

INSPECTION REPORT

LABURNUM LOWER SCHOOL

Sandy

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109477

Headteacher: Mrs Janice Pibworth

Reporting inspector: John Williams
22516

Dates of inspection: 15 – 17 October 2001

Inspection number: 205060

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First school
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Laburnum Road Sandy Bedfordshire
Postcode:	SG19 1HQ
Telephone number:	01767 680691
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Callan
Date of previous inspection:	6 July 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
22516	John Williams	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities English as an additional language Science Art and design Physical education	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9334	Jenny Mynett	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
7593	John Collier	Team inspector	English Religious education Geography Music	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
22291	Keith Saltfleet	Team inspector	Foundation stage Mathematics Information and communication technology Design and technology History	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Laburnum Lower School is located on the western edge of the town of Sandy. It has recently undergone significant changes in its character due to a reorganisation in the area. The school is now much smaller than at the time of the last inspection, when it had 194 full-time pupils and 29 part-time pupils. There are now 101 full-time pupils and 38 in the nursery. Major improvements have been based on re-modelling the accommodation, with increased teaching space and a new nursery unit. Attainment on entry varies from year to year with the whole range of abilities represented but is mostly below-average. There is high mobility in the school and an itinerant traveller population. There are a significant number of children whose language and personal skills are below those expected of pupils of this age. The school has three pupils for whom English is an additional language, none of whom is at an early stage of English language acquisition. There are 12 pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, although the school is aware that many eligible families do not claim their entitlement. There are now 35 pupils in the main school and 5 in the nursery, who have been identified as having special educational needs. This is higher than average. One pupil has a statement of special needs. The disabilities and difficulties the pupils on the special educational needs register experience, range from moderate learning difficulties and speech and communication difficulties, to emotional and behavioural difficulties.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an improving school. The new headteacher, ably supported by her two senior teachers and a committed staff, has addressed the issues of the last inspection. There has been a discernible recent improvement since her appointment and the school is now poised to make further strides forward. It places great emphasis on raising standards, which are below-average generally. The quality of teaching is consistently good and often very good making a positive contribution to pupils' learning. Leadership and management are now very good. The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to learn efficiently. It gives sound value for money.

What the school does well

- The quality of teaching is good
- The leadership and management of the school are very good
- Pupils make a good start to their education in the nursery
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good
- The governors are very involved in shaping the direction of the school

What could be improved

Standards in English, especially the skills of speaking and listening.
Standards in mathematics, particularly at Key Stage 2, and science.
Pupils' involvement in their own learning
Planning in the foundation stage

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1998. At first, progress was steady in addressing the key issues of that inspection. Since the appointment of the new headteacher in January, however, there has been rapid progress. Teaching is now good throughout because teachers now have higher expectations of what their pupils can achieve. This is a significant improvement. The school now analyses the information it gets from assessing what pupils know and can do, and this is helping them to decide which targets it should set to raise standards. Teachers now plan their lessons much better with a sharper learning focus. The successful implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies means that standards in these subjects are now beginning to improve. New methods of managing pupils' behaviour are proving to be effective. The leadership and management of the school are much improved. The school development plan now provides useful information for improving all areas of school life. Since the last inspection there has been a gradual improvement in overall standards in English and mathematics, not withstanding the recent improvement.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
Reading	D	E	E	D
Writing	E	E	E	E
Mathematics	D	C	E	D

Key

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

Similar schools are those having up to and including 15 per cent free school meals. This is based on the number of pupils receiving free school meals. However, indications are that more pupils are eligible than apply for their entitlement. Because of this the table above shows similar school data compared with schools having over 20 per cent free school meals.

Results in national tests in 2001 reflect the recent improvements in the schools provision. There was a marked improvement in standards in writing and in mathematics. This accelerated the trend of gradual increase in the number of pupils attaining the national standard, over the last four years.

