

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **ASHTREE JMI SCHOOL AND NURSERY**

Stevenage, Hertfordshire

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117352

Headteacher: Mr R W Randall

Reporting inspector: Mr D Hayward  
21234

Dates of inspection: 15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> October 2001

Inspection number: 197221

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

© Crown copyright 2001

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Chertsey Rise  
Stevenage  
Hertfordshire

Postcode: SG2 9JQ

Telephone number: 01438 351090

Fax number: 01438 353464

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Alan Hubbard

Date of previous inspection: November 1999

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Doug Hayward 21234	Registered inspector	English Information and communication technology Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught?
Christine Laverock 15527	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Gail Robertson 24137	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage Art History	How well is the school led and managed?
Katherine Spencer 30028	Team inspector	Mathematics Music	How well does the school care for its pupils?
Sandra Brown 18283	Team inspector	Geography Physical education Religious education Special educational needs	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Mohindar Galowalia 20832	Team inspector	Science Design and technology English as an additional language	Staffing, accommodation and resources

The inspection contractor was:

TWA Inspections Ltd  
5 Lakeside  
Werrington  
Peterborough  
Cambs.  
PE4 6QZ

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager  
Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	
Information about the school	<b>6</b>
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>10</b>
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>30</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Ashtree JMI and Nursery is a very large school situated in the Shephall district of Stevenage, in Hertfordshire. The school is situated in a highly populated area of houses that are a mixture of privately and local authority-owned. Currently, there are just over 400 pupils on roll, including 55 children who attend the school's nursery on a part-time basis. Fifty pupils (12 per cent) are eligible for free school meals, which is broadly in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils identified with special educational needs (19 per cent) is in line with the national average, and the percentage with Statements of Special Educational Need is below the national average. Eight pupils (2 per cent) speak English as an additional language, which is slightly higher than in most schools, although only one of them is at an early stage of learning English.

Children start at the nursery after their third birthday, attending for morning or afternoon sessions. They then transfer to one of the reception classes in September or January of the year in which they are five. Tests given to pupils shortly after they start in the reception classes show that their levels of attainment are generally lower than those in other schools in Hertfordshire, and particularly in mathematics.

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

**This is a good school that has made considerable progress in the last two years. The headteacher, staff and governors have worked hard to make Ashtree a school that is going from strength to strength. Teaching is very good overall and pupils progress very well. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are outstanding. The school provides good value for money.**

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

- It provides a very good start to children's schooling in the nursery and reception classes, and helps pupils to make good progress from the time they start until they leave at 11 years of age.
- It provides high standards of teaching. Teachers are very enthusiastic and work well as a team. They put a great deal of effort into making their lessons interesting and enjoyable. They have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and have excellent relationships with them.
- It places great importance on developing pupils' excellent behaviour and positive attitudes to their work. Pupils listen very carefully to their teachers, concentrate extremely well and really like coming to school.
- It emphasises the importance of caring for each other and provides very good opportunities for pupils to become confident and responsible members of the school.
- It teaches a wide range of interesting and varied subjects. Pupils use computers well to help them learn.
- It forms very good links with parents and values the support they provide. Parents feel welcome in school and play an important part in their children's education.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership. He has developed strong teamwork amongst staff and clear direction that have helped to improve the school.

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

- The way in which help for pupils with special educational needs is organised for individuals and small groups and pupils with English as an additional language.
- Opportunities for teachers and subject co-ordinators to observe colleagues and to share good practice.
- The way in which the school makes the best use of teaching time.
- The way in which the school sets and reviews targets for pupils to improve their work.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1999 by two inspectors for two days. That inspection was to assess the progress the school had made since its inspection in 1997, when it was judged to require special measures. The inspection in 1999 found that the school had made good progress and was providing an acceptable standard of education and sound value for money. In the two years since then, many major improvements have taken place and the school is much better than it was. For example, the standard of teaching is far better now than in 1999. The school has successfully addressed all the key issues in the previous report. Standards in mathematics, the foundation subjects and information and communication technology have all improved. The school has also worked hard to improve pupils' handwriting, their spelling and the presentation of their work. Pupils' listening skills are now excellent. Teachers give them many opportunities to discuss and answer questions in lessons. These opportunities have helped to make pupils much more confident about speaking. Their attitudes and behaviour, which the school has worked very hard to improve, are now outstanding overall. The school now provides good value for money, which is an improvement on 1999 and it is well placed to continue to improve.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6, based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2000	
English	B	C	B	B	well above average    A above average        B average                C below average        D well below average    E
Mathematics	D	D	C	C	
Science	B	C	C	C	

There has been a steady overall improvement in pupils' results over the past four years. In the most recent tests for 11-year olds, pupils attained results in comparison with all schools nationally and with similar schools that were above average in English and average in mathematics and science. Their results in national tests at 7 and 11 years of age that are at least in line with those in other schools in Hertfordshire, and sometimes slightly above. Standards during the inspection in English, mathematics and science were in line with those expected nationally at both key stages. Standards in the foundation subjects have improved tremendously since 1999, especially in information and communication technology, where pupils achieve higher standards than those expected in primary schools.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Outstanding. Pupils say, <i>'We are very proud of our school and it helps us to learn.'</i> They are very interested in their lessons, keen to answer questions and they get on with their work very well. They feel that, <i>'The school is a lot brighter than it used to be. It's nicer to work in and it's safe.'</i>
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Pupils are polite, friendly and courteous to each other and to adults. They are very well behaved in lessons and during lunchtimes and playtimes. Pupils say that, <i>'Behaviour now is much better than in the past. There is no bullying anymore – it's just like a dream.'</i>
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Pupils have lots of opportunities to take responsibility. The school council is very effective. Pupils say, <i>'If we have a problem we can talk to the school council members and they will try their best to sort it out. They have done in the past!'</i>
Attendance	Satisfactory. It is similar to that in most other primary schools.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Good	Very 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.*

During the inspection 105 lessons were observed. Only three lessons were unsatisfactory, because they were not organised well enough. Of the remainder, almost three-quarters were at least good and just over a third of lessons were very good and occasionally excellent. Six per cent of lessons were excellent. This is high quality teaching. There are outstanding relationships between pupils and teachers. Pupils recognise this and say, *'Teachers are lovely. They trust us and want us to respect them. We do, because they respect us'*. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is consistently good and has a significant impact on the attainment of pupils of all abilities. Teachers plan their lessons well so that the work is at the right level for pupils to understand. This means that pupils find their work interesting, concentrate very well and are keen to succeed. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do and use questions extremely well to find out how much they have remembered and learned.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Children in the nursery and reception classes enjoy a stimulating range of activities and have a very good start to school. The school has improved its work in English and mathematics, and in a wide range of other subjects, such as art, music, design and technology and history. Computers are being used more and more effectively to help pupils learn. The range of extra-curricular activities that teachers provide is very good and pupils enjoy joining in.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress in lessons in class, but additional help for them individually and in small groups has little impact on their progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school does not monitor well enough the progress of the very few pupils who are at an early stage of learning English.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school has a very strong ethos and helps to develop very high levels of respect, understanding and support. Pupils say, <i>'If you are upset people come up to you and ask if they can help. Even if they don't know you they help. Girls and boys get on well – they care for each other'</i> . Trips to places of interest and visitors to the school help to develop pupils' understanding of their own and other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school promotes pupils' personal development very well. Staff like and value the pupils. The school is working hard to develop ways in which it assesses pupils' work to help them make progress.

Parents of children who have recently started school for the first time comment on how quickly they have settled in. The school provides lots of useful information for parents and works hard to involve them in their children's education.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very good leadership and is well supported by the senior management team. He is highly regarded by parents and has made important changes to improve the quality of pupils' education and the reputation of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	There are many newly appointed governors who are enthusiastic and very supportive. They are playing an increasingly important role in the running of the school, including its finances, and setting the right priorities for development and improvement.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The fact that the school has improved so much in the last two years shows how well it has worked to improve the quality of education it provides to help pupils achieve higher standards.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses its budget very well to provide a good standard of education.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Twenty-five parents attended a meeting shortly before the inspection started and 100 parents returned their pre-inspection questionnaires.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They say that their children enjoy school and make good progress.</li> <li>• They say that the school works closely with parents and listens to what they say.</li> <li>• They say that teaching is good and that the school is well managed and led.</li> <li>• They say that behaviour is good and that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some parents feel that they are not well informed about how their children are getting on.</li> <li>• A few parents do not feel the school sets the right amount of homework.</li> <li>• A small number of parents say that the school does not have high expectations.</li> <li>• A number of parents do not feel that the school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

The inspection team fully supports parents' positive views. Inspectors feel that parents are well informed. The school invites parents to three parent-teacher consultations each year and pupils' annual reports are very informative. Parents who disagreed with the amount of homework set did not indicate whether they felt it was too much or too little. Inspectors consider that homework supports the work that pupils do in school. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do and, in the opinion of the inspection team, there is a very wide range of activities outside lessons.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The inspection took place just before half-term of the autumn term when pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 had been in their new classes for about six weeks. It was not possible, therefore, to predict with any real accuracy what standards they would achieve in nine months time when they are 7 and 11 years of age. Consequently, the inspectors' scrutiny of work in pupils' books at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 was carried out on the work completed in the previous year by pupils in Year 6 who had left, and by pupils who were now starting in Year 3. In addition, books from those pupils currently in Year 2 and Year 6 were also scrutinised.

#### **Children under five**

2. On entry to the nursery, informal assessments of the children by nursery staff show that many arrive with few early experiences of language and social skills. They also have significantly lower mathematics and language skills than might be expected at that age. For example, the range of words they are able to use is often very limited. They tend to speak using single words and short phrases rather than extended sentences and this, in turn, affects their ability to respond to questions. They have had little experience of numbers and shapes and do not understand many aspects of mathematical language.
3. Children learn a great deal in the nursery. They have many opportunities to talk to each other and to adults and to develop the range of language they use. They use sand and water to learn mathematical terms, such as '*full*', '*more*' and '*less*'. They grow in confidence, join in larger gatherings, such as assemblies, and develop good physical skills in lessons in the hall. They make good progress in the nursery. Nevertheless, assessments carried out within a few weeks of children starting in the reception classes, which are the same tests as those given to children in other Hertfordshire schools, show that most attain slightly below the average level in other Hertfordshire schools and below the level expected nationally.
4. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage<sup>1</sup>. They benefit from skilled, caring and supportive staff and from very well-planned lessons and activities. The school does not see below-average attainment at an early age as any obstacle to pupils' attainment as they move through the school. This demonstrates the school's expectation of high achievement from all its pupils. That is, expecting the very best that pupils are capable of. This inclusion of all pupils in the way the school has improved its results and in its aspirations to improve still further is a strong feature of the school's work. The rate of progress that children under five make means that most are on course to attain the Early Learning Goals<sup>2</sup> by the end of the reception year and a few are on course to exceed them.

---

<sup>1</sup> Foundation Stage – this was introduced in September 2000 and forms a separate stage of education for children from the age of three until they reach the end of the reception year.

<sup>2</sup> Early Learning Goals – these are targets for learning by children by the end of the reception year. They refer to personal, social and emotional development, communication language and literacy skills, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, and physical and creative development.

## Key Stage 1

5. Despite low *'baseline'* scores in areas such as language and mathematics, pupils' results in national tests at the age of seven at Level 2 and at the higher Level 3<sup>3</sup> have steadily improved in the last three years. In the 2000 national tests and assessments at the end of Key Stage 1, the percentage of pupils attaining Level 2 or higher was above average in reading and writing and very high in mathematics and science. In comparison with pupils in all schools nationally, and with those in similar schools, pupils attained results that were above average in reading and well above average in writing and mathematics. Ashtree's results at Level 2 and Level 3 were higher in all three subjects than the Hertfordshire average.
6. In the most recent 2001 tests, the percentage of pupils attaining Level 2 has fallen very slightly in reading from 92 per cent in 2000 to 87 per cent. In writing it has fallen from 92 per cent in 2000 to 83 per cent. In mathematics, the percentage is almost the same. Results at Level 3 have also fallen slightly in all subjects. The reason for the slight *'dip'* in results this year is that the pupils are not of the same ability as the previous year group. The scrutiny of work and discussions with pupils show that standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science for pupils currently in Year 2 are at the level expected of pupils at this age. Standards in the foundation subjects are also at the expected level, with the exception of information and communication technology (ICT), where standards are higher than expected. In religious education, pupils achieve standards above the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.
7. Pupils in Key Stage 1 make good progress, especially considering their often low attainment in key areas when they start school. That rate of progress is carefully monitored by the school and pupils receive well-targeted additional help from teaching assistants whenever necessary to help them in specific subjects. Teachers make sure that the work they plan takes careful consideration of the range of pupils' abilities in their classes.

