

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **GOLDINGTON GREEN LOWER SCHOOL**

Bedford

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109434

Headteacher: Mrs P Worden

Reporting inspector: Mrs C A Field  
9479

Dates of inspection: 10<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> June 2002

Inspection number: 196136

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Lower
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Goldington Road Bedford
Postcode:	MK41 0DP
Telephone number:	01234 301103
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr I Hedley
Date of previous inspection:	June 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
9479	C A Field	Registered inspector	Equality of opportunity	Information about the school The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
31754	C Roberson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
15414	D R Carrington	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Music	
25074	J Cox	Team inspector	Provision for pupils with special educational needs Provision for pupils with English as an additional language Provision for children in the Foundation Stage	
6752	J Dickins	Team inspector	English Religious education Work of the Language Provision	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
25771	P Sandall	Team inspector	Science Geography History Physical education	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school is situated to the east of Bedford and provides for 4 to 9-year-olds, most of whom live locally and come from a mixture of private and social housing. The school has grown well in size since the time of its previous inspection and many staff are new. Currently there are 413 pupils on roll and the number is rising. Governors have increased the admission number to enable three classes of 30 pupils in all years. Most pupils are from white European backgrounds but around 16 per cent have a different heritage, for example black Caribbean, black African, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Chinese. A very small percentage of pupils are from traveller backgrounds or are refugees from Afghanistan. Around 8 per cent of pupils receive additional support to help them learn English; some of these pupils are at an early stage of English language acquisition. Mother tongues include: Punjabi, Hindi, Farsi and Danish. About a quarter of pupils are eligible for free school meals which is broadly average when compared to primary schools nationally. A similar proportion of pupils have special educational needs that cover a range of difficulties, and 6 pupils have a statement for mainly moderate learning difficulties. The school makes additional provision for 14 pupils who have a statement of special educational needs for speech and language difficulties, some of whom are brought to school from quite a distance away. These pupils receive much of their education in classes in the main school with others of the same age, but with additional support. The school refers to this aspect as 'language provision' and this is the term used throughout the report. Pupils' attainment on entry into reception is below average.

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

Goldington Green is an effective school and one that strives for continuous improvement. The headteacher and senior management are forward thinking and provide clear educational direction. Teaching is good overall and most pupils make good progress during their time in school, though standards could be higher still by Year 4. Staffing and accommodation issues that the school has already begun to improve currently hamper the start to education made by the youngest children in school. Good attention is given to meeting the specific needs of the diverse group of pupils, and staff work very hard to help pupils overcome some significant barriers to learning within a caring environment. Most pupils have good attitudes to school, behave well and work hard. They generally get along well together and there is positive racial harmony. The school makes efficient and effective use of its resources and provides good value for money.

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

- Standards are above average in English, mathematics and design and technology at seven years and in science, history, art and design and music at both seven and nine years.
- Teaching is good overall and enables most pupils to learn successfully.
- The standards of behaviour are good overall and pupils show enthusiasm and interest in their studies.
- Good attention is paid to welfare, health, safety and child protection matters and this provides an environment in which individual educational, personal and social needs can be sensitively met.
- The language provision is one of the school's strengths and those pupils with statements for speech and language needs receive a good quality education.
- The leadership by the headteacher and key staff is well focused on the right priorities for the future, and very good systems are in place to support the professional development and performance of all staff.

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

- Standards in English and mathematics could be higher by Year 4.
- Multicultural aspects of curriculum are not well promoted and this requires review.
- There is a lack of clarity, rigour and system in the management, monitoring and evaluation of the provision for those pupils who learn English as an additional language and those from ethnic minority backgrounds.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The previous inspection took place in June 1997 and identified many strengths and a happy learning environment. Five specific aspects were identified as requiring improvement. These included: the need to plan school improvement more strategically; improve the quality of teaching in information and communication technology (ICT), design and technology (DT), art and design and physical education (PE); ensure that curriculum co-ordinators have more time to carry out their duties; continue to develop assessment procedures and the monitoring of pupils' progress; and take action to improve boys' attainment and progress. The school has made good progress in improving these aspects and has good capacity to sustain a good rate of future improvement.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests (known as SATs).

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
Reading	D	D	D	C
Writing	D	C	C	B
Mathematics	A	C	B	A

Key	
Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E

NB: Similar schools are those with 20-35% of pupils eligible for free school meals

The above table shows that the standards achieved by seven-year-olds in the 2001 SATs were average in writing, below average in reading and above average in mathematics. Standards compared more favourably with similar schools. The standards achieved by nine-year-olds were broadly average in English, mathematics and science when compared to other Bedfordshire lower schools. Standards have been improving steadily over the past five years. The indications are that the school's performance in the 2002 SATs is much improved. When the 2002 standards are compared to those in 2001 they are above average across the board with some high level achievement apparent in writing and mathematics, though these are unconfirmed as yet.

Children in the Foundation Stage achieve appropriately from a below average starting point. Some children could be doing better but temporary staffing problems and accommodation limitations are hampering the rate at which they learn. The school has already begun to make improvement here. Pupils make good progress over their time in the infant phase with accelerated learning taking place in Year 2. Standards are above average in English and mathematics. Infant-stage pupils make good progress and achieve well in science, art and design, DT, history and music. In the junior phase most pupils make satisfactory progress across their studies, with some good progress in science, art and design, history and music. There is some good achievement made by higher attainers in English and mathematics, though the proportion of those achieving at the average level 3 and the higher level 4 is similar to that found in most other Bedfordshire lower schools. The impact of the school's strategies for improvement can be seen much better in the written work of younger pupils than older ones. The achievement of middle-attaining pupils is not as positive as other groups and this is one area the school is aware it needs to tackle more. Pupils who learn English as an additional language generally make similar learning gains to their classmates. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements, make good progress against their specific targets.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have good attitudes to school and are keen to learn. They generally get along well together and there is positive racial harmony.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good overall. However a small but significant minority has challenging behaviour that is not always managed positively. In some classes behaviour is fussy and too demanding of the teachers' attention and this requires review. Three exclusions last year were fully justified.
Personal development and relationships	Good relationships are supporting positively pupils' effective learning.
Attendance	The school's attendance level is below average, due to a minority of pupils who have significant absences and not always for fully justified reasons. A high proportion of parents also take their children on holiday in term-time.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	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.*

Teaching has improved since the time of the previous inspection despite considerable staff changes. The school's very good attention to the professional development of staff, including performance management, is having a positive impact on improving teaching quality. Teaching is good overall and is leading to pupils' making good progress in English, mathematics, science, art and design, history and music. Teaching is effective for those pupils who have special educational needs, including those with specific speech and language difficulties and those who learn English as an additional language or are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Some pupils have multiple needs, however, and would benefit from a more co-ordinated provision being made for them that focuses on their all-round development. Learning support assistants make an extremely valuable contribution to both teaching and learning, are well focused on individual needs and effective in assisting the pupils they work with to make good gains in their learning. Learning sets in English and mathematics are a positive feature, however the range and quality of work and the standards expected are not as good as they could be for middle-attaining sets in junior classes. The school is aware of the need to focus on learning outcomes as part of its developing monitoring activities and when sharing and extending the best practice in school.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and balanced with good strategies for literacy and numeracy. The provision made for pupils' personal development is highly relevant and effective. A good extracurricular programme provides enrichment.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	These pupils are well supported in school and make good progress against their individual targets.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory attention is given to helping these pupils learn successfully but there are weaknesses in assessment, management and monitoring systems.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Pupils' moral and social development is well fostered. Satisfactory attention is paid to pupils' spiritual and cultural development, however the promotion of multicultural education is under-represented across the curriculum and this requires review.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school is caring and has some very good procedures for assessing attainment in core subjects. There is developing use of assessment to track and target ongoing progress of different groups of pupils across the subjects they study.
How well the school works in partnership with parents and carers	The school maintains sound links with parents but recognises that it is timely to widen the strategies for involving them directly in the support of their children's education and in supporting good patterns of attendance.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and senior management are forward thinking and provide clear educational direction. There is unity of purpose and shared determination to succeed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors know well the strengths and weaknesses in school and are effective in role. They fulfil their legal responsibilities efficiently.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good attention is paid to ensuring that best value principles are applied to all areas of evaluating the school's performance and setting the right priorities for improvement. The school has clear ambitions to become a centre of excellence.
The strategic use of resources	There are good accommodation, resources and staffing levels. All resources are put to effective and efficient use and the school provides good value for money.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children like school.</li><li>• They are expected to work hard and are helped to become mature and responsible.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communication between school and home</li><li>• The range of activities outside lessons</li></ul>

Only 13 per cent of parents returned the inspection questionnaire and a total of 22 parents met with the registered inspector at two meetings held at different times. The views above are those expressed by these parents. Inspectors agree with the positive views expressed, and agree that the school could widen its strategies for involving parents as partners in education. Inspectors find that the range of extracurricular activities is good and parents should feel reassured on this count.

## PART B: COMMENTARY

### HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

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

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The school has made good improvement in standards since the time of its previous inspection. Pupils, irrespective of their background, gender or ability, now learn more successfully than they did in all subjects.</li><li>• Standards today are above average in English, mathematics and design and technology (DT) at seven years and in science, history, art and design and music at both seven and nine years.</li><li>• Within a caring environment that values individuals, the school is assisting pupils, many of whom have significant barriers to learning, to work towards their personal best.</li><li>• Standards currently are higher at the end of the infant than the junior phase and this requires attention.</li><li>• The school has set realistic targets for the next two years that it is currently on track to meet but these could be more challenging to reflect its ambitions to become a centre of excellence.</li></ul> |
|--|
- 1 Since the time of the 1997 inspection, the school has made good progress in raising standards in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils, irrespective of their background, gender or ability, now learn more successfully than they did in all subjects. Within a caring environment that values individuals, the school is assisting pupils, many of whom have significant barriers to learning, to work towards their personal best. The rate of mobility amongst the school's community is one aspect that is changing. It is increasing and the school is aware that the impact of mobility on some pupils' ability to achieve may become significant and will require close tracking.
  - 2 Strengths in history and music have been sustained despite the greater focus on literacy and numeracy. The impact of good leadership, significantly improved teaching and a much better planned curriculum are key reasons why standards are lifting. Standards currently are higher at the end of the infant phase than the lower junior phase because the nature of classes changes from Year 3 on, when many more Language Provision pupils with special educational needs join those continuing in school. It is also the case that pupils higher up the school have had less time to benefit from the good quality education now being provided. Nevertheless, standards at the end of Year 4 are not yet high enough. The school is aware of this and through its action plan has set out to raise them year on year. The school has set realistic targets for the next two years that it is currently on track to meet, but these could be more challenging to reflect its ambitions to become a centre of excellence. The majority of parents who completed the inspection questionnaire said that they are pleased with their children's progress. A few at the meeting would like more emphasis on reading and information about how to support their children better. The inspection team agrees that this is one area that the school could seek to strengthen.
  - 3 The standards achieved by seven-year-olds in the 2001 SATs were average in writing and science, below average in reading and above average in mathematics. The standards achieved by nine-year-olds in the optional SATs were broadly average in English, mathematics and science when compared to other Bedfordshire lower schools. Standards have been improving steadily over the past five years. The indications are that the school's performance in the 2002 SATs is much improved. When the 2002 standards are compared to those in 2001 they are above average across the board with some high-level achievement apparent in writing and mathematics, though these are unconfirmed as yet. The standards achieved by nine-year-olds appear to remain at broadly average levels when compared to those achieved by a nationally representative sample of schools as published by QCA and when set against the results of other Bedfordshire lower schools.
  - 4 The profile of children's attainment on entry to reception classes is below average. By the time they enter Year 1 as five-year-olds, most have made steady gains and are working at the level expected across the six areas of learning. The staff have a sound understanding of how young children learn and are committed to providing a good quality of education. Their efforts are currently being adversely affected by temporary staffing and accommodation issues which the school is already working to improve. The Foundation Stage manager has improved the planning of lessons and the use of

assessment to feed back into future lessons. Learning objectives in planning reflect the 'stepping stones' leading towards the necessary levels for children in the Foundation Stage. However, in some lessons, teachers do not take sufficient account of children's different learning needs. So, for example, all children receive the same worksheet, which is too hard for many children as they are unable to read the words. This is especially so for those learning English as an additional language. The staffing difficulties are resulting in the children's not having sufficient opportunities to talk about their learning with an adult. This impedes their successful language development and hampers the pace at which some could move forward in their learning. The focus on group reading rather than individual reading is limiting the emergence of reading skills for some children and they need to be given more one-to-one attention. Few parents or carers work as volunteer helpers in the Foundation Stage. The co-ordinator hopes to change this and attract far more to become directly involved in their children's academic and social development.

