has led to improving standards. Good planning ensures that lessons build on previous learning effectively. Teachers ensure that all pupils have tasks they can do and which build on pupils past knowledge. Activities are interesting, challenging for higher attainers, and enjoyable. They reinforce many writing and reading skills. Teachers mark work promptly and reinforce their expectations of pupils very effectively. Teachers maintain good reading and spelling records and there is some dialogue between home and school through pupils' reading cards. Pupils' attitudes in English are good. Most are keen to contribute to lessons and work without direct supervision, although some groups are a little noisy and take longer to settle to tasks because they have not yet learned to work effectively without talking. At times, when the talk is about the task, voices are loud because pupils are excited by what they have to do. Teachers do not organise enough opportunities for pupils to improve their skills in listening and in taking turns when speaking to others with special lessons designed to do this. Teachers do not consistently use the behaviour code to help them improve some pupils' listening skills.
89. The good relationships between all adults and pupils create a pleasant atmosphere for pupils to grow in confidence and develop their skills and understanding. Pupils with special educational needs, and with English as an additional language, benefit from the skilled teaching of teachers and support staff. Care goes into the grouping of pupils and the purposeful deployment of staff in English lessons. This has a significant positive effect on pupils' learning. Teachers have a good understanding of the literacy strategy and this ensures that pupils are clear about what they are expected to learn in lessons. They use an imaginative range of resources very effectively to motivate and interest pupils. The school has implemented the literacy strategy and the new arrangements for developing pupils' writing skills effectively. Co-ordination of the subject is very good and information obtained from assessments of pupils' progress is used very well. Pupils use the library confidently. Opportunities for drama are used well and pupils benefit greatly from them.

## **MATHEMATICS**

90. Since 1997, standards of work in national tests in Year 2 have been below average or well below average. The standards that were reported during the last inspection two years ago were close to average. The school has made further good progress in the improvement of pupils' standards of work. The main finding of this inspection is that most pupils in Year 2 are now working at the national average and pupils achieve well. A higher proportion of Year 2 pupils has attained above average standards this year at seven. It is likely that results are a significant improvement over 2000, when results were below the national average. However, there are no national figures yet for comparing schools' test results. Pupils attained or exceeded their targets set by teachers this year. Year 4 pupils' standards of work seen during the inspection were lower than the nationally expected standard. Two thirds of pupils in Year 4 this year (2001) are attaining the standards expected nationally.
91. Boys and girls achieve similarly. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because adults are sensitive to their needs. They receive work that is challenging for them. Pupils with English as an additional language receive good support. For example, if a pupil's lack of English inhibits their understanding of an aspect of mathematics, they join a class of younger children who are working with a member of

the special needs support staff for some lessons until they are able to cope. This has worked successfully.

92. One reason why results have varied in the past is that there are small numbers of pupils in each year and some variations in the capabilities of each year group occur. Currently in Year 4, there is a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. The factors that have raised standards include:
- The tracking of pupils' progress through the school.
  - The quality of teaching and learning in many lessons is good and more is expected of pupils.
  - The effective use of the National Numeracy Strategy.
  - Teachers usually ensure that pupils receive work that is challenging.
  - The teacher who organises the subject (the co-ordinator) ensures that the curriculum builds properly on what pupils already know year on year.
  - The co-ordinator has a good action plan for improving the subject further this year.
  - Better procedures for assessing what pupils know help teachers to plan lessons.
  - There is now a greater emphasis on investigative work, which is more interesting for pupils.
  - A good policy guides what teachers do.
93. Pupils in Year 2 add 75 and 10 and subtract 12 from 55 accurately. Higher attaining pupils subtract 72 pence from a pound and work successfully with written problems. All pupils know some lines of symmetry in basic shapes and many know the names of six three-dimensional shapes, such as cone and cylinder. Pupils measure accurately in centimetres and many tell the time at least to the nearest quarter of an hour. Lower attainers add 12 and 10 and subtract 4 from 20 successfully. They match coins of similar value but have some difficulty ordering two digit numbers.
94. Year 4 pupils typically understand the value of numbers according to the position they are in. Pupils successfully add 82 to 91, work out the perimeter of shapes and understand the terms 'vertical' and 'horizontal.' Pupils work successfully with basic fractions and know that one whole one is the same as three thirds or four quarters. Pupils use 'bar' and 'tally' graphs successfully and add decimals such as 1.6 to 1.2. They make good progress in the amounts they complete and with the complexity of their work. Pupils have demonstrated they can multiply 555 by 5 using a method of breaking down the numbers into more manageable units so that they can complete the equation in their heads. Most pupils measure angles accurately and know the eight points of the compass. Average and higher attainers complete similar work, which includes line graphs of temperature changes during the day. Lower attainers work with number 'snakes,' adding basic numbers to 100 successfully. They subtract 21 from 92 and label circles and squares correctly.
95. Pupils' attitudes to mathematics are good. They mostly listen carefully to their teachers, respond confidently in mental number sessions and many get on independently with tasks quickly. Pupils' enjoyment of mathematics has a positive effect on their learning. They try hard to complete the work they have been given to do. Pupils mostly work co-operatively, for example, when sharing materials and solving problems. Pupils are not afraid to 'have a go' and they learn positively from their mistakes. Teachers, however, deal less effectively with minor interruptions from some boys. The school's good behaviour policy is not always used consistently and progress in lessons slows when teachers give too many reminders about the correct behaviour. Some boys concentrate best when they have tasks to do.