## Key Stage 2

8. In the tests in 2000 at the end of Key Stage 2, the percentage of pupils attaining Level 4<sup>4</sup> was average in all three subjects. The percentage attaining Level 5 was well below average in English, below average in mathematics and average in science. In comparison with those in schools nationally, and with pupils' prior attainment, results were average in English and science and below average in mathematics. In comparison with those in similar schools, results were average in science and below average in English and mathematics.
9. In the tests in 2001 at the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' results in comparison with all schools nationally and with those in similar schools were above average in English, and average in mathematics and science. The most significant improvement was in the number of pupils attaining the higher Level 5. In English the percentage rose from 16 in 2000 to 36 in 2001. In mathematics it increased from 16 to 25 per cent and in science it rose by 2 per cent to 36 per cent overall.
10. Since 1998 there has been a trend of improvement in results at Ashtree in English, mathematics and science, which has been above the national trend. This trend of improvement is equally significant compared with the Hertfordshire average, as can be seen from the tables below.

---

<sup>3</sup> Levels – by the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are expected to attain Level 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Those who attain Level 3 are, therefore, attaining above nationally expected levels.

<sup>4</sup> Levels – by the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are expected to attain Level 4 in English, mathematics and science. Those who attain the higher Level 5 are, therefore, attaining above nationally expected levels.

## Percentage of pupils at Level 4 and above

English	1998	1999	2000	2001
Ashtree	59%	81%	82%	81%
National	65%	71%	75%	75%
Hertfordshire	73%	77%	80%	80%
% difference with national average	-6%	10%	7%	6%

Mathematics	1998	1999	2000	2001
Ashtree	39%	56%	70%	69%
National	59%	69%	72%	71%
Hertfordshire	65%	75%	76%	76%
% difference with LEA average	-20%	-17%	-2%	-2%

Science	1998	1999	2000	2001
Ashtree	56%	88%	88%	90%
National	69%	78%	85%	87%
Hertfordshire	77%	85%	89%	91%
% difference with national average	-13%	10%	3%	3%

Pupils in Key Stage 2 maintain the good progress they make in the Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1. During the inspection the scrutiny of work showed that standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are at the expected levels in English, mathematics and science. Standards are as expected in all the foundation subjects, with the exception of ICT, where they are above the expected levels. Standards in religious education are above the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.

### Across the school

11. Almost all parents said in their questionnaires and at the pre-inspection meeting that their children were making good progress. Parents of children in the nursery and reception classes say that their children settle quickly and that this helps them to make good progress. The school accepts children's low attainment on entry as a reason for having high expectations of what they can achieve, rather than using it as an excuse for low attainment. Almost all the pupils are doing the best they can. There was no indication during the inspection of any groups of pupils, such as boys, girls or ethnic groups, doing better than others. They were treated the same in lessons and no group dominated discussions or activities. In fact, the school is very good at ensuring that boys and girls of all ages are treated equally and included in all activities fairly. Interestingly, the pupils themselves are the first to admit that there is no favouritism shown to any particular group. They regard the school and the teachers as being 'fair' to all of them.
12. The school has resolved that the 'special measures' judgement it experienced in its first inspection in 1997 will never be repeated. The progress it was judged to have made on its re-inspection in 1999 has been maintained, and in some areas improved. It has become much better at tracking the progress that pupils make as they move through the school and supporting individuals or groups of pupils whenever required. The newly

installed computerised assessment program has already enabled the school to spot any anomalies in the progress that individuals or groups of pupils make from year to year.

13. It has worked very hard and successfully to address the issues identified in its interim report in 1999. For example, the previous report noted variations in standards between subjects and year groups. This is no longer the case. In fact, there was considerable parity between different classes within the same year group and steady progression through the key stages. Standards in the Foundation Stage were identified as requiring improvement. However, one of the school's strengths during the inspection and evident from wall displays, pupils' books and class timetables was the wide curriculum that pupils experience and the standard of work that they achieve in those subjects. Information and communication technology, which was identified as a weakness in the last inspection, is now an area where pupils experience success.
14. The school's strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are having a significant impact on attainment and progress at both key stages. The structure of these strategies has helped teachers to focus on particular aspects of these subjects. This includes many good opportunities for using and applying mathematics in other subjects, for example science and geography. This, combined with the school's good on-going analyses of how well pupils are progressing and setting challenging targets for improvement has helped to develop a trend of improvement in national tests. The school now feels it has reached a stage where it can be a little more '*flexible*' in its use of the National Literacy Strategy, for example to help it develop pupils' extended writing skills.
15. At Key Stage 2 there is a good system of individual targets which are shared with pupils and written into their exercise books after a piece of work has been completed. These are then highlighted by pupils at the beginning of their next piece of writing to remind them about their current targets for improvement. For example, pupils have personal targets, including the presentation of their work and the use of dictionaries. As yet, however, the review of these targets is carried out less formally and agreement about whether they have been reached is not usually shared with pupils.
16. One of the more notable successes of the school's work is in ICT, an area highlighted for improvement in its interim report. ICT is now used very successfully to support other subjects. The school has a very open approach to working out how the recently opened computer suite can be most effectively used. Additional support staffing is very effective and has a major impact on the development of pupils' ICT skills. Pupils have frequent opportunities to use data handling programs, spreadsheets and word processing programs in a range of other subjects. The school has recently purchased sensor equipment to complement pupils' good existing investigative and experimental work in science. The weaknesses identified in the teaching of foundation subjects in the interim report have also been successfully addressed. There was no evidence of previously identified weak subject knowledge or inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. In fact, good and very good teaching was observed in many foundation lessons and its positive impact on pupils' progress was clearly apparent.
17. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs and those with statements of special educational need is sound at both key stages when pupils are supported in classes. The school identifies pupils with special educational needs early in their school careers and work in classes is well planned at different levels to ensure that it is appropriate for pupils' needs. In almost all classes, teachers are extremely good at ensuring that pupils with special educational needs are fully included in all aspects of the lesson. For instance, in an excellent literacy lesson in Year 1, teaching assistants sat on the carpet next to individual pupils during a teacher-led introduction to repeat instructions when needed and to ensure they understood every aspect of the work. The teaching assistant with responsibility for special educational needs gives good support in

mathematics and English, where work is linked and planned with class teachers.

18. A range of additional support for pupils with special educational needs is in place and support is available for pupils at Stages 2 and 3 of the Code of Practice<sup>5</sup>, as well as those with statements. This support usually takes the form of withdrawal to a table in the classroom or to a separate room. This does not support the school's inclusion policy and is less effective in helping pupils to progress. The newly introduced individual education plans vary in quality from class to class. Teachers do not have the support they require from the co-ordinator for special educational needs to identify precise learning concerns regarding pupils on Stage 3 and above. Often, in these cases, the individual education plans are not detailed enough to list short, achievable and measurable targets and there is insufficient evidence that parents are fully involved at all stages.
19. The school has a small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Whilst most of these pupils make satisfactory progress, the very few early learners do not do so. No direct support teaching was observed. However, the school does not formally record how it provides support for those pupils identified with English as an additional language, or track the specific progress they make in acquiring English. The mainstream classrooms provide very good all-round relationships. This helps any newly-arrived pupils to settle well. The competence of some teachers in languages that they share with pupils, for example German, also helps them to settle well and feel secure. However, the teachers do not have sufficient knowledge and understanding of how pupils acquire an additional language and how early stage learners can best be supported in the mainstream classroom.

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

20. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent. This is very good improvement since the last inspection when they were described as good. Parents confirm this view. They are very positive about children's behaviour, particularly on school trips. Pupils come to school eagerly and enjoy all the activities which teachers provide for them. They concentrate well in lessons, listen carefully to instructions and are attentive to explanations. This is because teachers make lessons lively, interesting and challenging. Pupils are very friendly to one another and to visitors and are keen to talk about their work. They participate in a mature way in class discussions and value each other's contributions. They do not make fun of each other if mistakes are made and are encouraged to highlight one another's strengths. For example, in Year 1, a '*Star of the Week*' is selected, and everyone in the class has to think of one thing they like about that person. Pupils' excellent attitudes contribute to the very good progress which they make in lessons.
21. Pupils behave extremely well in and around the school. They move between classrooms and the halls without any fuss. They work constructively in pairs and groups and productively on their own. Pupils talk about the school being a safe place to be in and one where teachers respect them and they respect them back in return. There is no oppressive behaviour in lessons or the playground. Pupils relate extremely well to one another and are very aware of the impact of their actions upon others. They are very clear about school and class rules, which they abide by. No unpleasantness was observed amongst pupils during the inspection and if they accidentally bump into each other they apologise without prompting. Pupils describe the school as safe. Incidents between pupils are so isolated that teachers can spend all their time teaching and rarely have to stop to correct distracting behaviour. There were six fixed period exclusions in

---

<sup>5</sup> Code of Practice – this gives practical advice to schools and local education authorities about their responsibilities and tasks to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs receive the most appropriate help to further their learning and personal development. Stages of special educational need range from Stages 1 and 2, when limited additional support is provided for pupils entirely from within the school to Stage 5, which ensures that a pupil has a statement outlining his or her needs and shows what additional and specific support a pupil will receive. Stages 3, 4 and 5 involve external specialists as well as staff within the school.

the last academic year as the school was having to deal with unacceptable behaviour from a small group of pupils. There have been no recent exclusions, however.

22. Pupils with special educational needs are equally positive in their responses and are well accepted by others. The vast majority of behaviour is equally as good as that of other pupils and pupils are managed well by their class teachers and teaching assistants.
23. Pupils show initiative in their learning and around the school. They respond very positively when given specific responsibilities, such as being library monitors and representatives on the school council. Pupils participate in decisions about improving the school, for example on playground activities, and have a good understanding of citizenship as a result. They collect harvest parcels for local elderly residents and they have raised money for National Children's Homes and Comic Relief. They respond promptly and sensibly in lessons when asked to get equipment out; for example, this was seen in a Year 2 physical education lesson requiring small apparatus in the hall. Older pupils help in the infant playground at lunchtimes and with hearing children read in the reception classes. The youngest children in the nursery are involved in planning which activities they are going to choose each day, and this progresses as they move through the school. By the time they are in Year 6, pupils have the ability to work independently and have a very mature approach to their work.
24. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory when compared with the national average and is at the same level as it was at the time of the last inspection. The majority of pupils have very good attendance, although a significant number go on holiday with their parents during term time. The vast majority of pupils arrive at school punctually and quickly settle to their work.

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

25. The quality of teaching promotes good standards. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 97 per cent of lessons. It was unsatisfactory in only three lessons out of 105 lessons observed. In those lessons, teaching pace was slow and lessons were not well organised. Teaching is at least good in almost three-quarters of lessons. It is at least very good, and occasionally excellent, in just over a third of lessons. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is good overall. In one-third of English lessons and one-fifth of mathematics lessons teaching is at least very good. This high quality teaching has a significant impact on the progress and achievement of pupils of all abilities in literacy and numeracy.
26. Teaching in the nursery and reception classes is never less than very good and has a tremendous impact on the positive ways in which children work and their good progress throughout the Foundation Stage. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is usually good when they work in classes and receive support that has been planned by class teachers. It is far less effective when pupils are withdrawn for additional support from specialist staff because there is no clear link or application between their group or individual work and their work in classes.
27. Ninety-seven per cent of parents in their pre-inspection questionnaires agree that teaching is good. It is far better now than it was during the school's inspection in 1999. Then, in a much smaller sample of lessons, teaching was at least satisfactory in 88 per cent of lessons and good or very good in 42 per cent of lessons, compared with 75 per cent in this inspection. Teaching strengths identified in that inspection still remain; for example, well-planned lessons for pupils of all abilities, explicit learning objectives that are usually shared with pupils, and effective questioning to find out how much pupils know.