Inspection findings confirm this recent improvement in standards. By the end of the foundation stage, most children are on course to achieve the early learning goals. Standards in English in the current Year 2 remain well below-average as this group has a large number of pupils with special educational needs and poorly developed language skills. Standards are below-average in science but in line with the national average in mathematics. By Year 4 standards are still well below-average in English and below-average in mathematics and science. This represents a decline in standards in mathematics, although recent improvements in curriculum and teaching are beginning to have an impact and pupils now make good progress. In all other subjects, pupils now achieve the standards expected for their age. No significant differences are noted between the attainment of boys and girls. The school has recently revised its targets for pupils in all age groups. These are now realistic and the school is on course to achieve them. The overall improvement in standards has been in line with the national upward trend over the last four years.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most pupils are enthusiastic and show good attitudes to their work and to their teachers.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Most pupils behave well both in lessons and around the school and this has a beneficial effect on their learning. However, there is a minority of pupils who find it hard to concentrate on their work.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Most pupils relate appropriately to adults and to each other. They share ideas and work sensibly together. The majority enjoy taking responsibility for jobs around the school and like to help with routine tasks.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

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

The quality of teaching and learning is now good overall. In Years 1 and 2, 11 out of the 12 lessons observed were good or better. In Years 3 and 4, half the lessons observed were good or better. Very good teaching was observed in the nursery, in English, art and design and music. Teaching in literacy and numeracy is good throughout the school. This reflects the work the school has done recently to improve the quality of teaching.

Teachers now prepare and organise their work in good detail. Lessons have clear learning targets to offer challenge to pupils of all abilities with consequent good learning. Staff recognise the learning needs of pupils from different cultural groups, those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Teachers expect pupils to do their best and to behave well, with the result that the majority do. Pupils' learning is effectively assessed and this information used to plan future work for each pupil. There is a good emphasis on teaching the basics so that each pupil can succeed. All staff make good use of the time and resources available to them and manage pupils well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that is planned to meet the needs of all pupils. Literacy and numeracy are planned using the recommended guidance to enable pupils to make satisfactory progress.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for special educational needs pupils is good. The recently improved procedures for monitoring the progress of these pupils are good
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Pupils with English as an additional language receive good support and make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is satisfactory. The school makes good provision for pupils' social development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are satisfactory. Systems for assessing and recording what pupils have learned are good.

The school now works more effectively in partnership with parents. Their involvement in the work of the school makes a good contribution to pupils' learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership and management of the school are very good and provide very clear leadership in its work. The headteacher enjoys the very good support of her two senior teachers.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body fulfils its duties very well. It has established a strong committee structure and governors are in a good position to shape the school's future.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school now evaluates its performance very carefully so that teachers and governors know what is effective and what is not.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning is very good. The school uses its available resources very effectively. The school pays very good attention to the principles of best value.

The school improvement plan has clearly defined targets and is a good vehicle for improvement. There is a good number of suitably qualified and experienced staff to meet the needs of the curriculum. The accommodation provides a bright and stimulating learning environment. Learning resources are satisfactory.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What a few parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like coming to school • Their children make good progress in school • The teaching is good • The behaviour of pupils is good • Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school • The school expects their children to work hard and do their best • The school is well led and managed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They do not feel well informed about how their children are getting on • They do not feel that the school works closely with them • They do not feel that their children get the right amount of work to do at home • They do not feel that the school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons

