

## INSPECTION REPORT

**MANLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Harpenden

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117103

Headteacher: Ms Vicky Parsey

Reporting inspector: Mrs Jayne Clemence  
22629

Dates of inspection: 4 – 7 February 2002

Inspection number: 197478

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior School

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Sauncey Avenue  
Harpenden  
Hertfordshire

Postcode: AL5 4QW

Telephone number: 01582 713452

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr R Johnston

Date of previous inspection: September 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
22629	Jayne Clemence	Registered inspector	Mathematics Music Physical education Religious education Equal opportunities Special educational needs	How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
1311	Barrie Wood	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with the parents? How well does the school care for its pupils?
23009	Anne Hogbin	Team inspector	Science Geography History Foundation Stage curriculum	
20963	Judy Keiner	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to the pupils?
10144	Mary Marriott	Team inspector		Evaluation of teaching assistant support in Literacy and Mathematics

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Manland Primary School is situated in Harpenden, Hertfordshire, and has 229 pupils between the ages of 4 and 11. There are 110 girls and 119 boys. The school has specialist provision for 8 pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Most pupils come from a White UK background, with a very small minority from Black African, Indian and Bangladeshi heritage. A very few pupils have English as an additional language, and they are fluent in speaking English. Four per cent of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals- a low figure by national comparison. Twenty-four per cent of the pupils are on the school's special educational needs register; half of those pupils are at the higher levels of special educational needs, and six pupils have statements of special educational needs. These figures are relatively high because of the specialist provision in the school. Many pupils come from more favourable social and economic circumstances than that found nationally. The range of pupils' attainment on entry to the school is above average. Since the last inspection, there has been a new headteacher appointed, and approximately two thirds of teachers are new to the school in the last two years. Most teachers are new to teaching their current age group, and some have moved between Years 1-2, and Years 3-6 with effect from September 2001.

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

Manland Primary School is an effective school, with many strengths, and several outstanding features. The high standards reached by Year 2 have been sustained, and pupils achieve well. Standards by the end of Year 6 are improving because of the good teaching in parts of the school, though there are some weaknesses in Year 5, and achievement for Years 3-6 is thus only satisfactory. Higher attaining pupils are not always achieving as they should. The school is well led by the headteacher, and current areas of weakness are being addressed rigorously. Overall leadership and management is sound. There is a shared commitment from the headteacher, staff and governors to continuous improvement. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- Teachers and learning support assistants work very effectively together, and their efforts are having a direct and positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning and raising standards.
- The good leadership provided by the headteacher, ensures there are clear and effective strategies for bringing about further improvement.
- The good quality Early Years provision ensures that children have a very secure and positive start to school life.
- The pupils' very positive attitudes and very good behaviour mean that they settle quickly to work, and recognise the importance of effort and hard work in order to improve.
- The excellent quality of activities outside lessons enriches the pupils' education.
- There is a strong ethos and atmosphere for learning, where pupils are encouraged to do their best, and their work is valued highly; there are very effective strategies for including pupils socially and academically, regardless of their differences or backgrounds.

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

- Standards and pupils' achievements in English, mathematics and science, though rising, could realistically be higher, particularly for the higher attaining pupils by Year 6.
- The unsatisfactory teaching in part of Years 3-6 is hindering the pupils' learning.
- The use of information and communication technology is underdeveloped, and standards in the subject could be higher.
- Some functions of the senior management, specifically the role of the deputy headteacher, are unsatisfactory, and are not having the necessary impact on raising standards and teaching.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There have been satisfactory improvements since the previous inspection in 1997. Many of the strengths have been sustained, including the pupils' attitudes and behaviour, the strong ethos for including pupils, and the very high quality activities outside lessons. The quality of teaching has improved. Weaknesses in the provision for the youngest children have been eradicated. Standards have seen a significant dip by the end of Year 6, though there are clear signs that standards are rising. New weaknesses have emerged in leadership and management, specifically in the role of the deputy headteacher, that are having a negative impact on standards.

## 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			
	All schools			Similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	A*	B	C	E
Mathematics	A*	B	C	D
Science	A	B	B	C

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

Children start school with skills that exceed those expected for their age in many areas. During the Foundation Stage (Reception), children achieve well as they are on course to surpass the Early Learning Goals. By Year 2, pupils reach standards that are above the national average in English, mathematics and science. A significant minority of pupils reach standards that are well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. In the most recent national test results, standards were very high and in the top five per cent nationally in writing, mathematics and science. In reading, they were well above average. Standards in the most recent national test results for pupils in Year 6 showed a sharp decline from the previously high standards. The low standards in Year 6 were analysed rigorously, as teaching during that year did not have the necessary impact on standards and pupils' achievements. Pupils in Year 6 are now on course to return to their previous high standards. There are new weaknesses though, in standards in Year 5. Standards have remained high by the end of Year 2 over time, and this is confirmed by inspection evidence. Pupils' achievements in Years 3-6 are satisfactory overall. Higher attaining pupils could realistically reach higher standards, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science by Year 6. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the school are too low, because the pupils' skills are not being developed systematically. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening are particularly well developed. The school has set suitably ambitious targets, and is on course to meet those targets, though there is ground to regain for older pupils particularly.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good; pupils are very keen, enthusiastic and understand the importance of effort and hard work in order to improve.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good; pupils develop self-discipline from an early age and show respect and kindness towards one another both in class and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent; there are many excellent relationships between pupils and with adults based upon mutual respect and trust.
Attendance	Very good; attendance rates are well above the national average; most

pupils arrive punctually.
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The strengths in the pupils' attitudes, behaviour, relationships and personal development make a significant contribution to the high quality atmosphere for learning in the school. Pupils are a credit to the school and to their parents. Pupils develop a genuine understanding of the meaning of good citizenship, and learn to respect one another for their individual characteristics, and not simply for what they achieve academically. Pupils are ready to learn, take their responsibilities seriously, and settle quickly to the school day. They contribute fully, and their enthusiasm for school is infectious. The high level of attendance ensures most pupils have very good continuity in their learning.

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Satisfactory

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

The sound teaching and learning overall are having a positive impact on standards and pupils' achievements. In almost one quarter of lessons observed, teaching was satisfactory, and in just under half, teaching was good. In one in five lessons seen, teaching was very good. A significant minority of teaching was unsatisfactory in part of Years 3-6. Teaching in English was good in Years 1-2, and satisfactory overall in Years 3-6. Pupils' literacy skills are being developed well, though the quality of writing, and handwriting requires greater consistency. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are being developed systematically. Teaching in mathematics is good in Years 1-2, and satisfactory overall in Years 3-6. Teachers develop the pupils' numeracy skills effectively, and there are useful opportunities where pupils use their mathematical knowledge in practical situations. Learning support assistants are very effective, and make a strong contribution to standards and pupils' achievements. Teachers ensure pupils are included fully into lessons, and those pupils joining lessons from the specialist unit are planned for carefully, ensuring they gain maximum benefit from the activities. Teaching is most effective in Reception, parts of Years 1-2 and Year 6. The best teaching included highly challenging activities, lessons conducted at a brisk pace, and work well-matched to the pupils' wide ranging needs. This led to highly motivated and enthusiastic pupils, keen to succeed. In the unsatisfactory teaching, learning opportunities were lost, due to low expectations of what could be accomplished. Higher and lower attainers did not learn as effectively as they could because work was not well matched to their particular needs. Whilst pupils were polite during such lessons, they lacked interest and did only what was expected of them, with little sense of progress. In otherwise satisfactory teaching, higher attaining pupils could have completed more in the time available given greater challenge. Teaching in ICT is often hampered by the level of teachers' confidence and skills, leading to missed opportunities for the subject to be taught systematically in other areas. Pupils achieve well in the Reception and in Years 1-2. Their achievements in Years 3-6 are only satisfactory due to weaknesses in teaching in Year 5, that hinder the pupils' learning and rate of progress over time. This means that pupils in Year 5 have to cover much learning in order to return to their previously high standards and achievements.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good; the curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant; the excellent range of extra activities outside lessons make a significant contribution to the pupils' education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good; pupils achieve well, and careful consideration is given to their needs across the curriculum.



Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall; the high quality provision makes a strong contribution to the school environment and atmosphere for learning.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall; all staff take considerable care to ensure the welfare and care of pupils; assessment is good overall, and particularly rigorous in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.

The school works very well with most parents. There is great emphasis upon developing the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Although other subjects are covered creatively, for example through special weeks, such as a history week, the school should monitor the time spent on some foundation subjects as they are in danger of being squeezed, with a resulting impact on standards. The school is very sensitive to the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. All staff go out of their way to include pupils, regardless of their individual differences or backgrounds. Staff and pupils alike show great respect and consideration for one another, and this makes a significant contribution to the atmosphere for learning.

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

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Sound overall; the headteacher's leadership is good, and most senior managers make a clear contribution to the direction of the school; the deputy headteacher's role and contribution is not making sufficient impact upon raising standards and improving the quality of teaching.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good; the governing body is led ably, and governors make a strategic contribution in shaping the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good; there are systematic procedures for evaluating the impact of actions on standards, teaching and pupils' learning.
The strategic use of resources	Good; resources including time, people and finances are used efficiently.

There is a good number of well-qualified staff to teach the National Curriculum. Learning resources are satisfactory overall, and well cared for. Accommodation is satisfactory, though the library has scope for further development. The school applies the principles of best value, and as a result operates efficiently and effectively.

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

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• They would feel comfortable approaching the school.</li> <li>• There is an interesting range of activities outside lessons.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school is helping their children become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some parents feel there is not enough homework for their children.</li> <li>• Some feel they are not well enough informed about how their child is getting on.</li> <li>• Some do not feel the school works closely enough with parents.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agreed with all the positive comments. Inspectors considered that the homework policy is appropriate, but in some cases, its implementation is inconsistent. Inspectors could not agree fully with the other negative views, as they found a wide range of very good quality information for parents, and many opportunities provided for the school and parents to work together. Inspectors consider it would be beneficial for the school to liaise further with parents. This is particularly in relation to the information about their child's progress, and how best to work more closely with those parents who are dissatisfied with the current level of information and contact between home and school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Standards are high by the end of Year 2, and improving after a sharp decline in 2001 by the end of Year 6. Pupils achieve well in the Reception and in Years 1-2. In Years 3-6, pupils' achievement is only satisfactory, due to current weaknesses in teaching in Year 5 that hinder the pupils' learning and rate of progress over time. The low standards seen in Year 6 in the 2001 national test results were analysed rigorously. The teaching in Year 6 did not have the required impact on pupils' standards, and there was a mismatch in teachers' assessments and test results. Teachers were relocated in order to bring about rapid improvements in standards in Year 6. This was an effective strategy, but the remaining weaknesses in Year 5 mean that these pupils are not building systematically on their previously high standards. The school is working hard to minimise the impact of these weaknesses.
2. When children start school and enter Reception, most are attaining above average in many areas, including their personal social and emotional development and in speaking and listening skills. Children are well taught and the vast majority are on course to exceed the Early Learning Goals in mathematics, communications, language and literacy, and knowledge and understanding of the world, and far exceed the goals for personal, social and emotional development. They are on course to meet the goals in the remaining areas when they start Year 1. The good provision in the Reception ensures children have a very secure and positive start to school life, learning well-established routines and work habits from an early age.
3. By the end of Year 2, in the most recent national test results in 2001, pupils reached standards in reading that were well above the national average. In writing, mathematics and science, standards were very high, and in the top five per cent nationally. By comparison with similar schools, standards in reading were well above average, and in writing, mathematics and science, standards were very high and in the top five per cent nationally. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher level (Level 3) was well above average in reading, and above average in writing. In science, by national comparison, very few pupils reached the higher level. This was because of weaknesses in the science curriculum. This weakness has been rectified, and there are more pupils on course to meet the higher level as a result.
4. By the end of Year 6, in the most recent national test results, standards were in line with the national average in English and mathematics, and above average in science. By comparison with similar schools, pupils reached standards that were below average in English, well below average in mathematics and average in science. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher level (Level 5) was below the national average in English, and above average in mathematics and science. These trends in standards were unacceptably low, considering the pupils' attainment on entry to the school, and the standards reached elsewhere. The school carefully analysed the results, and noted that predictions and teacher assessments did not match closely to the test results. The headteacher, together with the chair of governors, acted swiftly to address the decline in standards, and for example, staff were placed in Year 6 to hasten the pace of recovery. This was alongside other strategies such as booster groups, and extension activities in the local secondary school, to ensure higher attainers were being challenged. Other staff were relocated across the school, and many teachers this year are new to teaching their age group and phase.
5. Inspection evidence found standards to be above those found nationally in many subjects by the end of Year 2, and Year 6. By Year 2, evidence from work seen during the inspection showed pupils reaching standards that are above average in reading, writing, mathematics and science, and a significant minority of pupils are reaching well above average. Some higher attaining pupils could reach higher standards in reading given more challenging reading materials. Although standards seen during the inspection in writing were above average, few pupils were reaching standards well above average. Pupils in Years 1-2 are achieving well over time and their skills

are built upon systematically. By Year 6, evidence from work seen during the inspection showed pupils reaching standards that are above average in English, mathematics and science, but the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels should realistically be more, given their attainment on entry to the school. In Year 6, pupils are achieving well over time because of the effort and emphasis upon raising standards further. Inspection evidence found standards to be too low in Year 5. Since September for example, not enough has been done to challenge the higher attaining pupils, and much ground has been lost as a result. Overall, the pupils' achievement in Years 3-6 is only satisfactory. Most teachers are getting to grips with different ages and expectations for pupils. This means that sometimes, higher attainers could be challenged further. Pupils in Year 5 however are not achieving as they should, due to weaknesses in teaching. Higher attainers are not sufficiently challenged, and lower attainers struggle quietly, as work is not modified appropriately for their needs. Pupils in Year 5 have much ground to cover in order to return to the previously high standards they reached. Although pupils achieve satisfactorily overall, it is realistic to expect these pupils to be reaching standards that are well above those found nationally, and this is yet to be the case consistently. The turbulence in Years 5 and 6 in the last two years has hindered standards and the rate of pupils' learning.