- 5 Pupils make good progress over their time in the infant phase with accelerated learning taking place in Year 2. Standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Consistently good quality teaching and the positive impact that the setting arrangements have on these pupils' learning are key reasons for the boost in standards in these two subjects, evident both in lessons and in pupils' work books. The attention given to *THRASS*, a programme set up to support pupils' spelling and raise their phonological awareness, is paying dividends. The impact can be seen much better in the written work of younger pupils than older ones as for them this is the normal way of working. Improving pupils' written work has been the major priority for the school. It has improved the provision to teach skills such as spelling and to a lesser extent handwriting, and is now working on ideas, planning and different types of writing. Infant stage pupils make good progress and achieve well in science, art and design, DT, history and music.
- 6 In Years 3 and 4 (the junior phase) most pupils make satisfactory progress across their studies with some good progress in science, art and design, history and music. There is some good achievement made by higher attainers in English and mathematics, though the proportion of those achieving at the average level 3 and the higher level 4 is similar to that found in most other Bedfordshire lower schools. The school has identified that some middle-attaining pupils could be achieving more and has begun to target their raised achievements. Inspectors agree that this is a key area for improvement. Music was a strength of the school at the previous inspection and remains so today. There are many strengths in the subject and a wide range of opportunities for pupils to do well. The school's sustained success in Bedfordshire's music festival held annually is a good barometer of the quality and range of the learning opportunities being provided for pupils to excel and show off their talents. The standards attained in art and design, and to some extent physical education (PE), are being supported by a good quality programme of extra-curricular activities that stimulates some good achievements. A success in provision across the curriculum has been the drive to promote practical aspects in subjects. Pupils are being given plenty of opportunity to 'have a go' at organising appropriate aspects of their studies, and this has led to most developing confident attitudes and a willingness to find things out without fear of failure. This, coupled with the good relationships in school, is leading to pupils learning enthusiastically and with increasingly good results.
- 7 Pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements, make good progress towards achieving the targets set for them. This is an improvement on the sound progress reported during the previous inspection. They achieve well, relative to their low starting levels. The systems for identifying the needs of these pupils enable staff to define appropriate targets and support in lessons. In some classes, pupils with special educational needs are placed in ability sets and receive additional support with their literacy and numeracy work, which raises attainment and accelerates progress. A significant factor in the progress pupils make is the good support they receive from the learning support assistants. The school draws heavily on a range of strategies and uses withdrawal to support lower-attaining pupils. Inspectors observed a significant number of those in use during the week of inspection. It is quite apparent that in the small group and one-to-one sessions, whether it be commercially brought in schemes, for example, Fuzz Buzz, or specifically tailored work programmes, the pupils involved achieve well and learn with enthusiasm and enjoyment. What it was not possible for inspectors to gauge in their short time in school, is the overall impact of this approach on an individual's achievement, or whether there is any significant gain from one approach above another. The school has not yet monitored

exactly what impact the different strategies have on an individual's overall progress and this requires attention.

- 8 Pupils who learn English as an additional language and who are represented in all ability groups across the school are appropriately supported in English lessons and often mathematics lessons by teachers and learning- support staff. Pupils learning English as an additional language make similar progress to others of the same ability in these subjects. Five pupils in school are at a very early stage of learning English and they are making good progress because of the school's good attention to their needs. By the age of nine most can speak English with fluency and read and write at a similar level to other pupils in the school. In some subjects they are not given specific English language support and sometimes this was observed to disadvantage these pupils. For example in a science lesson, some of the pupils learning English as an additional language could not read the worksheet they were given and this hampered the progress they made in science. The school has not yet written specific plans aimed at targeting individual language development which would assist teachers in planning for and supporting these pupils in all subjects. This requires attention. The school is beginning to monitor the progress of different ethnic groups and to take the necessary action to improve progress. For instance, pupils from African-Caribbean backgrounds have been assessed as underachieving and so the school appointed a support assistant last September specifically to aid these pupils' learning. However, she has received very little direction in her role and has a considerable number of pupils to support and her work is spread too thinly to be fully effective. This is a key aspect for the school to review as part of improving the provision for the diverse groups of pupils in school.

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

- Pupils have good attitudes to all that school provides; they are very polite to visitors, they try hard and they play and work happily together.
- Pupils believe they are treated firmly and fairly by staff and this helps them to behave well. Standards of behaviour are generally good throughout the day, especially during assembly.
- There are occasions when a small minority of pupils in several classes are slow to settle down. The school excludes children from school as a very last resort when behaviour causes great concern.
- Relationships are good and pupils with a wide range of needs and from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures mix harmoniously.
- Personal development is satisfactory overall and pupils are maturing into sensible and considerate young people.
- Pupils are keen to come to school but attendance, although improving, is unsatisfactory overall because the rate is below the national average.

- 9 Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and a strength of the school. Pupils are friendly, well mannered and they generally play and work together very happily throughout the day. These are positive features, which were noted during the previous inspection. The very youngest children in the reception classes have some particularly useful opportunities to help them make choices and grow in confidence. Older pupils are especially caring towards each other and to younger pupils and they speak confidently about what they like and dislike about school. Pupils are developing responsible attitudes towards working. They try hard and keep up with what is expected and these good attitudes help them achieve. During a numeracy lesson first thing on Monday morning, older pupils in Year 3 immediately settled down and worked very sensibly, completing the activities conscientiously and taking pride in their work. Most pupils are interested and eager to join in all the activities the school provides for them including a good programme of after school activities.
- 10 During the previous inspection some boisterous and rough behaviour was noted during playtimes; this has been improved. Well-established routines help the smooth running of play and dinner times in what is a busy and potentially hectic time of the day. The purchasing of play equipment for outside play has been a good move in supporting social development and has helped improve standards of behaviour. During classes behaviour is nearly always well managed by all staff, who work closely together. Just occasionally pupils fuss unnecessarily, begin to irritate each other and then their learning is temporarily interrupted. There has been three pupils temporarily excluded over the last twelve months and these

were for rare but violent outbursts and were entirely justified. Overall, however, behaviour is good and this is because values are consistently promoted and pupils respond well to the school's approach.

- 11 Pupils know the difference between right and wrong and understand well the consequences of their actions. Some writing about 'shame' on display in a Year 2 classroom demonstrates this well. As one girl wrote, 'I felt shame when I shouted at Holly and made her cry....'. The school is a racially harmonious community where pupils from very different backgrounds and cultures mix well. Pupils are accepting one another's cultural differences, however the school is not taking sufficient steps to celebrate this diversity and capitalise on the richness of the pupils' own experiences. Pupils from the Language Provision and those with special educational needs throughout the school are fully included in school routines and all children's achievements are valued and shared. Relationships are good and staff who have worked at the school for many years know families and pupils well. Pupils trust adults and this supports their overall development as responsible young people. Their personal development is satisfactory overall with some good features, for example in the timetabled sessions in every class that allow for short, but important discussion about moral issues as they arise. An appropriately planned personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is a very positive feature and is assisting older pupils, for example, to learn about simple first aid procedures and how best to prepare for moving on after Year 4. However, systems to canvas pupils' ideas and to find out what all pupils themselves think and feel about their school are not in place. The setting up of a school council is one strategy for taking pupils' views and ideas on board that the school is considering.
- 12 Below-average attendance is being systematically targeted for improvement. Attendance at the school is unsatisfactory because it is still just below that of all primary schools nationally at an average of 93 per cent for the three preceding years, although slight improvements this year so far have been recorded. The school has worked hard, with support from the education welfare service, to encourage all families to send their children to school and is meeting with success. However, some parents are still not giving their full support. Two years ago office staff began 'phoning homes to encourage punctuality and regular attendance and this has been one effective strategy in tackling non-attendance. The school discourages the taking of holidays during term times, especially during May when SATs are undertaken, but so far this school year 818 sessions have already been missed due to holidays alone, and during the week of inspection twelve pupils were away all week on holiday. A very small number of pupils take extended family visits abroad, which also adversely affects attendance figures and, for this group, their achievement also. Punctuality is good with nearly all pupils arriving very promptly in the morning, including those in the Language Provision who arrive in minibuses or taxis provided by the authority. The school is keen to explore more ways of securing parents' support for ensuring that their children attend without interruptions, and the inspection team agrees that this would be worth doing.

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

- Teaching has improved since the time of the previous inspection despite considerable staff changes.
- The school's very good attention to the professional development of staff, including performance management, is having a positive impact on improving teaching quality.
- Teaching is good overall and is leading to some good achievement in English, mathematics, science, art and design, history and music.
- Teaching is effective for those pupils who have special educational needs, including those with specific speech and language difficulties and those who learn English as an additional language or are from African-Caribbean heritage, though better co-ordinated provision could aid these pupils' achievements overall.
- Learning-support assistants make an extremely valuable contribution to both teaching and learning, are well focused on individual needs, and effective in assisting the pupils they work with to make good gains in their learning.
- Learning sets in English and mathematics are a positive feature, however the range and quality of work and the standard expected are not as good as it could be in middle-attaining sets in junior classes. The school is aware of the need to focus on learning outcomes as part of its development of monitoring activities and when sharing and extending the best practice in school.
- Parents are pleased with the quality of teaching in school and the majority agree that their children make good progress. A few parents would like greater involvement in their children's education and the inspection team agrees that this would be a positive move.

- 13 Teaching is much improved since the time of the previous inspection despite a high turnover of staff. The headteacher and senior managers have undertaken systematic and rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning, the findings of which have been shared with teachers and have been used to good effect in planning for improvement. A good programme of staff training is proving beneficial to supporting professional and personal development. For example, weaknesses identified in subject knowledge such as in art and design and DT have all been attended to. Teachers are now confident to teach all National Curriculum subjects, and the planning in place to support lessons is thorough and gives good coverage to all the required elements.
- 14 The school has given a good push to setting and sharing targets between staff and pupils aimed at raising achievement in English and mathematics, and this approach is helping boost standards, more evidently in Year 2 than in Year 4. There is potential, however, for creating time in lessons for pupils to reflect on what they have learned and to have greater involvement in setting personal targets for improvement. Satisfactory provision is made for homework, though a more consistent approach to what is set would improve practice. Some parents would like more information about how well their children are learning and to take a wider involvement in supporting their education. The school is receptive to this and is seeking ways to extend its partnership with parents. The next step for management is to enable teachers to share and exchange the ingredients that make up the very best teaching and learning found in school, so that overall quality continues to get better and supports the school's good rate of improvement.
- 15 Teaching is good overall and results in the majority of pupils learning effectively and making good progress in most subjects by the time they leave at nine years. All pupils, irrespective of their background or gender, share in this good teaching. Classrooms are productive and purposeful places of learning in which pupils work hard and show good levels of interest and independence. The rate of progress made by middle attainers during their time at school is not as even as for other groups of pupils and this is one area of teaching where expectations need to focus on boosting these pupils' achievements.
- 16 In the 93 lessons observed during this inspection, teaching quality was of satisfactory or better quality in 97 per cent. In 44 per cent of lessons teaching was of good quality and in 9 per cent it was of very good quality. The teaching of children under five is satisfactory with some good features, providing a firm foundation for their later learning. Temporary staffing and a shortage of permanent qualified teachers, together with limited accommodation, are hampering the good start that the youngest pupils could be making. The school is already making improvement and the prospects for the future look good. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements, is good and enables these pupils to learn successfully. There is good support in place for pupils from African-Caribbean backgrounds and those who learn English as an additional language, though the provision for the latter is piecemeal at present and this requires review. The good quality of relationships in the school is successfully underpinning the standards being achieved. Teachers and learning-support assistants enjoy being with the pupils and vice-versa and this shows.
- 17 Most teachers were observed to teach at least one good lesson. Only three lessons were less than satisfactory; in mathematics, PE and music. In these lessons too low expectations led to limited gains in learning and in Year 1 behaviour management issues slowed the pace of learning. The very best teaching observed during the inspection was in an upper infant class English lesson, in an English and a science lesson in lower phase juniors and in lessons in English, mathematics, science and DT in upper juniors. There were common features to these very good lessons. Firstly, teachers gave very close attention to what pupils were learning and constantly set new challenges that ensured that all pupils, no matter what their starting point, made very good progress and achieved to a high standard. Both used time targets to assist the good pace set and they used questioning very effectively to enable pupils to share their learning with others in class and find out what pupils felt they could do better in the next lesson. In all lessons, pupils worked with very high levels of motivation and concentration and showed pride in their achievements. High quality relationships supported the sheer enjoyment that both teachers and pupils felt in working together successfully.



- 18 The teaching provided for pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements in main school and from the Language Provision, is good, and these pupils make good progress against their individual targets. Teachers and learning assistants know their pupils well and plan activities that are matched to their needs. Pupils make good progress mainly as a result of well-written individual education plans which contain precise targets for improvement, usually for language and literacy and often for behavioural reasons. Support staff give good assistance to pupils who have statements in place and this ensures that they can enjoy the same curriculum as their classmates.
- 19 Teachers are aware of pupils in their classes who learn English as an additional language and endeavour to ensure that work set meets their needs. However, the lack of clarity, rigour and system in the organisation of the provision means that some pupils who would benefit from co-ordinated support do not receive it. Some of the pupils who learn English as an additional language receive good support from an additional teacher. She is employed for only one and a half days and has an ever-increasing number of pupils to manage. These include refugee pupils. Pupils learning English as an additional language require a clear focus, both on language and subject content. Most staff work hard to ensure that pupils fully understand specific vocabulary. However, as there are no clear targets for pupils' language development and learning, it is difficult to determine if these are identified and met. There is therefore no certain way of ensuring that progress is being made and that the level of support is effective. The school has taken on board the need to ensure that pupils from African-Caribbean backgrounds, mostly boys, achieve to their personal best. To this end, a learning assistant is employed virtually full time to assist in their learning. The same strengths and weaknesses as flagged up above in the provision made for those learning English as an additional language are present in the provision for pupils from different ethnic minority backgrounds.
- 20 Children in the Foundation Stage benefit from sound teaching and get off to a secure start in their education as a result. The staff who care about the children understand their needs well, and provide a varied range of learning experiences that help children develop a good all-round education and get into generally productive work habits from an early age. Children from Indian and Pakistani ethnic backgrounds who enter the reception classes with very little English receive good support from the reception co-ordinator who speaks Punjabi and Urdu. There is no other support provided for children in the reception classes who are from other ethnic backgrounds. The organisation of the reception area is not well thought through, however, and is undermining the extent to which the children can sustain activity and develop concentration skills. Large numbers of children are required to move between bases to access the full curriculum and management is aware of the need for this to be reviewed now that the intake number is three times what it was at the time of the previous inspection. Inspectors saw some potentially good teaching limited by issues concerning accommodation and because staff had to respond to children of a wide range of ability and with specific learning needs without sufficient support. This resulted in some children being unable to make the progress of which they are capable.
- 21 Teaching is mostly good or better throughout the school because teachers ensure that pupils have good quality learning opportunities that provide a rich and stimulating diet. They are supported by effective long and medium-term planning in most subjects. Teachers generally plan lessons appropriately, maintain a productive and purposeful ethos, manage behaviour well, use a good range of interesting materials and largely structure lessons well to make the best use of time, resources and the accommodation. Setting arrangements are proving to be a positive feature in supporting teaching and learning and are having a tangible impact on raising academic standards. The model of four learning sets in Year 2 in mathematics and three in English ensures that all pupils are consistently challenged; this is not the case in the junior phase where some middle attainers could be achieving more. Next year there will be fewer sets possible due to limited resources. Assessment is usefully assisting teachers' planning in English and mathematics to good effect as demonstrated by the improving standards. There is scope for the use of target setting to support improvement in science and ICT specifically and other subjects too. Teachers are making good use of the ICT suite to assist pupils in developing their ICT competencies. They are not currently making effective use of computers in classes. Marking is good overall, for example in English and mathematics book, the teacher sets clear goals for the pupils to aim for. In other subjects, however, there is often too much emphasis on praising effort and not enough on targeting improvements and reviewing progress. These features are impeding consistently high quality teaching and learning.