The inspection team agrees with the overwhelmingly positive views of parents. The school has made great strides recently to open its doors to parents and to make them welcome. Homework provision is now much better and makes a good contribution to pupils' learning. The school accepts that there is room to improve the quality of its reports to parents and already has plans to improve them. The school currently provides a good range of activities for its pupils outside lessons.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. At the time of the last inspection, standards at the end of Year 2 were found to be below average in all aspects of English. Standards were judged to be satisfactory in mathematics, although pupils' performance in national tests was below average. Standards in science were judged to be satisfactory. In all other subjects, pupils attained the standards expected for their ages except in information and communication technology where they were below. In Year 4, pupils attained national expectations in mathematics but were below expectations in English and science. Standards in all other subjects were satisfactory, except for design and technology where they were below that expected.
2. Standards in English are currently well-below average in Years 2 and 4 where there are a large number of pupils recently identified as having special educational needs. There are marked variations in attainment from year to year, however there has been sound improvement in mathematics throughout the school. Currently, standards in mathematics are improving, thanks to the National Numeracy Strategy and are in line with the national average in Year 2 and below in Year 4. Design technology has improved since the time of the last inspection and pupils now reach expected standards in Year 4. Information and communication technology has improved in Years 1 and 2 and pupils now achieve nationally expected standards. At the end of Year 2 and by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 4, pupils achieve expected levels of attainment in all other subjects.
3. The significant improvements made in standards in information and communication technology in Years 1 and 2 and design technology in Years 3 and 4 are due to the improved quality of teaching and to the development of schemes of work in both subjects. Additional resources under the National Grid for Learning have helped the school dramatically improve the accommodation and resources for information and communication technology. The successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has had a significant impact on raising standards in mathematics.
4. Since the arrival of the new headteacher in January, there have been significant improvements in the behaviour of the pupils and in the structure of the school timetable which now has more rigour. Teachers now plan lessons which have sharper learning targets. This has improved the quality of teaching, which is now good throughout. The result of this is a considerable improvement in pupils' learning, which is now good in lessons, throughout the school. The school has compelling statistical evidence that standards have been adversely affected by the recent downsizing of the school. A significant number of higher attaining pupils have transferred to the new school and this has had an adverse effect on overall levels of attainment.
5. Schemes of work, which have been introduced for all subjects, give good guidance to teachers in what to teach in each year group. This has focussed teachers' planning on each stage of the pupils' development. This, in turn, has improved the quality of learning and consequently raised standards. The school has also implemented the National Literacy Strategy fully and efficiently. However, this strategy is taking longer to have an impact on standards because of the poor language and communication skills with which many pupils start school. Hence, standards in all aspects of English remain well below average.
6. In lessons, no significant differences were observed in the performances of girls and boys. Pupils from different racial groups and those for whom English is an additional language now make good progress and achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well in relation to the targets set for them in their Individual Education Plans. The majority of pupils move from levels of attainment which are below-average, as they start school, to levels nearer to the national averages in most subjects when they leave. This represents sound progress over time. However despite recent improvements, there is still a minority of pupils who find sustained concentration difficult. They tend not to listen to

instructions and their progress is impaired as they do not concentrate and do not know what to do.

The Foundation Stage

7. Children enter the nursery with a wide range of ability. However, most have levels of attainment, across most areas of learning, which are below those expected for the age group. Many have poorly developed skills in speaking and listening and personal independence. This is confirmed by the initial assessments conducted with these young children. They make rapid progress in the nursery particularly in their communication skills and their personal, social and emotional development. This is because of the good teaching in these areas of learning and because of the importance placed, by all staff, on using language correctly and working and playing well together. However, from their low starting point most children make good progress and are on course to achieve the goals set for the end of the foundation stage.