28. In addition, there are several other characteristics of good and very good teaching that are clearly apparent; for example, brisk lesson pace, class management, the use of resources teachers' use of praise to motivate pupils and teachers' high expectations of what pupils can achieve. There are two other strengths that deserve particular mention because of their obvious impact on pupils' learning in inclusive lessons, which stress the part everyone has to play. They are the culture of acceptance of all pupils' oral contributions to questions and in discussions, and the lack of negative comments in lessons.
29. In all lessons there is a clear emphasis on pupils being included in all aspects of the lesson. For example, *'having a go'* at answering questions. Teachers repeatedly stress the importance of pupils offering an answer, for example *'Who has not yet spoken?'*, and frequently a pupil will preface his or her answer by saying, *'Well, I'm not sure but...'*. The school ethos of *'trying'* is clearly understood by pupils who know that their efforts will be valued and appreciated, even if they are not *'correct'*. Answers are never *'wrong'*. Pupils are told, *'That was a very good try'* or, *'He's nearly there. Can anyone help him?'* or, *'Have another think and I'll come back to you'*. In an excellent literacy lesson in Year 1 the teacher constantly encouraged pupils to join in a very brisk question and answer session. In response to her question, *'Who's going to come out and write 'tree' for me?'* one pupil's effort was greeted with, *'That's a very good try, but who can tell me what **we've** missed out?'*, with the emphasis on shared responsibility, rather than individual blame.
30. Linked to this positive approach is the teachers' very good use of praise. One aspect of very good teaching is frequent praise to reward pupils' efforts, both individually and as a group. For example, at the start of a very good lesson the teacher commented to the whole class, *'You did very well yesterday. I think you can do even better today!'* As well as oral praise, such as *'Good girl!'* or *'You've worked really hard!'*, teachers use merit marks well to reward pupils' efforts. On rare occasions when teaching is less effective, praise is not used frequently enough to let pupils know that their efforts are appreciated.
31. Teachers' positive approach is apparent through the strength of their relationships with pupils and the way in which they deal with very occasional instances of negative behaviour. It is clear from examples of wry humour and pupils' responses that relationships are warm and respectful. While there are often instances of humour in classes, it is never taken too far. Only in one or two lessons were teachers heard to say, *'Don't!'* to pupils. For example, in a very good drama lesson in the reception class, a teacher overcame one child's lack of attention by asking him to help another child with his work, thus including him even more. In another class a teacher dealt very sensitively and positively with a pupil who found it difficult not to call out answers. By explaining that she greatly appreciated that pupil's answers, but wanted other pupils to have the same opportunity, the teacher was able to include all other pupils in the lesson introduction, but make all pupils feel that their answers were equally valued.
32. Teachers' good planning is another reason for high quality teaching. They plan carefully to link current lessons well with previous activities and to ensure that their lessons are well matched to pupils' abilities. Work is purposeful, challenging and keeps pupils fully occupied. In many lessons the *'intended learning outcome'* is made clear to pupils at the start and is often written on card or on the board. In the best lessons the teacher checks with the pupils to see whether they have stayed on task during the lesson and whether the intended outcome has been achieved by the end of the lesson.
33. Teachers use questioning very effectively to make *'on-going assessments'* to find out what pupils know, and this is another strength of good and very good teaching. In their lesson introductions teachers are very good at using questions to find out what pupils have learned and remembered from their previous lessons. Lessons invariably start with



a brisk question and answer session in which teachers pose searching questions. This immediately focuses pupils on what they have to learn. For example, in a very good science lesson in Year 1 the teacher started the lesson on comparing pupils' birth weight as babies with their weights now by asking, 'Would the heaviest baby be the heaviest in the class now?' 'How can we find out?' 'Look at the information and tell me who was the heaviest baby?' The teacher used questions very cleverly to encourage pupils' responses and to point out when correct vocabulary was used. Rapid questioning maintains the lesson pace and involves all the pupils, either through general questions to the whole class or to specific individuals. During the lesson, teachers might stop to assess by questioning what has been learned so far, and then use that information to revise a specific point or to move on when pupils understand.

34. Teachers plan work well for pupils with special educational needs, although they do not always use individual educational plans routinely in their planning. They usually deploy teaching assistants effectively to work with individuals and small groups, although they are not particularly effective when sitting passively during literacy introductions. Usually they provide good levels of help where they are most needed, for example sitting next to a pupil who finds it difficult to concentrate during a lesson introduction. Their work to support pupils is usually well planned and forms an integral part of the lesson, especially during literacy and numeracy lessons. It is not as effective when specialist teachers interrupt the work that they are doing as a planned part of the lesson, to withdraw individual pupils for repetitive phonic practice.
35. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs in small groups is not always effective. Although the work centres around much needed phonic revision, the withdrawal of pupils, often during literacy and numeracy sessions, does not fit well with school's otherwise very good emphasis on including pupils in all activities. As yet, there is very little support from specialist teachers during literacy lessons, for example to support individuals in 'shared reading' tasks and to extend their expertise to more pupils more effectively in terms of time. The teaching of pupils with English as an additional language is sound overall. There are hardly any pupils at an early stage of acquiring English, although for those one or two there is sometimes not enough individual support available in class.
36. The school's arrangements for setting homework are sound and support the work that pupils do in class, sometimes very imaginatively. For example, in a very good literacy lesson about the diary of Anne Frank, some pupils had taken the opportunity to go to the library in the preceding weekend to find non-fiction books about her. There were also regular occasions when pupils had used their own computer programs to download information about topics in school. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting felt that homework was 'just about right' in terms of volume and frequency.

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

37. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is broad, balanced and based securely on the Early Learning Goals. Children enjoy a stimulating range of activities. The curriculum planned for children in the Foundation Stage is lively, imaginative and appropriate and fully complies with the latest national guidance for children aged three to five.
38. The school meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and uses the approved scheme for the locally agreed syllabus to inform planning in religious education. The curriculum is well planned and broadly based and the quality and range of learning opportunities are very good. Work on display around the school in corridors, in halls and in classrooms mirrors the breadth of opportunities that pupils experience. The school has improved its work in English and mathematics, where the national strategies have had a

positive impact on standards. Curriculum planning gives good coverage in each year group. The criticism in the interim report of uneven provision in subjects between classes and within key stages no longer applies. The school is making good use of nationally provided schemes of work from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority that they adapt and appraise in the light of existing schemes and the needs of the school.

39. Good systems are in place to monitor and ensure that a balanced curriculum is being presented. However, in both key stages, but especially Key Stage 1, timetabling arrangements have a negative impact on subject timings. For example, religious education lessons are split, with an introduction that takes place before a physical education lesson and the main part of the lesson continuing after this. The plenary session for the numeracy lesson takes place 40 minutes after the conclusion of the main session, following morning playtime and milk consumption. This is not effective, as pupils are not able to sustain their interest or intensity of learning. The insistence on holding a Key Stage 1 assembly for four afternoons at the same time means that there is little flexibility in the afternoon timetabling arrangements. Timings for *'guided'* and *'silent'* reading are inconsistent and their purpose is not always clear, other than providing a short interval during which the registers are called. The time allowed for milk and putting on coats at Key Stage 1 is also excessive and inappropriately organised. The ten minutes or so allowed each day for drinking milk take up over an hour of teaching time each week. The premature end to the teaching day in Year 2 for pupils to change to go home is unacceptable.
40. Curriculum planning is good overall. In the Foundation Stage, long-term, medium-term and weekly planning is very good. The termly, weekly and daily plans in Key Stages 1 and 2 specify what pupils are intended to learn, with learning intentions outlined and described for the beginning of lessons. Planning for English and mathematics is detailed and indicates provision for pupils of differing abilities. Pupils have good opportunities to apply the mathematics and science that they learn and to develop their independent skills. Computers are being used more effectively to support subjects of the curriculum. Completing the plans is, however, extremely time consuming and sometimes they are excessive in quantity and duplicate others. The school's response to criticism about its planning in the interim report was to plan meticulously, but often excessively. The school is now at a stage of proficiency in planning where it can choose which elements of its planning documents are essential, which elements it wishes to keep and which it can usefully discard.
41. There are very good procedures in place for teaching and monitoring personal, social and health education. This includes a suitable programme for sex education. Despite some parents' reservations about the range of activities outside lessons, there is a very good range of extra-curricular activities that enhance the curriculum. These include football, dance, netball and gardening. They are very popular clubs and are well supported by pupils. The curriculum is also extended further by visits to shopping areas, churches and museums and pupils in Year 6 benefit from the experience of a residential visit.
42. In many respects the way in which the school includes all pupils in its work is very good. Lesson planning for all abilities ensures equality of access. The way in which teachers ensure that their questioning includes all pupils is extremely good. Boys and girls work extremely well together and there was no incidence of bullying or racial intolerance at any time during the inspection. However, some groups of children with special educational needs are withdrawn from lessons to receive individual or small group programmes. This results in valuable curriculum time being missed. Pupils with special educational needs who are supported in class by special needs teachers often receive work which is worksheet based and repetitive in nature instead of the wide range of activities available to the rest of the class.

43. Several aspects of the provision for pupils with special educational needs are unsatisfactory. Whilst individual educational plans are in place, and strengths and weaknesses are identified for each pupil, the targets set for improvement are often too wide, which makes it difficult for teachers to evaluate progress and to meet pupils' needs effectively. The links between the co-ordinator for special educational needs, the special needs support teacher and class teachers regarding the provision of support are not secure. Currently, individual or small group support does not impact sufficiently well on pupils' progress and is not an integral part of the whole curriculum for these pupils.
44. The provision of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Standards have improved since the last inspection. Throughout the school, teachers and other adults consistently promote very high standards of consideration for others.
45. Provision for spiritual development is very good. The school is a secure, supportive and happy community in which everyone is valued. Pupils are encouraged to express their feelings. As a Year 5 pupil said, *'I am proud to be part of a lovely school'*. They value others in circle time. Assemblies take place daily and explore worthwhile themes, such as linking the environment with the wider world. Work for some pupils allows them to explore how personal feelings can influence attitudes and actions. During the week of inspection, pupils in Year 6 expressed their feelings evoked by the story of Kisagotami in art, drama and music showing growing spiritual awareness.
46. The school makes very good provision for moral development and promotes values relating to right and wrong and respect for others. Its policies on behaviour, discipline and bullying provide a good framework within which pupils can develop. Provision is strengthened by the consistent and open approach adopted by staff. All adults around the school and in classrooms reinforce these values. Adults treat pupils with respect and receive the same in return.
47. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. They have a clear understanding of school and classroom rules. The very good relationships in the school promote very good standards of self-discipline. The many opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively in subjects such as English, science and religious education, as well as to compete in different sports such as netball and football, are a great help to their social development. Pupils begin to gain an understanding of citizenship and to appreciate their own work by helping with the daily routines of school life. Older pupils take responsibility for tasks such as organising and tidying the libraries and assisting with children in the reception classes at break times and lunch times.
48. The school's provision for cultural development is very good. The syllabus for religious education supports the study of a wide range of religions and the teaching of English and history also emphasises the development of pupils' awareness of the diversity of cultures throughout the world. The school has made visits to a Victorian schoolroom and to St. Albans cathedral. These visits add to the diet of rich cultural experiences. In addition, a varied programme of extra-curricular activities, including sports, and a good range of educational visits help pupils extend their experiences and widen their horizons.

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

49. Staff know their pupils really well and take good care of them. Parents are very positive about this aspect of the school's work. Close attention is given to the health and safety of pupils in lessons such as physical education and science. There is a child protection policy which guides staff on what to do if they have any concerns about the well-being of pupils. Most staff are aware of the procedures to follow, although some of the lunchtime staff have not had specific guidance and this needs addressing. Pupils are well supervised at break and lunchtimes and these are very pleasant occasions as a result. Trained staff administer first aid appropriately and parents are notified of any accidents that occur. The arrangements for storing registers during the school day to satisfy emergency evacuation procedures need attention to ensure that staff quickly know exactly which pupils are absent.
50. Pupils' personal development is very well catered for and staff are very supportive of pupils. The programme of personal, social and health education and citizenship is very effective in contributing to the maturity of pupils, as are circle times. These enable pupils to discuss issues such as bullying, stereotyping and resolving conflicts. Pupils have a very mature attitude to such issues as a result.
51. The school has very effective measures for promoting good behaviour and has been successful in bringing about improvements over recent years. The behaviour of pupils is now excellent as a result. Both pupils and parents confirm this to be the case. Pastoral support programmes are in use for a small number of pupils and enable very focused monitoring and improvements to take place. Importantly, they also involve parents. The majority of staff use positive reinforcement of good behaviour extremely effectively. Pupils value the rewards they are given for good behaviour.
52. There are good systems in place to promote attendance through rewards for individuals and classes. The school deters absences in newsletters, but in spite of this a high proportion of parents take their children on holiday during term time. Pupils' attendance is recorded daily and there are systems in place to monitor absences. However, class teachers are not all recording reasons for absences in registers so monitoring is easier in some classes than others.
53. A range of support for pupils with special educational needs is in place and is available for pupils at Stages 2 and 3 of the Code of Practice as well as those with statements. This support usually takes the form of withdrawal to a table in the classroom or to a separate room, but is not always as effective as teaching within the classrooms. Support from outside agencies is available and funds have been devolved to school to maintain this service. Outreach teams visit regularly to support staff and a few identified pupils. Some agencies have a long waiting list, but keep the SENCO informed of the expected time scale.
54. The school has sound procedures for finding out what pupils can do. Standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of both key stages have shown an upward trend over the past three years. These facts indicate that the school monitors pupils' progress sufficiently well and that assessments have been used to improve pupils' performances in national tests. The upward trend in standards is also due, in part, to the increased focus teachers have placed on evaluating pupils' work and setting new targets to further improve pupils' performance.
55. The school uses compulsory and voluntary National Curriculum tests, as well as other recognised standardised tests, to obtain information about pupils' academic achievements. Some of the information collected from these tests is unnecessarily duplicated. The school has recognised this and is in the process of prioritising which

information is relevant in order to assess pupils' attainment. The results of these tests are used effectively to raise standards and set challenging targets for pupils to meet. The school has recently begun to implement a very good system for recording and tracking pupils' progress using a computer software programme. This enables teachers to have an overall view of individual pupils' performance as well as tracking the performance of a whole class or year group. It quickly and effectively identifies weaknesses, although it is too early yet to gauge the impact that this has on raising standards.