6. The school's strong and inclusive atmosphere ensures pupils, regardless of their individual differences or backgrounds, have many useful opportunities to achieve and succeed. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because, in most cases, their needs are considered carefully, and work is well matched. The good provision for pupils in the special education unit ensures they move smoothly between individual support, group work and class activities, and achieve well in each of the contexts. Pupils identified as gifted and talented have a range of suitable activities over the course of a year, and considerable thought has been given to their needs. As a result, those pupils do well in the activities provided.
7. In English by Year 2, many pupils read with growing fluency. They enjoy reading with one another, and sharing books with adults. Higher attaining readers have scope for being challenged further in Year 2, particularly with more challenging reading materials. By Year 6, pupils show a clear understanding of sentence construction, grammar, punctuation, paragraphs and spellings. They write for a wide range of purposes. Pupils in Year 6 are highly articulate and confident as they express their views and opinions on literature, making clear comparisons, with examples to illustrate their thinking. Pupils' handwriting by Year 6 has scope for improvement, and there are examples of poorly presented and scruffy print with errors. Pupils do not yet have writing modelled consistently for them as they move through the school, and this hinders their own style and script.
8. Pupils' numeracy skills are developed effectively across other subjects; for example, when studying geography, they understand that different countries operate different time zones. The school's rich environment helps pupils to note changes over time in the seasons, and to recognise that temperature affects plants and the behaviour of wild life. Although they record information in a variety of ways, there are missed opportunities to present their work, for example, using information and communication technology skills.
9. Pupils' achievement elsewhere is satisfactory overall, and in places, they achieve well, for example, in literacy and numeracy, though this is not yet consistent in all year groups, and across all subjects. Standards in information and communication technology are too low, and pupils throughout the school are not achieving as they could. This is because there are missed opportunities for the use of ICT across the curriculum, and their skills are yet to be developed systematically. Standards by the end of Year 6 since the last inspection have seen a sharp decline, though the school is on course to see the necessary improvements. Overall, progress in standards has been unsatisfactory because of the ground lost over a two-year period (out of the four years) since the previous inspection.

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

10. The previous report stated that pupils had very good attitudes and behaviour, both in the classroom and around the school. Pupils were seen as polite and friendly, and relationships were judged to be very good. The school continues to have very high expectations for the attitudes, behaviour and personal development of all its pupils, allied to a strong sense of community. It fulfils its aims comprehensively, as all aspects of the pupils' attitudes and behaviour continue at a very good level. Pupils are being well prepared for their life in the wider world, as both relationships throughout the school, and the personal development of pupils are excellent. Parents recognise the school's distinctive values and attitudes and the impact on the development of their children.
11. In the Reception, children soon conquer their initial fears and quickly gain confidence and independence in their surroundings, and in school procedures. They have very good attitudes, and are keen "to have a go" at the day's agenda. They respond eagerly to the excitement of learning, and are entranced by other children showing their work. They listen well to their understanding teachers, and to each other, so that their social development is strong. They want to engage with new friends within very caring relationships. They quickly learn classroom routines, and their very good behaviour enables a happy and productive environment to be established. The Reception gives all children a very happy and confident start to their school lives, and prepares them well for the next stage of education.
12. Most pupils are accompanied to school by their parents, and arrive in a happy and enthusiastic mood. They look smart and clean in their school uniforms, and represent their parents well. As pupils progress through the school, they become increasingly keen to try the rich agenda of activities both inside and outside the classroom. They are motivated to work hard and persevere at tasks, and understand that hard work will produce good results. Pupils are consistently involved and engaged with their teachers, and extract the maximum enjoyment from lessons, as demonstrated in a music lesson in Year 6. They listen and concentrate well and, almost always, this produces an enthusiastic and productive teaching and learning environment. Their co-operative attitudes allow the classrooms and school to operate smoothly, and they are gaining a very good understanding of how they influence the learning of other pupils, either in independent or group work.
13. The behaviour of the pupils in classes and around the school is very good. Only a few examples of restlessness or exuberant behaviour were observed, when teaching lacked pace. Pupils have a strong sense of self-discipline, and recognise clearly the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. Staff do not need to exert an obvious control, and pupils are easily corrected with a quiet word. This produces a calm and happy work atmosphere, with well-focused lessons. Pupils from the specialist unit for emotional and behavioural difficulties are consistently included with their peer groups, and make no perceptible difference to the quality of behaviour in classrooms or around the school. This is a credit to the pupils and teachers, as many have been referred for disruptive behaviour elsewhere.
14. The pupils' behaviour outside classrooms is very good, and allows the lunchtime cafeteria to operate efficiently and without fuss. Playgrounds are happy environments, and no bullying, fighting, nor bad language were observed. Historically, there has been only a very small level of fighting or racist incidents, but these are uncharacteristic. Incidents have been amicably resolved with letters of apology from the pupils concerned. The headteacher has only made minor use of exclusions during the last three years. Older pupils have useful roles in the playground, as they look out for younger pupils, and take responsibility for coordinating some games, and ensuring behaviour is appropriate. This is under the guidance and supervision of adults.
15. The quality of relationships, at all levels, is excellent and contributes greatly to the ethos of the school. Staff are very good role models, and the mutual trust between staff and pupils is obvious. All parts of the school family enjoy being together, and this promotes a very effective teaching and learning environment. Pupils admit freely and honestly their level of understanding

in lessons, so that teachers can repeat learning points, if necessary. The quality of relationships is reinforced through the house system, whereby pupils from across the school are grouped into four different house teams. This develops a strong sense of teamwork across age groups. In the classroom, pupils listen to each other with respect, and value each other's opinions and qualities, so that pupils' speaking and listening abilities are developing well. Boys and girls eat amicably together at the very sociable lunchtimes within the cafeteria. Older pupils help younger pupils consistently around the school, through a "Buddy system". Many relationships are reinforced through well-designed and integrated play and games in the playgrounds. Pupils are courteous and polite and have a natural inquisitiveness with visitors.

16. The personal development of the pupils is excellent. All pupils, from the Reception onwards, are encouraged to be involved in the many activities without fear of failure. This is a very caring community, where pupils are encouraged to look after each other, as well as gain an awareness of others less fortunate than themselves, through charity work. There is a good personal, health and social education curriculum, which is effective in promoting concepts of citizenship both within the school and externally. Pupils agree targets for their education, and these are well used to give them a good understanding of responsibility for their own learning. The school makes every effort to raise pupils' self esteem and have an ownership of the school, through the school council and the house system. The school undertakes a residential visit for older pupils, as well as visits in the local community or to places of interest further afield, to support its learning.
17. There are many useful opportunities to appreciate life in other countries, and these have been well developed since the last inspection. All pupils display a well-developed sense of moral and social awareness, which is promoted creatively through a diverse range of interesting whole-school and house assemblies. Pupils maintain the site well as there is no graffiti, or litter and cloakrooms and toilets are tidy. The school has an excellent range of sporting and other extra-curricular activities and pupils are competitive in inter-school competition. This adds further to their very positive attitudes and enthusiasm for school life. The school's gardening exploits are particularly impressive. Pupils take a genuine sense of responsibility and ownership for their surroundings. As a result of their rich and varied personal development, pupils are well equipped for secondary education, and many want to recall the school with high regard and affection.
18. During the last four years, the school has maintained an overall very good attendance level, consistent with the findings of the previous report. All classes have attendance rates well above the national average, and many pupils have exemplary attendance throughout their time in school, which makes a positive contribution to their attainment and progress. Unauthorised absence is at a minimal level, and family holidays, taken during term time, are at a low level.
19. A few pupils find it difficult to arrive at school on time, but lessons are not affected by any lack of punctuality. There are no indications of any truancy. The school has a minimal level of requirement of the educational welfare service, but this is effective when needed.

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

20. Teaching and learning in the Reception and Years 1-2 are good overall. Teaching in Years 3-6 is satisfactory. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. This represents satisfactory improvement since the last inspection with far less unsatisfactory teaching now than reported previously. Teaching in the Reception has improved significantly, and where teaching was reported to be variable previously, there is greater consistency. There is currently unsatisfactory teaching in part of Years 3-6 that is hindering pupils' learning and achievements. Since the previous inspection, there has been a high turnover of teachers, with two thirds leaving and new members of staff joining the school. This year, many teachers are new to their year groups. Teachers have mostly settled well to their classes and this was demonstrated by the examples of good and very good teaching.
21. In almost one quarter of lessons observed, teaching was satisfactory, and in just under half, teaching was good. In approximately one in five lessons, teaching was very good. A significant

minority of teaching was unsatisfactory in Years 3-6, and mostly in Year 5. In the most effective teaching, pupils are enthusiastic and keen to learn more. They are genuinely frustrated when lessons finish, as they are so absorbed in their learning. In otherwise satisfactory teaching, if activities are too long, pupils' learning is hindered, as they do not maintain the level of interest or motivation. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, although pupils behave appropriately, many do not engage fully in the activities and simply do the minimum of what is required. Pupils work quietly, but this masks a lack of productivity, and some pupils realise they could do more.

22. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught. Teachers plan carefully for the pupils' wide ranging needs, and the school's strong philosophy of including pupils, regardless of their differences, is reflected well in practice by the teachers. Pupils identified as gifted and talented are well taught, and they have a growing range of opportunities to develop their skills through extra curricular activities. Pupils are included sensitively and discretely from the special educational needs unit, and teachers and pupils alike ensure a seamless transition when individual pupils either join or leave specific activities. This means the pupils engage fully in the class activities and do not find themselves as observers at any time. Teaching strategies, for example, ensure those pupils take part, have suitable responsibilities, and offer their own ideas at the beginning of lessons, helping them to feel part of the class as swiftly as possible. In other examples, the support teacher's skilful teaching enabled pupils to negotiate a place within a small group when composing and performing in a music lesson.
23. Teaching is good in the Reception. Teachers work very effectively with learning support assistants to provide a good mix of whole class and small group teaching. Lessons are well planned, and based firmly on learning through practical experiences. The development of children's personal social and emotional skills is good, and underpins all teaching in the Reception, and meets the aims of the school. As a result, children have very positive attitudes to school, are keen to learn and achieve well. They are interested in what they are doing and so they behave very well. The staff in the Reception have a very clear picture of what children know and can do, and plan their teaching well to move children forward appropriately within the six areas of learning. During the inspection, teaching had been so well planned in advance by the whole Reception team that the nursery nurse, acting as an unqualified teacher, and supported well by a recently appointed nursery nurse, was able to teach the class for the whole week while the teacher was absent. Teaching was good and in some instances very good. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection when the lack of achievement during the Reception Year formed part of a key issue.
24. The quality of teaching in English, including literacy, is satisfactory overall. In Years 1-2 it is good, and in Years 3-6 teaching is satisfactory. A small minority of teaching is unsatisfactory in Years 3-6. The characteristics of good teaching included a brisk pace, challenging questions, and activities that extended the pupils throughout the lesson. In the most effective teaching, time was very well used towards the end of lessons to summarise learning and emphasise key points. Planning for literacy is appropriate, though there is inconsistency in the development of writing, handwriting and reading through the school. Pupils are keen and eager to use their literacy skills. They read enthusiastically, and many express their ideas clearly, providing well-reasoned arguments for their opinions. Pupils take less time and care in the presentation of their work, and only a few produce handwriting that is of a consistently high standard. In the unsatisfactory teaching, activities did not challenge the pupils sufficiently, and as a result too little was accomplished in the time, leading to missed opportunities for further learning. The National Literacy Strategy is implemented effectively in almost all areas of the school.
25. Teaching in mathematics, including numeracy is good overall. There were examples of very good teaching in Year 6. Most teachers plan lessons carefully, ensuring work is well matched to the wide range of pupils' needs. The principles of the National Numeracy Strategy are implemented effectively, and well understood by most teachers. In the most effective teaching, for example in Year 6, pupils are grouped carefully, and work is modified accordingly. This ensures lower attainers achieve well and higher attainers are suitably extended and challenged in their mathematical thinking. The booster classes for pupils in mathematics are proving successful and having a clear impact on raising standards further. In the unsatisfactory

teaching, for example in Year 5, too little was accomplished in the time available, and many pupils were not sufficiently challenged. Tasks were tedious and repetitive, leaving some pupils frustrated at having to cover familiar ground, whilst others were confused from the very beginning of the lesson, due to the absence of clear explanations and instructions.