Years 1 and 2

8. The results achieved by the seven-year-olds in the 2000 tests and tasks were well below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The school has now been placed in its correct benchmarking group and when compared with similar schools' results are below average in writing, reading and mathematics. However this year's results (2001) though not yet ratified, show a distinct upward trend. There has been a marked improvement in results in writing and mathematics though reading standards have fallen. This represents a steady upward trend over the last four years in the number of pupils attaining the national standard in reading writing and mathematics, in line with the national trend, although the performance in reading this year was disappointing. In science, on the basis of teacher assessments for the year 2000, the percentage of pupils reaching the expected level is close to the national average although the number exceeding it is very small.
9. Inspection findings show that, for the current group of pupils in Year 2, standards in English are well below-average. The majority of pupils start school with underdeveloped listening and speaking skills. They make sound progress but by Year 2 they have had insufficient time in school to reach the standards expected for the age group. Listening skills are slowly improving by the time they are seven but many pupils still find it hard to concentrate and listen for a reasonable length of time. The majority of pupils find it difficult to speak in sentences, answer questions clearly and begin to use a satisfactory range of vocabulary. The school places great importance on reading. Pupils enjoy books and begin to talk about them with understanding. Staff work hard to inculcate a love of reading in the pupils. However, many do not receive adequate support outside school to maintain the interest in books that they gain in school. The more able pupils read confidently from known texts and use different methods to tackle unknown words. Pupils' writing skills are mostly underdeveloped though the recent targetting of groups of pupils has brought about an improvement in standards. Some pupils write well. They begin to use full stops accurately and spell regular words correctly. Some pupils precisely use a more extended vocabulary in their writing but the work of the majority is inconsistent.
10. In mathematics, the pupils aged seven, attain satisfactory standards. Many pupils discuss their mathematics confidently, recognise patterns in numbers and understand place value. In science, attainment is below average. Pupils develop an understanding across all aspects of the science curriculum, though they need to experience more practical investigation and exploration, in order to develop their scientific thinking.
11. By the age of seven, pupils achieve at the levels expected in information and communication technology, art and design, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education. They reach the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education. Pupils' understanding of the spiritual aspect of their work is satisfactory and what is normally expected for the age group.

Years 3 and 4

12. Pupils maintain sound progress throughout Year 3 and Year 4 in all subjects. Standards for the nine-year-olds mirror those of the seven-year-olds. They continue to make sound progress in English, although many are starting from a very low base, their language skills still lag behind and standards are well below average. In mathematics and science, pupils attain below-average standards and need more opportunities for practical investigations. In all other subjects, standards are in line with expectations for the age group.
13. Speaking and listening skills improve steadily in Year 3 and Year 4 and some pupils become more confident in conversation, however, their listening skills are still immature. Many continue to enjoy reading and begin to discuss books at a good level of understanding. However, a few lose interest in reading and this affects their learning in other subjects. Standards in writing begin to improve, as pupils see the importance of writing for a variety of purposes and in a number of subjects. They begin to use a wider range of punctuation and the majority of pupils try hard to extend their use of vocabulary.
14. In mathematics, higher attaining pupils work confidently with numbers to 1000 and beyond. They explain well the methods that they use to arrive at answers - using the four rules of number. In science, pupils fail to reach satisfactory levels as they need more investigative work to develop their scientific thinking. They begin to use correct scientific language to explain their work but many have no real concept of a 'fair test'.
15. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. The recent improvement in provision for them has not yet had time to promote good progress but targets on Individual Education Plans are now very specific. It is therefore easier for teachers to judge whether the targets have been met and, since reviews take place more regularly, they can set more challenging targets on the next plan so that progress can be accelerated.
16. Throughout the school, teachers work hard to encourage pupils to use their literacy skills in all subjects. They plan opportunities for pupils to discuss their work and listen carefully to each other, for example, in literacy lessons when pupils report on what they have done. However, these opportunities at present are too rare and not sufficiently systematic in all subjects. Numeracy skills are used appropriately in geography and design and technology; for example to measure accurately. Pupils use their information and communication technology skills satisfactorily in many subjects. For example, they edit their writing and use an art programme to create pictures. They practise mathematical skills through number games on a computer.
17. The school's recent sharper focus on teaching the basic skills needed for pupils to succeed in the tasks set, ensures that the majority of pupils makes sound progress and reach the targets set. The school sets itself appropriate targets and strives to exceed them. It works hard to raise standards in all subjects. The thorough coverage of the curriculum throughout the school now ensures that pupils make good progress during their time in school. This, together with the clear learning objectives now set by teachers in most lessons, has a positive effect on raising standards.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

18. Pupils enjoy school, and most show good attitudes both to school and to their learning. Parents say that their children enjoy going to school, and they are particularly pleased that the school expects their children to work hard. Most pupils are well motivated and eager to contribute and participate both in lessons and other activities in and around school. Where tasks are interesting and practical, pupils work happily and focus well on their activities. Children in the nursery show a confident approach to work and in their relationships with each other. They are interested in their work and activities and show good levels of concentration. The children are developing good social skills and are eager to investigate, exploring new learning opportunities. They work and play well together, showing a fair degree of independence, happily sharing their toys and equipment.