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

- The curriculum is more effective than at the time of the previous inspection because it is leading to higher standards overall.
  - For pupils in infant and junior classes it is broad and balanced, all statutory requirements are met and the provision for literacy and numeracy is effective.
  - The provision made for pupils' personal development is highly relevant and effective.
  - A good extracurricular programme provides enrichment.
  - The lack of relevance of some content, together with a teaching style which frequently expects only minimal contributions from pupils, reduces learning particularly in middle-attaining sets.
  - Given the diverse nature of the school population the curriculum does not reflect this rich diversity well.
  - There are insufficient opportunities through the exploration, promotion, and celebration of the different cultures living in Britain and abroad to prepare pupils well for life in a multi-racial community.
  - Provision for the Foundation Stage curriculum is satisfactory but organisational constraints mean it is not as effective as it should be and children do not achieve as well as they could do.
- 22 There are secure, whole-school long and medium-term planning systems in place which ensure fair and equal coverage of the National Curriculum, National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies and the Foundation Stage curriculum. There is a well-planned systematic approach to personal, social and health education. ICT skills are planned for and taught discretely but the contribution of technology and computer work to improve learning across the curriculum is not fully developed.
- 23 Staff plan together in year groups and this ensures that pupils in parallel classes cover the same material. Teachers include curriculum objectives in their lesson planning but these are too general to support precisely different levels of attainment. One of the strengths of curriculum planning is the very good arrangement for the support staff to be involved in the process, and they are deployed well. The school has a high percentage of support staff and the very good arrangements to ensure that their work coheres well with that of the class teachers. Record keeping and feedback between teachers and support staff are of a very high quality. Subject leaders see the planning and are well placed to check subject coverage across the school. Homework is used to reinforce reading, spelling, and skill development. A weakness seen in many of the pupils' books during the inspectors' scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work was the overuse of worksheets with closed tasks. These tended to result in the level of achievement of all pupils being capped. The use of worksheets is an issue for the school to review.
- 24 Each phase of the school (Foundation, Infant, Junior) meets regularly, each group chaired by a senior co-ordinator, and staff review pastoral concerns which arise from the day-to-day work of the school. In this way, the school seeks to link the curriculum and the pastoral system effectively. There is, however, little actual monitoring of the curriculum in lessons and some basic issues have been missed. While the planning produced by the year team is good, it may be delivered to all pupils in turn by one teacher or by three separate teachers. If one teacher delivers the material, this can ensure a high level of expertise and consistency but it increases the mobility for pupils. Although the system varies between year groups, in most, pupils are set for English and mathematics and may be taught other subjects by different specialist teachers. This can result, for example, in some Year 4 pupils working with their class teacher perhaps only twice a day. Many pupils respond to this system well but some, particularly those who have personal or behavioural difficulties, do not. Year 1 teachers have reduced the amount of movement between classrooms because they found the pupils did not benefit. Foundation Stage staff and children are finding the constant movement problematic but the school has yet to propose a way ahead. It is essential that this is done very soon, as the impact of the present situation on standards, child confidence and the development of effective learning habits is not good.
- 25 The school has taken steps to ensure that its provision for all pupils with special educational needs (SEN) complies fully with the revised Code of Practice. This is a particularly good achievement as the special needs co-ordinator is currently away ill and has been so for some months. The curriculum provided as part of Language Provision is the same for all pupils, with two important additions: specialist speech and language work and good additional support from designated members of staff. Pupils make good progress because the work planned for them builds directly on the targets in their individual

education plans. Members of the support staff and teachers are particularly skilful at devising and executing work plans for these pupils. Record keeping and feedback arrangements between staff are very good. Curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is good because it enables them to make good progress. Staff use the targets in pupils' individual education plans to provide and deliver the right level of work for these pupils, which ensures That they are well motivated, work hard and achieve well.

- 26 Recently the school has responded to the under-performance of some pupils from ethnic minority groups, particularly those from African-Caribbean heritage, by the appointment of a support assistant whose task is to make the curriculum more relevant, to improve self-esteem and to raise standards. There has been some useful staff training and there are a number of very sensible proposals in place to extend this work. It is in the early stages of development and it will be some time before results improve as much as they could. The school curriculum also seeks to meet the needs of a number of pupils learning English as an additional language and those from different ethnic groups. This work is not currently well co-ordinated and although everyone is well intentioned and works hard, not enough is achieved by pupils. The deputy headteacher has taken on the mantle of *Educational Inclusion Manager* in an attempt to bring greater cohesion to the curriculum for the different groups of pupils, but this is very much in its infancy.
- 27 A very important role for all support staff is to ensure that the pupils they work with, whatever their needs, can have full access to the curriculum and join in fully in class lessons. For example, a Language Provision pupil was introduced on a one-to-one basis to some resources and key vocabulary which were to be used in a history lesson, which gave her a head start in understanding and taking part in the lesson. Support staff position themselves very strategically during the introduction to lessons, particularly literacy and numeracy, and reinterpret the lesson, motivating pupils from the Language Provision and those pupils with special educational needs to take part, and helping them practise replies to the teacher's questions.
- 28 The school pays good attention to supporting the personal, social and health education of its pupils. This is of great relevance to some pupils who begin school with immature behaviour and grow in confidence and self-assurance because of the school's good approach. A well-conceived programme that includes aspects of keeping safe and healthy is covered and, through *circle times* and assemblies, for example, pupils consider a range of issues which provides them with a good set of values and principles by which to live.
- 29 The curriculum is enhanced by good provision for extracurricular activities, although they were cancelled during the week of inspection. Usually these activities are very well supported by pupils and parents. The school also provides before and after-school care through the Honeysuckle Club which is well patronised. The transfer arrangements between the local family of lower and middle schools are good and have been developed very thoughtfully to ensure that the needs of Language Provision and special educational needs pupils are well met.
- 30 Provision for moral and social development. The school has consistent expectations about how pupils will behave and relate to each other. Rules are very prominently displayed in every classroom, and teachers generally make their expectations clear. Overall, this is effective but staff need to consider the link between moral and social development and the curriculum. Behaviour and working relationships are at their best in those lessons where the topic is imaginative, teaching style allows pupils time to respond and take a full part in discussions, where the teacher builds on their contributions and pupils are given good opportunities to work together creatively. The 'hot-seating' lesson seen in Year 2 and a geography lesson based on the view from the window in Year 3 are very good examples of these techniques being used very well.
- 31 Provision for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory with some areas of strength. Assemblies make a satisfactory contribution to spiritual development and there is some good emphasis on poetry in literacy. Work of high quality in art and design is achieved but there is very little emphasis on the work of non-European artists. The school takes part in local music festivals and the choir is actively promoted. There are opportunities to sing and make music in assembly, for example, but the music programme contains very little music from other than Western cultures. The school does promote the

understanding of other religions through its work in religious education and some work in geography but, given the make-up of the pupil population, the potential for celebrating and sharing what it means to be Black or Asian in Britain is not well exploited.

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

- Pupils' health, welfare and safety are well attended to in an environment where routines are understood and followed.
- The school shows genuine concern for the well-being of pupils and is responsive to needs.
- There have been improvements in pupils' behaviour, and the monitoring and promotion of it are good.
- Pupils' personal development is fostered appropriately but there is scope to involve pupils more in decision making and in the life of the school and to monitor provision more closely.
- Attendance is properly monitored by the deputy headteacher, who ensures that good and generally effective systems are in place to record and promote attendance.
- The assessment practice of some individual teachers, identified by the previous inspection as a weakness, has been successfully developed into a coherent and effective whole-school approach.
- Better use of assessment information is a key factor in the school's efforts to raise standards further still.

- 32 The school was praised in the previous inspection for offering a generally supportive and caring environment. However, there were some significant weaknesses identified concerning the procedures for recording attendance, the arrangements for promoting and monitoring behaviour and especially the systems for assessing pupils' academic development, which were not used consistently. Many of the shortcomings have been addressed and the quality of support and guidance now has many good features.
- 33 Many families choose to use the Honeysuckle Club before and after school. Pupils enjoy their time there and are very sensitively cared for by an experienced team, which is well led. Pupils are also well supervised during the day. The large school building and grounds are kept clean and offer pupils variety, space and an attractive environment. Pupils move around the school sensibly and everyone understands the routines of the day, which are closely followed.
- 34 Parents and the school itself say that there are increasingly more pupils who have difficulties behaving appropriately and who have significant barriers to overcome. There are a high number of pupils in school who are looked after by carers and the school has established good home/school links, which benefits the education of pupils who may be at risk. However, written pastoral support programmes are not in place and this requires review. A range of medical and health needs are understood and the school nurse who is on site every Tuesday is a key adult working as part of a team in the school who has promoted good and safe working practices. A number of therapists and professionals from outside agencies also work effectively as part of this team. Procedures for ensuring child protection arrangements are in place and the school takes its role in this area of pupil welfare seriously. Training is regularly undertaken and adults working at the school are confident that they know what to do if they have any concerns.
- 35 There is an early identification of pupils with special educational needs and those who learn English as an additional language. The specific learning needs of these two groups are not always clearly separated and are sometimes 'lumped' together. Relevant targets are written for pupils with special education needs, which are appropriately reviewed and clearly stated in their individual education plans. These targets have not yet been shared with parents, who are unaware of the best way to support their children's needs at home. Targets to improve pupils' English language development are only just beginning to be set for pupils who learn English as an additional language. The system of appointing a 'key worker' to co-ordinate support for each child in the Language Provision is sensible and demonstrates a very sound approach to care.
- 36 A new behaviour reward system was introduced this school year and pupils and whole classes receive recognition for good and improving behaviour and consideration for others. The yellow and red card systems in use on the playground are also helpful and midday supervisors log any incidents. Senior teachers take a good role in monitoring behaviour and all staff support pupils consistently well. The school follows county guidance to record any racial incident and records show that there have been two

such incidents this school year, which were addressed. Bullying of any kind is dealt with firmly and fairly.

- 37 Registers are completed accurately and anyone arriving after 9 o'clock is properly marked as late. Reasons for absence are made clear and there are very few unauthorised absences. The importance of good attendance is, however, not given a high enough profile in the annual report from governors nor in the school prospectus. Individual target setting and rewards are not yet used enough as strategies which could improve rates still further. The school could usefully find ways of securing a partnership with parents to support this work.
- 38 Strategies to monitor personal development are informal and implicit in much of what the school does throughout the day. Verbal channels of communication, which are a strength generally in the school, are well used to inform adults of pupils' personal needs and achievements. The assessment practice of some individual teachers, identified by the previous inspection as a weakness, has been successfully developed into a coherent whole-school approach, which represents good improvement against this key issue. All teachers regularly assess the work of individual pupils against National Curriculum levels of attainment in all subjects, using a common format. Teachers are planning assessment opportunities more thoughtfully, so that they provide as much information as possible. Because of these improvements, teacher assessment is now more consistent and accurate. There is sometimes less clarity in deciding exactly what skills or knowledge pupils are expected to gain in the course of a lesson: the tendency is to try to cram too much in, which makes judging progress more difficult.
- 39 Procedures, then, are very good; the school's next step is to improve the use made of this information. While this is satisfactory, the information gathered is not yet used consistently to track the progress of individual pupils year on year or to set consistently challenging targets for individuals, sets or groups. Pupils are not always sure how well they are doing, or what they need to do to improve. Better use of assessment information is a key factor in the school's efforts to raise standards further still.

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

- Parents and carers have satisfactory views of the school, however they raise 'communication' as one area in need of improvement.
- There is a dedicated Parent Teacher Association, which is very supportive of the school.
- The school is generally open and welcoming to parents and carers but not proactive in involving them fully in the life of the school. Their views are not yet systematically sought.
- Home visits for younger children are a good feature, which help parents get to know reception staff.
- Parents and carers are kept well informed but information could be made available earlier.

- 40 Overall the views expressed by parents and carers are satisfactory but mixed. Parents told inspectors that their children like school, are expected to work hard and are helped to become mature and responsible. They hold less positive views about aspects of communication and information. A significant minority were dissatisfied with the range and quality of extracurricular activities. Inspectors agree with the positive views expressed, and agree that the school could widen its strategies for involving parents as partners in education. Inspectors find that the range of extracurricular activities is good and parents should feel reassured on this count.
- 41 An open evening for prospective parents is part of a well-established programme to explain about school life and includes input from many who work at the school, the nurse for example. The school prospectus provides clearly written information although one or two pieces of information are missing. Some staff are able to speak the mother tongue of some pupils who are learning English as an additional language, which enables many more to access information, but written translation services are not used when communicating with parents and this could be a helpful addition. The home/school agreement is a suitably written and most parents sign it. Many parents and carers enter the school every morning when most staff are easily accessible and time is given either for a brief discussion or to arrange suitable meeting times. The headteacher or deputy headteacher are nearly always available for immediate consultation with parents. Home visits for younger children are a good feature, which help parents get to know reception staff. These are all positive features to information.