26. Teaching in personal and social education is very good. Pupils understand clearly the principles of good citizenship from a very early age. There are many practical situations, for example the school council, where pupils have genuine opportunities to make decisions and influence what happens in the school, having to face the opportunities and frustrations of democracy in the process.
27. Teaching in Years 1-2 is good in English, mathematics, science, art and design, physical education and religious education. There was insufficient evidence to judge teaching in other subjects. Teaching in Years 3-6 is satisfactory in English, and good in mathematics, science, art and design, physical education and religious education. There was insufficient evidence to judge teaching in other subjects. Teaching in information and communication technology is unsatisfactory overall, as it is not having the necessary impact on developing pupils' ICT skills and knowledge throughout the school. Whilst teachers are keen to extend their own knowledge, teaching does not ensure systematic and effective explanations and instructions to develop the pupils' ICT skills. This in turn restricts the pupils' learning in lessons, and hinders their achievements over time.
28. Teachers in most parts of the school take considerable care in creating bright, attractive and high quality learning environments. Pupils' work is celebrated carefully, and there are many displays at the same height as the pupils. Teachers, for example, ensure that artefacts are displayed to encourage the pupils' curiosity. Pupils learn actively from their environment, and take notice of their surroundings as a matter of course. Teachers show considerable respect for the pupils' contributions, and listen carefully to their responses. Pupils in turn are eager and enthusiastic to achieve, and many want to surpass their own personal best. The excellent relationships between pupils and with adults add to the overall high quality environment for teaching and learning.
29. In the most effective teaching in literacy, for example in Year 1 and Year 6, there were high expectations, with activities carefully planned for the pupils' wide-ranging needs. Pupils in Year 1 developed their phonic skills rapidly, due to the very effective strategies used by the teacher. Higher attaining pupils were encouraged successfully to extend their skills in developing sentences, by constructing questions accurately. Pupils who had only recently moved from Reception were achieving very well. The use of the white boards, whereby pupils record their work, enabled the teacher to assess quickly whether or not all pupils understood the tasks. Learning support assistants were used very effectively to provide discrete, yet focused support for pupils with special educational needs. In a very effective lesson in Year 6, the very clear instructions and structure to the lesson ensured pupils improved the quality of their writing. They produced interesting and lively writing to include a dilemma, based on extracts from the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. There was rigorous use of questions to extend the pupils' thinking. In both examples there was much useful learning throughout the lessons. Pupils gave lively responses, and were keen to complete their work. There was genuine enthusiasm for learning, and disappointment when the lessons had to finish.
30. In otherwise satisfactory teaching, the pace of lessons occasionally became too slow at certain points, and sometimes the lessons themselves were over-long to maintain the pupils' concentration effectively, for example in science at the lower end of Years 3-6. In a few examples in Years 1-2, the organisation of activities limited the pace of learning, for example where pupils contributed individually, and time was not used as efficiently as possible for further learning. In the good teaching, there was evidence of carefully structured lessons and efficient use of time and resources. In all but the very effective teaching, there was scope for further extending and challenging the higher attaining pupils with work of a higher order, in terms of developing the pupils' thinking.



31. The inspection of this school included a focused view of the contribution of teaching assistants to teaching and learning in literacy and mathematics. Teaching assistants provide targeted and unobtrusive support to meet individual and group needs. This ensures that all pupils are fully integrated into the life of the school community, and that all develop very good levels of self-confidence. Teaching assistants are very well informed and make a significant contribution to learning. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, and those who are gifted or show a particular aptitude for a subject, are well catered for through focused tasks and additional challenge. Assistants have very good relationships with pupils and teachers. They are able to work in conjunction with teachers to raise standards and to ensure that all pupils gain full benefit from their lessons. Lessons are well planned and structured, with assistants keeping their own support sheets, which are very detailed to pupils' needs. Pupils respond well and are becoming confident learners. The effective use of resources, for example the thesaurus and spell checker, help to improve pupils' understanding. In mathematics, pupils use a variety of practical resources to underpin confidence in their learning, for example, protractors and calculators were well used in a lesson seen, and ensured that all pupils gained appropriate access to the lesson. Assistants evaluate pupils' learning rigorously in lessons and this is recorded and fed back to teachers each day, providing very useful assessment evidence, which in turn informs the next days planning. The learning support assistants make a very valuable contribution to the pupils' learning.
32. Teaching strategies are effective in most areas. The effective teaching, and examples of good and very good teaching, together with the high quality atmosphere for learning, ensures pupils settle quickly to lessons, concentrate hard, and absorb new learning effectively. The weaknesses in teaching that emerged since the previous inspection have impacted upon standards and the pupils' learning. The school is working hard to rectify these weaknesses and regain lost ground in standards.

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

33. The school provides a broad and well-balanced curriculum overall, which meets statutory requirements, including provision for religious education, collective worship and sex and drugs education. Pupils are offered a rich mixture of arts, literature and outdoor activities as part of their studies. Visits to theatres and historical sites contribute well to extending the curriculum for all pupils. The curriculum has been enriched by very successful subject weeks, such as the art, history and book weeks, in which artists and outside specialists, as well as local volunteers and parents, contribute to special activities across the school. The school also draws very effectively on its strong links with its partner secondary schools; for example, by enabling pupils to use the art and library and science facilities of the neighbouring secondary school.
34. There are some weaknesses in the balance of curriculum subjects in different years, in that there is some variation in the amount of time given to different subjects. The range of time devoted to ICT, for example, varies in different year groups. There are similar variations in the time allocated for other subjects, including science and literacy. Provision for foundation subjects, such as history, geography and design technology, although satisfactory, is increasingly being squeezed. The very substantial amount of time given to English and mathematics teaching provides well for the development of literacy and numeracy skills. Older pupils become very confident readers and most regularly visit libraries, although few feel as much enthusiasm for non-fiction as they do for fiction.
35. There are well thought out curriculum guidelines in place for all subjects. These include good guidance on the teaching and learning styles and opportunities to be offered to pupils in lessons, including the use of ICT and reference books. There is also good guidance, common to all subjects, on making links with other subjects, checking and recording pupils' learning and providing for all pupils, including those with special educational needs. The curriculum for ICT is currently unsatisfactory. There are too few opportunities for the pupils to develop their ICT skills effectively and systematically across the curriculum, and in ICT lessons themselves, skills are not always taught effectively, due to lack of guidance and direction in the subject.

36. The curriculum for children in the Reception is good, which represents a substantial improvement since the last inspection. It now covers all the areas of learning for this age group well, and provides very well for the development of the children's speaking, listening and social skills.
37. The school provides an excellent range of extra curricular activities for pupils. Lunchtime and after-school clubs include chess, recorder, singing, art, gardening, drama, dance, photography, computers, football and a range of other sports and musical activities. There is also an independently organised and very well attended after-school club, providing activities until the early evening. Boys and girls participate equally in the extra curricular and after-school activities. The school's commitment to equal opportunities is backed by a clear policy and is evident in its care to involve all pupils equally, and respond sensitively to their different social and cultural perspectives.
38. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection when provision for spiritual and cultural development was judged as sound and for social development as good. The school has maintained its very good provision for moral development. There is a very inclusive and supportive atmosphere, a joy of learning, and an appreciation and respect of the world around, which is very strong and underpins all provision.
39. Opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual awareness are very good. The high quality acts of collective worship, which include stories, prayers and well-sung hymns allow pupils to reflect on themes such as how they are special and their life is precious. Pupils recognise the notion of a supreme being, and have moments of stillness and reflection. The personal, social and health education programme, and circle time also provide very good opportunities for pupils to recognise their own feelings and talents and those of others. Pupils experience many moments of wonder and awe such as their involvement in African drumming, or watching the school garden grow, because teachers themselves experience it and share this with pupils. Teachers use stories very well to enable pupils to reflect on their emotions by talking about storybook characters and drawing parallels. For example pupils think about what makes them angry and how they show the anger by empathising with the wolf to explain how his angry feelings made him want to eat Red Riding Hood.
40. Provision for moral education is very good and is an integral part of the school's aims and philosophy. Clear guidance is given during assemblies, the personal, health and social education programme, and circle time as to what is acceptable behaviour. Consequently the pupils' behaviour is thoughtful, shows a respect for others, and is of a very high standard. Pupils are given very good opportunities to develop their own moral standards by creating class rules and the school charter of rights and responsibilities. Staff promote honesty, fairness and respect for truth and justice through their very good example and high expectations. This provides very good opportunities for pupils to develop an awareness of right and wrong. There is very good information about the dangers of the consequences of misuse of drugs, alcohol, smoking and sex, and this enables older pupils to make informed decisions. Some curriculum areas are well used to consider the morality of current issues such as whether it is right to ban smoking in public places or grow genetically modified crops to combat starvation in developing countries.
41. There is very good provision to promote pupils' social development. From Reception onwards, pupils are encouraged to be considerate to each other, take turns and share fairly. There are many useful opportunities during lessons for group work, and the sharing of resources. There are also very good opportunities for older pupils to extend these skills, such as the Year 6 residential visit, when pupils foster skills for living harmoniously together, with respect and tolerance of other people's views and opinions. The very many clubs and school productions enhance significantly the pupils' social development. The contribution of the gardening clubs, run by two enthusiastic teaching assistants, has a very strong impact on the pupils' sense of responsibility and ownership for their environment and surroundings. The development of the wildlife area has made an important contribution, for example in providing opportunities for pupils

to work together co-operatively for the benefit of the whole community, and to experience the wonders of nature as part of their spiritual development.

42. All pupils, including those just starting in Reception, help in the smooth running of the school through taking the registers to the office and being classroom helpers. Older pupils are given broader opportunities to develop responsibility through acting as playground leaders, operating the buddy system, or being a cutlery monitor. Pupils in the sports teams and choirs are given good opportunities to develop relationships with other schools through taking part in inter-school sports fixtures and musical events. Pupils are taught social responsibility within the wider community, and encouraged to raise money for charity. They have many opportunities to learn about citizenship and democracy through the school council, and are shown how democratic processes lead to change. For example elected representatives canvas grass root feeling within their Year groups before making their contributions and voting. They consider issues such as whether too much of the playground is devoted to football and whether the amount of drink or bread allowed at lunchtime should be increased.
43. The school offers very good provision for pupils' cultural development. Pupils learn about their own culture and that of others through the National Curriculum, and extra curricular activities. Pupils sing songs from around the world and appreciate the work of artists from other times and countries. Festivals connected with different faiths are celebrated systematically at the appropriate times of the year to coincide with the celebrations themselves. This adds further relevance to the pupils' awareness and knowledge of cultures beyond their own. Pupils in Years 3-6 presented a production of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, a Rabbi spoke in assembly and one class made puppets and performed the story of Rama and Sita. Full use is made of opportunities that lead to an understanding and appreciation of differing lifestyles and religions. For example the tragedy of September 11<sup>th</sup> led to a greater understanding of both the Sikh beliefs and extremism. A visitor to assembly spoke of his work in a Romanian orphanage and a recent Japanese student enhanced pupils' knowledge of customs in that country in many curriculum areas including art, and led to the making of a very attractive Japanese garden. The recent multicultural week provided a wealth of very good opportunities for pupils to develop their cultural awareness through an interesting blend of practical work in all curriculum areas and through visits and visitors. Consequently pupils have a very good appreciation of cultural diversity which put with the strong focus on respect for others results in a racially harmonious school with pupils interested in a world beyond their own.
44. Overall, there have been good improvements in the curriculum and opportunities offered to pupils. In some instances, extra curricular activities outside lessons, have gone from strength to strength. The curriculum weaknesses in provision for children in the Early Years has been eradicated fully. In provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, all areas have either improved or sustained previous strengths.

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

45. The school regards this aspect of school life as a key part of realising its mission statement of being a "happy, caring, and forward thinking school, that believes in the education of the head, hands and heart." Since the last inspection, the school continues to provide a very high standard of care, support and guidance. The present quality of pastoral care positively contributes to each pupil's achievement, excellent personal development, and their personal happiness.
46. The headteacher and staff have a thorough working knowledge of all their pupils. They accept their pastoral role with obvious enjoyment and determination, and they display leadership and dedication in this area that is clear to parents and pupils alike. Pupils feel constantly supported by this integrated and secure community, without any loss of their independence, and there is a strong mutual trust with all staff. In turn older pupils promote the caring culture and positive ethos of the school with younger pupils. Many parents greatly praise the headteacher and staff, and have an increasing admiration for their efforts in this aspect of school life.

47. There is very good monitoring of pupils' personal development. This reinforces the very good personal support and guidance that they receive. The headteacher meets with teachers every half term, and pupils are tracked against a number of criteria, using "pupil tracker" software developed by Hertfordshire Local Education Authority. This has enabled the school to investigate links between academic performance and personal development and set correction targets. Additionally the headteacher encourages teachers to keep a positive comments sheet on each pupil, so as to ensure reports to parents have a good balance.
48. Pupils keep their own records of achievement, and these provide a useful monitoring diary of their personal development. The school's very good knowledge of each pupil allows it to involve professional agencies, as required, for pupils with special educational needs, or develop behaviour strategies through the behaviour unit. The school has a good special educational needs provision, promoted by good individual educational plans, which include attainable targets, and are agreed with parents on a termly basis. All pupil-based information systems are updated by the school secretary, and are sufficiently focused and specific to support any emergency. There is a very good liaison and relationship between the school and the local secondary schools, so that parents receive good support at transfer, and parent and pupil anxieties are minimised. Induction procedures for parents are comprehensive, include the school nurse, and are especially effective in guiding new pupils and parents, so that pupils make a confident start to their school lives.
49. The school has sufficient relevant, clearly written and updated support, guidance and welfare policies, which guide and underpin its actions. Policies receive a common sense and consistent implementation by well-trained staff, and any temporary staff arriving at the school benefit from a concise staff handbook. The school is efficient in welcoming outside agencies to support the pupils on a routine basis, or if there are specific problems. The skills of the school and its well-developed caring ethos allows the school's infrastructure to support pupils with complex behavioural problems, either included in the classroom with their peer age group, or in the behaviour unit. The school nurse supports the school well with routine medical checks, and trains staff in special procedures. She gives invaluable support to the school in sex education, and parents feel relaxed with the school's provision.
50. Child protection procedures are very good. The headteacher has received refresher training recently, and the special educational needs coordinator, as the deputy child protection officer, has received appropriate training along with other staff. Additionally the school receives a good level of support from the school nurse and social services. There are presently no pupils on the register but the school has good experience of problems and is very vigilant.
51. The school has very high expectations of the behaviour of its pupils, so as to establish a positive teaching and learning and environment. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. The school's "Charter of Rights and Responsibilities" is a fundamental pillar of the school, and the principles are well understood by all pupils. Pupils are involved in the production of class rules, which are well displayed. Staff provide very good adult role models, and have excellent relationships with all pupils, and a strong mutual respect. Adults give praise consistently, which raises further the pupils' self-esteem. Rewards are diverse, allocated appropriately, and give the pupils a strong focus on personal achievement, behaviour and effort. Pupils are also reminded of the need for a team effort through the house system. Sanctions are well understood by pupils and parents, but required only occasionally. The use of letters of apology to resolve problems is effective. Some aspects of the moral provision are assessed and reinforced by pupils and staff during assemblies, or during the personal health and social education lessons. This helps to reinforce the school's values further. The staff and headteacher have a thorough knowledge of any short-term problems between pupils. They are very effective in detecting and eliminating any oppressive behaviour by discrete and sensitive interventions, when necessary.
52. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance continue at a very good level. Parents are made aware of their statutory obligations, and cooperate fully with the school in discharging their responsibilities. The headteacher and staff realise the importance of attendance and

punctuality in the running of the school, and they cooperate as a team in producing a consistently very good result. When absence occurs, families are routinely telephoned if necessary, and letters used effectively, so that unauthorised absence is minimal. Despite tight punctuality procedures a few families are late for school at the start of the day, usually due to traffic problems.