96. The teaching of mathematics is good and has led to improving standards. Teachers provide a secure atmosphere that supports pupils, so that they are not afraid to make mistakes. Teachers encourage children to find different ways of solving problems and they value any contributions made by individuals. On occasions, teachers do not shorten the taught part of lessons when some pupils' concentration has slipped. Teachers plan group work and usually take account of the different needs of lower and higher attaining pupils. However, there is further scope to challenge higher attainers with more difficult work more often. Teachers keep good records of what pupils know, understand and can do, which help them to plan subsequent lessons. In most lessons observed, what pupils were to learn was clearly written in teachers' plans. However, this was not always the case. In one lesson, the teacher had not specified exactly what pupils were to learn and this had some negative impact on the progress of pupils.
97. The teaching leads to good learning. In a successful lesson in Year 4, pupils learned to find many ways of solving a problem. For example, pupils used four numbers and the four rules (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division) to make 50. This task challenged all pupils and initially few got the answer. However, with successful consolidation pupils quickly made progress towards finding an answer close to 50. Pupils learnt to be reflexive in their thinking, for example, to try ideas out to see which was the best. In the same lesson, they also learnt to consolidate a method of adding hundreds, tens and units.
98. Teachers use inventive ways to maintain pupils' concentration and good attitudes to mathematics. Year 2 pupils revised the four rules and several other important mathematical words in a very active way, as if practising a martial art. At the end of the lesson, pupils played another game, which effectively revised their understanding of multiples of 2, 5 and 10. All pupils watched the progress of their classmates during the game very closely to see if any of them made a mistake.
99. Other subjects help pupils develop their mathematical skills. For example, in science pupils measure forces and time experiments. In ICT lessons, pupils practice basic skills. For example, they draw graphs on computers and display their results attractively. In design and technology pupils measure the dimensions of materials they need to make things. Early understanding of dates in history and religious education help pupils to understand four digit numbers. Pupils find places using letter and number co-ordinates in geography.
100. The teacher responsible for mathematics supports colleagues effectively and organises the subject well, showing a strong commitment to improvement.

## **SCIENCE**

101. The school has improved on the low standards reported during the last inspection in Year 2 and in teacher assessments in 2000. Nearly all pupils now (2001) attain the expected national standard. Pupils achieve well. Three quarters of pupils in Year 4 this year (2001) are attaining the standards expected nationally in teachers' assessments and they achieve well. Standards in Year 4 are close to, but below those expected nationally. Boys and girls achieve similarly. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because they receive work that is challenging for them, and have good adult help in many lessons. Pupils with English as an

additional language also achieve well. Adults encourage them to listen and to write by explaining ideas in different words and by allowing extra time for pupils to finish their work when necessary. Currently in Year 4, there is a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. The main reasons for the improvement in standards are:

- The teaching has improved and more is expected of pupils.
  - The teacher who organises the subject (the co-ordinator) ensures that the curriculum builds properly on what pupils already know year on year.
  - The co-ordinator has a good action plan for improving the subject further this year.
  - There are better procedures for assessing what pupils know to help teachers to plan lessons.
  - There is now a much greater emphasis on experimental and investigative work so that pupils explore the laws of nature through 'hands-on' practical work, which is more interesting for pupils. The curriculum concentrates more on 'real-life' situations.
  - A good policy further guides what teachers do and a programme of lesson observations has given teachers valuable information about their teaching and how to improve.
102. Seven year olds' work over the year shows they have an improving knowledge and understanding of all aspects of science. All pupils learn about similar topics in science. Pupils have, for example, found out that some substances are stronger than others are. They write sentences such as, 'When you heat water at it becomes vapour.' They know that chocolate can be melted and will solidify when cool. Pupils know where insects and small animals can be found. Higher attainers make accurate predictions and test ideas consistently well. Lower attainers make simple predictions. They, for example, predict that a large torch will be brighter than a small one.
103. Nine year olds understand how seeds are dispersed and what a food chain is. Pupils have written 'keys' which allow them to identify different types of creature by their individual features. Pupils have investigated the bending of light. Pupils know several types of rock, such as chalk and granite and how soil can be improved so that plants grow better. Pupils predict, then measure, how long candle flames will last when covered by a jar. Lower attainers know what happens to a plant when it is left out of water. Although Year 4 work is less well presented than in Year 2, there is good progress in pupils' knowledge and understanding of science. Pupils have investigated why salt is added to roads in winter. They were all very excited when their ice cubes with water alone, water and salt and water and oil were taken from the fridge. Pupils discovered a range of things; the most important was that salt in water lowers its freezing point therefore making roads safer in winter. Pupils of all levels of attainment understood this idea. Pupils with special educational needs and lower attaining pupils benefit from the practical approaches to work, in which they can be involved alongside their peers. They receive good adult support.
104. The teaching throughout the school is good and it has a positive effect on pupils' behaviour and learning. Teachers set mostly clear targets for each lesson, which pupils understand. Where the targets for lessons are less clear, pupils make slower progress. Some lesson targets do not specify what pupils will learn, for example, over the week or during lessons. The curriculum is organised so that what pupils are taught builds on what they have already learnt. Consequently, pupils gain new knowledge and skills and make good progress in many lessons. Teachers record what pupils know, understand and can do effectively.

105. Pupils have good opportunities to use their writing skills to express their ideas and findings. Pupils' listening, speaking and numeracy skills are put to good use. They learn new technical terms and to count accurately. They learn enquiry skills as they ask questions about, for example, how different kinds of joints work (Year 3) or how strong different materials are, in Year 1. Teachers question pupils to improve their thinking and give good attention to the revision of ideas in all lessons and at the end of topics.
106. In a Year 1 lesson about forces, the teacher concentrated pupils' efforts on the need to predict what might happen before they tested anything. It was a successful lesson where the lesson targets were clearly recorded in terms of what the pupils would know and understand at the end of the lesson. All pupils learned to make predictions about how the materials might respond to pushes, pulls and twists. Higher attainers explained in some detail that they were not sure what all the results would be. Some pupils, for example, thought about what the difference between a twist and a pull were and whether how hard they did these made a difference. There was much learning in this lesson that will be useful to pupils in the future. In another successful lesson, in Year 3, the teacher outlined clearly in her plan what pupils would actually learn about different types of joints. Pupils went on to learn that there are hinge joints and ball and socket joints and that they have advantages and disadvantages in the way that they work. Most pupils' behaviour was good but there were some interruptions from a small number of pupils, which slowed progress. Teachers do not always consistently carry out the suggestions in the behaviour policy.
107. To support their planning, teachers use a wide range of resources effectively. Teachers now routinely prepare investigative and experimental work. Pupils learn how to test fairly and to develop methods for investigating ideas, although the term 'fair test' rarely features in older pupils' writing. Pupils learn to record information and to make simple measurements, such as timing how long a candle will burn without oxygen. Teachers prepare all lessons with care. There are occasions however when older higher attainers are not set work that is more difficult from the outset of lessons. For example, they are not often asked to create a fair test for themselves with little or no help initially.
108. The teacher responsible for science has a strong influence on the subject. The checks on teaching and learning have helped the school raise science standards. Pupils have sufficient equipment to use during small group work. Many good displays reinforce pupils' understanding of scientific ideas. For example, in the Year 3 classroom there is a very clear display of a mouth showing all the types of teeth and where they are. Pupils' end of year reports for parents lack targets for pupils to attain in the coming year.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

109. At seven and nine years, pupils attain the nationally expected standards of work and achieve well. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. There is some particularly good work in Year 3 where pupils have looked at bridges and their effect on the environment and have created pictures using chalk and crayon. A particular strength is the good use made throughout the school of the work of other artists and the use of the Internet to 'visit' art galleries. This facility enables pupils to develop their own artistic skills in terms of techniques, composition, tone and texture. Pupils use a wide variety of media and develop a wide range of basic skills which



make it possible for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, to achieve well. Pupils' work, along with that of other artists, is displayed very effectively around the school and classes have good displays of all kinds that stimulate interest and help pupils learn in many subjects. Pupils make successful use of information and communication technology (ICT) to produce pictures, patterns and designs that link their art and design work to other subjects. Pupils further develop their skills by working with a sculptor in school and by looking at the history of a nearby National Trust site.