- 42 However, some parents speak of inconsistencies in practice with the sharing of information. Newsletters are regularly written but sometimes information is received quite late. For example, curricular details on what will be studied went out just before half-term this summer. Some comments in home/school diaries testify to the fact that staff do not always respond immediately to written parental questions or concerns. Written reports on pupils' progress over the year are inconsistent in the way they explain clearly the next step forward. Communication with parents is satisfactory overall. Some parents would like to know more about what their child is doing at school and ways to be more involved in supporting their achievements. The inspection team agrees that this would be a useful aspect in supporting raised standards.
- 43 While one-to-one communication between staff and families is often very effective and spontaneous and contributes to many individual' achievements and progress, the school has not yet formally or informally sought all parents' views with the same purpose in mind. The school culture does not truly embrace parents as a whole nor does it recognise that they are a rich and varied resource, which could be more actively engaged in the school and in pupils' learning.
- 44 The Parent Teacher Association is a hard working group, which raises considerable funds for the school and makes a strong contribution to resources. Events it organises are well attended. Parents are welcome to work in the school voluntarily and several do, but parents who do so report that they have to make the first move in establishing this role. However, a notice on the reception door clearly invites parents and carers to get involved if they can. Homework makes a satisfactory contribution to learning overall and all pupils are set spellings, reading, and number and language activities every week. So, while there have been improvements in some areas since the previous inspection, in the successes the school has in involving parents as partners in education there is still some room for development. Overall the impact of parental involvement is satisfactory and the range of strategies in place to include and involve all parents is satisfactory also.

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

- The headteacher and senior management are forward thinking and provide clear educational direction.
- The leadership by the headteacher and key staff is well focused on the right priorities for the future and very good systems are in place to support the professional development and performance of all staff.
- The school has made good progress in improving the shortcomings identified by the previous 1997 report and has good capacity to sustain a good rate of future improvement.
- There are good accommodation, resources and staffing levels. All resources are put to effective and efficient use and the school provides good value for money.
- Governors have yet to establish clearly what the staffing arrangements will be in the new accommodation for the Foundation Stage and this requires review.
- There is a lack of clarity, rigour and system in the management, monitoring and evaluation of the provision for those pupils who learn English as an additional language and those from ethnic minority backgrounds. This is a key issue for the school to address.

- 45 The leadership and management by the headteacher and key staff are effective. There is clear educational direction and a positive and shared commitment to succeed. The weaknesses identified in the previous report have been eliminated. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are a good partnership and are driving forward school improvement at a good pace. This shows in the record of improving standards over the last five years, and inspectors saw ongoing improvement to the quality of education, progress and standards in their observations of lessons and in sampling pupils' work.
- 46 The school improvement plan is written to a good format and identifies the action to be taken in the short and longer term to bring improvement. The school's priorities are the right ones and the aims are reflected appropriately in them. The opportunity for outcomes to be evaluated has been identified, but some of the success criteria are vague at times; for example, the aim to incorporate ICT in numeracy lessons says what action will take place but not what impact is expected in terms of raised achievements. The staff view target setting as a positive feature in supporting their own performance in

respect of pupil progress; the next step is to identify numerical values in the school improvement plan so that they can be measured for success.

- 47 The role of the senior management team is well documented. Most see themselves as pastoral leaders, in place to give support and encouragement to colleagues and to aid communication. Some have monitored quality and standards in the school under the auspices of their subject leadership role and as part of the team leader approach to performance management, which is seen to be a very positive feature in school. However they are not yet fully effective in tracking the performance of the school and targeting the required improvements. The role of subject leader is developing well, but some have yet to be drawn fully into the process of self-critical review. Job descriptions are reasonable in identifying key tasks of co-ordination but should now define leadership and management responsibilities more clearly. The school has received Investors in People accreditation and this is an indicator of the close attention paid to staff appraisal and development.
- 48 The special educational needs co-ordinator is currently on leave due to ill health. The deputy headteacher is managing the provision in her absence and as part of his educational inclusion brief. The administration side has been kept conscientiously up to date. The monitoring role has suffered. There has been limited evaluation of the organisation of the special educational needs provision and this requires review.
- 49 The management of the provision for pupils with English as an additional language and the monitoring of the achievement of those from ethnic minority backgrounds also falls to the deputy headteacher; he is expected to line manage a teacher who works in support of pupils for whom English is an additional language for one and a half days per week and a learning assistant in school virtually full time. No one has yet assumed the strategic management role and this is unsatisfactory. No one is co-ordinating all the various support staff or taking responsibility for the administration. There is limited communication between the people involved in assessing needs and providing support. Inspectors observed some good practice in supporting these pupils in lessons but no one is checking to see what progress individual pupils are making, nor what the build up of the various programmes of support they receive means to their overall development. There is no system or organisation in what is being planned; none of these pupils has individual language targets that can be tracked for progress. These are key issues for the school to address.
- 50 Governors have an appropriate range of committees to help them organise their business. They are efficient in undertaking their strategic role, make the necessary checks for 'best value', and they ensure that legal requirements are met. Governors have a sound level of confidence and involvement and the collective knowledge of strengths and weaknesses of the school are guiding decision making appropriately. The need to become more critical in their oversight of the curriculum is recognised as an area for development. There is secure control of the budget, however there are only loose links between this and the SIP. For example, resources are earmarked but actual financial amounts are not often expressed. Subjects appear to have an allocated amount and some subject leaders show its breakdown in more detail than others. The school employs a full-time bursar to manage finances, however in practice his role is more concerned with the procurement of services and the management of contracts. The school buys a bursarial service to good advantage from the local education authority. A budget of nearly a million pounds was allocated and spent last year. The planned save at 4.2 per cent is a little over recommendations but the indicative costs for buildings development and enhanced resources take up most of this in the forecast budget. The arrangements for staffing in the Foundation Stage are not altogether clear at this stage and governors now need to pin down exactly what the staffing and costs for the new provision will be. There is good accommodation, plentiful resources and a generous level of staffing. The school uses the resources available efficiently to provide good quality education for a diverse group of pupils, and gives good value for money.

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

The school is providing an effective education for pupils. To make it even better the headteacher, staff and governors should seek to

**Raise standards by Year 4 in English and mathematics by:**



- Seeking more ways to involve parents as partners in educating their children, supporting work in school and at home and working with the school to improve attendance;
- widening the opportunities for the youngest children in school to use language, including sufficient time and opportunity for them to talk about what they are learning across the areas they experience;
- focusing on early reading skills and ensuring that readers of all ability throughout the school have the opportunity to develop reading capabilities at their own pace, and that adults assess progress and record how well individual are achieving against National Curriculum requirements;
- identifying the expectations in mathematics planning to ensure that it is specific enough to provide consistent levels of challenge to different pupils, especially middle attainers in the junior sets, and increasing the use of ICT to support learning;
- establishing a rigorous criteria by which the subject leaders can track and target the standards being achieved by different groups of pupils across the school;
- setting challenging targets for every year group (and all learning sets) that are regularly reviewed and adjusted upwards as necessary;
- promoting more widely features of the best teaching and learning in both of these subjects to be found in school;
- reviewing the use of worksheets to ensure that these offer pupils sufficient opportunities to develop their own ideas and make contributions;
- ensuring that the marking of pupils' work not only rewards effort but points clearly to the next step for improvement and makes full use of individual targets in reviewing progress.

Paragraphs: 2, 4, 6, 14, 15, 21, 23, 39, 42, 46, 47, 75, 76, 77, 80, 82, 84, 85, 86, 88, 89

**Improve the provision for those pupils learning English as an additional language and those from ethnic minority backgrounds who receive assistance to help them learn by:**

- clarifying leadership, management, teaching and support tasks in such a way that all staff directly involved in meeting these pupils' needs know exactly what their roles and responsibilities are;
- establishing an early system of assessing needs, setting specific language targets for individual pupils aimed at raising their achievements, and identifying exactly how these pupils needs are to be met in all learning situations;
- ensuring that there is a rigorous system in place for monitoring and evaluating the progress made by those pupils who learn English as an additional language and those from ethnic minority backgrounds;
- assessing the multiple needs that some of these pupils have and making sure that the various strategies being used are complementary and always work in the best interests of the pupils.

Paragraphs: 8, 19, 26, 49, 87

**Improve the multicultural development of pupils by:**

- planning and delivering a programme of study that seeks to heighten pupils' awareness of multicultural issues across the curriculum;
- recognising and celebrating the cultural diversity of pupils attending the school and drawing on personal experiences when appropriate;
- extending the multicultural resources in school to provide pupils with good quality learning materials that embrace cultures beyond those of Western Europe;
- raising awareness about the multicultural dimension of education by giving a higher profile to this in displays and in the programme of visits organised.

Paragraphs:31, 113, 130

In their action plan governors should also give attention to the following more minor issues:

- continuing the targeting of attendance;

Paragraphs: 12

- clarifying staffing and accommodation for the Foundation Stage for the new school year.

Paragraphs: 4, 20, 24, 62, 63

## THE WORK OF THE LANGUAGE PROVISION

- The Language Provision is one of the school's strengths and those pupils with statements for speech and language needs receive a good quality education.
- The attitudes and behaviour of Language Provision pupils are good.
- Language Provision pupils often benefit from good teaching and therefore their learning is good.
- Direct line management for Language Provision pupils and staff is provided by the deputy headteacher and this works very effectively and efficiently.
- There is insufficient direct monitoring of standards, teaching and learning within Language Provision and this is an area for enhancement within the context of good provision.
- Overall, this money is well spent as provision for these pupils and they make good progress. The Language Provision gives good value for money.

- 51 It is not possible to compare the previous Language Provision with that being provided currently as the previous report lacks any clear judgements about the provision. The school currently makes specific provision for fourteen pupils across the age range. Apart from brief sessions for very specific work these pupils are fully integrated into mainstream classrooms. There is no agreed number of places but the school believes 20 pupils to be the maximum number of pupils it could provide for effectively. In order to be admitted to the school, a pupil must have a statement of special educational needs specifying a speech and language disorder. Pupils are expected to be within the normal ranges for ability and behaviour. While most of the Language Provision pupils at the school do fall within these ranges, a small number do not but have a wide range of diverse needs, which include profound learning and behaviour needs. Each pupil has a designated 'key worker' who provides most of the day-to-day support. Pupils also receive regular input from a speech therapist and other specialists as may be required according to their statement. The designated governor for special educational needs also has oversight of the provision for Language Provision pupils. The governors may now find it helpful to clarify the criteria for admission and agree the maximum number to be admitted with the local authority. There are more Language Provision pupils in the junior phase than in the infants. They should consider establishing a maximum per year group as well as for the school as a whole.
- 52 The standards achieved by Language Provision pupils vary according to their ability. One reason to justify the full inclusion of them in mainstream is they can be appropriately placed and work well in the right set. There are pupils from the Language Provision doing well in all levels of sets including the higher-attaining sets. The record keeping is of very good quality, the monitoring of performance tight, and the school is able to demonstrate how well each Language Provision pupil is doing. Inspection findings confirm that Language Provision pupils achieve well.
- 53 The attitudes and behaviour of Language Provision pupils are good and much the same as the rest of the school. They have positive attitudes to school, are keen to achieve, and relate well to their classmates and each other. Some do have personal difficulties in managing their own behaviour to achieve a consistently high standard. They are helped to do so well by members of the support staff, although occasionally they need time to calm down and re-establish appropriate ways of responding. Relationships between Language Provision pupils and the rest of the class are good and both benefit from the opportunity to work alongside each other.
- 54 Language Provision pupils often benefit from good teaching and therefore their learning is good. Teachers understand well what their role is, as do members of the support staff. Staff have very good knowledge about each pupil, and individual education plans (IEPs) include clear aims which are well translated into targets for individual lessons or groups of lessons to guide teaching and learning effectively. Key workers generally support pupils in the classroom but occasionally withdraw a pupil for specific support or assessment. Pupils derive much benefit from this one-to-one support but exit and re-entry to lessons can be very disruptive. This is an area where staff need to improve procedures further and for the school to track what pupils miss out on when they are withdrawn.
- 55 Very little of the curriculum is modified to meet the specific need of Language Provision pupils but the introduction on a one-to-one basis of new material, ideas and vocabulary helps ensure full access to the curriculum. In addition, the provision of frequent, high quality speech therapy is an important addition to

each pupil's programme. Key workers know what work is being covered in these sessions and are well placed to reinforce the work. Parents are invited to watch one session per term so they are also kept up to date with progress and areas to work on.