53. Health and safety procedures are good and they are applied thoroughly, through the leadership of the headteacher and an enthusiastic governor. The school is a safe environment for all pupils and staff, despite an above average minor accident rate. The school has a sufficient complement of qualified first aiders, and first aid facilities are good with a separate medical room. Pupils are well acquainted with health and safety principles in the home and at school, through the personal health and social education provision, or by teacher guidance at the start of lessons, where appropriate.
54. The school's procedures for assessment are good overall. In the core subjects of English mathematics and science they are very good. In the last two years the senior management team and governors have increasingly recognised the importance and usefulness of detailed analysis of data to monitor and improve standards. For example nationally available information showed that although overall, Year 2 pupils had far exceeded the standards attained nationally in science, there were no pupils who scored at a higher level (Level 3). This led to the science co-ordinator analysing pupils' answers to questions to ascertain where the curriculum needed improvement to enable standards to improve. It was found that there was insufficient emphasis on investigative science. This has been remedied and the school expects approximately twenty five per cent more pupils to reach above average test results this summer. There are similar examples in mathematics and English.
55. There have been rapid improvements in the procedures for assessment in English, mathematics and science. This is because the senior managers questioned what it could do to collect data that would enable it to teach pupils at the optimum level for their prior attainment, and to track pupils' achievement to ascertain whether teaching and the curriculum were effective. Consequently there are now effective systems that regularly check and record pupils' achievement and attainment, and from this, teachers set individual and class targets for future development. With the focus more clearly on how well pupils are learning, the school changed both its teaching and learning policy and its marking policy to encompass more effective procedures. Each lesson now starts with a clear learning objective, and pupils are assessed as to how well they have met this. Teachers check regularly what National Curriculum levels pupils are reaching, and this information is used systematically for future planning.
56. In the remaining curriculum areas there is less emphasis on assessment, although both procedures and the use of assessment are satisfactory. There are regular assessments at the end of units of work and books are regularly marked. However, there is a variance of practice between different teachers which leads to some teachers with responsibility for individual subjects lacking data to show whether teaching and learning is as good as it should be. As with English, mathematics and science lesson objectives are well used to assess the effectiveness of teaching and learning in individual lessons and for future lesson planning.
57. Assessment for children in the Reception is very good and a key to why the Early Years team can plan so effectively. All adults monitor children' learning well throughout the day, in order to plan future provision, underpinned by the team's very good observational and questioning skills. There is a very good system of target setting on large stars for individual children, showing one mathematical and one literacy target for each half term. The Reception teacher reviews these half termly with both her team and the senior management team. Tests for children starting school are carried out systematically, to give teachers a starting point from which to measure children's achievement. Assessment of children's readiness to read is very good. When children start to take books home, there is very good dialogue between home and school in the reading diary, and records are kept of individual and guided reading sessions that are used well to monitor the achievement in this curriculum area. There is very thorough assessment for children at the end of Reception, and the information is passed to Year 1 and discussed systematically

with the next teacher, to ensure continuity of provision for children. The many strengths in the school's care of the pupils have been sustained, and procedures for assessment have developed considerably.

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

58. The last inspection report indicated that the high level of interest and support shown by parents was a strong feature of the school. A significant number of parents participated in the life of the school and there was a high degree of parental satisfaction with the quality of information provided. The school has further strengthened its partnership with parents. There are strong indications that parents have a high degree of interest in their children's education. The Ofsted parents' questionnaire had an improved level of return, compared with the previous inspection. The school has the confidence of all the communities represented within it.
59. Parents' views of the school are now at an overall good level. Parents show specifically a significant increase in their approval regarding homework, work standards, and values and attitudes, whilst most other areas show increases in their satisfaction level. There are three areas of dissatisfaction in the areas of "homework provision" and "well informed on progress", whilst "working closely with parents" causes concern for some parents. A detailed inspection of these matters by inspectors could not agree fully with the parents in these specific matters. Overall, there is a mismatch between some parents' expectations of what it can be reasonably expected to provide. Some additional adverse factors have also influenced the picture in the short term, namely class sizes, and misunderstandings with parental help in classrooms, and the management of the after school "Time Out Club".
60. The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is at a very good level. Many parents find it easy to develop informal communications with teachers and staff, and more disadvantaged parents are discretely supported. The school seeks to have an open door policy, and be a listening and welcoming school, and parents find no restrictions towards developing very good relationships. The school wants to know what parents are thinking about their children's education, and it consults with parents through written questionnaires, and the recently convened Parents' Forum. This is starting to provide a substantial quantity of information that will shape the school's strategic thinking and school development plan. All the school's documentation embraces parents, and indicates their importance in the life of the school.
61. The impact of parents on the work of the school is very good. Some parents and past parents have been recruited as school staff, and approximately one in ten parents play a high quality role within the school, and within classrooms, through listening to readers or helping teachers with school visits. All parent governor roles are filled, and some positions have been covered through competitive elections. They are committed, enthusiastic and gaining a working knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The Home and School Association works tirelessly through an enthusiastic committee to provide memorable and fun events and raise valuable funds for the school. It communicates well with parents and greatly adds to the sense of community within the school.
62. The quality of information for parents is very good, and many aspects show a flair and simplicity in presentation that communicates well with the target audience. The prospectus and the annual governors' report to parents are both high quality and informative documents. Both documents indicate that the school values its parents. However, none of the key statements of the school – ethos, mission, aims or the charter of rights and responsibilities- mention parents, and there is no parent policy. Additionally, parents would benefit from the school's well-written policies being displayed. Notice boards, both internally and externally, are not always informative for parents or indicate the school's pride in presentation. All written communications are very good, mindful of the need to engage parents' interest, regular and timely, and are respectful to the role of parents. Parents receive a high quality newsletter every week, which is eagerly anticipated. Annual reports to parents are good. They give extensive and perceptive feedback about pupils' abilities and performance in all subjects of the National Curriculum. They contain performance against past targets and identify future targets. Reports seek the views of parents, but do not

require pupils to contribute their thoughts on the past or future year. Teachers keep extensive records of parental consultations, which detail achievement and development targets for pupils.

63. The growth of the educational partnership is an increasingly very good feature. Over nine out of ten parents have signed both the home-school agreement and consent form. They are very aware of their statutory obligations regarding attendance and punctuality, and support the school unreservedly to produce a very good outcome. The school has very good turnouts for meetings with the teacher to discuss progress, and celebration assemblies, but the annual governors' meeting for parents is not well supported. The school has not yet developed curriculum evenings for parents, but they are given an overview of topic work each term. An increasingly high level of parents approves of the present homework arrangements, but both pupils and parents would benefit from a regular homework diary. Reading diaries are well used to support a dialogue between teachers and many parents. There is a close collaboration with the parents of pupils with special educational needs, and together the school and parents produce meaningful individual educational plans, with targets, leading to pupils achieving well. When pupils have special difficulties, the school gives good support and parents are well involved, often with outside agencies. Parents are very well supported when their children start school, and they appreciate the clear communication of school routines in the term prior to starting. Parents receive well co-ordinated guidance at the time of transfer to secondary school, and their anxieties are minimised.

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

64. The leadership and management of the school is sound overall. The headteacher provides good leadership and direction for the school. The strong ethos and atmosphere for learning, and the clear emphasis upon including all pupils regardless of their differences or backgrounds, means there is a high level of social harmony amongst pupils in the school.
65. The headteacher is well supported in some, but not all areas of senior management. The senior managers, including those for the Reception, leaders for Years 1-2, and 3-6, and the special educational needs coordinator, carry out their responsibilities efficiently and effectively. Currently the deputy headteacher's role is not sufficiently strategic in setting and raising standards. This in turn has an impact upon the headteacher's role. There is an imbalance of strategic responsibilities between the head and deputy headteacher's roles, leaving the headteacher overloaded as a result.
66. The headteacher and governors are working hard to address the current weaknesses in teaching, and in bringing about the necessary improvements in standards. A wide range of initiatives has been introduced to boost the pupils' achievements over time. Teachers are well supported, for example as many have new year groups, and some have moved to a different phase in the school. The headteacher has taken a very rigorous role in assessing pupils and tracking standards, though this level of involvement is not sustainable without more strategic support from other senior managers.
67. The leadership and management of the Reception are very good. The Reception teacher and nursery nurses work very well as a team, developing and implementing the Foundation Stage curriculum. There is a constant reflection and evaluation of what is being taught and achieved to provide the best curriculum and to use the most interesting methods possible. The talented co-ordinator, new since the previous inspection, has worked extremely hard and effectively to improve provision to turn what was a key issue in the previous report into strength of the school. This is recognised by the Hertfordshire Local Education Authority, and they have chosen Reception to be part of a research project into excellence of Early Years provision. The school has important strengths and several outstanding features that are a direct result of the headteacher's leadership and direction.
68. The inspection included a focused view of how effectively teaching assistants are managed and trained to contribute to the teaching and learning of literacy and mathematics. The delegation of teaching assistants is effective and efficient. The special needs co-ordinator has responsibility

for the smooth day-to-day organisation and management of assistants and ensures that systems of support and communication are maintained. Experienced teaching assistants provide very good support for pupils learning. Between them they have wide-ranging expertise that allows for very effective support in all classes from Reception to Year 6, and for those pupils who have special educational needs, who are fully integrated into the school. There are well-established arrangements for induction and training, with all assistants having undertaken the recent national training initiatives.

69. There is sound monitoring and evaluation of teaching, and new staff, including those recently qualified and trainee teachers, are well supported. Aspects of monitoring have scope for further development, in that the monitoring of teaching is too infrequent, and comments from lesson observations have room for a better balance between description of the lesson, and evaluating the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. The headteacher has also commissioned monitoring from external consultants, adding further rigor and objectivity to the process. The induction programme for new staff is effective and ensures they are integrated smoothly as part of the wider team.
70. The school has systematic procedures for evaluating the impact of its actions on standards. There are regular discussions amongst senior managers about the school's relative strengths and areas for development. This is coupled with much discussion and collaboration with the wider staff team about direction and strategy. This approach has led to a high level of ownership amongst staff, and considerable consistency in the implementation of policies and new initiatives. There are suitable strategies for appraising staff and managing their performance, and the careful tracking of pupils' achievements add relevant evidence to this process.
71. The school improvement plan provides a comprehensive overview of the school's priorities, and provides clear priorities for future improvement. There is much emphasis upon raising standards further. The criteria for measuring success could be more precise and quantified, and the school's current targets for improving standards have not yet been updated in the plan. Although the administration staff uses new technology efficiently, elsewhere, its use for other staff is underdeveloped. The school manages well the wide range of initiatives and demands made upon it externally, and seeks to minimise bureaucracy in many areas. The greater use of new technology for the purposes of planning, recording and reporting would minimise further the teachers' load.
72. The school's financial organisation is good, and priorities are matched appropriately to the budget. Specific grants are used well, for example in supporting pupils with special educational needs in the unit. The resources and staff are used widely across other areas of the school, and more pupils benefit as a result. The administration is efficient and effective, and administrators create a warm and calm atmosphere. Administrative systems are efficient, and ensure the school runs smoothly. The budget carried forward from the previous year is appropriate, and designated for the purposes of redesigning the administrative area, staffing, and necessary building works.
73. The school has clear aims, with considerable emphasis upon the charter of rights and responsibilities for pupils. The aims and values are very well reflected by adults throughout the school.
74. The governing body has a clear idea of the school's relative strengths and areas for development. Governors are led ably by the chair, with a realistic and candid perspective of the school. The governing body maintains a level of rigor and challenge in their evaluation of the school, for example in their analysis of standards and trends, and whether or not the school is adding the necessary value to the pupils' education over time. Financial procedures are efficient, and governors take a full role in shaping the school's direction, following carefully the principles of best value for money.



75. There is a good match of teachers and support staff to meet the demands of the National Curriculum. The accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory overall, though the library has scope for improvement.
  
76. Strengths in the key leadership of the headteacher have been sustained. There has been considerable care in improving the quality of the learning environment both inside and outside the school, and this in turn has had a strong impact on the high quality atmosphere for learning. New weaknesses have emerged in functions of senior management, that in turn have hindered the rate of progress, particularly in the central aim of raising standards. Overall improvements have been only satisfactory because of this weakness.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

(\* Indicates these aspects are already included in the school's improvement plan)

77. **\*Raise standards further, giving priority to English, mathematics and science by:**

- improving the quality of pupils' writing;
- improving the pupils' handwriting and presentation through the school;
- ensuring pupils have reading materials that match their levels of attainment consistently;
- ensuring teaching is good or better in all year groups in English, mathematics and science;
- ensuring more pupils reach the higher levels in English, mathematics and science.

As referred to in paragraphs 1, 4, 5, 7, 9, 20, 24, 25, 30, 32, 98, 100, 102-104, 106, 111, 115, 118, 121 and 122.

78. **Eradicate the weaknesses in teaching by:**

- setting high expectations of what pupils achieve;
- ensuring work is well matched, and challenging to the pupils' wide-ranging needs.

As referred to in paragraphs 5, 13, 20, 21, 24, 25, 32, 98, 106, 115 and 142.

79. **\*Raise standards further in ICT by:**

- improving the coordination of the subject, to provide clarity and direction for raising standards;
- improve teaching in ICT;
- ensuring ICT is used effectively and systematically across the curriculum;
- adopting a "safe internet use" policy, so that parents are fully informed when their children learn new skills about the internet and its use;
- increase the range of ICT software for pupils.