110. Pupils enter Year 1 with creative abilities close to those expected of children of their age. The younger pupils look carefully at the works of Van Gogh and create collages of their favourite views using shoe box lids on which to arrange shells, twigs and leaves. Older pupils look carefully at pattern, texture and shape. They observe natural objects such as flowers, trees, rocks and shells and create the texture of these, using pencil. Pupils look at buildings using a view finder, and extend their understanding of texture further by making rubbings with wax crayons of bricks, concrete and gravel. Pupils also look at the water-lily pictures by Claude Monet and successfully reproduce similar tones and colours in their own pictures as those used by the artist. Older pupils make tiles using clay and finger puppets using felt. Pupils develop their sewing skills and have the chance to work with different fabrics.
111. In Years 3 and 4, pupils further develop their observation skills by drawing instruments of the orchestra and pencil portraits of themselves. In Year 3 they study a painting by Macke and create their own paintings in the same style using a variety of textures, with paint and brushes. Pupils explore paint mixing and use this in their paintings. They create very special pictures of bridges, looking carefully at how they fit into a natural environment. Pupils use chalk and pastels and select highly appropriate colours for their pictures. During the inspection they looked at sculptures and designed one to improve an area of the Garden 2000. The pupils looked at the colours in the garden and recorded these in order that their designs will blend in with the environment. They sketched their first ideas and then designed their sculptures.
112. By the end of Year 4, pupils observe the paintings of Vincent Van Gogh and Johannes Vermeer. In their literacy work, pupils describe their opinions of Vermeer's work and show clearly the depth of their observation of his paintings. They use their sketchbooks well to develop their perspective drawing of a chair in their 'take a seat' project. Pupils show their knowledge gained from observing "Vincent's Chair" by Van Gogh, by creating their own pictures of a chair, both in the corner of a room and outdoors. They extend their experience of using clay by making tiles decorated with motifs taken from the willow pattern plates. Whilst looking at 'journeys' in other curriculum areas, the pupils plan their own 'journey' in their sketch books and paint this onto wood in the art style of the Australian Aborigines.
113. The subject is effectively managed. The teacher in charge has a good knowledge of the subject and a good overview of the work in school. Teachers keep a record of the work completed in art and design on their weekly planning sheet, which is seen by the co-ordinator. Although no written assessment of pupils' attainment is in place, on-going assessment by teachers takes place to monitor successes and points for development. The school uses national guidance to plan lessons and additional training for all staff is identified in the school's development plan in order to improve further the teaching of art. The planning identifies the development of skills clearly and the good effect of this planning is seen in the work produced throughout the school. Resources are good and the school has decided to extend their own

collection of pictures to use in their teaching rather than use the local loan service. There are books to support art and design in the school library and pupils use these to find further information about the artists that they are studying. The co-ordinator also takes the after school art club. The club takes place in the spring term and this year younger pupils attended too. There is a waiting list to join because it is so popular.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

114. Most pupils in Year 2 and at the end of Year 4 attain the nationally expected standards of work and make good progress, including those pupils with special educational needs and with English as an additional language. Standards have improved since the last inspection because a comprehensive scheme of work is in place and a wider range of materials is used for making things. The staff has gained confidence and clearly understands the design process.
115. In Year 1 pupils bake cakes, guided by a support assistant. Other pupils draw designs for four different cakes and then use the designs to decorate the cakes with sweets and coloured icing. Older pupils make tiles using clay and finger puppets using felt. Pupils develop sewing skills and have the opportunity to work with fabrics. They also make simple winding mechanisms. In food technology, they make fruit kebabs. The pupils first design their kebabs and identify the fruit they wish to use. They make their personal kebab and eat it to evaluate the taste. Words such as 'fabulous, fantastic, delicious' are offered by pupils to describe the taste of the kebab.
116. Pupils in Year 3 design and make photograph frames. They sketch their ideas to show four different views of their frame. They also use their sketchbooks to design the puppets and make the model heads using papier-mache on a wooden frame. Pupils finish them using paint and finally varnish. The teacher gives very good attention to the safety aspects of using varnish and pupils understand clearly that it must be kept away from the skin and their eyes. Pupils design a setting and scenery for their puppet theatre and higher attaining pupils develop their own ideas while others use the suggestions given by the teacher. They have good opportunities to be creative and imaginative when developing their ideas on paper. Pupils' food technology work links well to their work on food in science. They make a variety of sandwiches and use their knowledge in numeracy to make tally charts and bar graphs to show their favourite fillings and favourite bread.
117. Older pupils have also linked science work to their technology project. They make an electrical circuit with a switch and light to use in a room which they create using a shoebox. They make appropriate furniture for the room and decorate the walls. Pupils are very pleased to show how the lights work and explain accurately how the switch breaks or closes the circuit to work the bulb. Resistant materials, such as small square section wood, are used to make a wooden cube frame. Pupils cut their own wood strips accurately using small hacksaws and fasten the frame together with card corners. They cover five sides with card, leaving the top with a circular hole in the card so that it will store small items. Pupils decorate their boxes and take them home as a gift for Mother's day.
118. The teaching is good and pupils make good progress. Teachers place good emphasis on all aspects of health and safety in their design and technology lessons.