- 56 The school delivers much of its curriculum in sets or by making use of teachers' expertise; this means that pupils move classrooms most lessons. When a Language Provision pupil moves class, his key worker is likely to go with him/her. This provides an extra measure of stability for these pupils but it does have one consequence. In some lessons, there may be up to four key workers plus the class teacher, while in other classes there is just the teacher. Many of the teaching group sizes at Goldington Green School are in the mid twenties; five adults was seen as too many at times as it did not allow pupils to demonstrate any independence, while other teaching groups with no support were failing to deliver adequate teaching and learning, or improve attitudes and behaviour.
- 57 Direct-line management for Language Provision pupils and staff is provided by the deputy headteacher. He meets regularly with his staff and ensures that they remain motivated and confident and have good access to training to update their skills. He has established that the role of the key worker is to be the first point of contact for the child, the family and the class teacher, and this was seen to work well. Very effective systems have been established in school to ensure that they are involved in planning, record keeping and reviews. This means they are always well informed and their extensive knowledge of the child is used to best effect.
- 58 The deputy headteacher also manages the Language Provision office files and maintains very efficient records. He has revised procedures and changed them as necessary to ensure that they meet fully the requirements of the revised Code of Practice. The governor for special educational needs also has oversight of provision for Language Provision pupils and is well informed. All statements, IEPs and reviews are up to date but the targets in the most recent IEPs have yet to be shared with parents. All files are stored securely but readily accessible to all that need them. One of his major priorities is to know exactly what Language Provision pupils are doing in lessons and withdrawal sessions. In general this works well but there needs to be more direct monitoring of pupils, as the inspection team discovered several instances where withdrawal and re-integration were not appropriately managed and led to disruption.
- 59 One area for further development is for the school to review what it says to the parents of non-Language Provision pupils about the special provision made by the school. Currently parents of other pupils at the school know little about the special provision it makes. The school, while not wanting to burden Language Provision pupils and their families with labels which may be interpreted as excuses for not doing things, have also missed the opportunity to celebrate something which is special and unique about the pupils and how well they do. Yet the school also acknowledges how much everyone benefits from the inclusion of these pupils in the life and work of the school.
- 60 The local authority invests considerable funds in the school to support their work with Language Provision pupils. Overall, this money is well spent as provision for these pupils is good, and they make good progress.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	93
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	40

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	8	41	41	2	1	0
Percentage	0	9	44	44	2	1	0

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

### 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)	413
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	97

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	20
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	91

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	36

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	55
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	42

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.2
National comparative data	5.6

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

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

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year2)**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	40	39	79

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	30	36	38
	Girls	33	35	37
	Total	63	71	75
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	80 (71)	90 (81)	95 (87)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	32	37	36
	Girls	33	34	36
	Total	65	71	72
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	82 (77)	90 (84)	91 (92)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

**Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	37
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	2
Indian	17
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	4
White	231
Any other minority ethnic group	18

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

**Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	2	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)	19.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.75
Average class size	24

**Education support staff: YR – Y4**

Total number of education support staff	14.3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	258

**Financial information**

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	905,029
Total expenditure	879,561
Expenditure per pupil	2 065
Balance brought forward from previous year	12 425
Balance carried forward to next year	37 893

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	10
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Results of the survey of parents and carers**

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	413
Number of questionnaires returned	55

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	67	27	6	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	52	37	6	2	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	48	10	2	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	62	12	4	0
The teaching is good.	50	37	4	4	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	38	19	6	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	35	6	6	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	33	2	2	4
The school works closely with parents.	35	42	15	4	4
The school is well led and managed.	40	46	8	4	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	50	2	2	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	40	10	8	15

NB Rows may not total 100% due to rounding



**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**

- Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory.
- Staff are a committed team and work in the interests of the children, a number of whom have specific learning needs, including speech and language delays and some who are learning English as an additional language.
- The overall profile of the children's attainment on entry to reception is below average.
- Staffing and accommodation issues that the school has already begun to improve currently hamper the start to education made by the youngest children in school and, although they make sound progress, it could be better.
- The reception co-ordinator is enthusiastic and very hard working and is doing a good job; she knows clearly where improvement lies and is keen to take responsibility for developing the provision.

61 Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Staff are a committed team and work in the interests of the children, a number of whom have specific learning needs, including speech and language delays and some who are learning English as an additional language. The overall profile of the children's attainment on entry to reception is below average.

62 At the time of the previous inspection the reception area had just been reconstructed and contained forty children. Since then the staffing has changed and there are now over ninety children in a fairly confined space. The school has approved plans for two new rooms that will provide more space for the youngest children in school. During the inspection two nursery nurses were acting as unqualified teachers and a supply teacher was in place to cover for an absent newly qualified teacher. A teacher from the school's language provision was also supporting teaching in the Foundation Stage. There are no clear plans yet in place for the desired staffing level from September and this requires review. The reception co-ordinator is enthusiastic and very hard working and is doing a good job despite considerable difficulties with staffing and accommodation. She has sensibly decided to keep the very youngest children, who started school in January and April, together as a group. The other reception children start and end the day with one teacher but spend the majority of their time moving between three different rooms and working with different staff. This organisation is quite stressful for many children, particularly those with special educational needs and those who learn English as an additional language. By the end of the day, many of these children are tired and confused as a result of working with different adults, all of whom have different methods and expectations. During the inspection, one child said to the teacher, 'Are you always here?' when looking for reassurance and comfort. The accommodation for the youngest children who have just started school does not provide a safe and calm environment despite the best efforts of the teacher. The room is unsuitable as it is a noisy thoroughfare. The school bell rings very loudly in this room, and other reception children have to pass through the room to go to the toilet. There are plans to improve the accommodation, and attention should be given to ensuring that children feel safe and secure in the new arrangements. Early assessment information indicates that children enter the school at Year 1 with levels of all-round development and maturity which are slightly below those of children of a similar age. Many children have average speaking and listening skills when they start school.

63 Children make satisfactory and at times good progress in the reception classes. As a result, by the time they enter Year 1 the majority of the children have achieved the expected attainment levels. The staff have a sound understanding of how young children learn. The co-ordinator has improved the planning and assessment. Learning objectives in planning reflect the 'stepping stones' leading towards the necessary levels for children in the Foundation Stage. However, in some lessons, teachers do not take sufficient account of children's different learning needs and all children receive the same worksheet, which is too hard for many children as they are unable to read the words. There is a sense of children being 'kept busy' rather than having their learning needs met. On several occasions, teachers, including those acting as 'unqualified' teachers had to cope with thirty children with no additional teaching support. This situation results in their being over-stretched and children not having sufficient opportunities to talk

about their learning with an adult. This impedes children's successful language development and hampers the pace at which some could move forward in their learning.

- 64 Learning resources are satisfactory. However, some books, puzzles and games require replacing as they are careworn and unappealing. The outdoor play area and the range and quality of outdoor resources have been improved since the previous inspection. During the inspection there were no large wheeled toys used and the climbing frame was out of action.

### **Personal, social and emotional development**

- 65 Teaching in this area of learning is satisfactory. It varies between the different reception rooms. By the time they enter Year 1, the majority of children are achieving the expected standard. Some staff place considerable emphasis on encouraging children's personal and social skills and as result children make good progress and develop self-confidence. In the role-play areas such as the 'shoe shop' children are encouraged to choose resources for themselves. They enjoy selecting which shoes to wear and take turns to be the shopkeeper. The youngest children have settled into the class routines really well and select their own resources without any fuss. They concentrate for some time on tasks such as making Plasticine food to go in Little Red Riding Hood's basket. This is due to skilful teaching and organisation by the co-ordinator. All adults are kind, caring and infinitely patient. They provide good role models for the children, always treating each other, parents and children with courtesy and respect. The children are encouraged to become socially independent by hanging up their own coats and by helping to tidy the classrooms.

### **Communication, language and literacy**

- 66 In relation to their attainment on entry, all children make satisfactory progress in acquiring speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Staff aim to take every opportunity to encourage children to communicate when working and playing. However, when teachers have thirty children with no support, communication is restricted. The more articulate children interact well with friends even if there is no adult support. For instance, children make helpful suggestions to each other when constructing cogs in the knowledge and understanding room. Basic writing skills are carefully taught with appropriate attention given to pencil control. However, most of the writing takes place in one room and, as the children have only limited time in this room they do not make the maximum progress. Most children have a reasonable attempt at writing their first names independently. All children enjoy books and higher-attaining children behave as readers, retelling stories using picture clues and memory to help them. They join in enthusiastically when sharing a large book with the teacher and can read, write and spell simple words such as 'cat' and 'hat.'
- 67 Due to the way in which learning is organised in different rooms in the reception classes, children have the opportunity to read with a teacher only once a week. Most parents are supportive and help at home but children have insufficient time to read to an adult during the school day. The school is not harnessing the help of some parents in the way seen in many other schools to give their support as volunteer helpers in the reception classes.
- 68 Teaching is satisfactory. Group reading is taught well by one of the unqualified teachers. The co-ordinator skilfully teaches the new entrants how to write individual letters. However, in other lessons, tasks are not always matched to children's learning needs, particularly for the higher-attaining children. One child told the teacher, 'I can do that easily but I don't want to.' Quite a few children completed their first tasks quickly and then the teacher appeared to select any work to fill the rest of the lesson. Children were occupied with yet another work sheet, and were not really making the progress of which they are capable.

### **Mathematical development**

- 69 Attainment in this area of development is average overall, although in number work attainment is better. Many children can count to 20 and recognise these numbers. A small number of higher-attaining children count beyond this. Staff focus well on mathematical language and children learn useful mathematical phrases such as 'taller than' and 'smaller than'. Higher-attaining children learn to estimate

and make good guesses as to the number of pens in a pot. Work sampling reveals that children have enjoyed a 'number hunt' around the school. Teaching is good overall. Planning is carefully matched to the differing learning needs of children. Children enjoy the practical activities, which help to motivate and sustain their interest. The youngest children are excited and amused by the reception co-ordinator who deliberately miscounts numbers 1 to 10. They enjoy saying the correct order! Good use is made of number songs and rhymes to reinforce mathematical skills. Most children make good gains in their learning as a result of good teaching. In the mathematical development room one of the unqualified teachers is particularly effective when she has a support assistant working with her. Children are calmer and the two adults work very well as a team ensuring that children make good progress.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

- 70 Teaching in this area of learning is good. Children enter the reception classes with a range of ideas of the world around them. Scientific knowledge and understanding is gained as children learn how to keep healthy by eating well and taking exercise. Good intervention and effective questions by a supply teacher develop children's knowledge of how clocks work. Important vocabulary such as 'cogs' and 'gears' is skilfully introduced to children. The teacher provides a good range of materials for children to select from so that they can design and make their own cogs and clocks. Children concentrate well, and use equipment such as scissors, Sellotape and paper fasteners sensibly. They share resources and support each other with suggestions and ideas. The teacher sensitively makes good use of children's mistakes such as sticking the cogs down so they can't turn. These errors are turned into learning points for all children to share. The youngest entrants have completed a successful African-Caribbean topic entitled 'One Smiling Grandma'. This is particularly relevant in celebrating the home backgrounds of a significant proportion of children. Everyone enjoyed dancing to African music, including the teachers!

### **Physical Development**

- 71 Attainment in this area of learning is average for children of this age. The imaginative development of the outdoor play area has been a major factor in helping the children to make satisfactory progress in the development of their physical skills. Although there is a good range of interesting outdoor activities, such as sand, water, washing dolls' clothes and painting the fence, there are no wheeled vehicles to aid spatial awareness and movement, and the climbing frame is currently out of action. Teaching is of sound quality overall. In a satisfactory physical education lesson, children learned to listen carefully to instructions and moved sensibly on the floor. They had a good awareness of space and made high and low movements confidently. The supply teacher was totally involved which encouraged and motivated the children. The children were slightly confused as the teacher clapped to signify when they had to stop instead of using a whistle, which is what they are used to, but nevertheless her instructions were acted upon quickly. Fine motor skills develop appropriately. In the first gymnastics lesson for the youngest children in school the teacher chose calypso music to aid the warm up and this stimulated good responses. The children worked co-operatively as they put out benches and carried out the mats. The children enjoyed the mini-circuit that was created and worked with enthusiasm and enjoyment. Few could balance their bodies and hop or skip with the required degree of control and most worked at the red stepping-stone level. Good teaching helped them make good gains in spatial awareness, body control and in working together. Most children show increasing skill when controlling pencils, scissors, crayons and paintbrushes. By the time they join Year 1, most children will have achieved the expected level in their physical development.

### **Creative development**

- 72 Standards are as expected for children of this age. Sound teaching ensures many opportunities for children to paint, print, draw and use collage and construction materials. They make tissue paper jellyfish and paint scary sea creatures. Children carefully cut and stick different coloured squares to make Elmer the elephant. Most children make satisfactory progress in developing these skills. On occasions staff use templates instead of letting the children draw their own pictures. This inhibits the children's creativity. Children enjoy and benefit from role-play in 'Granny's cottage.' Reception staff work hard to make role-play areas into exciting and stimulating areas. However, the inadequate staffing

means that staff are unable to interact sufficiently with the children during their role-play to encourage and extend communication skills.

## ENGLISH

- Standards achieved by the age of seven are now above average and better than at the time of the previous inspection.
- Pupils, irrespective of their background, gender or ability, now learn more successfully than they did at the time of the previous inspection in English.
- There are many things to celebrate in the provision for English but the very high quality teamwork between teachers and learning support assistants heads the list.
- The school has implemented the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) well and now analyses results carefully to identify specific areas of weakness.
- A range of strategies, for example the additional literacy strategy (ALS), is having a positive impact on improving standards.
- There are still some areas to improve, particularly in Years 3 and 4 where currently middle achievers do not make as much progress as they need to in order to achieve to their full capabilities.
- Key areas for continued improvement include handwriting and the marking of pupils' work to build in target setting and opportunities for self-review.
- The school has set realistic targets for the next two years that it is currently on track to meet, but these could be more challenging to reflect its ambitions to become a centre of excellence.

- 73 Standards achieved by the age of seven are above average and better than at the time of the previous inspection. The school has implemented the NLS well and now analyses results carefully to identify specific areas of weakness. There is some good achievement made by higher attainers in English, though the proportion of those achieving at the average level 3 and the higher level 4 at the age of nine years, is similar to that found in most other Bedfordshire lower schools. The impact of the school's strategies for improvement can be seen much better in the written work of younger pupils than older ones. Early in 2001 the school identified spelling as being a significant weakness and introduced a systematic programme of work (known as THRASS) to address this weakness. The school was disappointed that results in the 2001 SATs showed no improvement, but early indications from the 2002 tests show very significant improvement in results. The school already knows it needs to improve the handwriting and presentation of pupils' work and this weakness is now being addressed more systematically. These steps, together with the work to improve boys' reading skills and boost attainment through schemes such as the ALS, are having a very positive impact on improving standards. Computers are used effectively to support pupils in developing literacy skills, for example when practising word recognition and comprehension through the good choice of software or when presenting their work using word processing.
- 74 Special educational needs and Language Provision pupils receive good individual support with their work in English. Their needs have been identified and individual education plans (IEPs) guide both teaching and learning-support staff to plan and prepare effective support for pupils. They receive support for skill development but also to ensure that their self-esteem and confidence are high. Pupils are often supported in class lessons but where appropriate are withdrawn for specific support such as ALS or speech and language individual programmes. Support for them continues at a high level throughout the school and they benefit much from this provision. Learning assistants are active partners with class teachers and, for example in literacy lessons, make sure the specific pupils for whom they are responsible have full access to the lesson. They sit near the pupil, talk with him/her, encourage him/her to respond to the teacher's questions and help the pupil frame and practise the answer. Support for pupils learning English as an additional language and those from ethnic minority backgrounds is less obvious. Not all pupils need support as some of the highest-attaining pupils in the school are from other ethnic groups. The school has recently begun to make particular provision to raise the attainment of African-Caribbean boys who are significantly under-performing and, although this is too recent to have had much impact, the provision being made during the inspection was good.
- 75 Teaching and learning in English is good across all aspects of the subject. Some particularly good work was seen in lessons in Year 2 where the focus was on improving speaking and listening skills. In one lesson the pupils had made puppets and written dialogue for a play. They rehearsed their play and presented it to their classmates, four of whom were official graders with clipboards and pens. Each

presentation concluded with an evaluation by the class and the players, which was conducted in a very mature manner. This was because that was how the teacher expected the class to respond and they rose to meet her expectations. In a different Year 2 lesson, three pupils assumed the roles of characters in a story and then responded in role to questions from the rest of the class. The positive, confident manner of the teacher communicated well to the pupils and the quality of questioning and response was very high. One pupil asked, 'Why did you buy the right size for Dad, and clothes for Neil which were too big?' and the reply was 'Because Dad would not grow but Neil was small and he would grow and be able to wear the clothes for a long time'. The pupil self-evaluation which concluded this session was of high quality, particularly since this was a class group of mixed ability and not a high-ability set. The learning-support assistant played an important role in this lesson in helping a Language Provision pupil frame her questions. The effectiveness of this method of working in raising standards needs to be recognised by all staff, because teaching style in many lessons in all subjects ensures that almost all talking is done by teachers, and pupils often have very little opportunity to learn through discussion.