56. The school collects and retains samples of pupils' work in English, mathematics, science and information and communications technology and teachers assess what National Curriculum level the pupils have achieved. The written comments made by teachers about each piece of work vary in quality. The very best examples clearly identify what pupils can do to improve and indicate that teachers know their pupils very well. Portfolios are being collated which include pieces of work to which teachers have awarded a National Curriculum level through mutual agreement. The assessment co-ordinator has produced useful guidance for class teachers regarding attainment levels for writing. This ensures consistency amongst teachers in awarding a level when analysing pupils' work.
57. Teachers use the beginning and end of lessons effectively to find out, through the use of searching questions, what pupils have learned. Opportunities for assessment are not always clearly identified on planning documents, but teachers use the information gathered on pupils during lessons effectively to plan the next stages of learning. Detailed analyses of National Curriculum tests in Year 6 have recently been carried out. The school is beginning to use this information to identify areas requiring improvement and this is gradually being prioritised in planning documents. Individual targets for pupils are identified in their workbooks for English and mathematics. Currently, there is no formal review of these targets on a regular basis, although parents' evenings provide a good focus for discussing pupils' targets on a more general scale. Without regular reviews, it is not clear to pupils how they can work towards achieving their targets or how to judge whether they have achieved them.

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

58. Parents' and carers' views of the school are very positive. The school is becoming increasingly popular in the local community and its good reputation is growing. The vast majority of parents say that their children enjoy school and they are pleased with the progress that they are making. They were surprised at the initial '*special measures*' judgement on the school, but feel that many aspects have improved since then. Parents are positive about children's behaviour and they feel that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. They also feel the school works closely with them, listens to their views and is well managed and led. They believe teaching to be good. A few parents would like to be better informed about their children's progress, would like a different amount of homework to be set, and would like teachers to have higher expectations and provide a more interesting range of activities outside lessons.
59. The inspection team fully supports parents' and carers' positive views. With regard to the areas which parents would like to see improved, information to parents is judged to be very good. The school provides termly opportunities for parents to discuss their children's work and annual reports are very informative. They give a clear description of the subject taught as well as a judgement about how well each child is doing. Parents are invited to comment on reports and pupils complete a self-assessment. This is good practice. There are also good informal links between parents and staff who make themselves available at the beginning and end of the school day. Parents receive regular newsletters about general matters as well as what is taught in each class. Parents who disagreed with the amount of homework set did not indicate whether they felt it was too much or too little. Homework was judged to be supporting learning well. Teachers have high

expectations of what pupils can do and in the opinion of the inspection team, there is a very wide range of activities outside lessons.

60. The school has very effective links with parents. There is good dialogue between teachers and parents through reading and homework diaries and parents can contact the school via e-mail. Parents are encouraged to help in classes with swimming and educational visits and several regularly assist in this way. In a science lesson in Year 2, two parents provided good support for small groups discussing the effect of heating different materials. This contributed effectively to the progress which pupils made. Parents also support the school through the Friends Association. Money is raised for valuable improvements, such as outdoor play equipment and air conditioning for the computer suite. Social events are also organised, for example pupil discos, and pupils in Year 6 receive a leaving present each year. Several parents also assist with keeping the school vandal free through a local initiative called School Watch. This involves patrols organised in conjunction with the local police. Parents' and carers' involvement makes a positive impact on the work of the school.

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

61. The leadership and management of the school are good overall. The headteacher's leadership is very good and he provides clear educational direction for the work of the school. Standards have continued to improve since the last inspection and the key issues have been successfully addressed. The school has a clear sense of purpose and a commitment to improve that is shared by all who work in it. In their pre-inspection questionnaires, 92 per cent of parents quite rightly acknowledge that the school is well managed.
62. The staff and governors share the headteacher's view of the school's direction. He has aimed to achieve a happy secure school where pupils behave appropriately, where they respect teachers and other pupils and where there is a commitment to raising standards. The results of his work are evident in several ways. For instance, the pupils' attitudes to the school and its work are excellent, as are their behaviour, personal development and relationships.
63. The deputy headteacher supports the headteacher well. She has a very full job description and sets an outstanding personal example in her class teaching. The headteacher and governors are aware that she requires some time away from her classroom responsibilities if she is to use her experience and expertise to raise the quality of teaching and learning even further. A member of staff currently holds a third senior management post, that of assistant headteacher. The purpose and responsibilities of this post are equally as important to the success of the school's programme. Teamwork in the school is very strong, as is the commitment to improve the teaching and learning even further.
64. The management of special educational needs is unsatisfactory. The role of co-ordinator for special educational needs is not well established and teaching support is not well embedded into school routines. The curriculum is not enhanced by special needs support and there is little impact on pupils' progress, although individuals are adequately supported in '*skill and drill*' techniques, as well as specific programmes for developing pupils' phonic proficiency. The co-ordinator's time is not always efficiently planned. The vast majority of the time is spent with individual pupils, or pairs of pupils, often repeating exactly the same programme that has been previously practised with groups. Special needs team meetings are planned during lesson time, thereby depriving pupils of support, and there is no monitoring of how time is spent supporting pupils or how effective or ineffective it is.

65. There is a satisfactory programme for monitoring teaching and learning. Monitoring is carried out through a careful study of curriculum planning, work sampling and discussions with pupils. At the present time the headteacher carries out direct observation of lessons and subject co-ordinators have started to carry out this important part of their management role. The governing body is well informed and they give good support to the headteacher and staff and carry out their duties well. There have been many new appointments but they have formed a body of governors who are keen and enthusiastic. They have established an effective committee structure to oversee the work and life of the school. Meetings are well organised with agendas and minutes and governors make good use of their experience of management outside the world of education in personnel, finance, buildings and management decisions. They are playing an increasingly significant part in the management of the school, but are at an early stage of monitoring the standards of teaching and learning. They act well as a *'critical friend'* to the school.
66. The school has made good use of all available resources to achieve the improvement in the standards of work and the standard of education it provides. The head plans the budget initially according to the educational priorities identified in the school development plans and long-term priorities. The finance committee of the governing body is ably chaired and all governors receive regular, up-to-date financial information, which places them in a strong position to consider spending alternatives. Prudent financial management has produced a financial reserve from a deficit figure. This reserve has been identified to cover the school's future budget shortfalls due to the fall in pupil numbers and to improve the fabric of the building and further exciting building projects. The school receives financial grants under the standards funds for schools. These are used well for the purpose intended and staff appreciate the positive impact they have on their teaching and pupils' learning. The governing body is fully conversant with *'best value'* principles.
67. The school has an adequate number of teachers and a good number of support staff. The teachers have a good mix of experience. They are suitably qualified and benefit from regular training in the subjects that they lead. This keeps them informed of the latest developments. The headteacher is active in ensuring that the best available teachers are deployed to lead the subjects. The support assistant for information and communication technology is very competent and provides very good learning for pupils. Staffing for supporting pupils with special educational needs is generous, but not always effective. External support for pupils for whom English is an additional language is sound. However, support for pupils within the school is weak. Teachers are not adequately skilled in the area of second language acquisition and in appropriate curriculum learning. The school has sound appraisal and performance management procedures in place. A review of the role of deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher has been planned. The induction arrangements are good. The newly qualified teacher receives good mentoring, for example setting of termly targets and appropriate release time to benefit from the support within the school and from the facilities provided by the local authority. The role of co-ordinators in monitoring their own subjects through examining pupils work and teachers' planning is well established. Monitoring of teaching in their subjects has now begun.
68. The accommodation is good. It includes two halls, a dining hall and good-sized classrooms and large corridors, although there is limited class storage space. All areas are very attractively exhibited with pupils' current work and displays to promote pupils' literacy and numeracy. The computer suite is of medium size. It is well organised for half-classes, but for whole class teaching, it is overcrowded. Nevertheless, the facility that it provides makes a very positive impact on pupils' learning. The libraries are housed in attractive and easily accessible areas and provide good resources for learning.

69. The overall quality, range and accessibility of resources are good. The teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy are well provided for in the classrooms and centrally through the library. Resources for history, geography and design and technology are satisfactory. The number of computers is very good and allows for whole and half class teaching. The range of musical instruments and science equipment is good. Resources for art are unsatisfactory. Resources for physical education and religious education are good. The range and quality of resources for the Foundation Stage are very good and support exciting teaching and learning. The day-to-day financial control and administration are good and have been maintained since the previous inspection. The office staff are able and efficient.
70. Taking into consideration:
- the children's low attainment when they start school and the progress they make;
  - the pupils' excellent attitudes and behaviour;
  - the very good quality of teaching that the school provides;
  - the attainment of children and pupils at the ages of 5, 7 and 11 years;
  - the consistently improving trend in results in national tests at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2;
  - the breadth and balance of the curriculum;
  - the good links with parents;
  - the very good quality of leadership;
- the school provides good value for money.

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

71. Taking into account the school's many strengths, in order to build on its hard work and improve the quality of education still further, the governors, headteacher and staff should:
- (1) review the management of, and provision for, special educational needs and pupils with English as an additional language in school, to ensure that: (paragraphs 17-19, 34-35, 43, 53, 64, 75, 95, 113 of the main report)**
- a. a review of the school's provision for supporting pupils with special educational needs is completed quickly and made known to all staff;
  - b. clear guidelines for the management of special educational needs are established, indicating specific responsibility for aspects of special educational needs, such as individual education plans, support in withdrawal groups and within classrooms, regular liaison with class teachers, both individually and at team meetings, to ensure their involvement in identifying pupils and reviewing their progress;
  - c. clear expectations of time management are established;
  - d. learning support staff are deployed in classes to have the maximum impact on pupils' learning;
  - e. pupils' individual education plans are carefully targeted, the school has the means to measure any progress that is made and they are monitored regularly;
- the provision for and progress of pupils with English as an additional language is carefully monitored;

**(2)**



**(2) extend management and monitoring responsibilities by:  
(paragraphs 63, 65, 67, 75, 98, 122, 137 of the main report)**

- a. ensuring that the headteacher and senior management team continue to regularly monitor the quality of teaching throughout the school;
- b. providing regular opportunities for subject co-ordinators to extend their existing good work by training them to play a part in monitoring and raising standards throughout the school, including the quality of teaching and discussions with pupils;
- c. providing opportunities for teachers to share their very good practice by observing others in their own and other key stages;

**(3) review the way in which the school makes the best use of time during the school week by:  
(paragraph 39 of the main report)**

- a. carrying out a timetable audit as soon as possible, especially the use of non-teaching time in Key Stage 1;
- b. reviewing the arrangements and timing for daily collective worship;
- c. reviewing the use of silent and guided reading time outside the normal daily arrangements for teaching literacy.

**The following minor points for improvement should be considered as the basis for an action plan: (paragraph 40 of the main report)**

- a. review the current planning documents with a view to reducing their number in order to avoid duplication and to ensure clarity and simplicity;
- b. review the target setting process to ensure that targets are reviewed with the pupils on a regular basis.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	105
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	26

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	6	30	40	26	3	0	0
Percentage	6	29	38	24	3	0	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	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	28	374
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		50

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2	77

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	8

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	26
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	15

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	5.6
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	32	27	59

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	29	29	32
	Girls	25	25	27
	Total	54	54	59
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (88)	92 (91)	100 (97)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	29	32	32
	Girls	25	27	27
	Total	54	59	59
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (83)	100 (93)	100 (97)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	31	19	50

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	24	21	27
	Girls	15	14	17
	Total	39	35	44
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81 (81)	70 (56)	88 (88)
	National			

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	24	22	28
	Girls	16	14	18
	Total	40	36	46
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80 (81)	72 (56)	92 (92)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	6
White	357
Any other minority ethnic group	8

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	6	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR - Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	18
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	27
Average class size	27

#### **Education support staff: YR -Y6**

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	28
Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	
Number of pupils per FTE adult	9

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

\* This carry forward figure amounts to about 7 per cent of the school's budget for this year. The school has done particularly well in overcoming a deficit budget to accumulate a reserve, much of which it has earmarked for further internal and external improvements and redecoration.