For example, when working with food, pupils learn that their hands carry germs and must be washed before they touch the fruit. Most pupils work hard and successfully carry out the tasks set by the end of lessons. Teachers provide good worksheets and these are used well by the pupils at the planning and evaluation stage of the design process. Pupils learn much from lessons as their attainment demonstrates.

119. The teacher who manages design and technology has very good subject knowledge, which she shares with all members of staff, including support assistants. The co-ordinator attends meetings with other school staff to gain ideas and share experiences. The nationally recommended scheme of work is in place and is used together with the school's own good scheme. The co-ordinator continues to evaluate the success of the scheme effectively through discussion with staff. She checks the termly planning and her evaluations are discussed in staff meetings. Teachers assess pupils' work and good records are kept in teachers' record books. Resources have improved since the last inspection and now include two workbenches and a small collection of hand-tools.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

120. Most boys and girls attain what is expected nationally for their ages at both seven and nine years of age. Pupils achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because they receive work that is sufficiently challenging for them and receive good adult help in many lessons. Pupils with English as an additional language also achieve well. Adults help pupils to engage closely with reading and writing tasks by, for example, assisting with the meaning of words. Since the inspection four years ago, standards have been maintained and work is now more relevant to pupils' own experiences. As they move through the school, all pupils gain a sound knowledge and understanding of geography.
121. At seven, pupils know the names of the countries and seas of the British Isles. They know what to pack for a holiday and have discussed and found their holiday destinations on maps. Pupils successfully use number and letter co-ordinates to find places on imaginary maps. Year 1 pupils draw their journey to school and make good attempts to draw a bird's-eye view of the classroom. Pupils have completed an interesting traffic survey that showed that most vehicles moving around the estate are cars.
122. Pupils in Year 3 know the four points of the compass. Pupils have considered the advantages and disadvantages of turning the school field into a shopping centre. All pupils have given sensible reasons for their opinions. Pupils' understanding of many aspects of geography is improved because they have a working knowledge of numbers to a thousand and can use this knowledge, for example, to measure distances. At nine, pupils have made further good progress with understanding the similarities and differences between places. Pupils have drawn plan views of objects and know the eight points of the compass. They begin to understand what 'interest groups' do, for example, when traffic free zones are considered. They understand the process of recycling and of how much the average person throws away. Pupils have studied how to work out the quickest route to places on simplified road maps. They have made successful comparisons between life in Dunstable and Chembakolli in India.

123. The main strengths of the teaching are the understanding teachers have of the subject and the relevant practical work that pupils are given. Pupils' research skills develop well and they use a range of sources, such as textbooks, surveys and library books to find evidence about specific topics. The quality of pupils' presentation of work is particularly good in Years 1 and 2. The teacher responsible for geography has a positive impact on the subject. For example, she has ensured that the work pupils have is interesting and relevant to pupils' lives. There is a good emphasis on the use of real life situations, such as the use of surveys and pupils have responded well to the curriculum. The teacher responsible for geography has worked very hard to improve the guidance for teachers to use when planning lessons. There is a clear and well written action plan for the future development of geography.