- 76 The majority of pupils enter Year 1 with average levels of reading and most pupils' skills and understanding are being developed appropriately through guided reading sessions. Teachers and support staff are skilful at moving the learning on in lessons by paying good attention to the development of phonic skills and the learning and recall of high frequency words. By the end of Year 2 the most-able readers read very well. They know what sort of books they like to read and why. They can list a range of authors and some of their books. They write book reviews and recommend books to other pupils. Reading development continues to be promoted in the junior classes. Some very good teaching of reading skills was seen in the Year 4 top set for literacy. The teacher provided a very good example of how she expected pupils to read and they responded to her firm lead well. She interwove teaching about spellings, punctuation and the use of expression very effectively. She referred to previous work. This technique was familiar to the pupils who began to make similar references. Teachers make good provision for less-able readers through guided reading and the use of programmes such as ALS, Fuzz Buzz and structured reading scheme material. These were good teaching and learning sessions because they focused closely on individual learning needs. However, it is not clear from the school's assessment processes what the overall impact is of the different strategies being used to support individual pupils' development in literacy, and this requires review.
- 77 Reading books are sent home regularly and parents respond positively but there is no vigorous attempt by the school to recruit parents or carers as reading partners. This is a missed opportunity to provide additional opportunities for pupils to read. Money has been invested in the purchase of guided reading books but, in many classrooms, reading corners or display areas were lacking in positive impact and did not invite pupils to select books. A number of pupils who read to inspectors did so from rather tired and worn-out books. The central library is an attractive area for book storage and selection but lacks any space for a whole class to receive library lessons. However it is strategically positioned next to the ICT suite and therefore there is considerable scope for increasing the use of the whole area for research.
- 78 Improving pupils' written work has been the major priority for the school. They have improved the provision to teach skills such as spelling and to a lesser extent handwriting, and are now working on ideas, planning and different types of writing. Standards in written work show improvement and are above average at age 7. Although closer to expectations in Year 4 this group of pupils has not had the full benefit of the NLS. However the most able of the year group, although fewer in number, are achieving higher levels than expected for their age. In a good lesson in Year 2, the teacher used a text well to check whether pupils knew the correct use of the possessive apostrophe. A pupil explained the rule clearly and other pupils knew different occasions when an apostrophe should be used. In the same lesson, the teacher constantly used phonemes and graphemes to help pupils spell correctly and this is having a very positive impact on pupils' ability to spell, read and write. This interweaving of different aspects of English is one reason why standards are improving. In another Year 2 lesson, pupils compiled a worry list, which includes 'I'm afraid of my teeth falling out and swallowing them'. The quality of discussion in this session was good with confident contributions from both boys and girls. There was good evidence in pupils' books that the most-able pupils are being challenged. One good example involved a homework task to find out information about elephants and then use it to write a 'fact file'. This work was at a secure Level 3 for the most-able pupils.

- 79 In junior classes, the best-extended pieces of writing are achieved when the Year 4 teachers expected the pupils to work together in small groups to write a book. This showed good evidence of planning, story and character development, paragraphs and dialogue, and the best example was about Level 4. They were also set an interesting writing task in history by their teachers to 'write a report on life in the 1950s'. In response to a series of leading questions most demonstrated their ability to gather and present information logically. Year 3 pupils wrote letters home as Roman soldiers based in Britain. This task was one of the few seen which required pupils to reflect and respond in a personal way. The best work by pupils used information well to justify a point of view. Year 3 pupils also wrote extensive character studies of the people in the first Harry Potter book. Written work demonstrated a good understanding of the text and of how to make the text interesting for the reader. Pupils' approaches made the stories fun to read.
- 80 The school as a whole has yet to identify fully the rich vein of opportunities for pupils to write in different ways in subjects other than English. This is a missed opportunity as much of the written work in history, geography and religious education was in response to worksheets, much of which required only a limited response. There are two key areas for further improvement. Firstly, handwriting requires attention. Work has begun in this area but staff need to check very carefully that pupils are learning correct letter formation and not just repeating errors. There is also a problem with the incorrect way in which many younger pupils hold their pencils, and this needs attention as letter formation is often oversized and presentation poor. This needs to be corrected at a young age and not allowed to become an established habit. Secondly, while all work is marked, much of marking relates to effort rather than content, spelling, grammar, presentation etc. This does not help pupils know how to improve or involve them in assessing their own performance. There is also a missing link between the use of lesson objectives, the setting of targets and the marking of work. Most lessons in English began by reference to learning objectives and they were often re-visited as part of the plenary in the best lessons. But they were really curriculum objectives for a unit of work and now need to be defined at different levels to make them underpin targets and marking. Target sheets in pupils' books were quite often seen as marked 'achieved' and this is misleading if it implies 'consistently achieved'.
- 81 There are many things to celebrate in the provision for English but the very high quality teamwork between teachers and learning support assistants heads the list. This is founded on good professional working relationships underpinned by a highly developed communication system. This ensures that lesson planning covers the work of both teachers and learning support assistants. Learning support assistants always know in plenty of time what work the class will be doing so they can adapt as necessary for the pupil they support. Record keeping and the transfer of information between staff are very good and effective in ensuring that pupils make good progress in English.
- 82 The subject leader has already brought about improvements to standards, teaching and learning in English. There is the commitment and the capacity for these to be even better. The time is now right to reintroduce regular monitoring of teaching and learning in lessons as this has had less priority recently. This is essential to identify exactly what needs to be improved to make a difference. The school has set realistic targets in English for the next two years that it is currently on track to meet, but these could be more challenging to reflect its ambitions.

## MATHEMATICS

- There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.
- Standards are above average at the end of Year 2.
- Pupils, irrespective of their background, gender or ability, now learn more successfully in mathematics than they did at the time of the previous inspection.
- Standards are improving in Years 3 and 4 and are average overall, but are not yet high enough.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- The curriculum is broad and well balanced, though too many worksheets are in use, especially in Years 3 and 4.
- The subject is managed well. However, there is not enough direct monitoring and evaluation of the strengths and shortcomings of the subject throughout the school.
- The setting arrangements work well in the interests of the highest attainers, though the support for pupils with diverse needs is not always sharply focused.

- 83 The school has made good progress with improvement in mathematics since the previous inspection. In 1997, standards were average in Years 2 and 4 and pupils made satisfactory progress. Now, standards are above average at the age of seven and average at the age of nine. The preliminary evaluation of this year's SATs results shows that nearly every pupil achieved level 2 in the SATs and just under a half reached level 3. This compares favourably with last year when pupils achieved above the national average in the SATs and well above the level found in schools with a similar level of entitlement to free school meals. At the age of nine, standards match those found in Bedfordshire schools generally.
- 84 Both boys and girls have good levels of basic numeracy skills and knowledge, although the speed of calculation is not always as quick as it might be. The school has introduced the numeracy strategy with success and pupils are prepared well for the demands of middle-school mathematics. There is some good work undertaken in mathematical problem solving and investigation and standards are above average. However, the excessive use of worksheets in Year 3 and 4 in lower and middle sets works against the development of even better skills and knowledge, particularly when the worksheet used is dreary, unimaginative and focused on unnecessary repetition of already mastered facts. In contrast, there is emerging good practice in the use of ICT to support learning in mathematics, and the subject leader wishes to develop this even more.
- 85 The teaching of mathematics is good overall. There are some strengths, chiefly in Years 2 and 4, including the good teaching of basic skills, teachers' subject knowledge, the methods used and the pace of work. A very good lesson in the top set for Year 4 was conducted at a cracking pace and resulted in pupils working quickly as they defined values, sequenced numbers and looked at negative integers at a challenging level. Some very probing questioning by the teacher resulted in pupils' deepening their mathematical thinking skills. By contrast in a lesson for the low attaining set in Year 3, unsatisfactory progress was made because expectations were too low and the tasks chosen failed to stimulate pupils so that the achievement of many was below their capabilities. Whilst most teachers share the learning objectives with the pupils at the start of the lesson and many review them at the end of the session, few ask the pupils themselves to evaluate their own progress. The marking of work is not as effective as in many schools and the use of comments to underline progress towards personal targets is sparse. Most lessons are pleasant, productive sessions where learning takes place in settled conditions. Occasionally, pupils are over-fussy and take some time to settle but, in general, behaviour is good. The good quality of relationships is an asset in enabling pupils to work together in a mature and sensible fashion.
- 86 The curriculum for mathematics is broad and well balanced, though there is little use of ICT to support learning and this is a missed opportunity. The setting arrangements for the subject work well in the interests of the higher-attaining pupils. This is especially the case in Year 2 where there are four, rather than the three ability sets found in other years. Here, higher attainers are challenged well and achieve some very good results. Also in Year 2, the provision for the lowest set is well matched to the individual targets of the pupils, all of whom have special educational needs. Pupils in the two middle sets are also well taught. The overall impact of this well-focused support is to give a timely boost to standards and this year has ensured that virtually every pupil has reached the desired level 2.
- 87 In other years, the support for pupils with diverse needs, such as those with additional language provision, English as an additional language or special educational needs, is not always as focused as it could be. There are generous levels of support in some sets; not all of this is focused on the needs of the targeted pupils. Where such support is provided, the most beneficial impact is sometimes on the behaviour of pupils rather than on the academic progress made.
- 88 There are good procedures for assessment in mathematics and the relatively new target setting and tracking process is bedding in well. This is thorough and well documented, for example the subject leader has introduced the Springboard 4 programme to help raise standards in Year 4 in the light of the significant under-performance in last year's QCA tests. However, some work remains to ensure that the monitoring and target setting systems track progress consistently as it unfolds, rather than waiting until after it has taken place. School managers are working capably to refine the system in this way and the subject leader is keen to make the necessary improvements. The school has set realistic targets in



mathematics for the next two years that it is currently on track to meet, but these could be more challenging to reflect its ambitions.

- 89 Mathematics is a well-managed subject. The subject leader is hard working and effective and is influential in bringing improvement. She has rightly identified the enhanced use of ICT as a key area for improvement. There are good levels of shared commitment to future improvement amongst the staff. The subject leader has had some chances to monitor directly the strengths and shortcomings of the subject and has observed all teachers teach mathematics this year. In all, there is good potential for maintained improvement in the future, given a rigorous programme of monitoring and evaluation to ensure strengths are shared and shortcomings eliminated.

## SCIENCE

- There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.
- Standards are above the national average by the age of seven, and attainment at nine is above the average found in Bedfordshire schools.
- Teaching is good overall, though the overuse of worksheets restricts the development of writing skills, and much presentation is careless and untidy. Links with other subjects, such as the development of literacy and mathematical skills, are coincidental rather than planned.
- Boys and girls of all abilities, including those in language provision and those who learn English as an additional language, have positive attitudes towards science, and enjoy practical tasks and investigations.
- Pupils generally make good progress both in acquiring factual knowledge and enquiry skills.
- The level of challenge needed by higher-attaining pupils is not always considered in the planning and as a result their learning is not extended consistently.
- Good, enthusiastic leadership is driving forward improvement at a good pace.
- Regular and systematic assessment takes place, but no targets are set as a result of this. This is a missed opportunity to assist in raising standards.

- 90 There has been good improvement in science since the previous inspection in 1997. Standards, which were reported as average (although barely such at seven), are now above the national average by this age, and by the age of nine above the average found in Bedfordshire schools. Progress, which was adequate, is now good, and the wide variations between classes reported previously no longer exist. Planning is now shared between classes and follows government guidelines, and this consistency, together with good teaching overall and the introduction of a systematic system of assessment, is largely responsible for the improvement in standards.
- 91 Preliminary results of teacher assessment of seven-year-olds in 2002 show pupils to be broadly average overall but above the nationally expected standards for pupils achieving the higher level 3. Inspectors' discussions with pupils and the sampling of their work in their books show that standards are above average overall. Pupils generally have a good understanding of the tasks they undertake and are able to explain why things happened as they did, and this is true of pupils of all ages. However, older pupils, and especially those capable of high attainment, do not always make the progress that might be expected, given their ability at seven. Despite this, their scientific understanding suggests that, by the time these pupils take the national tests at the age of eleven, they will achieve standards which will compare favourably with those found elsewhere.
- 92 Discussion with pupils, as well as the work they have completed, indicates that they have covered all aspects of scientific knowledge thoroughly: life processes and living things, materials and their properties, and physical processes. More importantly there is plenty of evidence of scientific discovery through experiments and activities. While these are understandably usually teacher directed for younger pupils, older pupils sometimes have the opportunity to set up their own challenges, choosing materials and methods for themselves, as when designing a bridge to carry increasing weights. Pupils are enthusiastic about this sort of experience and are keen to recall their successes. There is room for teachers to offer more of these opportunities for independence. Alternatively, in a very good lesson in Year 4, pupils were encouraged to decide on their own criteria for sorting different living and non-living objects scientifically. This led to very good discussion and the selection by pupils of methods they have

encountered in mathematics, such as 'Venn' and 'Carroll' diagrams, an excellent example of practical links between subjects. The very good learning which took place was a direct result of this carefully structured freedom of opportunity.