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999 / 2000
----------------	-------------

	£
Total income	778,702
Total expenditure	750,598
Expenditure per pupil	1,629
Balance brought forward from previous year	45,452
Balance carried forward to next year	59,568*

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4

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 25.5%

Number of questionnaires sent out	400
Number of questionnaires returned	102

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	33	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	51	47	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	51	1	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	52	9	1	0
The teaching is good.	53	44	1	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	45	17	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	61	33	3	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	39	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	32	53	12	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	55	37	1	0	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	51	43	2	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	42	14	3	6

These columns do not always total 100 due to rounding and the fact that not all parents respond to every question.

## CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

### AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

72. The Foundation Stage, with its high quality provision, is a strength of the school. One nursery class and two reception classes make up the Foundation Stage. Children are admitted to the nursery in September or January following their third birthday on a part-time basis only. They leave the nursery and enter the reception classes in the September or January following their fourth birthday. After a staggered intake children attended the reception classes for the full day. At the time of the inspection there were 53 nursery and 24 reception children. Nearly all the children receive nursery education. The Foundation Stage is staffed by a qualified teacher and two nursery nurses in the nursery, and two teachers and one assistant in the reception classes. A teacher for special educational needs provides further teaching support on a regular basis. Most children attend local playgroups before they come into the school. Children and parents are well prepared before they enter Ashtree. Good induction procedures enable children to make a smooth transition into full-time education. Parents are well involved in the transition from home to school. There is a new parents' afternoon and children visit the nursery with their parents.
73. Attainment on entry is below average in the nursery. Children make good progress in their learning in the nursery. However, the assessments carried out shortly after they start in the reception class show that attainment is still below that expected for children of this age. Staff use this assessment to help them identify children who may require additional support. The baseline assessment information is carefully collated and contributes to the good ongoing assessment procedures carried out during year. The curriculum planned for children in the Foundation Stage is lively, imaginative and most appropriate and fully meets the latest national guidance for children aged three to five. These are known as '*the stepping stones*' towards the Early Learning Goals, which are the standards expected nationally for children at the end of their reception year.
74. By the end of the reception year most children are on course to achieve the Early Learning Goals in all areas of learning. Few will achieve beyond that level. A significant number will not reach the goals, particularly in communication, language and literacy and also in mathematics. Since the last inspection, standards have risen in the Foundation Stage.
75. Staff work well together on curriculum planning to ensure that children do not experience the same activities in the nursery and again in the reception year. The teacher for special educational needs plans her own activities after consulting the teachers. However, children with special educational needs are better supported when they follow the class activities, rather than individual work. The accommodation and resources are good. Outdoor provision in the nursery is very good, but the reception classes have no enclosed area of their own. Staff have not had the opportunity yet to monitor each other's teaching and learning strategies or to share each other's very good teaching practice.

### Personal, social and emotional development

76. Children's personal, social and emotional skills are well below those expected when they enter school. They make good progress and the majority are on course to attain the Early Learning Goals. Children enjoy coming to school and happily leave their parents and carers. They settle into nursery and school routines well because the teachers are very well organised and are well supported by nursery nurses and classroom assistants. Skills of co-operation are developing well, but some children are still learning to share with each other. The teachers create tasks that encourage children to develop responsibility for their classroom and to learn to care for things. They show excellent levels of responsibility when they clear up the toys and tidy up the book corner area by

placing books in the appropriate place. Children show responsibility in selecting their chosen activity and their concentration on these tasks is excellent. Rules are clearly established. Children know that they must listen to their teacher and each other, for instance in 'group time', where the rule is, 'Only speak when it is our turn'.

77. Teaching is very good. The teachers create a secure environment, where expected behaviour is clearly identified. A strength of teaching is the use of questions and the routine planning of opportunities for children to talk to others. This contributes well to growing levels of confidence and the development of their language. Children learn to respect and care for each other. Their ideas and work are valued and teachers give positive feedback. Celebrations, for instance Diwali, develop the children's awareness of cultural and religious differences.

### **Communication, Language and Literacy**

78. Children enter the reception classes with attainment that is below that expected for their age, particularly in conversational skills, the range and depth of their vocabulary and hand control for writing. The planned range of activities in the nursery and reception classes promotes children's language and literacy skills well. All children make good progress and by the time they are five many are on course to reach the expected levels, but very few will exceed them. All children listen well, focus on their teachers and other adults and follow instructions. Children in the nursery use only a limited range of vocabulary. When describing what they see in preparation for acting out 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' they shout out 'Beds!' and 'Bowls!' The staff encourage them to look carefully and think what size they are and how many there are of each. Nursery children are taught in small groups to encourage and develop language. Children in the reception classes listen well in small groups and as a whole class. They enjoy singing songs and rhymes as a group activity. They readily talk about their experiences and demonstrate increasing vocabulary. For example, in a lesson on healthy foods one pupil says, 'Milk is good for us, because it makes our bones strong'.

### **Mathematical development**

79. Children's knowledge of mathematics on entry to the reception classes is well below that expected for their age, particularly their lack of mathematical vocabulary. Children are supported well in learning mathematics with a wide variety of resources and experiences and no opportunity is lost to reinforce number work in a variety of ways. Children consolidate their learning well, because the practical activities give them good opportunities, for example comparing sizes in the nursery when learning about Goldilocks and the Three Bears. Children in the reception classes count socks on a washing line and peg on 'one more' and put the right number of candles on a cuddly toy's birthday cake. Children make good progress in counting skills, number recognition and mathematics language. Most are able to count well beyond five. Children in the reception classes know the names of common shapes, for example 'triangle', 'square', 'circle' and 'rectangle'. They learn to recognise coins, measure in centimetres and know about weight and time. When supported by an adult they play simple number games appropriately. They learn to add and subtract mentally and to try to explain how they arrived at the answer. Computers are used effectively in the nursery and reception classes to support number recognition. Most children are on course to achieve the Early Learning Goals.

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

80. Children's attainment in this area of learning on entry to nursery is low. Their general knowledge of the world is poor. Teachers provide many very good opportunities for the development of children's knowledge and understanding of the world. For example, they use early morning and afternoon break times well as opportunities to talk about families, homes, and past and present activities in their lives. Children know about features of their environment and talk about the shops and trees. Few of the children in the nursery

know the name of the road they live in, but those in the reception classes can name some of the roads they walked on when they explored the community looking for autumn signs. Staff make good use of the school environment and of visits and visitors to enhance the children's knowledge and understanding. For example, the children in the reception classes learn to recognise the changes in the environment over time and they are aware of the patterns of nature when looking at objects found on their autumn walk. Children are appropriately encouraged to learn through rich practical experience and by direct use of their senses. The good opportunities for scientific investigations enable children to find out about floating and sinking in the reception year. They make boats and try to float them, and learn how to grow sunflower seeds successfully. Children have very good experience of using technology. In the nursery they freely use the computer and demonstrate how to use a mouse to join a number of objects together. In both year groups, teachers consistently provide opportunities for children to understand their world through well-planned creative activities that stimulate their senses. Children made good progress and most are on course to attain the expected standards by the end of the year.

### **Creative development**

81. Children's attainment on entry to the nursery is similar to that expected nationally, except in hand control, which is below average. The teachers provide a range of interesting resources that are well directed to extending the children's creative development. All children have good opportunities to develop their use of colour through painting, collage and modelling, for example their marble rolling pictures in the nursery and magnificent flowers in the style of Georgia O'Keefe. Children in the reception classes look carefully at colour mixing and blending and produce paintings like those of Monet and Andy Warhol. They explore a wide range of materials, for example sand, paint, crayons materials and glue, when they colour and stick. Children use their imaginations and colour their pictures boldly. There are many opportunities for children to experience role-play and they do so imaginatively, after reflecting the stories they have heard or recalling their own experiences. At the *'Ashtree Surgery'* the nurses put on rubber gloves before administering an injection. The role play clothes and resources are bright, clean and well thought out by all staff. Children explore sound, listening to the teacher singing or taped music and join in appropriately. Children love singing and join in the actions. They learn how to hold and play musical instruments such as the triangle and woodblock. The children in the reception classes follow the conductor's instructions, stopping and starting at a given signal. In a good, wide range of creative activities children show evident enjoyment and develop skills in their responses to what they see, hear, touch and feel. Nearly all children are on target to attain the expected levels by the time they finish the reception year.

### **Physical development**

82. Most children are well developed physically and most on entry to the reception year have reached the expected levels. The children in the nursery have immediate access to the play area, which is well fenced off and imaginatively set out to encourage exploration and physical challenge. The children in the reception classes do not have this facility, but they take part in the school physical education programme. Both nursery and reception classes use the spacious Key Stage 1 hall for physical challenge. Children's ability to control their limbs and movements is well developed and teachers provide good experiences for them to explore the body's potential, such as climbing, jumping and running. By the time they are five most children can hop, jump and climb, whilst skipping proves a harder challenge. They enjoy moving to music especially music with a strong rhythm such as Brazilian tunes. They are not fully aware of space and sometimes bump into each other. Children achieve reasonable control of small equipment and carefully use scissors, pencils, crayons and paintbrushes effectively; most do so with confidence. Hand, eye co-ordination is developing through matching and positioning shapes, decorating and sticking; but children's hand control for writing and for intricate creative activities is less well developed.



## Teaching

83. The teaching of the children in the Foundation Stage is never less than very good. All staff work very well as an effective, efficient teaching team. They have very good knowledge of how young children can be motivated and extend their learning. The Foundation Stage team is enthusiastic, fun promoting and vibrant and they help the children to make good progress. The relationships between staff and children are excellent. Staff provide very good role models and have appropriate expectations of children's work and behaviour. Activities are exceptionally well planned and are well matched to the needs of all children. The teachers' plans have clear learning intentions and build well on what children can do and already know. Teachers sometimes over-plan, creating an unnecessary workload. All staff have a clear understanding of how children learn and what will interest them. Staff expectations are excellent, as are their teaching methods to develop these young children. The teaching positively promotes the Early Learning Goals and provides a very good foundation for the National Curriculum.

## ENGLISH

84. The good standards in reading and writing at Key Stage 1, and the school's steady improvement in English test results for 11-year-old pupils, are due to the following factors: consistently good teaching, (just under 75 per cent of English lessons were judged to be good and just over a third were very good during the inspection); the thorough implementation of the literacy strategy; careful monitoring of pupils' work to ensure that they make good progress; and target setting that maintains a steady challenge for pupils to improve. The previous inspection report in 1999 noted that standards were above average in both key stages, but showed variation between year groups. At Key Stage 2, the school has focused carefully and successfully on increasing the number of pupils attaining Level 5. It has risen from 21 per cent in 1999 to 36 per cent in 2001.
85. At both key stages, pupils' listening skills are outstanding. They listen carefully to their teachers and to adults in class lessons and assemblies. They also listen attentively to their peers in class. Their ability to concentrate means that in lesson introductions they concentrate very well on what their teachers say to them and know what they have to do when work starts. During the inspection, no pupils were heard asking their teachers to repeat what they had to do.
86. Pupils' speaking skills are developing well and have improved considerably since the last inspection, when older pupils were judged to require additional opportunities to develop their confidence in explaining their ideas. The school has worked very hard and successfully to extend speaking opportunities, despite often limited opportunities for pupils to develop their conversational skills outside school. During the inspection in a range of lessons at Key Stage 2, planned opportunities to develop pupils' speaking skills were observed. For example, in an excellent religious education lesson the class teacher chose lower attaining pupils in small groups to select a spokesperson who *'fed back'* the results of discussions about sensitive issues. In a very good information and communication technology (ICT) lesson the teacher made careful links between ICT and literacy, with pupils using a range of vocabulary which they recorded on the word-processor. In a very good physical education lesson the teacher encouraged the development of speaking skills through detailed evaluations by pupils of others' games skills. Although their language could hardly be described as *'sophisticated'*, there are clear indications that the school works hard to promote pupils' use of extended vocabulary.
87. The improvement in pupils' speaking skills is especially significant considering their very limited range of language when they enter school and that the school's previous reports noted that older pupils lacked confidence in explaining their ideas at length. Pupils speak

openly about themselves and their interests in social settings, for example in the dining room or on the playground. They are very warm towards visitors and are keen to engage in conversation. Teachers are very good at using lesson introductions to draw pupils into discussions and debate, including those who are usually more reticent.