## **HISTORY**

124. Inspection evidence from one lesson observed and pupils' work shows that pupils' attainment matches national expectations at both seven and nine years of age. As they move through the school, all pupils gain a good knowledge and understanding of change over time. Most boys and girls attain what is expected nationally for their ages and achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and have good adult help in many lessons. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve well because, for example, adults repeat questions, explain words and reinforce important points so that they are fully understood. The teaching quality and pupils' standards of work reported four years ago have been maintained up to Year 2 and have improved in Years 3 and 4. For example, work for older pupils is no longer 'superficial' and based mainly on the use of videos.
125. At seven, pupils have an adequate sense of when some events happened and understand that places and people change over time. Pupils understand that some events occurred before others. In the one lesson seen, all pupils realised, for example, that Stephenson's Rocket preceded modern day trains. Higher attaining pupils sequenced six different kinds of train from different periods successfully. Pupils know the stories of Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole. They have looked closely at Victorian toys and explain which is their favourite. Pupils have studied the Battle of Hastings and the Great Fire of London. In Year 1, pupils begin the process of understanding change over time. Pupils have looked at old and new houses and have compared Victorian washing days with the present day.
126. At nine, pupils have knowledge of several more periods in history. They have studied the Stone Age period and how people lived. Pupils have produced small booklets about Henry the Eighth that are full of interesting facts and pictures. Pupils have an appropriate understanding of how it was to be rich or poor in the past. In Year 3, pupils study aspects of the history of the Saxons, Vikings and Romans. Pupils writing skills are used to good effect. Pupils have successfully compared Roman times with the present and all pupils write at least three sentences to explain the reasons why these peoples invaded England. Teachers make good connections with pupils' general knowledge. Pupils know that several months of the year are named after Roman Emperors. Their understanding of dates is enhanced because many pupils understand numbers to a thousand.
127. The teaching in the one lesson observed was good. In the introduction to the lesson, the teacher asked probing, open-ended questions about the ages of trains, often directed to individuals, so that all pupils were fully involved in the discussion. Consequently, pupils made good progress in developing their skills of sequencing

information. The teaching had a good impact upon pupils' behaviour and attitudes to the lesson.

128. The teacher responsible for history has a good influence on the subject. For example, she ensures that the school works to national guidelines. She has worked very hard to improve the guidance for teachers to use when planning lessons. Teachers' plans are checked. There is a clear and well written action plan for the future development of history.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

129. At the end of Year 2 and Year 4, pupils' standards of work meet those expected nationally and pupils make good progress and achieve well. There have been good improvements since the last inspection. There is an additional computer in each classroom and teachers are receiving further training in ICT skills so that they may become more effective in their work. ICT is timetabled for all classes and good use is made of lesson time. Computers are used well in literacy and numeracy. They are not used sufficiently in other subjects.
130. Pupils in Year 1 learn to type their own name, using the shift key to make capital letters. They look at information around them and the ways in which it is presented, for example, traffic lights and clocks give instructions. Pupils use a simple paint program to create a background scene and then learn how to use the 'stamp' tool to add objects to their scene. They learn how to print their pictures of clowns and a plate showing their favourite dinner. Pupils use ICT to support their numeracy work. They create pictograms showing their favourite colours. Older pupils in Year 2 learn how to use search techniques to find information about habitats on a CD-ROM. They use the menu, index and the key words to help them find information. Children with special educational needs have very good support to encourage them to explore the menu and successfully find information about ants. Not only do they look in the section labelled 'habitats,' but they find additional information about the food ants eat. All pupils think carefully before writing the questions they will ask when it is their turn to use the computer.
131. Pupils learn to use a programmable floor robot to form a letter as it moves on the floor. They give a sequence of instructions to enable the robot to move and other pupils have to guess the letter shape. The computer is used to support learning in numeracy and during the inspection, pupils used a program to reinforce their understanding of multiplication. In order to develop their understanding of the work of the artist Mondrian, pupils used the computer to draw straight lines, geometric shapes and add colour, using the 'flood' and 'fill' tools to create a pattern in the style of the artist.
132. In Years 3 and 4, younger pupils use e-mail to send simple messages successfully to each other. They record information about mini-beasts on a database. The computer is used to investigate sound patterns in music. Pupils use 'stop,' 'play,' 'forwards,' 'backwards,' 'record' and 'delete' to listen to a simple sequence of higher and lower notes. Pupils learn how to use the computer to search for 'skeleton' in their science work using the CD-ROM encyclopaedia. They are shown the right word for the search and then a follow up word, for example, 'knee cap' to look more closely at various parts of the body. Older pupils have ICT books in which they record their work. They learn to put information into a database and create a variety

of graphs effectively. Pupils successfully retrieve information from these graphs. Their word processing skills are developing well. They correct their writing and change the size, colour and style of the fonts they use. Pupils organise their writing into paragraphs, write newspaper columns and correctly present lines of poetry. All pupils use the programmable robot and accurately sequence instructions to control it.