As referred to in paragraphs 8, 9, 27, 35, 94, 106, 108, 112, 122, 128, 132, 136, 141-146 and 148.

80. **Improve aspects of the leadership and management by:**

- ensuring key functions of the deputy headteacher's role are operating strategically, and having the necessary impact on standards;
- establishing greater rigour in monitoring teaching and learning.

As referred to in paragraphs 65, 66, 69 and 76.

81. The school may also wish to consider the following less serious areas:

- liaise further with parents, where there is a mismatch of expectations between home and school, particularly in relation to homework, information to parents about the children's progress, and the partnership between home and school;
- establish greater consistency in the setting of homework;
- monitor the balance of the curriculum.

As referred to in paragraphs 34, 59, 63, 133 and 139.

## PROVISION FOR PUPILS WITH EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES

82. The school has a specialist unit for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are places for eight pupils. Pupils come from a wide area geographically, and most have statements of special educational needs. A growing proportion of the pupils referred to the unit has additional special educational needs and autistic spectrum disorder. The work of the unit is very well integrated into the life of the school. Pupils have a good balance between focused and individual support, group work and regular contact with their peers in class lessons.
83. The programme of support ensures all pupils, regardless of their level of special educational needs are included fully into the wider life of the school. The special educational needs coordinator works very closely with teachers to ensure pupils from the unit have the best opportunities to be included in lessons. Pupils are very well supported during lessons by teaching and learning support assistants. They achieve a suitable balance between support for the individual pupils, whilst helping them to become independent and responsible for themselves beyond the security of the unit.
84. There are many good examples where pupils from the unit are included fully into lessons, and make a useful contribution in the process. The school's strong ethos where all pupils are valued, included and respected, regardless of their individual differences or backgrounds has a very positive impact in these practical situations. Pupils from the unit are welcomed by teachers and pupils alike, and there is genuine appreciation for them when they join the class. This attitude in turn ensures the pupils feel able to offer their own ideas, settle quickly into the activities, and achieve well as a result. All staff are keen to support pupils from the unit, and make every effort to overcome difficulties and challenges that the pupils may bring.
85. Teaching in the unit is good, and there are very good strategies for managing more challenging behaviour. The policies and practices are implemented consistently elsewhere in the school, thus providing pupils with similar messages from adults wherever they may be during the day.
86. The leadership and management of the unit is good. Staff work as an efficient and effective team both in the unit and across the school. The unit, though separate within the building, is not isolated in any way. There is scope for further improving the environment, resources and furnishings. There were strengths identified from the previous inspection that have been sustained, and there have been sound improvements since that time in the provision.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	48
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	30

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	10	23	11	4	0	0
Percentage	0	21	48	23	8	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	229
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	55

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.3

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	20	14	34

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	20	20
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	33	34	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (87)	100 (84)	100 (97)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20	20	20
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	34	34	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (87)	100 (97)	100 (87)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

*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
	2001	18	17	35

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	10	16
	Girls	17	15	17
	Total	28	25	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80 (83)	71 (75)	94 (86)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	14	12
	Girls	17	16	17
	Total	31	30	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	89 (78)	86 (81)	83 (86)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

*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	2
Black – other	0
Indian	5
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	0
White	221
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

**Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	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)	12
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	28
Average class size	29

**Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	202

**Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	0
Total number of education support staff	0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	0
Number of pupils per FTE adult	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Financial information**

Financial year	2001/2002
	£
Total income	570,753
Total expenditure	576,408
Expenditure per pupil	2,517
Balance brought forward from previous year	50,480
Balance carried forward to next year	30,218

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	7
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	229
Number of questionnaires returned	117

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	31	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	43	47	4	3	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	46	46	8	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	51	17	3	2
The teaching is good.	54	40	0	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	47	17	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	61	30	3	4	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	43	53	2	2	0
The school works closely with parents.	30	52	16	2	0
The school is well led and managed.	47	41	7	2	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	49	46	3	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	59	36	4	1	1

**Please find additional comments under the section of parents' and carers' views in the summary.**



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

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

87. Children start Reception full time in the September or Easter terms before they are five. There is a flexible part time arrangement to suit each child for the first few weeks. Most have had pre school provision and many are above average in personal social and emotional development and in speaking and listening skills and have broadly average standards in other curriculum areas, although within each curriculum aspect there is a sizeable minority who are above average. Children are taught well and the vast majority are on course to exceed the Early Learning Goals in mathematics, communications, language and literacy, and knowledge and understanding of the world, and to far exceed the goals for personal, social, and emotional development. They are on course to meet the goals in the remaining areas when they start Year 1.
88. There is very close contact with the parents and a genuine sense of partnership with them. They are invited to school before their children start, to learn about school routines and they receive good information through the reading diary. There is useful daily contact with teachers about how to help their child at home, and this contributes positively to children settling in happily. There are many opportunities for parents to come into school to see what their children are learning. The Reception curriculum is good. It offers an interesting range of good quality learning opportunities. It is relevant and meaningful as it links the different curriculum areas through a common theme or topic. Consequently, children are interested in coming to school. It is enhanced by good quality resources both indoors and out. Children follow the national framework that includes six areas of learning, known as the "Early Learning Goals". There are no children needing provision for identified special educational needs.
89. The leadership and management of the Reception provision is very good. Teachers and nursery nurses work very well as a team. They develop and implement the curriculum effectively through a good mix of whole class and small group teaching. This is very well planned, and based on learning through practical experiences and purposeful play. There is constant reflection on and evaluation of what is being taught and achieved, in order to provide the best curriculum and most interesting methods possible.
90. During the inspection, teaching had been so effectively planned in advance by the whole nursery team, that the nursery nurse, acting as an unqualified teacher, and supported well by a recently appointed nursery nurse took over at short notice in the class teacher's absence. There were many examples of good teaching, and in some instances very good teaching. Assessment is very good and a major reason why the team plan so effectively. All adults monitor closely the children's learning in order to plan future provision effectively. There is a very good system of target setting on large stars for individual children. They show one mathematical and one literacy target for each half term which are shared with both children and their parents. The Reception teacher reviews these half termly with both her team and the senior management team. Tests for children starting school are carried out to give teachers a starting point from which to measure children's achievement. The assessment of children's readiness to read is very good and once children start to take books home, the very good dialogue between home and school in the record book and records kept of individual and guided reading sessions monitors the achievement in this curriculum area well. Very thorough end of Reception assessments are passed to Year 1 and discussed with the next teacher to ensure continuity of provision for children. The talented co-ordinator, new since the previous inspection, has worked extremely hard and effectively to turn Early Years provision that caused concern and formed a key issue in the previous report into a strength of the school. This is recognised, as the Local Education Authority that has chosen Reception to be part of a research project into excellence of Early Years provision being carried out by Worcester University and has recommended the unit for a county kite mark for its high standard of early years provision.

## **Social emotional and personal development.**

91. Children are on course to far exceed this Early Learning Goal. Adults manage children very well in a caring and supportive environment, praising children's efforts, and they make them feel valued and special. They speak kindly and politely and expect children to do the same, constantly promoting good manners, taking turns and fostering attitudes of respect for others. Teachers encourage good table manners in the dining room and sit with children helping to make mealtimes a sociable occasion. Relationships within the class are very good. Children understand the class rules, which they all sign in agreement. The very good attitudes to learning and very good behaviour at school enables children to achieve well, face the challenge of new learning and this leads to a very purposeful and happy working day.
92. The personal, social and health education programme and assemblies make a good contribution to this area of development. For example, children reflect on how they are the most precious things in God's sight and discuss consequences of actions of story characters that they can relate to their own lives, such as the greedy animals trying, by unfair means, to win the race in the Chinese New Year fable. Children conform very well to school routines and dress and undress themselves with minimum help for playtime and physical education lessons. They are very polite, helpful, willing, do as they are told and listen carefully to instructions. Teachers provide good opportunities for children to take responsibility for their own lives. They keep the room tidy and take registers to the office in the main school. Children also work well independently, confidently trying out new activities, initiating ideas, and collaborating well in a group, such as when presenting a class assembly about teddies for the whole school and their parents. Children are keen to learn and have very good relationships with each other and the adults who work with them. The house system enables children to develop friendships with children in other age groups and classes. The Reception teacher provides good opportunities for co-operative play and developing social skills in the different practical areas such as the paint mixing table or musical instruments corner. Very good teaching was seen in this curriculum area during the inspection.

## **Communication, Language, and literacy.**

93. This area of development is seen by the school as key to learning, and is given a very good emphasis. Children are on course to exceed this Early Learning Goal, and the teaching is good. Children follow the Reception Year National Literacy Strategy, and their skills in reading and writing develop well. They enjoy joining with the rest of the school during book-week, dressing up as their favourite character and talking about favourite stories. All adults have a very good knowledge of how to teach the basic skills using methods that stimulate and interest the children. Teachers constantly assess what stage children have reached and plan teaching to keep them learning at an optimum rate or spend more time reinforcing if that is what is needed. Teachers provide a very wide range of opportunities for speaking and listening to develop children's vocabulary and communication skills, such as role-play in the class zoo. They have very good questioning skills, which result in children giving extended answers. Most children have a very good knowledge of traditional stories such as Hansel and Gretel and nursery rhymes, and enjoy reading books such as Elmer the Elephant as part of a whole class group. They distinguish between text and illustrations, notice detail in the pictures, and retell stories in their own words. Higher attaining children suggest different endings and read independently with good expression at a level usually found at the end of Year 1. Children learn their sounds very well by following the school's phonic programme which links spoken and written work very well, allowing spelling to develop naturally alongside reading and gives children the tools to work out unknown text. Children are taught that not all words sound out and take these words home to learn. Reading books from the graded reading scheme are taken home daily to share with parents, and children read regularly and individually to adults at school as well as taking part in guided group reading sessions. Handwriting skills develop well. Teachers lead children systematically through the recognised stages needed to become independent writers. They first encouraged children to have a go at writing; such as taking down telephone messages on paper and whiteboards in the role play area. They scribed children's dictation about their news and children copied over the teacher's writing, and then underneath more independently, starting to

use recognisable and correctly formed letters. By the end of the year, higher attaining children, write their own stories and factual writing about using simple dictionaries and correct punctuation. The display about winter has some very good creative writing, such as 'Snow is crispy white sugar'. Most children achieve the expected standard in writing by the end of the year. There is limited evidence of the use of computer programs to support literacy.

### **Mathematical Development.**

94. Children are on course to exceed this Early Learning Goal. During the inspection teaching and learning in this area was good. It covered the element of counting, ordering, and understanding the number system and positional vocabulary. Children count forward and backwards to twenty by half way through the year. Higher attaining children add and subtract as conventional sums, forming their numbers and symbols correctly and neatly. Teachers used school routines well to enhance children's number skills. For example, they asked children to count the number present during registration. One higher attaining child mentally worked out that 22 school dinners and five packed lunches made 27 altogether. Children respond well to using interesting resources, such as zoo animals to develop their understanding of vocabulary, or coloured bricks to make sequential patterns. Most children understand that different mathematical words have similar meanings such as 'next to' and 'beside'. Higher attaining children apply this knowledge to positioning coloured squares correctly in their books unaided. Children follow the National Numeracy Strategy for Reception classes and teaching is carried out through practical experiences such as measuring the length of a piece of paper by the number of teddies that can lay along it or weighing conkers or ingredients for cooking. Teaching makes meaningful links with mathematics and other areas of the curriculum. For example, children made batik work symmetrical butterflies, and printed repeated patterns using paint and different shapes. In literacy, children read the story of the Three Bears and then applied the vocabulary to practical number work about comparative sizes. Teachers make very good use of classroom assistants to work with small groups and keep detailed observations of children's understanding in order to plan the next stages of their development. However, there is insufficient evidence of computer programs being used to support the different aspects of mathematics.

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

95. Children are on course to exceed this Early Learning Goal. There was limited opportunity to observe this area during the inspection although the photographic record shows pupils have a wide ranging and stimulating curriculum. Teaching and learning are good. They are very well planned to ensure children gain a rounded development through practical activities. Children have recently been to Whipsnade Zoo and talked knowledgeably about the different animals they have seen. They went to Legoland and found out about building structures. Teachers use these visits well to develop children's knowledge when they return to school. For example, using replica toy animals, children discussed the different patterns on the skin of tigers and giraffes and looked around to find different patterns of bricks in houses and buildings in the locality. Children are taken on walks around the school and to the local shops and draw simple route maps when they return. They know about the past through talking to visitors, such as a grandma who talked about her childhood and the toys she liked to play with, and through visiting the toy museum. During multicultural week, children learnt a great deal about other cultures and drew Rangoli patterns in chalk on the playground. Most pupils confidently use the mouse in computer programs to navigate around the screen and to click on screen tools, such as when colouring umbrellas, they changed their colour and pattern.

### **Physical development.**

96. Teaching and learning, from the limited evidence available in this area appears satisfactory and by the end of the Foundation Stage children are on course to meet this Early Learning Goal. In the one physical education lesson observed, teaching was satisfactory. Children followed a sequence of movements in a 'follow my leader' game. However, the lesson lacked variety and pace. Teaching correctly took care to warm up and cool down and to encourage children to put their hand on their heart after the warm up exercises to feel it beating hard. However, it must be

remembered that the nursery nurse took the lesson at short notice. During the day children have very good opportunities to develop their awareness of space and movement through using the wheeled vehicles and climbing apparatus in their spacious gated area. They used the space in the hall and outdoors well and move safely in a variety of ways. In the classroom, they handled tools, objects, construction, and malleable materials safely and with increasing control, developing their smaller muscles and hand/eye co-ordination. For example, they used scissors to cut different types of paper to make collages of zoo animals and made invitation cards for their class party. They use paintbrushes with increasing skill and concentration and thread beads carefully on laces for counting games.