- 93 Pupils in Year 1 look carefully at plants and draw them prior to looking at different plants in the school grounds. They manage this well, with lower-attaining pupils being well supported. However higher-attaining pupils do not complete the extension work of labelling different parts of the plant and writing a sentence about it. This is due to a mixture of lack of time and lack of support: for example no vocabulary is displayed and there are no 'writing frames' to guide pupils' ideas. In Year 2 pupils are keeping a record of their bean's growth, some of which will soon be able to support Jack! As well as 'competition' beans they grow 'research' beans in different conditions, and are encouraged to predict what might happen to them and to give reasons for lack of growth or change of colour, all of which is good practice.
- 94 Pupils in Year 3 are starting a new topic on light and shadows, and lessons are planned to assess their existing knowledge and understanding, following discussion, through the use of an appropriate worksheet. In a very good lesson pupils come up with some interesting ideas, partly because they discuss the work in small groups. The teacher builds on this expertly to underline that in science there are often no 'right' answers, but that the questions need framing carefully. For example, most pupils say that newspaper lets some light through, but another pupil responds 'It depends how many sheets there are!' Real scientific thinking is taking place here, and it is good to see pupils encouraged to question and probe.
- 95 Inspectors' scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work indicates that boys and girls make good progress from year to year. The use of government guidelines for planning ensures that topics are repeated later on at a more demanding level, so that pupils build on what they already know. The use of regular assessments, which are built into the planning, is providing teachers with a good overview of progress, both for individuals and year groups. The next step, already in the subject leader's action plan, is to use these results to set challenging targets for attainment so that standards are lifted higher still. Older pupils in particular will benefit from knowing what they need to do to achieve the next level in their learning.
- 96 Teaching is good overall, both in the lessons seen and by the quality of work pupils produce, as well as their understanding. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen, and there were examples of both good and very good teaching. Good teaching in school is reaching pupils of all abilities, as well as those who have special educational needs, including statements, and those who learn English as an additional language. The work of support staff is particularly effective in helping pupils who have difficulties in achieving well. The *hands-on* and experiential approach to science was observed to motivate pupils, some from African-Caribbean backgrounds who have been assessed as finding learning difficult, and secure their sustained concentration to good effect. Teachers generally have good relationships with their pupils, and this ensures that more time is spent on learning, as there is little need to correct inappropriate behaviour. The use of support staff is well planned and the quality of the people involved makes a strong contribution to the progress of different groups of pupils, such as those with special educational needs or language provision. While verbal expectations are high the same it is not always true of written tasks, and teachers are too easily satisfied by work that shows a lack of effort. Sometimes this is due to the inappropriate use of worksheets, which can limit the quality of responses, especially from higher-attaining pupils. There are examples of other subjects linking with science, such as mathematics and ICT, but these are incidental rather than planned for. Pupils' writing too could be more carefully structured so that they are given sufficient opportunities to write in different styles and for different purposes.
- 97 Management in science is effective, as demonstrated by the improvements in the subject. The new subject leader is enthusiastic and already has ideas to develop learning in science further, having observed science taught in all year groups apart from her own. The school is in a good position to continue to develop and improve the provision in this subject, and to secure even higher standards.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

- The rate of improvement in art and design has been good.
- Standards are above average throughout the school and pupils make good progress.
- There is a relevant, broad and balanced curriculum with some richness, though there could be more work in three dimensions and improvement in the use of sketch-books.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Assessment of skills and knowledge is good.
- There is insufficient direct monitoring and evaluation of standards and the curriculum.

- 98 Standards in art were average at the previous inspection and pupils made satisfactory progress. School managers have worked hard to make improvements and the rate of advance has been good. Today, standards are above average in all years and progress is good for all pupils, irrespective of their gender, background or ability.
- 99 Pupils develop good skills with a good range of materials and techniques. Much of the work in evidence is based on two-dimensional art and design, but involves an interesting programme of tasks that are well focused on the development of skills, knowledge and understanding. Some very good quality artwork is produced in Year 2, for example. Here, pupils work carefully to produce prints of leaves using paint, paint wash effects with silhouettes to show sunsets, and tissue paper poppies of intricate detail; they weave string to represent church architecture. Many pupils show close attention to detail and meticulous use of the different materials.
- 100 Pupils also develop good appreciation of the work of different artists. Contrasting figures such as William Morris and Jackson Pollock form the basis of some artwork that is influenced by the master, but is nonetheless original. A comparative weakness is representation of the work of artists from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds in the curriculum, and the celebration of the liveliness and panache shown by their use of colour and materials.
- 101 Teaching quality is good through the school. Skills are taught well, teachers have good subject knowledge, methods are effective, expectations high and the pace of learning brisk. The involvement of pupils themselves in the evaluation of their work could be more consistent. However, pupils enjoy art and design, they work hard and are productive and creative artists. Behaviour and relationships are strengths. There is some good challenge for higher-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well given their need for additional support.
- 102 The curriculum for art and design is well focused on the development of skills. It is broad, well balanced, relevant and of considerable richness. In some ways, the curriculum is promoted more successfully in Years 1 and 2 than in Years 3 and 4. The breadth of work, for example, is greater in Year 2 and the use of sketch books in Years 3 and 4 is not demanding enough. There is satisfactory use of ICT to enhance the development of skills and knowledge in art and design. The assessment of attainment is set against a good skill progression list.
- 103 The subject leader manages art and design with interest, involvement and determination. She has not had opportunity to monitor directly the work in other classes and, because she is relatively new to the post, does not have full information about the strengths and shortcomings of the subject. However, she is ready and able to take on this role and art and design has good potential for the future.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

- The school has maintained its provision for design and technology soundly.
- Standards are above average at the age of seven and nine.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall with some strengths
- The curriculum enables pupils to make choices and tap into their own creativity in Years 1 and 2; there are too many worksheets in Years 3 and 4.
- Assessment of skills and knowledge is good.
- There is too little direct monitoring and evaluation of performance in the subject.

- 104 The school has sustained the average skills and knowledge developed in design and technology reported in 1997 and has made useful improvements to some aspects of the subject. At present, standards are higher by the age of seven than they are by the age of nine, largely because the work in the first two years is more investigative and pupil focused than in the latter two years where there is an over-use of worksheets.
- 105 Attainment is above average at the end of Year 2 and average by the end of Year 4. The whole range of design and technology skills is included in the work, so the younger pupils develop the ability to plan and design products, manufacture them, then evaluate the result and suggest ways to improve. This was observed in a Year 2 lesson where the pupils were designing models that used two different mechanisms to aid movement. The pupils drew detailed sketches to show their design and, with help from the adults present, they then labelled their designs with information about the materials to be used and where levers and sliders would be utilised. In such lessons, the pupils are given opportunities to use their initiative and to show their own understanding.
- 106 Some work for older pupils is controlled strongly by the teacher. Questions often have just one possible answer; the teacher explains the process fully and pupils' responses are directed to filling in information and answering questions on worksheets. Pupils are sometimes told why things are designed the way they are rather than being given opportunities to investigate for themselves and to talk about their own findings. There are exceptions to this type of lesson, where initiative and independence are fostered successfully, but they are not widespread enough.
- 107 In general, teaching is satisfactory, though there are some strengths. Skills teaching is good and teachers' subject knowledge is secure. The pace of most lessons is brisk. However, the use of support staff in lessons is not always focused on the needs of targeted pupils.
- 108 There is a satisfactory curriculum for the subject with appropriate focus on skills development. The system of assessment is a strength and there are good quality resources. The subject leader manages the subject on a maintenance basis as he has a number of other commitments that take up much of his time. There has been little direct monitoring and evaluation of design and technology in lessons and so strengths are not always shared or weaknesses eliminated quickly enough. The use of ICT to support learning in DT is not widespread. There is potential to make provision and standards the equal of the best subjects in the school but this is dependent on more rigorous checking of pupils' performance.

## GEOGRAPHY

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards are average at the age of seven and nine.</li> <li>• Pupils show good attitudes, behaviour and relationships in lessons.</li> <li>• Sound teaching leads to pupils understanding what they are doing and making steady progress.</li> <li>• There is good emphasis on the use of geographical skills and good use made of visits to develop understanding; though there could be still greater focus on pupils' multi-cultural development.</li> <li>• Too many worksheets limit pupils' opportunities to write in depth and this requires review.</li> </ul> |
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- 109 When the school was inspected in 1997 standards were average at the ages of seven and nine. This is similar to current standards. However, there were also variations in progress between one year group and the next, as well as between parallel classes. While good teaching was commented on in the previous report, there were also a small number of unsatisfactory lessons. These variations appear to have been ironed out, and pupils now receive a sound education in geography whatever their class or teacher. This represents sound improvement since the previous inspection.
- 110 Much of the work in geography is firmly based on direct experience wherever possible, which makes pupils' learning more meaningful and effective. The younger pupils in Year 1 study traffic in the local area, discussing their findings and using terms such as 'busy', 'noisy' and 'dangerous'. They use their experience to plan their own survey of cars in the school car park, making good use of mathematical skills such as 'tallying'. Pupils in Year 3 similarly build on their existing understanding of the human and physical features of a landscape to survey the school's surroundings and suggest how it could be developed or used more effectively.

- 111 Teachers use effective resources to support more theoretical learning. Year 2 pupils have lots of ideas about the different ways we use water, and watch an appropriate video to help their understanding of the 'water cycle'. However this is a difficult concept for such young pupils and understanding is limited for many, with too many ideas to take in over a short time. A video and written resources such as information sheets and timetables are used very well in a lesson for Year 4 pupils, comparing their own education with that of children in India. Pupils are encouraged to investigate for themselves and to justify their findings, resulting in good learning taking place.
- 112 Teaching seen during the inspection was at least sound, and mostly good or very good. The quality and content of pupils' books indicates that it is generally satisfactory over time and is having a positive impact on the development of different pupils' achievements, irrespective of their cultural background, gender, special needs or ability. Strengths include the good use of geographical vocabulary, high expectations of pupils' response and behaviour, and the planning for support staff for pupils with special educational needs or language provision. The reinforcement and encouragement offered by these staff make a good contribution to the progress made by the pupils they help. Areas where teaching could improve include offering more opportunities for pupils to write at length: higher-attaining pupils' response is sometimes limited by the overuse of worksheets with closed tasks. The quality of pupils' presentation of their work is often untidy, and teachers' marking rarely seeks to inform or improve understanding.
- 113 Good use is made of visits to support geographical skills, particularly in mapping, for example the comparison made with Kimbolton on the residential visit in Year 4. The work on India provides useful insights into cultural differences and similarities, however there could be still greater focus on pupils' multi-cultural development within such lessons, and when teachers choose resources and organise visits. Older pupils use and create maps confidently, and show a good understanding of keys, scale and co-ordinates.
- 114 Subject leadership is sound. Regular and systematic assessment opportunities are built into the planning, helping teachers to identify how knowledge, understanding and skills are building from one year to the next. However this information is not yet used to set targets for individuals or groups of pupils to achieve.

## HISTORY

- Standards are above average at the ages of seven and nine.
- Teaching is good and pupils make good progress overall.
- Pupils enjoy history and work well together.
- There is too much reliance on prepared worksheets and this caps the level at which some pupils could achieve; this requires review.
- Good leadership and management have ensured that the strengths identified at the time of the previous inspection have been sustained and these look likely to continue.

- 115 As at the time of the previous inspection in 1997, standards in history remain above average, both nationally at the age of seven and when compared with the standards generally expected of nine-year-olds. The maintenance of above average standards represents satisfactory improvement, especially when taking into account the increased focus on English and mathematics in primary schools. While the standards achieved by pupils in the lessons seen were generally average, the quality of work seen in pupils' books, produced over the course of a year, indicates that both boys and girls make good progress and achieve well across the ability span, irrespective of their starting point. Inspectors' discussions with a mixed group of pupils in Year 4 who show good knowledge of historical fact, a secure understanding of historical enquiry, and the importance of evidence in supporting well-reasoned judgements confirms this.
- 116 Pupils in Year 1, having looked at holidays fifty and a hundred years ago, compare them with holidays today. While they show some awareness of the differences, the task set is too easy to complete, as the pictures they have to organise are all black and white unless they are of today's holidays! In Year 2 this theme is developed more successfully through a well-chosen video, old photographs of Scarborough

and questions that ensure that pupils have to look carefully to find information. There is a good emphasis on using evidence to support ideas, and an effective preparation for next week's visitor who will talk about visiting the seaside fifty years ago.

- 117 Pupils in Year 3 are studying the Romans, and most have a reasonable sense of chronology: her friends quickly contradict the girl who puts Romans in cars! Again an effective video is used to give information about the fate of Pompeii, which the pupils find very interesting and which prepares them for their visit to St Albans later in the week. They make good use of history books to support their writing, although a task more closely related to the video may have produced a more thoughtful response. Year 4 pupils attempt to contrast buildings in the 1950s with the present day. While this has the apparent advantage of using the school's own classrooms as a resource, the lack of obvious differences makes the task too challenging for many pupils, who would have been better served by buildings with greater contrasts.
- 118 Teachers are well prepared and have good relationships with their pupils, and lessons generally proceed at a good pace. Questions are used carefully, both to check pupils' knowledge and understanding as well as to encourage them to think like historians. Lessons usually finish with effective sessions in which concepts are reinforced for the whole class. The standard of historical understanding in pupils' books is not matched by the quality of writing or presentation, however. Too many tasks are based on worksheets, and this limits the response, especially of higher-attaining pupils. While pupils make good progress overall, it is less secure in Year 3. Pupils with special educational needs, as well as those requiring language provision, are generally well supported in lessons and as a result make similar progress to that of their classmates.
- 119 History is effectively managed by an experienced and well-qualified subject leader. She has a good understanding of the school's current position and a carefully thought-out action plan to make further improvements based on the assessment already taking place. There are good links with geography in the use of maps, but literacy links need more careful thought so that pupils can develop their writing skills through the medium of history.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

- There has been good improvement since the 1997 inspection.
- Standards are average at the ages of seven and nine.
- The level of teachers' subject knowledge and confidence has been improved well.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress due to sound teaching and learning quality.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, though some resources have yet to be used fully in the development of skills and knowledge.
- The cross-curricular use of ICT and use of computers in the classroom are not yet at the level found in many schools.
- The management of ICT is good, though there are not enough opportunities to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning in lessons.