88. Reading standards are good at both key stages. At Key Stage 1, reading is taught well, including a thorough approach to phonics. Average and above average attainers read well and enthusiastically. They enjoy a range of reading material, for example diaries, stories, poetry and non-fiction books, and some are members of the local library. They recognise many words by sight, but for those that are unfamiliar they have a range of good strategies such as using pictures for clues and recognising initial letter sounds of words. The less fluent readers also try to *'build'* words using their knowledge of letter sounds, but have a less secure knowledge of blending letters together. They look carefully at the pictures in their reading books to see whether they can get any clues about how the story is developing. Higher attaining readers are already developing preferences for certain authors and types of books. They are able to find reference books in a library and locate information using the contents and index pages. In some Key Stage 1 classes, pupils have short periods of time, usually at the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions, when they can select and *'read'* class books which they have to replace when lessons start. This practice does not encourage pupils to be selective about these books and does not send out the right messages about reading in a relaxed and enjoyable environment.
89. At Key Stage 2 the school has been successful in maintaining pupils' progress in reading. They read for a variety of purposes in a range of different settings. For example, teachers might ask them to read a passage from a book during the literacy hour. They might be required to read information books linked to their history or geography topics. Many pupils enjoy reading at school. They generally read fluently with good understanding and correct any mistakes they make without being prompted. Average and above average readers appreciate the humour of stories and have well-developed preferences for authors, giving comprehensive reasons why they enjoy their books. The school provides opportunities for them to choose non-fiction books from the library on a weekly basis and they are developing clear preferences for different types of content. They have good library skills and are well aware how to use advanced techniques, such as skimming and scanning, to obtain information from non-fiction books.
90. The improvements in pupils' writing noted in the interim report have been maintained. A scrutiny of work reveals a good range and quality of ideas and expression. Pupils' writing shows a clear development in style, vocabulary and maturity. The school has worked hard to address criticisms about handwriting, presentation and spelling at Key Stage 2. Pupils' work shows good development in the use of punctuation, and spelling becomes more accurate. Pupils develop good sentence writing and learn how to write in a variety of styles and for a variety of purposes. They have many good opportunities to write in many other subjects, for example writing up experiments in science or writing about exciting past times in history.
91. The progression in style, fluency and vocabulary is evident in pupils' writing as they move through the school. For example, in a reception class, a child wrote, *'A Doctr Mends your heart'*. Nine weeks into the new term a pupil in Year 1 has written a little more adventurously, *'I like being cuind(kind) to pieol(people). I went to the shops and bought my boots'*. By the end of Year 1 last year, pupils were able to write extended stories and descriptions that contained humour and detail. *'My house is a mess. I have to sher a room with my sister whyl my dad is knocking out a cuboard. My room is lilook (lilac). I have got a dressing table in my bedroom. My house is a terraced house. My garden is a mess to. In the garden there is a littl paf and nuthing lives in the pond. My mum and dad's room is allways tidy'*. By Year 2, pupils have developed a more sophisticated idea

of how to use short sentences to increase the descriptive impact of their writing. *'The hour is late. The moon is shining and the stars are twinkling. The owl is gliding and the cat is purring on the wall. The bright light in the house is reflecting'*.

92. By the time they get towards the end of Key Stage 2 their writing develops well. They use their wider vocabulary and ideas they have read in books well to create suspense and excitement. *'They plunged on. Sometimes the four boys were engulfed in stinking, yellow mountain mist, but Bill let nothing stand in the way of getting out of the fire. Suddenly they stopped. They heard a sound like a 'coo-ee'! The long drawn-out syllable bounced back to them'*. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils are using writing for an extensive range of purposes. For example, they capture the excitement of their visit to the 'Crucial Crew Scheme' in Stevenage. *'Thank you for arranging our visit. We really enjoyed learning with you. Everyone thought it was exciting, crawling through smoke and phoning the emergency services, though it wouldn't be fun in real life'*. They also feel confident enough to express sensitive thoughts and ideas on paper, as one pupil did in her personal, social and health education notebook, which forms part of a regular link with the teacher. *'I am finding it hard to work where I am sitting and I think I could work harder if I moved. The person on my right is always telling me the answers to my maths, even though I don't record them. I do not think I am reaching my full potential. I hope you understand'*. To which the teacher responded, also in writing, *'Yup. Let's chat'*.
93. Pupils respond very well in English lessons, whether in class lessons or small group work. Their behaviour is usually very good and they are keen to learn and to make progress. This means that they get on with their work quickly, there is hardly any *'messaging about'* and they manage to achieve a great deal. The very good relationships with their teachers and amongst themselves means that they work well together without arguing and can be relied upon to work well during literacy sessions, especially when there is no direct adult supervision. Pupils are proud of the work they have done and are very keen to read to adults.
94. Teaching is very good overall. Teachers plan effectively and take careful note of what pupils have learned in previous lessons. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the literacy hour and the good quality of teaching has a positive impact on pupils' learning. On one or two occasions when teaching was less successful, the organisation of pupils and resources was not effective. The most notable aspects of very good and excellent teaching are lesson pace and the effectiveness of teachers' questioning in involving everyone in the lesson. Pupils have no time to lose interest! Teachers in those lessons have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve, they use resources, such as computers and small whiteboards, very well and they deploy teaching assistants very effectively. The weakest part of lessons is the plenary session, which is often rushed and does not give sufficient time for the teacher and pupils to reflect about what has been learned. Teachers' marking is frequently very detailed and well-matched to the type of writing the pupils undertake. Target setting by the teachers, to focus pupils on a particular aspect of English they wish to improve, is becoming increasingly effective. However, there is no formal, regular occasion for the pupils to be involved in reviewing and evaluating the success of the targets.
95. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress overall, although the effectiveness of the support they receive varies according to how it is planned. Work in the classroom is usually well planned for all abilities. It includes different amounts of work and revision for some lower attaining pupils to try to help them retain what they have learned. It also includes small group work within the classroom, supported by teaching assistants, that is linked well to the activities that the other pupils are doing. Work in small groups outside the classroom reinforces the pupils' knowledge of phonics, but it does not support the work they are doing in class. Separating them from the *'normal'*

activities that other pupils are doing tends to promote a fragmented approach to their learning.

96. There are two libraries, one for Key Stage 1 and the other for Key Stage 2. Both are of good size and are situated in appropriate areas of the school, which allow easy access for pupils. An enthusiastic co-ordinator ensures that the library areas are inviting places that encourage pupils to spend time researching and reading. She has written a good action plan, to ensure that the quality and quantity of stock and the standard of accommodation improve.
97. The library areas are well used by classes and individuals, who understand the Dewey Index and alphabetical order. Information and communication technology is not used in the library area, as independent work and research take place in classrooms. Nevertheless, pupils have good opportunities to work independently and also have the skills to do so. Every class has a timetabled session where aspects of library skills are tackled and pupils select non-fiction books to take home. The libraries also provide positive environments in which pupils can choose books or browse through the library stock.
98. The subject co-ordinator brings great enthusiasm to the post and has clear ideas about how to continue the improvements in pupils' standards in English at the end of both key stages. Pupils' work and teachers' planning are regularly monitored.

## **MATHEMATICS**

99. Pupils in Key Stage 1 make good progress and by the end of Year 2 achieve the same standards of work that are expected of seven-year-old pupils nationally. A significant minority of pupils achieves standards that are above average. Pupils in Key Stage 2 continue to make good progress and by the end of Year 6 achieve the expected standards. Since 1998, results in the national end of Key Stage tests have continued to rise and the school has continued to improve the quality of its mathematics teaching. It is too early in the school year to make a prediction regarding the outcome of national tests for the current year. However, evidence from a scrutiny of work from this year and last year indicates that the school is working well towards achieving its targets. The improvement in standards and the good progress that pupils make are due largely to:
  - a more focused curriculum, indicated in teachers' planning documents, covering a wide range of mathematical concepts;
  - clearly structured lessons which include a balance of mental and oral work, teacher explanation and independent tasks for pupils;
  - good teaching which enables all pupils to participate and learn.
100. Pupils in Year 1 learn to use the basic skills of addition and subtraction, and many are secure in carrying out simple calculations mentally. They count confidently in ones and twos to a given two-digit number and higher attaining pupils also count back from a different two-digit number. On occasions, teachers encourage pupils to explain how they reached their answer to a mental calculation. This is effective in enabling pupils to clarify their thinking and benefits all pupils, some of whom may not have been quite as successful. For example, when solving a *'real-life'* problem involving the subtraction of four from seven, one pupil said, *'I started at four and counted on to seven.'* Pupils are beginning to make decisions about their number work as a particularly good example in Year 1 shows. Pupils were playing the game of *'Snakes and Ladders'* but were using two dice. They were only allowed to move the number of places shown on one of the dice. Their task challenged them to decide which number would get them the furthest without falling down the snake. About half of these average-attaining pupils could give reasonable explanations for their choice and developed their ability to solve problems in the process.

101. Pupils in Year 2 have a good understanding of place value and many can count accurately in twos and fives. They have a sound recall of multiplication facts in the two, five and ten times tables, and derive doubles and halves of numbers to 20. Pupils have a good understanding of odd and even numbers and sort numbers to 20 into groups according to these features. Higher attaining pupils carry out this task competently using three-digit numbers as they can explain how to recognise an odd and even number. One pupil said, *'It's even if it ends in two, four, six or eight.'* A lower attaining pupil explains that, *'Four is even because you can share it'*. Pupils have a good understanding of sorting objects according to their features. Two pupils were devising their own criteria for sorting two-dimensional shapes and successfully used *'Shapes that are circles and shapes that have corners.'*
102. Teachers use good questions at the end of lessons to find out what pupils have learnt. During the lesson on sorting using a Venn diagram, one pupil explained that using this method of sorting means, *'You put some things in the circle and some things out of the circle.'* Pupils talk confidently about a wide range of work that they have studied including measuring, data handling and time. Their knowledge and understanding of two-dimensional shapes are particularly good and many pupils can name shapes with up to eight sides. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress whilst in Year 1 and Year 2. Work is accurately matched to their abilities and they are supported well by learning support assistants.
103. By the end of Year 6, pupils' mathematical and numerical competencies are sound. They acquire a good understanding of the basic operational skills of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division and use correct mathematical vocabulary to help with their problem solving. Pupils in Year 6 use their knowledge of multiplication and division to calculate ratios. High quality direct teaching, focusing on pupils' prior weaknesses, enables them to make good progress. For example, a few pupils were experiencing difficulty in calculating the ratio of a set amount of money given the total amount. The teacher skilfully questioned them about ways of tackling the problem until many were able to work on these problems on their own. When asked to find the ratio of one to three of a total of £36 one lower attaining pupil's response was, *'Four nines are 36, three quarters of 36 is 27, so the ratio is £9 to £27.'*
104. Pupils in Year 5 use vocabulary relating to *'chance'* in an effective way. Clear and enthusiastic teaching captures pupils' attention, enabling them to process information and to organise a wide selection of words such as *'impossible'*, *'probable'* and *'likely'* in order of their probability. They devise sentences which show their understanding of these words. For example, *'Impossible - today I met Queen Victoria'* and *'Unlikely - I am going to town today'*. In data handling nearly all the pupils in one class could accurately identify and calculate the *'range'* and *'mode'* of a set of data because the teacher had explained and demonstrated the concept so clearly.
105. A strong feature of the daily mathematics lesson is the oral and mental work that is carried out at the start of the lesson. In the best examples, pupils are encouraged to think quickly to calculate answers. For example, pupils in Year 3 quickly derive number bonds to 20 whilst in Year 6 strategies for doubling decimal numbers are well established. Teachers use resources very well to enable all pupils to be fully active in this part of the lesson. In Year 1, pupils use number fans of single digits to display their answers; whilst in Year 4, pupils use digit boards to show how they round three-digit numbers to the nearest hundred. They display their answers clearly which also helps the teacher to pinpoint any pupils who are experiencing difficulty. As a result of this, in many lessons, teachers then target particular pupils to answer in order to reinforce their learning. In Year 5, pupils quickly turn to their partner to explain what strategy they would use to solve a numerical problem. This strategy enables all pupils to participate fully in the lesson. In

a small number of lessons the pace of this oral session is too slow. This means that pupils are not as well motivated and are not as enthusiastic to answer. In the lessons where progress is greater, pupils do not know who the teacher is going to pick next to answer. In two lessons, pupils were on the edge of their seats in anticipation and eagerness to contribute. Many teachers are skilful at targeting particular pupils to answer questions that are within their ability.