### **Creative development.**

97. There was no direct observation of teaching and learning of this area, but photographic evidence and regular classroom activities and displays show that both are good. Children are on course to meet this Early Learning Goal, and some are likely to exceed the goal. Children develop their imagination and imaginative vocabulary well during role-play activities such as acting the class zoo or playing with small world toys linked to the class topic. They took part in whole class productions such as 'The Grumpy Sheep', which they performed for their parents at Christmas. There are regular opportunities for creative play to develop children's imagination and social skills. For example, a table was set up where children tried mixing different coloured powder paints and there were easels with brightly coloured poster paints for free expression on large white paper. The music corner has a variety of colourful instruments, which groups of children use to compose their own songs and rhythms. Children have looked at famous paintings such as Patchwork by Paul Klee and then interpreted it in their own way through using different textured paper squares.

### **ENGLISH**

98. Standards in English are above the national average overall. In the most recent tests, in 2001, attainment in English by pupils in Year 2 was above the national average in reading and well above the national average in writing. Attainment in English was at the national average for Year 6. The proportion of pupils in Year 2 attaining the higher Level 3 in reading and writing in the national tests was above that in schools nationally. Compared with similar schools, Year 2 pupils attained average standards in reading. However, Year 6 pupils' attainment in the tests of both the expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5 was below the average compared with similar schools. Standards observed during the inspection in lessons, pupils' workbooks and pupils' reading were above average overall, reflecting improvements in teaching, particularly in Year 6, in the current year. Evidence during the inspection showed the pupils reaching standards by Year 2 that are above average in reading, writing and spelling. Some higher attaining pupils could reach even higher standards in reading given greater challenge in their reading materials, and few pupils were seen to be working at the higher level in writing. Evidence during the inspection by Year 6 showed pupils reaching standards that are above average in English, though there are fewer than should realistically be expected reaching the higher level. Standards in Year 5 during the inspection were too low, and pupils, both higher attainers and those with special educational needs have not been achieving as they should over time. Scrutiny of books showed too little work covered over time, and a lack of challenge for higher attaining pupils.
99. Pupils' achievement as they go through the school varies. It is satisfactory overall. Pupils' achieve well in speaking and listening. Pupils in all years speak fluently and listen carefully to teachers and each other, for example when they are discussing the moral of a story they are studying. Year 2 pupils give confident, well prepared oral presentations on what they have learnt through a homework project on a famous historical character they have chosen, such as Anne Frank or Lord Nelson. They readily ask probing questions, comment thoughtfully on their learning and make suggestions about how their work and that of their classmates can be improved.
100. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in reading by Year 2. They make good gains in learning sounds linked to letters when they enter Year 1, building well on the confidence they gain in the

Reception in speaking and listening and in beginning to recognise and write simple words and phrases. By Year 2, they work out words they do not know by using their knowledge of letter sounds and spelling patterns. They confidently choose books from their classroom stock and know which are fiction and which are non-fiction books. They enjoy visiting libraries. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their targets because they are very well supported by their teachers, and the school's support staff. However, the higher attaining pupils do not always make as much progress as they could because the school does not offer them challenging books to read. Some pupils in Year 2 are reading books like Roald Dahl's "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" at home, but are expected to read much simpler early readers at school. They use the contents page and blurb on the back cover to judge whether a non-fiction book has the information they need, but have not yet been taught to use an index though they have the potential to do so.

101. Although their achievement in reading is uneven between Years 3 and 5, by Year 6, all pupils have become confident readers who know a range of good children's authors, such as C S Lewis, Jacqueline Wilson and Philip Pullman. The school is exceptionally successful in helping its oldest pupils develop good skills in understanding the underlying meanings of passages from books like "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe". Lower attaining pupils, including some with special educational needs readily identified the key sentences in extracts from this book in a good lesson observed, and confidently talked about how the author used a "time-slip" to move the characters from a recognisably real world to a very different imaginary one. By Year 6, most pupils read widely and enthusiastically at home and school and the higher attainers talk with unusually sophisticated understanding about the typical types of stories the authors they know write. They use libraries regularly outside school and readily use the index to find information in a non-fiction book on a topic they are studying. However, most older pupils say they are much less interested in non-fiction books than fiction. This is partly because the school has not done enough to develop its library to widen their knowledge and enjoyment of the adult reference books and good non-fiction which they are capable of reading.
102. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in writing overall in Years 1 and 2, but most are not making enough progress in handwriting. Pupils in Year 1 begin to plan stories to write, and higher attainers confidently write sentences like, "My Granny is amazing. Becos she can nit my clothes." By Year 2, they write stories, accounts of things they have recently done, short plays and very simple book reviews. However, few pupils, including the higher attainers, write extended stories because the tasks set do not plan well enough for their potential.
103. Pupils' attainment in writing in Years 3- 6 is uneven, because the variety of work and the degree of challenge they are set in different years varies greatly. For example, in some classes, pupils are often set limited textbook, sentence completion exercises, and word searches. By Year 6 however, they achieve well, because they are regularly set a wide range of interesting and challenging writing tasks which are drawn from good classroom work on authors like Dickens, Shakespeare and Longfellow. For example, Year 6 pupils wrote prose versions of the Hiawatha story after reading the poem. Lower attaining pupils created a simple prose version of "Jabberwocky". They also develop an exceptionally mature style in presenting written arguments on a controversial topic, such as drafting a letter to a newspaper editor on whether smoking should be allowed in public places. This is the result of the very good teaching they are given on how to write formal arguments. Lower attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, also learn how to write in these styles, but their progress is held back by the continuing errors they make in punctuation and spelling of common words. Whilst almost all other pupils write in a well formed legible joined style, some of the lower attainers still use capitals in the middle of words.
104. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teaching is good in Years 1-2, and satisfactory in Years 3-6. There were examples of very good teaching in Years 1 and 6. Very good teaching is characterised by very good planning for pupils of all abilities, good structuring and use of time, and use of challenging tasks and imaginative resources. For example, Year 1 pupils made good gains in their learning to write independently in one lesson because the teacher included an intriguing task of re-ordering muddled sentences, using the capital letters and full stops as

clues. This helped them use capitals and full stops correctly when they wrote their own sentences. The very good teaching of reading and writing in Year 6 benefits from the very good quality literature used as resources and models and the demanding tasks set for pupils of all abilities. A strength of almost all lessons observed, was the very good use made of the school's system of explaining to pupils what features the teacher is looking for in their work, and the way in which they ask pupils to use simple hand signals to show whether they understand their tasks well, are unsure or do not understand.

105. Teachers also work very well with classroom assistants and this enables pupils with special educational needs to make good progress in relation to their learning needs. Most teachers of older pupils use a good system of teaching pupils to work through a numbered checklist to check their writing, and where this is used it helps pupils to improve the quality of their work. Teachers also set clear targets for pupils, although the quality and appropriateness of the targets is uneven between different year groups. It is used particularly well in Year 6, where pupils and teachers regularly check the progress they are making towards their targets in reading and writing. Teachers mark pupils' written work carefully, and most give good advice on what pupils are doing well and how to improve their work. However, in some pupils' books, teachers mainly write comments like "good work" without any guidance on what could be improved. The amount and quality of homework set is very varied. In some years, and particularly Year 6, pupils are regularly set interesting and challenging work to do, whilst in other years it is not regularly set.
106. Unsatisfactory teaching is characterised by too little planning, over-dependence on textbook exercises, lack of challenge for the higher attainers and too little guidance for lower attainers. For example, in Year 5, all pupils were set the same task of beginning to write a fable using a pre-supplied storyline, when the class contained many higher attaining pupils with a sophisticated understanding of the fable format and the potential to complete a more original fable of their own. In some classes, teachers do not consistently use the school's handwriting style, or they do not give handwriting lessons regularly enough and this holds back pupils' progress in handwriting. A common weakness in almost all lessons is that ICT is very rarely used to support reading or writing, although each classroom has at least one computer and many lessons include tasks in which pupils draft and revise their writing or need to read a variety of source material. Because the computers are not yet equipped with "talking" word-processing software and word banks, not enough is being done to help pupils with special educational needs make more progress in writing independently.
107. Pupils enjoy their English lessons and are very keen to contribute ideas and comments in discussions. They are very ready to help classmates in group work and support them where they are struggling. They set to work promptly, and do their best to help their own learning, for example, being ready to consult dictionaries and checklists without being prompted. There are many good opportunities where the pupils' literacy skills are developed across the curriculum. In every day life around the school, pupils are encouraged to read articles from newspapers, for example about the school's success in a local horticultural competition. They read signs and messages, for example reminding them of daily events, clubs and the school council. Elsewhere, in other subjects such as science, pupils are encouraged to read instructions and labels of items before analysing their contents. There are books made by pupils that include poetry and stories, illustrated creatively. These resources add further interest to the pupils. Much of the pupils' work is labelled carefully around the school, explaining what they did, and how the work was completed. The many and varied displays were also carefully described, and pupils could be seen using their literacy skills usefully in such situations.
108. Since the last inspection, the school has successfully adopted the National Literacy Strategy and this has improved the quality of the English curriculum. It has also improved the school's provision for literacy in other subjects, since pupils are now better taught to recognise and produce different written styles, and to construct reports and arguments. Attainment has risen but not consistently over the years, and it has not improved as much as in other schools. Pupils' knowledge of language, and younger pupils' knowledge of letter sounds have greatly improved. Pupils are achieving more in Years 1 and 2. However, the school has not done

enough to improve the use of ICT to support learning, which was identified as needing improvement in the previous report.

109. The co-ordinator has worked energetically and enthusiastically to improve the subject. She has supported the introduction of the successful approaches being used in Year 6, and has improved the range of books and resources to help pupils learn letter-sound relationships. There are regular checks made of the teachers' long and medium term planning, but this does not include checking weekly and lesson planning and pupils' workbooks closely enough to identify the uneven quality of challenge and support for lower attaining pupils in some years. Although the school uses test results well to identify areas for improvement and set targets, not enough use is made of the excellent assessments regularly made by classroom assistants of pupils' learning in lessons to identify where improvements are needed

## **MATHEMATICS**

110. Since the last inspection, high standards have been sustained in mathematics for pupils by the end of Year 2, though there has been a decline in the previously high standards reported by the end of Year 6. The school is now back on track to see standards improve.
111. In the most recent national tests in 2001, by Year 2, pupils reached standards that were very high in mathematics, and in the top five per cent nationally. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher level (Level 3) was well above the national average. Standards in the most recent national test results in Year 6 were in line with the national average, and compared with similar schools, standards were below average. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher level (Level 5) was above the national average, and in line compared to similar schools. The school rightly analysed these results and found underachievement in Year 6, as pupils were entering the school with above average attainment, and leaving with standards that were only in line with the national average. Evidence from the inspection judged standards to be above average by Year 2 in mathematics, and a significant minority of pupils were reaching standards well above average. By Year 6, inspection evidence found standards to be above average, though not enough pupils were reaching standards well above average, considering their attainment on entry to the school. Standards in mathematics in Year 5 during the inspection were too low. Higher attaining pupils were not challenged, and lower attainers were often confused and lost with the tasks required of them. Pupils are achieving well by the end of Year 2 in mathematics, and their achievement is satisfactory by the end of Year 6. This is because the pupils learn more rapidly and evenly during Years 1-2 than they do currently between Years 3-6.
112. Pupils have a secure start to school life, with considerable emphasis upon developing their mathematical skills in a variety of practical contexts. In Year 1, there is an appropriate focus upon developing basic number skills such as addition, subtraction, number patterns, shape and odd and even numbers. By Year 2, many learn to use mathematical language and vocabulary with increasing accuracy. They understand fractions such as halves and quarters, and begin to use graphs to depict information. Work is well matched to the pupils' range of attainment, and covers all the requirements of the National Curriculum. Many achieve well as a result of the good teaching. The National Numeracy Strategy is being well implemented; and teachers are using the mental arithmetic sessions effectively to sharpen the pupils' skills in doubling, halving and identifying number patterns. There are few opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills in conjunction with ICT and the use of computers in mathematics is currently underdeveloped.
113. By Year 6, pupils' mathematical knowledge is gaining ground that had been lost previously. This is because of the very effective teaching now in Year 6, and the clear impact on pupils' learning and achievement, for example in setting for the range of attainment. In addition, the booster classes held before school at the beginning and end of the week, and the extension classes arranged at a nearby secondary school with beacon status for its high quality work, are having a significant impact on standards. Pupils are becoming increasingly analytical, and targets for further improvement help focus their thinking further. When studying fractions, for example, pupils were quick to grasp the relationship between fractions, decimals and percentages. Pupils

are quick to find ways of solving mathematical problems, and understand how to measure angles accurately. They are sharp to see links between numbers, and thoroughly enjoy mental mathematics.

114. The pupils' mathematical skills are being well used in other subjects; for example, as they make observations about temperature, conduct surveys and make accurate predictions in their scientific investigations that are linked to mathematical skills.
115. Teaching is good in Years 1-2, and satisfactory overall in Years 3-6. There are examples of very good teaching in Year 6, but this is undermined by weaknesses just prior to that, where there is insufficient challenge, and too little is accomplished as a result. Higher attaining pupils could achieve more, and lower attainers struggle quietly as they are confused by the lack of clear explanations to tasks and mathematical concepts. Learning support assistants make a very valuable contribution in such circumstances and retrieve some of the learning opportunities when working with individuals or small groups. The most effective teaching is characterised by brisk starts to lessons, with rigorous use of questions to challenge the pupils' thinking. The very effective mental mathematics sessions ensure pupils stay sharp and agile in their responses to mathematical problems. The difference between good and satisfactory teaching is mostly due to the pace of lessons. Overall pupils are keen and interested in mathematics, and most teaching enables them to learn effectively, sustain concentration and persevere well throughout lessons.
116. Mathematics is managed well and led with enthusiasm and clarity. The subject leader has a clear understanding of the priorities for future development. High standards have been sustained for pupils by the end of Year 2, but there has been a decline in the most recent test results for pupils in Year 6. The school has put in place a secure strategy for further improvement, and is working hard to compensate for this weakness. Overall improvement has been satisfactory since the last inspection.