- 120 To some degree, information technology was the school's *Cinderella* subject in 1997. In that year, the inspection report indicated that there were shortcomings in the subject that held progress and standards back. Significant amongst these were the lack of teacher expertise and shortages of key resources. The school has made good efforts to bring improvement and today the subject is much more at the heart of the curriculum. Nonetheless, there are still things to achieve. School managers acknowledge this, but are cheerful in their bid for continued improvement.
- 121 Standards are average at the age of seven and nine for both boys and girls from different backgrounds. The impact of improvements has been felt more in Years 1 and 2 because these pupils have always known the better level of provision and increased expertise. In Years 3 and 4, standards have been boosted to an average level by recent innovation. There is indication that, in the future, standards could be above average by the age of nine. For example, Year 2 pupils now show some good skills when using a wide range of word processing features and in computer control as they manipulate the screen turtle by means of the *Logo* program, and move *Roamer*, the programmable vehicle.

- 122 Improvements in progress and standards are largely due to the improved level of teachers' subject knowledge and confidence. Teaching is satisfactory through the school and there are some strengths emerging as teachers use the full range of available resources more. Most lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, the teaching methods used are successful, support staff do a good job when working with their targeted pupils and the management of pupils is a strength. Ongoing assessment of the development of skills and knowledge could be sharper, and pupils themselves could be given more chances to evaluate their own progress. In general, learning is satisfactory because pupils work hard enough and produce acceptable amounts of work.
- 123 Attitudes to ICT are good, though there is some stifling of initiative and interest by the over-use of worksheets, particularly in Years 3 and 4. This also restricts the progress made by higher-attaining pupils in particular. Behaviour is good too and the quality of relationships is a strength in the promotion of good co-operative learning habits. Pupils are keen to use the computer suite and use the opportunities provided to build skills and knowledge well.
- 124 The curriculum for ICT is much improved on that found at the previous inspection. All strands are covered, though the lack of some resources restricts opportunities in some aspects. For example, the appropriate use of the Internet to foster pupils' skills and knowledge about the communication strand has been held back by problems of access and the need to gain parents' permission for their children to use the facilities. However, some work has been done at a theoretical level, as shown by the several worksheets used in Year 3 to build knowledge of how the Internet operates.
- 125 There are two related aspects of ICT that school managers wish to improve and inspectors uphold these priorities as appropriate. Firstly, the computers in the classroom are not, in general, used as efficiently as those in the good quality computer suite. Secondly, the use of ICT to develop skills and knowledge in other subjects is not as widespread as it could be. There is some good use of computers in music, for example, and many subject leaders indicated to inspectors that their current priorities include better use of ICT.
- 126 ICT is managed well by the subject leader. He has good expertise and is influential in bringing improvement. There have been few opportunities for him to monitor standards, progress and the quality of provision across the school, and so some of the subject strengths and shortcomings have not been detected early enough. Nonetheless, there is good potential for continued improvement.

## MUSIC

- The school has sustained the strengths in music reported at the previous inspection.
- Standards are above average and pupils make good progress.
- Teaching and learning quality are good.
- The good range of extracurricular music activities that take place considerably enhances the curriculum and standards.
- The subject leader manages music well.

- 127 Music was a strength of the school at the previous inspection and remains so today. There are many strengths in the subject and a wide range of opportunities for pupils to do well. Standards in singing are particularly good. Pupils across the school sing enthusiastically and sweetly; singing in assembly is uplifting.
- 128 Standards are above average at the end of Years 2 and 4. Pupils compose and perform pieces with confidence and precision, and are introduced to a good range of music from classical and modern traditions. They listen carefully and talk enthusiastically of their preferences in what they hear. They liken the sound patterns to things about them and many are beginning to read music notation at a comparatively early stage. Skills and knowledge are thus promoted well, and pupils make good progress because the music curriculum is systematic in the promotion of good skills and knowledge.
- 129 The quality of teaching is good. Several teachers have expertise in the subject; proportionally more than in many schools. Subject knowledge is good and expectations high, skills are taught effectively, pupils

are managed well and most lessons go at a suitably swinging pace. Pupils' assessment of their own skills could be fostered more consistently, although the overall system of assessment is good.

- 130 Both boys and girls enjoy the opportunities provided for them to learn about music. Pupils with special educational needs, including those from Language Provision are well integrated into lessons. Everyone works hard and creatively. Behaviour is good in most music lessons and the good quality of relationships enables the pupils to work well together when composing or performing. Pupils with special educational needs are supported effectively in music lessons and they make the same good progress as the other pupils. Pupils' cultural development is advanced successfully by the work in music, though their experience of the musical traditions of non-Western cultures is rather restricted. Much of the music performed or listened to is of European origin. This could easily be enhanced by the selection of stimulating and enjoyable pieces from around the world, particularly to reflect the richness and diversity of pupils' own heritage.
- 131 One contributing factor to the rich musical life in school is the range of activities outside lessons. The choir and instrumental groups participate in a wide range of events, including those sponsored by the Bedfordshire Music Festival. These events and competitions show the school's music tradition in a good light and achievement is sometimes outstanding. There are improving opportunities for pupils to develop music skills and knowledge through the use of ICT. The subject leader is actively seeking ways to widen the opportunities for pupils who like music, but who do not have particular musical traditions in their families, to take part in and succeed in choral singing and instrumental performance. This is an eminently sensible priority that will broaden and equalise opportunities and enable many more pupils to celebrate the richness of the school's music making.
- 132 The subject leader has held the post for a relatively short time and has taken on the mantle of managing music well. She has firm ideas for future priorities in the subject and is giving an increasingly strong steer to the subject, although she does not have enough opportunities to monitor music lessons directly. The subject leader acknowledges that she inherited a strong musical tradition, but is clearly capable of stamping her own authority on the development and further improvement of the subject.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- There has been satisfactory improvement overall in the provision for physical education (PE) since the inspection in 1997.
- Standards are at the expected level in games at the age of seven and athletics at the age of nine.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and pupils make steady progress.
- Planning for support staff in lessons needs more focus to be fully effective, especially in supporting those pupils who have challenging behaviour.
- Older pupils particularly have good attitudes to PE and this is helping them to make sound progress.
- Extracurricular opportunities add enrichment to the PE programme and both support and extend pupils' progress.

- 133 There has been satisfactory improvement in PE since the previous inspection. Standards in games and athletics are sound, these were the only aspects it was possible to observe during the inspection because of what was planned for as summer activities. By the age of seven pupils show appropriate understanding of both ball skills and teamwork, and by the age of nine their athletic performance broadly matches that achieved by pupils of a similar age.
- 134 Swimming is currently limited to half a term in Year 4; managers hope to extend this to Year 3 next year if local resources can be secured to facilitate this. Parents raised a few concerns with inspectors about swimming, which they see as an important aspect of the curriculum they believe is under-represented. It is not possible for inspectors to make judgements about this as no swimming was observed and the school's own swimming pool is being de-commissioned as part of a new buildings programme. There are no set standards for pupils to achieve below the age of eleven. Parents' views were brought to the attention of the school. Gymnastics and dance are taught in blocks at different times, and planning indicates that they are given appropriate attention. Dance in particular benefits from extracurricular opportunities. There is a dance club in Years 3 and 4, and students from De Montfort University teach



traditional dances to pupils in Year 4. Maypole dancing is linked to the history topic on the Victorians and culminates in a public performance. Some pupils also perform expressive dance at the annual Bedfordshire music festival with considerable success. Boys and girls can practise their skills in football and 'unihoc' in school clubs, and the 'ten-step' award programme in athletics for Year 4 pupils is linked to activities for the annual sports day.

- 135 Pupils in Year 2 playing a team game showed the beginning of tactical awareness, trying hard to pass the ball to team-mates and working hard to intercept the opposition's passes. The teams are kept small, which gives all pupils the chance to be involved. However, the lesson has to take place in the hall, due to several pupils' failing to bring their trainers and, as it was, five pupils missed the lesson because they had no PE kit, despite numerous reminders. Older pupils make good progress in athletic skills. There is a good balance between teacher explanation and using pupils to demonstrate, and as a result there is a marked improvement in pupils' performance as the lesson progresses. Pupils in Year 4 are also given responsibility for measuring and recording their progress, encouraging their independence.
- 136 The quality of teaching is generally sound, with some good teaching of older pupils. Pupils are encouraged to warm up before the lesson proper, and can explain why this is important. Their readiness shows that this is a regular occurrence. The good teaching is focused on the development of skills, and involves pupils in competing against themselves to improve control and performance. Effective management of pupils, with clear expectations and good relationships, makes a strong contribution, ensuring that time is well used. In the one unsatisfactory lesson, too much time was spent on organising equipment and dealing with poor behaviour and, as a result, some pupils became restless and the class made little progress. The use of support staff, while generally helpful, particularly to pupils with special educational needs or language provision, is not always effectively targeted where it will do most good in aiding individuals, some of whom have difficulty controlling their behaviour, to make gains in both physical and personal development. The attitude and response of pupils to PE is generally good, reflecting the quality of the teaching they receive, and there is plenty of enjoyment, as there should be.
- 137 The subject leader is recently appointed and has had little opportunity to influence the quality of teaching and learning, although she has observed some teaching taking place to assist her in evaluating the quality of work in school. She is enthusiastic and has clear ideas for developing the subject further. Good quality assessment takes place at regular intervals, which can usefully assist teachers in enabling pupils of all abilities to make consistent progress over time.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The provision for religious education was satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection and this has been sustained.</li><li>• Currently attainment is average, teaching and learning are satisfactory, and pupils usually respond well in lessons.</li><li>• A new local syllabus has been in place since Christmas 2001 and it is now time for the school to review teaching and learning prior to the planned introduction of its new scheme for assessment.</li></ul> |
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- 138 Pupils in the infant classes begin to learn from religion as they think about rules to live by and record their own versions of the Ten Commandments. An examination of pupils work shows that even the less-able pupils understand the idea of rules and they make a good attempt to record their own. Pupils listen to and retell the story of 'Moses in the Bulrushes'. This was presented as an open task and so enabled the more-able pupils to demonstrate their improving mastery of literacy skills. An interesting piece of work seen in Year 2 promoted reflection and was based on the difficult concepts of obedience and authority. Pupils were required to respond to statements such as, 'I have learnt to...', 'I was taught by...', 'I have to obey...', 'They have authority to...'. The resulting work was limited by the worksheet they were required to complete. Many pupils need to improve the quality of their presentation.
- 139 Junior-age pupils of all abilities can record the qualities of a friend and demonstrate that they understand the key features of friendship. Pupils learn about religion as they study the symbolism of water in religion. Pupils in Year 4 understood the use of water in welcoming ceremonies such as baptism and confirmation. The teacher who introduced the concept of water washing away everything bad using the

story of Noah as a starting point for discussion could have extended this further. Pupils learn about different faiths as they study the Jewish ceremony of Bar Mitzvah, but some of their written responses were disappointing because the worksheet provided only limited space for the pupils to record. Because the task was more open, pupils produced interesting lists of the qualities needed by a Brahmin. Pupils in Year 3 had a good opportunity to make use of their research skills to find out more about religious rules in relation to food. The teacher had thoughtfully provided some texts at different levels of difficulty so that all could achieve the task, and he made sensible use of pupils' expertise in Islam. The concluding session (plenary) was almost curtailed because monitors from the next class who needed the books were waiting eagerly in the doorway. Overall, junior pupils need to improve their handwriting and spelling in religious education.

- 140 Teaching and learning are satisfactory and meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. This is an achievement because the syllabus is new and teachers are still coming to terms with the content. In lessons observed there were some weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge; this was particularly evident in the lessons on Islam and Sikhism. Teachers often used story as the basis for the lesson and good storytelling meant that pupils became highly motivated and interested in the topic. There was also effective use of question and answer sessions to promote knowledge and understanding, but reflection and personal response was less well promoted. This was mainly because teachers do not give enough emphasis to this aspect of the work. There was not enough opportunity in many lessons for pupils to demonstrate learning from religion. Pupils' tasks are satisfactory overall but vary in quality too much and range from good to unsatisfactory. Many pupils are not motivated by worksheets, they wrote very little and spend most of their time colouring in. Some worksheets are useful and add to pupils' learning; most do not. Support staff make sure that pupils who learn English as an additional language, those with special educational needs and Language provision pupils do at least as well as the rest of the class and they often produce better results because of the good support and close monitoring they receive.
- 141 Pupils respond satisfactorily and this relates directly to the quality of teaching. Where the work set is interesting, imaginative and presented in a lively manner they respond positively. But when tasks are uninspiring and insufficient time is allowed for discussion there is some loss of attention. Pupils want to contribute to discussions but teachers sometimes seem to be looking for just one right answer rather than a range of opinions and thoughtful responses. This results in the discussion moving on too rapidly and few pupils having the opportunity to contribute.
- 142 The provision for religious education is ripe for improvement. The school plans to review the implementation of the new syllabus soon and the subject leader is busy developing a new system for assessment. However it is essential that the school also monitors and evaluates teaching and learning to identify the need for additional training in specific religions, resource needs and which teaching methods most successfully achieve the twin objectives of the syllabus - learning about religion and learning from religion.