106. Pupils respond very well to their mathematics lessons and work hard to achieve their best. They are greatly encouraged by their teachers and listen very well to what they are teaching them. In a very small number of lessons, teachers allow pupils to call out and this interrupts the flow of the lesson and learning is slower. The majority of teachers manage pupils extremely well and this results in lessons that are enjoyable and informative and all pupils are valued. They give pupils time to think about their responses and, if they are incorrect, help them to develop strategies for increasing their accuracy. Teachers praise pupils for their efforts and this has a very positive effect on their confidence to answer.
107. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is very good in a quarter of lessons. Teachers plan activities that are interesting and relevant and cater for the needs of all pupils. There are a few occasions where higher attaining pupils are not challenged enough. In a small number of lessons they are given the same work as the average attaining pupils in addition to their own task. Quite often this is unnecessary when the concept has been taught sufficiently during the main teaching part of the lesson. It also means that pupils who work at a slightly slower pace do not have enough time to complete the task that is intended for them. A good feature of the high quality teaching is the way in which teachers use searching questions at the beginning and end of lessons to find out what pupils have learned. *'Tell me how you got that answer'* or *'what would happen if we did it this way?'* are examples of questions that teachers use to help pupils clarify their thinking.
108. The successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy is monitored well by the subject co-ordinator, who provides effective leadership and sets a very good personal example of high quality mathematics teaching. Good records are kept to track pupils' progress and a useful analysis of National Curriculum tests enables teachers to identify areas for development. Targets are set for individual pupils to work towards, but at the moment there is no consistent approach across the school for reviewing them.

## SCIENCE

109. Eleven and seven-year-old pupils attain expected standards in comparison with all schools nationally and with those in similar schools. This represents a decline in standards since the last inspection. Nevertheless, the trend of overall improvement in the school's results has been maintained since 1997. The attainment of boys and girls is similar. Overall, good teaching and learning leads to good achievement.
110. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have sound knowledge, understanding and skills in all areas of the subject. They observe and record their observations in a table, for example the number of different minibeasts, and draw appropriate bar charts. Pupils have a clear understanding of *'push and pull forces'*, for example, when opening a door. They observe that some materials such as water and ice can be interchanged. Higher attaining pupils know how dolphins and cacti are adapted for their respective habitats. Pupils' understanding of fair testing is very good. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.
111. The sound scientific skills, knowledge and understanding of pupils in Years 3 and 4 are evident in their recorded work. They know that materials such as chocolate, butter and ice melt on heating and harden on cooling. They devise a circuit with a switch and name

some organs of the digestive system. Pupils carry out investigations, for example comparing the effect of air resistance on falling objects. However, their understanding of the phenomenon is not secure. They describe that a ball of paper drops faster than a flat paper of a similar mass, *'because there is no air resistance'*.

112. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have a good understanding of the different ways that seeds disperse and of how day, night and seasons are caused. Their understanding of electrical insulators and conductors is satisfactory. Discussions in classes show that the pupils have a good understanding of fair testing. However, their writing does not reflect clear understanding. They also do not practise fair testing when carrying out investigations. For example, pupils write that, *'What I am going to change is: add more vinegar and more bicarbonate of soda'*. Higher attaining pupils have greater knowledge and understanding, for example, of how seeds are adapted for dispersal and of the solar system. They explain that the larger the amount of water in a bottle, the smaller the air column and higher the pitch. Average attaining pupils are unsure of the relationships between pitch, note and the level of sound and how these are affected by the length, thickness and tension of the string and by the length of the bar of a chime. Pupils' use of language to explain scientific ideas and processes is weak.
113. Pupils throughout the school display very good attitudes and behaviour in science lessons. Working individually or in groups is purposeful. There is mutual respect between the pupils and between the pupils and the teachers. The school's ethos for learning helps all pupils to learn rapidly and productively. Occasionally, pupils who are learning English as an additional language do not make as much progress as they should. The language barrier is too strong and teachers do not have sufficient understanding of how pupils acquire language and how their learning of science can be supported.
114. The quality of teaching is good overall and contributes to pupils' good progress and achievement. Teachers foster good relationships and treat pupils with respect and sensitivity. The pupils reciprocate by creating a good environment for teaching and learning. Lesson planning is good with clear objectives for learning. Teachers invariably make sure that pupils understand these. Questioning is used effectively and teachers include all pupils in discussions. They give clear explanations and set high expectations which encourage all pupils to learn well. Linking fresh learning with what has gone on in the past helps pupils to develop a clear picture of how new ideas fit together to make learning science exciting.
115. The lessons often finish by revising new learning. Pupils are asked to reflect on what the learning objectives are for the lesson. In the excellent and very good lessons the teachers' expositions and demonstrations totally grip the attention of all pupils. There are occasional weaknesses as well. Teachers expect pupils to investigate too many possible alternative answers to a problem. Sometimes there are too many pupils in groups to work effectively as a team. This causes frustration, especially amongst younger pupils. The overall quality of marking is satisfactory. In some classes, good guidance is given for improvement. In some classes, most of the marking is in the form of ticks. Such marking does not deal with pupils' scientific misconceptions.
116. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator monitors pupils' work and the curriculum planning. Monitoring of teaching is planned for the latter part of the year. The science curriculum, including opportunities for scientific investigation, is good. Appropriate targets are set for the subject. There is a good focus on developing vocabulary, but pupils' recording is not always good enough. Pupils' use of the Internet is good; for example, they research information on the solar system. The forthcoming purchase and use of sensors is intended to provide opportunities to develop pupils' skills knowledge and understanding of scientific phenomenon.

## ART AND DESIGN

117. Pupils' standards are those expected nationally for 7 and 11 year old pupils. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school and reach the standards that they should. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.
118. There is a wide range of attractively displayed art work on classroom walls, in the halls and in corridors that shows how pupils have used a wide range of media, such as paints, pastels and clay. The range of displays also reveals very good links between art and other subjects; for example written stories illustrate paintings linked to pupils' geography work. Still-life drawings by pupils in Year 5 of musical instruments illustrate their work on sound, and very neat mathematical designs help to make attractive pictures of three dimensional paper pillows in Year 6. There are very good links to literacy and numeracy. Pupils in Year 3 use their writing skills to record how they felt about certain artists and pictures. One wrote, '*I like Matisse's 'The Snail' because it is not normal*' and pupils in Year 2 measure a metre length of string and create designs of trees, hearts, flowers and abstract patterns showing their lively imaginations.
119. Art is also used very well to develop pupils' understanding of their own culture and that of others. Pupils in Year 3 successfully make beautiful Adinkra printed patterns using four African symbols of love, strength, rhythm and patience. Art forms an important part of the school's work. It is used well to help make the school a lively, attractive place in which to work. The care with which it is displayed reflects the importance that teachers place on celebrating pupils' creative ability.
120. Pupils in Year 2 develop sound observational drawing skills. Their still life representations of autumn trees are very detailed and show that they have concentrated hard. Many of their self-portrait sketches bear a really strong resemblance to their models, even down to the smallest details such as crooked teeth and freckles! Pupils in Year 5 make bold, clear and detailed drawings of faces and the same attention to facial detail is as evident here as it is in Year 2. Last year's pupils in Year 6 showed how well they had looked at a bowl of different fruits. They created delicious pastel pictures which they translated into a cross stitch design and finally added a frame to their finished work. A high standard was successfully achieved. There is good evidence of three-dimensional artwork around the school. For instance, in Years 1 and 2 pupils use paper curling, twisting, folding and bending and work with clay. They use rice and pasta to make colourful pictures. This work is continued in Key Stage 2.
121. Only one lesson was observed in Key Stage 1. Additional evidence was obtained from a scrutiny of pupils' work and of the teachers' plans. Teaching throughout the school is satisfactory overall, with some good teaching observed in Key Stage 2. The features that made these lessons good were the good demonstrations of work to be done, the clear explanation of the skills that pupils will develop, and the use of teachers' questions to promote discussion. The teachers were well prepared and pupils knew the class routines so no time was lost. The pupils enjoyed the teacher's clear explanations and wanted to experiment for themselves. However, in all lessons pupils were given paper of same size and colour, allowing no independence or choice. Pupils also had to share a palette of paint, sometimes between six of them. Pupils were very well behaved and thoroughly enjoy their creative work. They concentrated very hard and generally were extremely pleased with their results. They were keen to show what they had done and were genuinely impressed by other pupils' work. In Year 1, pupils talked enthusiastically about their pictures based on Paul Klee's work *Senecio*, preferring their own versions to the original!
122. Classrooms have good areas for artwork, but resources are not plentiful and all pupils



had to share equipment. The policy and scheme of work are out of date and there have been only limited opportunities for the co-ordinator to monitor learning, so no teaching has been observed. The co-ordinator is beginning to develop a portfolio of work, although currently only a few examples of the standard of artwork pupils should be striving for in their artwork are represented. There are, as yet, only limited assessment opportunities built into the planning and delivery of art and design.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

123. Pupils' attainment reflects expected standards at both key stages. This level of attainment also indicates that the school has maintained expected standards since the last inspection. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The curriculum is satisfactory and is improving as a result of the introduction of national schemes of work. These factors ensure satisfactory progress and achievement. Inclusion, overall, is good. This ensures that all boys and girls, irrespective of their background make comparable progress.
124. Work in Key Stage 1 shows satisfactory progress and achievement. Pupils design and make a range of products such as shadow puppets, fruit salad and assemble lanterns using electrical circuits. Pupils use a range of tools and materials safely. There is little evidence, however, of pupils evaluating the things that they make. In the only lesson observed in this key stage, the pupils made fruit salad. They had planned the recipe previously and showed good awareness of the importance of personal hygiene. The pupils displayed very good attitudes and behaviour.
125. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 design and make picture frames, mazes, puppets, Tudor houses and torches using a range of materials and tools. They make best progress in Year 4. For example, they disassemble torches to study their mechanism and research and investigate circuits. The standard of work seen was above average and all the products made by pupils worked.
126. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 design and make Origami books, a simple cam rotating a figure, pizza, a four-wheeled buggy and a wind powered boat. The quality of products shows sound progress, achievement and attainment. Observation of pupils in Year 6 shows that they are developing good skills at measuring accurately and sound skills at sawing. The pupils showed good interest in making their product, which they had designed themselves.
127. The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed is very good. The lessons observed were well planned with clear learning objectives which the teachers shared with pupils. They were asked to reflect how well they made progress in achieving these. There was good emphasis on accuracy in making measurements and using tools safely. Explanations were invariably clear. The use of questioning was very effective in informing pupils and extending and sharing knowledge and skills. The management of pupils and the quality of mutual relationships were very good.
128. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator is aware of the current weaknesses in the curriculum and has introduced the national model scheme of work with

a view to introduce  
this scheme  
permanently from  
September 2002.

## GEOGRAPHY

- 129 Standards in geography are as expected for pupils at the end of both key stages. Key Stage 1 pupils know about many of the main features of the local area and recognise attractive and unattractive features of the immediate environment. Pupils in Year 1 are challenged to make their own decisions in placing photographs of features in order, from nearest to furthest, in the school. The higher attaining pupils give good explanations for their choices. Pupils in Year 2 contrast the human and physical features of the imaginary island of Struay and Stevenage. However, questioning in these lessons was not sufficiently probing and opportunities to deepen pupils' knowledge were missed.
130. At Key Stage 2, pupils are well informed about their local area and have a good understanding of geographical themes. They use their knowledge well to identify common features and processes, for example in their work on rivers and settlements. Teachers' good subject knowledge and creative thinking give pupils good opportunities to develop their skills of geographical enquiry. For example, following a practical session using sand and water pupils in Year 6 were able to see clearly how a delta is formed and are able to record this in their books. They describe and use diagrams well to explain this process and use technical vocabulary correctly, such 'erosion' and 'meander'.
131. Pupils' attitudes to geography are very good. They enjoy the lessons and respond positively and enthusiastically. They are keen to learn. They enjoy finding out about their own and other areas and work well individually and in groups.
132. Teaching is good overall. Teachers' planning is well organised and consistent between classes. This provides good opportunities for pupils to build skills in a systematic way. The impact of good subject knowledge and expectations for high quality work is clearly seen in pupils' books in Year 6.