133. The teaching of ICT is good. Teachers use whole-class lessons to develop pupils' skills in a way that meets the needs of all pupils. Pupils' attitudes consequently are good. The able support staff ensures that pupils who find the work more difficult achieve success with additional help. In the lesson observed, the teaching was good and pupils' progress was consequently good. The teacher has good subject knowledge and interacted effectively with pupils. Pupils all made good progress, they enjoyed their work and concentrated hard to complete their tasks.
134. The teacher responsible for co-ordinating this subject has a very good knowledge of the subject and her work is very effective. She sees the termly plans and all the staff use the same planning sheet. Each class has a portfolio showing their work throughout the year and there are ICT displays in each classroom. There are appropriate signed agreements with parents and pupils regarding access to the Internet. There is a computer in the library to help pupils and staff search for information.

## **MUSIC**

135. Pupils throughout the school attain the standards expected for their ages and enjoy their music making activities, especially singing. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who learn English as an additional language, achieve well in relation to their prior attainments.
136. In lessons, pupils in Years 1 and 2 build up a good repertoire of songs and learn to sing at different speeds and moods because the teachers lead them very skilfully. There are good links with art. For example, pupils recognised a painting of a field of sunflowers very quickly. They suggested correctly that the painting was by Van Gogh and listened very thoughtfully to the associated music on a tape. Skilful questioning by the teacher helped pupils to establish good links between the music and the painting. Pupils concentrated very well as they learned the song quickly so that before the end of the lesson they sang it well. They enjoyed the activity so much that they looked forward to singing the song in two groups.
137. Pupils in Year 4 sing in two parts and follow the teacher's instructions well. They sing without an accompaniment and maintain their pitch well. Pupils increase their speed, add intonation and expression to their singing, which makes it interesting for them and for the listener. Pupils sing songs from 'Oliver' with great feeling. The songs suit their young voices well and the overall effect is very moving. The teacher knows that pupils want to sing these songs and leads them to higher levels of performance. Pupils learn to read musical notation very accurately and play scales on the recorder, watching the notes very carefully. Every pupil has a recorder and attempts to play the tune, and, although this leads to some slight variation in skills in fingering and breathing correctly, it is a very good example of how everyone in the class can be included in musical activity. It also gives every pupil the opportunity to practise skills in reading music.

138. Pupils enjoy making music and achieve well. They work sensibly together and know that it takes effort to achieve good results. Pupils' concentration is good when pupils sing in class or assemblies because the teaching and learning of music is good. Teachers consider practical issues carefully, ensure that everyone is settled, has enough space, and can see any words or music. Teachers plan lessons effectively to include appropriate practice and extension of what pupils know and can do. Since the last inspection there has been an improvement in that there are now useful written guidelines for teachers to follow so that all elements are taught during the year.
139. Pupils sing a range of songs very sweetly. Their diction is clear and they listen carefully to the music between lines and verses. Pupils concentrate well, sing tunefully and learn melodies and words quickly. Older pupils make a good contribution to the singing in assemblies and this helps younger pupils learn the songs more quickly.
140. Pupils learn to play the violin with a teacher who visits the school each week. There are clubs during the year for pupils who are more skilled in playing the recorder. Visiting groups and musicians come to the school to share their expertise with pupils and these occasions contribute very positively to pupils' learning. Music plays a very important part in the life of the school and pupils regularly attend festivals and carol singing events in Dunstable and at local churches. The co-ordinator, who has considerable musical expertise, provides good support for other colleagues. Music makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

141. Standards of pupils' work meet national expectations at the age of seven and nine. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and who learn English as an additional language, achieve well and make good progress. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.
142. At seven, pupils reach the expected levels of knowledge and skill in games activities. All understand the importance of a warm-up before the lesson and the need to cool down after exercise. In a Year 2 games lesson, pupils improved their ability to throw and catch balls, beanbags and quoits as they moved around the field. The teacher showed them how to challenge themselves by trying to catch the ball with one hand or throw it up from under their leg. Higher attaining pupils were very pleased when they were able to demonstrate that they could do this. Pupils improved their skills in throwing accurately to a partner and tried to aim a beanbag through a hoop as it is rolled from one person to another. Most pupils found this very difficult but a few did it successfully.
143. Year 1 pupils showed good stretching abilities in a warm-up game and tried hard to walk around the playground balancing a ball on a racquet. At first most pupils found this difficult, but the teacher encouraged them and gave advice on safe carrying so that most pupils were successful. The teacher made good use of pupil demonstrations so the group could observe the good features of someone's control of the ball when bouncing it up and down. Consequently, all pupils concentrated on trying to improve their performances. Pupils found this a challenging activity because of the intense concentration required.