## SCIENCE

117. The school's performance in science is above the national average by Year 2 and Year 6, and close to average when compared to similar schools. This is shown by national test results, and confirmed by inspection evidence. Standards have been maintained at a similar level to the previous inspection and have improved in Year 1-2, and a significant minority of pupils are reaching standards that are well above average. However, results have fluctuated from year to year and are only just keeping pace with the national trend of improvement.
118. Fewer pupils have attained the higher levels of National Curriculum in science than could reasonably be expected to do so, either at the end of Year 2 or Year 6. However the school has started to use the nationally available data very analytically to pinpoint where pupils could do better. As a result, there have been changes to the curriculum and teaching methods in order to bring about the necessary improvements. It has also placed a particular focus on investigative science, and teaching pupils to apply their scientific knowledge to new situations. Therefore it is well placed for a more pupils to reach the higher levels in future years, and is confident of higher scores in national tests this year. All pupils in the school are very environmentally aware and have contributed to making very high quality environmental areas within the grounds, for which they have received many prestigious local awards. Two dedicated and enthusiastic classroom assistants run gardening clubs for all age groups and their work not only makes the school grounds a delightful learning environment, but it also raises the scientific understanding of pupils who attend.
119. Last year at the end of Year 2 all but a very few pupils with identified special needs attained the nationally expected level (Level 2), but none scored a higher level because they did not receive the teaching to enable them to do so. Whilst pupils' knowledge and understanding of living things were good because of the high focus on the environment, they had not covered a curriculum at a suitable level to do so in the remaining aspects of science. The teacher with responsibility for science identified this through analysing data. The school confidently expects about a quarter of its pupils to attain an above average score (Level 3) this year. This is because



of the revised, broad curriculum, taught at an appropriate level, with teachers setting targets for each pupil and keeping a regular eye on the National Curriculum level they are attaining.

120. Standards of work seen in Year 2 for most pupils are very high. Pupils are achieving well in Years 1-2, building successfully on the good start they have in Reception. Lower attaining pupils and those with special needs achieve well as very able classroom assistants support them in small groups. All pupils understand the concept of a fair test and are very careful to think of the ways they can ensure this in their experiments. Pupils know that materials have different properties. For example, through wrapping ice cubes in different materials and recording the rate they melted, pupils understood that some materials insulate better than others. They know that plants need light, water and warmth to develop by growing cress and beans and can name the main parts of animals and plants. They know that certain leaves such as cabbage and lettuce and roots such as carrots are edible, but some are not. Pupils carry out experiments to show that different vehicles cover different distances when starting from the same point on a ramp, measuring and making tables of their answers. Higher attaining pupils write reports of their experiments unaided, usually drawing conclusions based on scientific ideas. Pupils realise that vehicles travel further on a polished floor than on the carpet and the higher attaining pupils know this is affected by friction. They collaborate well in small groups, which supports their personal development well. They are interested in their experiments and carry them out sensibly. Higher attaining pupils are starting to think well scientifically and these practical methods enable them to explore their ideas. For example one boy noticed a car that followed a curved path might appear not to have travelled as far as one going straight but had in reality, showing very good observational skills. He also applied his mathematical knowledge well by suggesting this could best be measured using a piece of string.
121. Standards of work by Year 6 are above average because the specialist teaching in Year 6 is very good, and pupils learn very well in the lessons. The school is on course to meet its targets and maintain similar percentages in the national tests to last year with a slight improvement in the percentage of pupils attaining at high and very high levels (Levels 5 and 6). New initiatives, such as enhancement clubs for higher attainers, the opportunity to use the secondary school science laboratories, and extra homework are helping to raise standards further. Pupils have very good general scientific knowledge and are aware of environmental issues and current scientific research through the activities of Science Week and links with the local scientific research laboratories. For example, a Nigerian scientist talked to pupils about her work on genetically modified crops for developing countries. Pupils discussed both the scientific and moral issues surrounding this, which made a good impact also on their moral and cultural development. Achievement in Years 3-6 overall is satisfactory, but it does not maintain the rate that is currently shown by pupils in Years 1-2. Although teaching is satisfactory in Years 3 and 5 it does not enable pupils to move forward at the rate that they show they can do when in Years 4 and 6. Also, the target setting and monitoring system has not yet fully impacted on raising standards in all classes, and pupils now in Years 3, 4, 5, and 6 did not have the benefit of the present strong curriculum when they were younger.
122. Overall, teaching is good and pupils learn well in lessons. In the very best teaching, there is a high level of scientific knowledge that enables teachers to ask questions which stretch the limits of pupils' understanding and which challenges pupils' thinking at whatever level of prior attainment they have. In these lessons, learning is fun and resources are used very well to give pupils a good understanding of particular concepts. For example, Year 6 was studying reversible and irreversible change during the inspection. The teacher was demonstrating how heat causes an irreversible chemical reaction by making a demonstration cake for the class. Having broken one egg in the bowl the teacher threw another for a pupil to catch, carefully engineered to drop on the table. This amply demonstrated to all pupils that this egg had been irreversibly changed by heat causing a chemical reaction and had been hard boiled - a lesson they will remember for a long time! A feature of the very good teaching in Years 4 and 6 is the pace of lessons which move swiftly, keeping pupils interested and motivated and learning at a very high rate. Throughout the school, teachers manage pupils very well and are now using assessment very well to monitor how well pupils are attaining in National Curriculum terms and to set challenging targets for them. Homework is very well used in Year 6 to support classroom learning. Where

teaching is less effective, there is insufficient focus on the scientific elements of practical work. For example, when teaching about vibration and sound, although there was good use of musical instruments as resources to motivate pupils, there was an over concentration on the musical features rather than scientific principles. Therefore pupils learnt less science, but more music than was to be expected. Throughout the school, teachers make insufficient use of ICT as a tool within science.

123. Science is very well led and managed. The teacher with responsibility is very effectively raising standards, through a sharp analysis of national data and the results of ongoing testing within school. Answers on question papers are analysed and the curriculum strengthened accordingly in areas where pupils need more practice. The biggest improvement she has made that has had immediate impact both on standards and the enjoyment of science is changing the teaching style to a much more practical and investigative approach. Science is led by example with enthusiasm and drive. This includes the effective organisation of a very interesting and diverse whole school Science week that saw visiting theatre groups act scenarios about the dangers of drugs misuse and recycling. The science coordinator belongs to a cluster group of schools to share good practice and uses the facilities of Rothampsted laboratories very well to enhance pupils' learning. Scientists there provided an insect hunt for pupils and provided a microscope for the school as well as sending visiting guest speakers. Improvements overall have been sound since the previous inspection.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

124. During the week of the inspection only one art lesson was observed. Evidence was also drawn from artwork displayed, visual records of pupils at work, classroom displays and teachers' planning. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is above average. This represents sound improvement since the last inspection, where attainment was reported as average.
125. As they go through the school, pupils achieve well in learning to work in a variety of media, including work in textiles, collage, chalks, pastels and paint. They develop good levels of skill in working in two and three dimensional projects, for example, working from simple pattern and shape making with modelling material and clay in Years 1 and 2, through to sculpting wood and stone with chisels in Year 6. They are given regular opportunities to extend their drawing and use of colour through observational drawing exercises of animals and plants and through using sketchbooks to explore colour and style. Pupils develop their own work through studies of the work of a range of painters and crafts workers from different periods and cultures, including Roman and Greek pottery, Indian textiles, Matisse, Klee and American Pop Artists. They use sketchbooks very effectively in Year 6 to make connections between these works and their own ideas.
126. The quality and range of the work they do benefits from the good range of local artists they work with during the school's Art Week. For example, undertaking an adventurous outdoor turf landscaping project, as well as creating large scale murals and hangings, small scale stained glass and indoor and outdoor sculpture projects. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well as do higher attaining pupils. The school provides well for gifted and talented pupils by encouraging them to participate in national competitions, and a number have won national awards.
127. The teaching of art is good overall. Good teaching was seen in Year 6 where the teacher had used the Internet and good quality art books to introduce the work of Andy Warhol. Pupils were set to develop sketchbook work, taking familiar domestic objects or commercial art illustrations and using Warhol-style techniques of transforming the objects through bold colour transpositions, repeated imaging and stylising. Because the work was developed over a series of lessons with challenging tasks set, most pupils moved from simply colouring objects to understanding how the colouring and image repetition process could be used as a transforming one. The teacher drew well on pupils' experience of seeing a current television series on Warhol's work and related newspaper coverage to sustain a high level of interest in discussing how to improve their own work and that of their classmates. Teachers have high expectations

because they work from a very good, challenging scheme of work which has been developed by the subject co-ordinator. There is further scope for work based on studies of heritage artists, such as Rembrandt, Constable and Turner. Teachers constantly encourage pupils to review and improve their work, Pupils respond enthusiastically and take pleasure and pride in the skills they are learning and the work they produce.

128. The subject co-ordinator has made a good contribution to raising standards in art since the last inspection, particularly through the scheme she has developed and through her organisation of the very successful Art week. Art has a very high profile in the school and contributes well to its positive and welcoming ethos both through displays and through its role in bringing artists and the wider community into the school. There is scope for improving the monitoring of the subject beyond taking detailed photographic records, particularly through evaluating the progress pupils make in different years. Although there is an effective informal system of assessment, which is used well by teachers in lessons, there is not yet a formal system of documenting pupils' attainments and progress. There is also scope for improving the use of ICT in the subject, both as a source of traditional and contemporary artists' work and through widening the range of opportunities pupils have to use ICT to make and transform images.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

129. Only one design and technology lesson was observed during the week of the inspection. Taking into account evidence from samples of pupils' work, classroom displays, documentary evidence, including teachers' planning and photographs, standards of work in Year 2 and Year 6 are average. Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall. These standards have been maintained since the last inspection and improvements since then have been satisfactory.
130. Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall as they go through the school, but the rate of progress they make varies between different Year groups. In Years 1 and 2, they investigate how houses are built and make simple models. They examine vegetables and fruit and how they can be served. They make simple puppets and wheeled vehicles. They learn to plan their designs and improve them by adding components, but they do not make as much progress as they should in learning to use the design process to make better products. They sometimes focus too much on decorating models they make rather than making them work better. This is because teaching does not focus enough on design as a process of making products function better. The pupils' achievement in Years 3 - 6 also varies. Pupils achieve appropriately in Years 4 and 6 because they conduct very thorough investigations and evaluations of the products they set out to make, and teachers set high standards for the quality of finish to be achieved. For example, Year 6 pupils take hats apart and use what they have learnt to construct their own hat patterns so that they are well-shaped, fitted and finished. Year 4 pupils use their investigations of electrical circuits and toys which use them, to construct attractive and well functioning electrical loop puzzles. In other years, where teachers' expectations are lower, less attention is given to investigating and documenting existing products, such as toys which use movement mechanisms and simple musical instruments. Most pupils complete the set product, but their documentation describes, rather than analyses, what they did, and the quality of finish is below expectations for their age group. Higher attainers, and those pupils with special educational needs achieve well, because the projects enable them to work at the level which matches their learning needs.
131. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Evidence of good teaching was seen in the documentation of pupils' investigations and project planning and making for Year 4 and Year 6, where the quality of pupils' analysis and evaluation was high. Pupils had written enthusiastically about their work and recognised how much they had learnt from developing their original designs. In a Year 2 lesson, satisfactory teaching was seen where pupils were set to improve wheeled vehicles they had designed and made. Although the teacher suggested developing logos and working windscreen wipers, the task set was too open-ended. Although all pupils improved the appearance of their vehicles, and a minority of pupils investigated and successfully made windscreen wipers, other pupils focused only on decorating their models or cutting out existing logos and sticking them onto their vehicles. Pupils usually work well together and are

keen to suggest ways in which they can carry out their design most effectively. They show great interest in the end-of-lesson review in hearing other groups and classmates talk about how they developed their work. Girls and boys achieve equally well, and usually work well together. However some pairings of pupils do not work as well as they should, because too little thought has been given to how best to manage the pairing of pupils with strong interests in construction and technical problem-solving with less confident classmates.