## HISTORY

133. Only lessons in Year 3 and Year 5 were timetabled during the inspection. Judgements are based, additionally, on a scrutiny of pupils' work for the previous academic year, planning documents and discussions with pupils. Standards of attainment in history at the end of both key stages are as expected nationally. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, made sound progress. Pupils study local history and learn about the past from a range of resources. They have plenty of opportunities to develop a sense of chronology and learn about key events in selected periods of history. A strength of the subject, particularly in Key Stage 2, is the good use of pupils' literacy skills in writing stories, diaries and reports of historical events.
134. At Key Stage 1, pupils study the life and times of Samuel Pepys. They learn about the importance of his diary when studying the Great Fire of London. They use reference books well to locate secondary sources of evidence and record information in stories and pictures. For example they write, *'The fire spread because the houses were close together and they were made of wood. Samuel Pepys was an eye witness'*. They can sequence events using terms specifically related to the passage of time and they are beginning to understand that there is a difference between fact and opinion.
135. Pupils in Year 6 study the changes in Stevenage from old and new photographs. They write enthusiastically about the way the town used to be and select historical information well to help them complete their accounts. They also study the Ancient Greeks, completing research into the Olympic games, mythological creatures and *'ancient groovy Greek, funky food'*. They use information and communication technology well to help them thoroughly research and appreciate that the past is told in different ways according to the author's viewpoint and so are beginning to understand that accounts may be

biased. History comes to life for pupils in Year 5 when the teacher, in role as a Roman soldier, visits the school to be interviewed by them. They ask searching, mature questions, showing that they can order time correctly and appropriately. They show that they have acquired a great deal of knowledge about invasions and understanding that invasion may lead to settlement. For example, the pupils ask, '*When you fought the Celts what did it feel like and were you devoted to your centurion?*' Another asked, '*Why did you (the Romans) want Britain if you had enough land elsewhere?*' Throughout the key stage, pupils learn about events, people and changes from a wide range of sources and record their work carefully to answer questions relevant to their inquiries.

136. The quality of teaching and learning at Key Stage 1 is satisfactory, but at Key Stage 2 it is more variable. Very good teaching was observed, as was unsatisfactory teaching. The very good teaching is based upon very good subject knowledge, strong cross-curricular links and high expectations of pupils' work and concentration. The teacher used questions very well and made very good use of subject vocabulary, giving clear targets and involving all pupils. As a result, the great majority of pupils demonstrate a good level of interest and enthusiasm for the subject and they concentrate and persevere with their work without repeated teacher intervention.
137. The policy and scheme of work have recently been updated, but the co-ordinator has had limited time to monitor the teaching and learning of the subject. Resources are adequate and good use is made of them. Pupils handle the artefacts with great respect.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

138. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are higher than expected for 7 and 11 year olds. Pupils make good progress and their work in ICT has improved significantly since the last inspection. This is because, in response to criticisms in its previous report, the school has worked hard to improve the opportunities for pupils of all ages to have regular access to computers and for computer programs to be used in other subjects. Computers were frequently used in classrooms during the inspection. Additionally, the school is monitoring the use of its recently opened computer suite very carefully to see how it can be most effectively used. There is good, systematic development of pupils' skills in ICT. Even the youngest are confident and competent at using computers and the level of difficulty of their work gradually increases as they get older. The school uses other forms of ICT well, such as digital cameras and tape recorders to enhance pupils' work. There are lots of examples of different types of programs displayed around the school and in pupils' books, for example word processing and data handling. Pupils have good opportunities to use the skills they have learned at home in their work in school. Many use their computers at home constructively to look for information that is linked to their school topics.
139. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils use keyboard and mouse control confidently, although their mouse control is better than their typing skill on the keyboard. They build very well on their existing skills that they learn in the reception class. They are able to '*log on*' independently and can use the '*scroll bar*' to move around the screen. They are able to use the mouse control to '*click and drag*' items and to replace them in other parts of the screen. They use computers very confidently and some speak in a very matter of fact way about using their computers to e-mail friends and relations - when their parents allow them to do so! They have used data-handling programs to make graphs and are familiar with word-processing their writing. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have well-developed skills in information technology. For example, they use the word processor to write letters to J.K. Rowling about her '*Harry Potter*' stories and to produce reports about a science experiment on air resistance. They use data-handling programs to record information as graphs and pie charts. They use a computer program to move a cursor in different directions by giving it a series of instructions and they are shortly to use newly

purchased sensors in their science experiments.

140. Pupils make good progress throughout the school. Teachers who have become increasingly confident following national training, a very competent and enthusiastic teaching assistant who works in the computer suite, and purposeful and well-informed subject management, help their progress. Some teachers very sensibly capitalise on pupils' skills and knowledge in lessons by using them to work with less experienced pupils. In order to give as many pupils as possible opportunities to use the computer suite the school has given careful consideration to its optimum use. It has decided that the best way to improve pupils' skills is to teach half a class at a time, using a talented teaching assistant, while the remaining pupils work in the classroom. Later the pupils change over. In this way pupils have purposeful use of the computers and time is not wasted. In two lessons organised in this way teaching was very good and time was extremely well spent, both in the suite and in class.
141. Pupils' attitudes to ICT are very positive. Pupils of all ages seem to take ICT for granted. They are not worried about '*breaking*' equipment and they are very receptive to new ideas about its use. They work very well in pairs when required to do so, even in the cramped computer suite, taking turns and discussing ideas well. They use equipment sensibly and carefully. The initial worries about the seating arrangements on high stools have proved to be unfounded. The only minor problems occur when pupils are asked to listen to a teaching point when they are using computers. They are very reluctant to stop their activity to listen!
142. Teaching is very good. Teachers have become increasingly confident in their ability to teach pupils about new programs and in the computer suite they have the additional security of a well-informed assistant. Teachers are able to answer pupils' questions and solve minor problems without delay. In the lessons observed, teachers' knowledge was very secure. They know the scope and limitations of the hardware and prepare their lessons very well. Teachers provide good levels of support during lessons, giving pupils immediate feedback, praise and suggestions for development. Computers are used very well in class lessons to support and extend the on-going work. The good work of the subject co-ordinator has been influential to the development of ICT work in school.

## MUSIC

143. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, pupils achieve the expected standards of work. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make sound progress.
144. Pupils' singing is a strength of the school. Several opportunities exist for pupils to participate as singers, including assemblies, choir and class music lessons. During assemblies, pupils sing with clarity and expression, paying careful attention to the timing of the song. Younger pupils participate in action songs with vigour and enthusiasm. Their ability to sing in two parts is of a high quality due to the skilful leadership of the music co-ordinator, who teaches them to sing. A particularly good example of this was in an assembly with pupils from the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. They were singing '*Kookaburra*' and '*London's Burning*' as a round. The harmonies that occur when singing in two parts were very clear.
145. All pupils respond eagerly and enthusiastically to their music lessons. Pupils in Year 1 accurately name a wide range of percussion instruments and learn to play with increasing control through suitable guidance from class teachers. They interpret stories and poems using instruments to create sound effects in different ways. Pupils in Year 2 distinguish between high and low notes and use hand signals to guide them whilst singing. Opportunities are provided for pupils to listen to extracts of music and discuss what they

hear. Pupils in Year 1 were listening to parts of *'Carnival of the Animals'* and had to guess which animal was being represented by the music. One pupil correctly guessed *'The Elephant'* because he said the music *'sounded like it was stamping'*. Another said the music sounded as if it was *'plodding'*.

146. Pupils in Year 3 and Year 5 make good progress in their music lessons because teachers plan interesting and exciting activities for them. They build systematically on previous work, which increases pupils' skills at making music. Pupils in Year 5 confidently explain the differences between *'melodic and rhythmic ostinato'* and give good examples of accompanying a piece of music using a *'drone'*. They compose and perform very well together and include the elements taught in their lessons in their compositions. Pupils in Year 3 use the term *'tempo'* appropriately to describe how the speed of a piece of music changes and give examples of how this affects the way that the music sounds. When describing the change in tempo of *'Three Blind Mice'* one pupil said, *'The mice are running faster'* whilst another said, *'It sounds like the farmer's wife could catch them when it's slow.'* A scrutiny of work revealed that pupils in Year 4 had been composing music to accompany some poems they had been reading. They recorded their music using symbols and shapes to represent the different sounds and instruments so that the music could be played and remembered.
147. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and is good in about half the lessons observed. Pupils' progress is much greater when music lessons occur on a regular basis, although, a small number of pupils said that this does not happen as frequently in their classes. Teachers' planning is sound and the introduction of a published scheme of work is having a positive impact on raising standards in music. It provides teachers with a range of activities that build on pupils' previous learning and enables them to plan lessons that are interesting and enjoyable. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to discuss each other's compositions during lessons and pupils' knowledge and understanding of famous composers are limited.
148. The curriculum is greatly enriched by the range of extra-curricular activities. Specialist teachers visit the school on a weekly basis to provide tuition in woodwind, brass and stringed instruments to some pupils. Good opportunities occur for these pupils to share what they have learned with the rest of the school during assemblies. One of the music teachers makes a valuable contribution to the singing in the school by accompanying singing practices and choir rehearsals. Pupils in Year 6 form good links with other schools when they take part in local singing festivals. Visiting musicians, such as a steel band and a brass ensemble, carry out workshop activities that allow each pupil to participate fully.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

149. Pupils of all abilities make satisfactory progress overall and achieve the standards expected of primary-age pupils by the end of both key stages. The school teaches all the elements of the National Curriculum, including swimming at a local pool. There are some examples of good progress in Key Stage 2 in gymnastic skills and team game skills. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
150. Pupils in Key Stage 1 work enthusiastically in gymnastics, for example through actions involving pulling and pushing. They co-operate well with each other and enjoy their tasks. Most seven-year-olds use the space around them well and link their movements into simple sequences. The well-planned teaching in Key Stage 1 challenges them and they are able to work independently and with a partner. The teacher gives them the opportunity to offer responses to their own and their classmates' performances for evaluation purposes. This enables pupils to reach their full potential.

151. The teaching is also good in Key Stage 2. Teachers continue to have high expectations of pupils in acquiring knowledge, skills and technique. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 learn to swim, and standards are above average. Pupils are confident and last year all pupils in Year 4 could swim 25 metres. In dance lessons in Year 3, pupils are creative and imaginative in making their bodies into spiky or spiral shapes and move well in time to the tempo and rhythm of the music. In a Year 6 gymnastics lesson, pupils work on stretching and rolling. They show controlled landings when coming off the apparatus and repeat and mirror each other's ideas. At all times pupils move safely on the apparatus and set up and put away the equipment sensibly. Teachers praise pupils for their sensible attitudes.
152. Pupils develop a good range of ball skills. Pupils in Year 5 develop catching and passing skills using rugby balls. Most are able to throw a ball accurately to a team member using a chest throw. They make good progress as a direct result of the teacher's own expertise in games skills and techniques. When playing a mini game of touch rugby they pay regard to the official rules and display sportsmanship and fair play. All pupils concentrated very well and used lesson time to the full.
153. An excellent range of extra-curricular sporting activities supports and builds upon the start given to the pupils in physical education lessons. School sports teams are successful in local competitions. The school has good links with Stevenage Town Football Club and pupils receive regular coaching from club members.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

154. At the end of both key stages, pupils attain standards above those expected by the locally agreed syllabus. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Religious education is taught regularly and, in most cases, effectively.
155. At Key Stage 1, pupils are aware of special events in other people's lives and are beginning to be familiar with some Biblical and other stories which enable them to talk about their experiences and ideas. They identify many aspects of Christianity and also have a good level of awareness of other religions. Pupils in Year 2 know that Muslims pray in a Mosque, which has no furniture in it, that prayer mats are used, that these are decorated with symmetrical patterns and that men and women worship separately.
156. At Key Stage 2, pupils describe the key features of the world's major faiths and they understand the importance of belief and how it affects their lives. Pupils in Year 6 discuss issues in a mature and sensitive way and are able to extend their knowledge of Buddhism and reflect this through drama, art and music.
157. Pupils have very positive attitudes and work conscientiously and with enjoyment on the variety of approaches provided by their teachers. Teachers expect pupils to think for themselves, to make connections with stories heard and to share their own experiences in class discussion. They do this willingly, resulting in good practice in speaking and listening. Pupils respond well to these high expectations to concentrate well and learn as much as they can. This was particularly evident in the Year 6 pupils' work on Buddhism. Teaching is good overall. Teachers' plans, lessons, work displayed and pupils' books show that teachers provide a balanced curriculum for religious education based on good subject knowledge.
158. In all lessons, pupils understand routines, know what they are doing and are keen to participate. Teachers have to spend little time on the management of pupils. Teachers make effective links with literacy, reading stories and encouraging pupils to write independently. Carefully graded work allows all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to achieve well.

159. Subject co-ordination is very thorough. Assessment procedures are well established and work is monitored and levelled to ensure the maximum progression of skills and knowledge throughout the school.