144. Seven to nine-year-olds work equally hard and learn effectively. They respond very well to quiet and firm guidance from the teacher and are very enthusiastic. In a well-constructed lesson in Year 4, pupils worked well with partners when they practised following their partner's movements around the hall before setting off in small groups with a compass to set a route. They worked effectively together, listening carefully to instructions such as, "Walk 20 paces to position 'B' in a northerly direction and set a marker." Pupils followed these instructions and then went in a different direction to set another marker. They demonstrated that they knew how to use a compass and understood the instructions given. When they arrived at point 'B' pupils constructed a game with the equipment they found. Pupils showed initiative as they made up games using bats, balls, hockey sticks, hoops and quoits imaginatively. The teacher offered good support and guidance to the groups as they worked out their games and in the discussion at the end of the lesson pupils evaluated the games they created and decided which was their favourite.
145. The teaching and learning in lessons are good. Teachers are confident. They plan carefully, follow the guidelines of the very comprehensive scheme used in the school very well, and there is always an appropriate challenge in the activities. Pupils start their work with enjoyable activities to warm up their muscles before strenuous exercise and there is a corresponding relaxation of muscles at the end of lesson. Pupils enjoy lessons and the activities that give them opportunities to learn and practise new skills.
146. At different times of the year pupils enjoy a range of sporting activities after school. The emphasis is on learning skills before pupils compete in teams or play games such as rounders. Pupils work very hard in these sessions and quickly learn the rules of games and work out tactics. The subject is led well and the co-ordinator rightly plans to develop more outdoor and adventurous activities to enhance the curriculum.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

147. At the ages of seven and nine, most pupils meet the standards expected in the local education authority's syllabus. Pupils who learn English as an additional language also achieve well. These findings match those of the last inspection.
148. Pupils aged seven become aware of the important characters and stories in the Old and New Testaments. They know the stories of the famous saints connected with the area. They know that people have different beliefs and special symbols or artefacts through a study of Buddhism, Sikhism, Judaism and Hinduism. Teachers make lessons interesting and visits produce interesting opportunities for pupils to learn. For instance, pupils dress up as monks and learn different skills, such as writing on wax or identifying different herbs. This is remembered well when pupils design their own herb garden. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 understand that everyone is special and that there are special people, such as Jesus and St Francis. They write simple prayers and enjoy learning about celebrations, such as Diwali and Chinese New Year, as well as the story of the Passover. Pupils know that the birth of a baby is very special for everyone and that parents from different faiths celebrate this very special occasion in different ways.



149. At nine, pupils' knowledge of the Bible increases and pupils deepen their knowledge of other world religions, significant leaders and teachers. Pupils in Year 3 gain an increased understanding of the features of places of worship and religious artefacts, such as the prayer mat and the Qur'an. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to imagine themselves as a Torah scroll. Pupils write sensitively of the scroll, which they know has to be handled with respect and show very good awareness of 'being special'. Year 4 pupils write thoughtfully about moral issues that are in the news and imaginatively about an Aboriginal journey as part of their religious education lessons. They listen carefully to the story of the prodigal son and are quick to learn that the father kept on loving his son although he was sad because he had not always been good. Pupils show an awareness of what is happening in the world around them and a concern for the problems that others experience.
150. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and pupils' learning is enhanced by interesting activities linked to a variety of religions. Teachers place a very good emphasis on learning about faiths other than Christianity, so pupils have consistent opportunities to learn about and understand the customs and beliefs of other faith groups. They build consistently on their previous learning and recall events and people well. Teachers promote literacy effectively through stories and the study of a range of religious writing. Pupils are encouraged to write independently and practise the skills taught in the literacy hour. There are good links with music in assemblies and lessons and pupils use their own artistic skills effectively to illustrate their writing in religious education. Pupils learn to discuss and to express their own views. They find religious education lessons interesting and enjoyable.
151. The co-ordinator ensures that the planning corresponds well to the locally agreed syllabus and there are now guidelines to help teachers plan lessons. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The co-ordinator has rightly identified a need to provide more opportunities for pupils to learn about the cultural richness and diversity of society through the religious education curriculum. Religious education makes a good contribution to assemblies, which are supported well by regular contributions from visitors. These have a positive effect on pupils' learning in religious education.