132. The current acting co-ordinator has been very effective in improving the subject in the very short time for which she has been responsible for it. The school now follows the recommended national scheme of work. Money has been raised to improve resources and the school now has very well equipped tool and resource trolleys, which are helping to raise pupils' attainment. The coordinator has also successfully encouraged colleagues to take training courses in the subject, and secured good partnership support from the local business community and from the regional subject support organisation. However, not enough has been done to ensure that ICT is used to support the design process and not enough is being done to encourage teachers to incorporate the use of motors and robot control systems. The co-ordinator has not yet had enough opportunities to monitor colleagues' classroom teaching, although she has identified the need to ensure that pupils are set equally high standards in all years. There is also scope for establishing a formal assessment recording system.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

133. Evidence was limited to two lessons, talking to pupils and sampling a selection of geography books and folders suggests attainment in geography is average both at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. However there is very little geography in pupils' books and what there is lacks depth and attention to presentation. Geography currently has a low profile in the school, as history is the main focus for humanities currently. The pupils' achievement in geography is satisfactory. The standards of attainment, teaching and learning are similar to those in the previous report. Pupils with special educational needs learn as well as their peers because of the good support from adult helpers.
134. At the end of both Year 2 and Year 6 pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the main areas of the National Curriculum for geography. This is more a wide ranging general knowledge, rather than an in-depth understanding of any aspect, and much of it is linked with history. From activities in Multicultural Week, pupils have a good general knowledge of current life and customs in other parts of the world. Year 6 pupils use Victorian and present day comparative maps to explain how places, such as Trimdon Grange, have changed over a hundred years, confidently referring to conventional map symbols and co-ordinates. Their historical research, using census returns, informs their knowledge of why places change over time and they explain that in Victorian times the community built up because of coal mining, but has now changed because of different working opportunities. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of other environments and are currently engaged in using the Internet to research a chosen mountain range and found a talk from a parent, who had climbed Mount Kilimanjoro, very interesting. They have previously used atlases to find out about different climates and world populations. Pupils know that the Ancient Egyptians were dependent on a good annual flood of the River Nile for their farming and refer to this using geographical terms such as 'delta' and 'flood plain'; however pupils have limited knowledge of local geography nor of how their own town developed. Pupils say that although they used a CD Rom to find out about the Egyptians, which contained some geography, they usually find out from worksheets provided for them. Consequently their geographical skills are limited. Year 2 pupils have a good geographical vocabulary and draw simple maps and routes. For example, they draw and label pictures showing the route of the balloon in the story 'A Balloon for Grandad', naming the different terrains such as mountains, islands and deserts.
135. It is not possible to judge teaching overall because of insufficient evidence. Teachers' planning sheets show that lessons link well one with another. The teaching in the two lessons seen in Years 1 and 4 were good. In Year 1, the teacher was using the story 'Penguin Small', by Nick Inkpen, well to describe different locations and as a stimulus to drawing a simple map. Teaching

took good account of different levels of prior attainment and both questioning and written work, which enabled all pupils to learn well. Those pupils with special educational needs drew a route showing the start and finish of the journey. Average attainers identified features such as the Arctic Sea, and an iceberg en route and the higher prior attainers identified the North and South Pole on a globe and understood that the sea is depicted in blue and the land in green. Pupils were very interested and behaved and concentrated very well. In Year 4 the very well planned teaching also used resources well. Here it was Ordnance Survey maps, whiteboards and prepared worksheets. The lesson was an assessment at the end of a unit of work to develop an understanding of settlements and map-reading skills and was conducted at a good pace and had a high rate of challenge. The teacher had a good knowledge of the subject, which enabled her to ask questions that were not as simple as they seemed, and which required pupils to think hard and apply what they had learnt during the previous few weeks. The teaching also provided good opportunities for collaborative working in pairs, which developed pupils' personal development well. Pupils showed teaching in the previous few weeks had been good. The majority recognise conventional map symbols such as a telephone box and contour lines and can describe what a place is like from looking at an Ordnance Survey map.

136. The role for the teacher with responsibility for geography has not yet developed to include the monitoring of teaching or standards attained by pupils. This is a weakness, as he is unable to quantify the effectiveness of the teaching or quality of pupils' learning in order to amend the curriculum or raise standards within the subject. Although the curriculum has recently changed to encompass the new units of work published nationally, historically the thematic approach has left pupils lacking an in-depth geographical curriculum. This is borne out by these comments from Year 6 pupils, 'teaching has changed recently. We now get more worksheets and have class discussions. We do quite a lot one day and then go onto something different. We find out about something, write it down or make a presentation and then move onto something new. We don't study anything for long'. The use of ICT as a geographical tool is underdeveloped. Assessment procedures are satisfactory for class teachers to know how much pupils have learnt within individual units of work and to enable them to write reports, but not for judging the longer-term achievement or the levels of National Curriculum attainment when pupils leave the school. Improvements since the last inspection have been satisfactory, though the subject at the time of the inspection was not a focus.

## HISTORY

137. Standards are average for the majority of pupils by Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils' attitudes are good- they find history interesting in school and enjoy the first-hand experiences of visiting historical sites and museums. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and those with special educational needs achieve well, because of the adult help in school available to support them.
138. Year 6 pupils look at photographs of Queen Victoria to give them clues about her life. They compare the lives of the rich with those of the poor and know that young boys were often street urchins and chimney sweeps. They understand how the role of women has changed since Victorian times by looking at old census forms and found out that poor women were servants and men went to work in the coal mines in northern England in the Victoria era. First hand experiences from previous years such as visits to Hatfield House, the Verulamium museum and St Albans Abbey have left a good historical impression and knowledge. Pupils use the Internet well to research famous figures, such as the wives of Henry VIII. Evidence from talking to Year 6 shows they have a very superficial knowledge of the periods they have covered and find it hard to recall many famous people or changes in each era. They have a very hazy knowledge of dates and cannot easily link their knowledge about different historical periods. Pupils have little knowledge about the history of their own area. Year 2 pupils know details of the lives of famous people such as Florence Nightingale and Louis Braille. Each child makes a class presentation about a famous person they have researched at home which develops their research and communication skills well and allows the rest of the class to learn from them which promotes their self esteem well. They compare hygiene in hospitals then and now and know where the Great Fire of London started and why we have Guy Fawkes' Night.

139. It is not possible to judge the quality of teaching as only one lesson was seen during the inspection. However, teachers give good opportunities for pupils to develop research skills and apply and communicate their knowledge in a variety of ways. Individual topic books, such as those about famous people in Year 2, and the Greeks in Year 5 are of a very high standard, and pupils' research skills have developed very well by doing them. However, as they have been done at home, they show evidence of very good use of homework and of the high level of parental support for their children's learning, rather than what has been taught in school. Teachers use history well as a basis for other curriculum areas, such as in Year 5 where pupils make a collage of Christopher Columbus's ship and write a Tudor newspaper article in literacy. There is very little recorded work in books and it was of concern that only three lessons appear to have been recorded in exercise books in each of Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 during the autumn term. Teachers use videos well to give pupils a greater insight to different historical periods.
140. The enthusiastic teacher with responsibility for history has worked hard to plan and introduce a new curriculum, based on national guidelines. She has successfully addressed the issues of a lack of artefacts, too little opportunity for personal research and overuse of printed worksheets mentioned in the last Ofsted report. There are now many new artefacts and videos; well organised topic boxes and loan material; and newly acquired teacher resource books; suggested different teaching methods; promoted visits and visitors and arranged a whole school history week for the near future. Improvements since the previous inspection have been satisfactory overall.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

141. Standards reached in information and communication technology overall are below average. Standards reached by pupils in Year 2 are average. They create pictures of houses using a paint program, write simple phrases and sentences using a word processing package and work out how to instruct a robot toy to follow a path across a room. However, the attainment of pupils in Year 6 is below the average for this age group. Although pupils in Year 6 create multimedia presentations, use spreadsheets to investigate practical mathematical problems, and search the Internet to find information about artists they study, they do not use control systems and sensors as expected nationally. Pupils in Years 1-2, and Years 3-6, including those who are otherwise high attainers, are not achieving enough in ICT as they go through the school, particularly as the majority regularly use computers at home. Pupils with special educational needs do not make enough progress in using ICT because they do not use software adapted to their needs, such as "talking" word processors. This is partly because the school has not yet acquired the full range of software needed to ensure that pupils cover the requirements for their age group and individual learning needs. It is also partly because staff have not had enough training to be able to use the school's very good ICT facilities confidently and effectively.
142. Relatively few ICT lessons were seen during the week of the inspection. Evidence was also drawn from samples of pupils' work, displays, teaching plans and interviews with pupils. The quality of teaching varies, but is unsatisfactory overall. There was effective teaching of simple programming skills was seen with a group of Year 2 pupils. This was where the teacher guided pupils, through giving instructions to classmates in order to negotiate a path, and they then worked out and recorded the instructions to program a robot toy to navigate a prepared route round a map of a garden. Unsatisfactory teaching was seen where teachers were not familiar enough with the hardware or software they were using. In one lesson, pupils were not given enough guidance to help them navigate a web site to find information about astronauts. In other lessons, teachers working in the ICT suite offered too little guidance, because they did not have strategies for making the most of the facilities. The school has not acquired software that would enable teachers to keep a visual check on the eighteen workstations in the suite, and they currently have to keep circulating round the room to check which pupils need help. Although classrooms are well equipped with computers, with two workstations in most classrooms, the computers are rarely used in subject lessons, even when there are tasks, such as drafting stories, for which they would be ideal.

143. Pupils enjoy learning with computers. Many frequently use them at home to find information on the Internet, to help with homework or to explore CD-ROMs. They enjoy their weekly ICT lessons at school, and the after-school ICT club is a popular choice with the younger pupils it is provided for. Where pupils experience difficulty with ICT tasks in lessons because they have had too little guidance, they sometimes give up trying and stop participating.
144. The school has recently adopted a very good teaching scheme developed by the local authority advisory service, but as yet, it is not being delivered, because staff have not yet had enough training to feel confident in taking on the scheme as a whole. In addition, the school does not yet have the full range of software necessary to undertake all the activities. Although teachers use the very good school system of classroom feedback to check on pupils' understanding of task elements, they do not yet use the good assessment scheme provided.
145. Overall the coordination of ICT is unsatisfactory, as there has been insufficient impact on standards in ICT and its use both in specific ICT lessons and across other subjects of the curriculum. The co-ordinator has done much to improve the level of ICT equipment since the last inspection. There has been useful assistance to establish the very well specified ICT suite, a digital projector and all classrooms are well equipped with computers and printers. However, the school has not yet carried out its obligations formally to adopt a policy for safe Internet use and ensure that parents, pupils and staff have signed agreements to support it. It is important that parents are informed about their children's developing skills in using the Internet, in order to safeguard their use of such skills outside school. This is a priority for school action.
146. The co-ordinator has also contributed to the school's ICT training programme, but most staff do not know how to use the ICT suite effectively, or how best to make regular use of the computers in their classrooms. They have not been shown enough examples of good ICT practice, such as using guide sheets with screen shots to help pupils navigate through programs and web sites. Staff working with the youngest pupils and with children in the Reception have had too little guidance on how best to use ICT as a part of their everyday classroom activities. Subject co-ordinators are not yet being encouraged to use their subject associations as a source of expertise in identifying the best software and approaches to enable ICT to support achievement in their subjects. Improvements since the last inspection have been unsatisfactory due to the lack of impact the subject is having across the school.

## MUSIC

147. The attainment of pupils in music is above average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils work hard and achieve well in music, and many have additional opportunities to play instruments, both tuned and untuned at school and at home. In the few lessons observed, teaching was at least satisfactory, and in one instance in Year 6, teaching was very good, but too few lessons were observed to make an overall judgement on teaching. Teachers use the range of instruments creatively, and assist the pupils to work as groups and teams in their musical compositions.
148. Pupils enjoy music, and sing heartily in assemblies. They appreciate music in different contexts, for example, in line dancing. They are particularly enthusiastic when taking part in clubs, such as choir and recorder. There were, for example, creative links between literacy, poetry and music, as pupils accompanied the Jabberwocky poem, preparing to introduce tuned instruments. They were creative and uninhibited in their ideas and interpretations. Pupils work effectively in groups, for example, as they interpreted the Planets Suite by Holst. They listened attentively to one another performing, making sensitive and appropriate comments for further improvement. There is evidence of some links between music and ICT, though overall the use of ICT is underdeveloped.
149. Throughout the year, there are many celebrations where music is used to enhance the pupils' learning, for example in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, music was an important feature of the production. There are wide ranging links; for example, as pupils extend their understanding of instruments around the world. A group of African drummers have visited the

school, providing the pupils with a rich and memorable experience of music in more multi-cultural settings.

150. The subject is led satisfactorily. Resources are adequate, and well cared for around the school. Currently there are no formal methods for assessing the pupils' musical skills or tracking their progress systematically.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

151. Pupils' attainment is above average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. A small minority of older pupils attain well above average in team games. This is reflected in their successes when playing against other schools competitively.
152. Pupils achieve well in such skills as throwing, catching and invasion games. By the end of Year 2, pupils throw and catch with considerable accuracy, and move their bodies in a variety of ways that demonstrates increasing physical control. Higher attaining pupils move with increasing dexterity, and change their body weight in the process with considerable ease. They understand the importance of exercise and the impact it has on their bodies. By Year 6, pupils are able to play basketball with a good level of success. They evaluate one another's performances helpfully, for example as they strive to improve their fingertip control.
153. Teaching overall is good, and pupils achieve well as a result. Teachers ensure that pupils are active and seek to engage them purposefully throughout lessons. There are wide ranging activities over the course of the year, and pupils also have regular opportunities to swim. Many are relatively advanced in their swimming skills. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of the subject, and this helps in their delivery of the subject. The many extra activities outside lessons where teachers, learning support assistants, and sometimes the administration staff contribute, greatly enhance the pupils' physical skills. This gives a high profile to physical education, and many pupils are more active as a result of the school's provision and encouragement in the subject.
154. The subject is led enthusiastically and effectively by a physical education specialist. Resources are well kept and ensure teachers and pupils have easy access to good quality equipment. Currently there are no formal methods for assessing pupils' physical education skills. There has been sound improvement since the previous inspection.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

155. Pupils reach standards that are often beyond expectations outlined in the Hertfordshire Locally Agreed Syllabus by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. They achieve well in religious education, and many express their views and opinions confidently.
156. By Year 2, pupils are able to recall the most well known stories of different faiths, including Rama and Sita and the story of creation in Christianity. They understand that different faiths celebrate special festivals, for example that Hindus celebrate Holi. It is particularly useful that the school takes the time and trouble to teach the relevant festivals, to coincide with the correct months of the year. This adds further relevance to the pupils' knowledge and understanding, and contributes effectively to their awareness of life in a multi-cultural society.
157. By Year 6, most pupils recognise the significance of the disciples and the main messages in the four gospels. They make useful comparisons between key figures in the Christianity and, for example, Hinduism. Many realise the significance of light as a concept in different faiths, and the way in which it is represented and celebrated.
158. There was insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement on teaching, but in the small amount of teaching observed, teaching was good. Teachers demonstrated a good level of knowledge in the subject and used a variety of artefacts to add interest to the lessons. Pupils



were interested and keen to understand more about the faith of other people, beyond their own immediate experience.

159. The coordinator has only recently taken over the responsibility for leading religious education. The subject is led enthusiastically, and already there are many new and creative ideas for developing pupils' knowledge and awareness further. For example, there are plans to develop the pupils' understanding of the concepts of spirituality, meditation and prayer. There have been good improvements since the last inspection. The weaknesses identified at that time have been eradicated, and the subject has a more positive and prominent profile throughout the school.