19. The behaviour of pupils is satisfactory both in lessons and around the school. Over the last year the school has focused on improving pupils' behaviour. This has been achieved through teachers' higher expectations and a more consistent application of the school's behaviour strategies. Parents feel that behaviour in the school has consequently improved. Where lessons are well managed and pupils are kept on task then behaviour is good. However, in lessons that are less practical or involve extended periods sitting on the carpet, pupils can lose attention and become distracted. Pupils know right from wrong, and what is expected of them. However, there is a small minority of pupils particularly in Key Stage 2, who find sustained concentration difficult and can become disruptive when their behaviour is not closely managed. This interrupts things for the rest of the class. Most pupils are friendly and polite, they are happy to talk about what they are doing and share their work with visitors. Behaviour is satisfactory at lunchtime and in the playground with pupils, although often exuberant, interacting well together. No incidents of bullying and oppressive behaviour were noted during the inspection. Pupils feel the school is a safe and happy place, and are confident that if they do report incidents they will be taken seriously, and the matter dealt with promptly and effectively. There has been one incident of a pupil excluded for a week this term. In the previous year there was one permanent and three fixed period exclusions.
20. Relationships in the school are satisfactory, both between staff and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves. A 'buddy' system between Years 4 and 2, and Years 3 and 1 provides support for the younger pupils at playtimes as older pupils 'look out' for their partner. The school seeks to foster an atmosphere of inclusion. Pupils who are travellers, and those with special educational needs or who have English as an additional language are satisfactorily integrated into school activities. In circle time, pupils listen to each other and are happy to talk about their feelings, respecting others' opinions, values and beliefs. Pupils interact well in pair and group activities. This was particularly apparent where pupils were working together on the computers, collaborating to build structures to support different weights in a design technology lesson or creating their compositions in a music lesson.
21. Opportunities to develop pupils' personal development are satisfactory. In the nursery, pupils are given a choice of activities, which helps them to take responsibility for their own learning and develop their initiative. However, in other years, fewer opportunities exist to promote pupils' independent learning and develop their investigative skills. Pupils are encouraged to take on roles of responsibility such as acting as monitors undertaking different jobs in classes, which they do conscientiously. Year 4 pupils help set up the toys and equipment for both lunchtime and 'treat time'; they act as door monitors or operate the music system in assembly. The school has recently formed a school council. The pupils feel that this is a good initiative as they can have a say in some of the decision-making processes of the school. As one boy said, *"people have concerns and we can come up with ideas and suggestions"*. They are currently identifying ideas for new playground equipment, and have already seen one of their ideas implemented.
22. Levels of attendance in the school are below the national average whilst unauthorised absences are well above. Pupils are generally prompt into school and lessons start on time. The introduction of the new 'Compact' attendance scheme this term is acting as a considerable incentive to pupils with significant improvements in attendance and punctuality already noted. Registers are maintained correctly. Attendance and punctuality are monitored effectively by the school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

23. The quality of teaching is good and contributes significantly to the good quality of pupils' learning, their attitudes and the progress that they make. Teaching throughout the school is consistently good. This is a strength of the school and an improvement since the last inspection. The issues raised at that time have been successfully addressed.
24. One hundred per cent of teaching during the inspection was satisfactory or better. Of the lessons observed, 54 per cent were good and 18 per cent were very good. There were no

unsatisfactory lessons observed during the inspection. Very good teaching was seen throughout in English, in numeracy, in art and design and in music.

25. Teachers set high expectations in lessons, particularly of what they expect pupils to achieve and of their behaviour. They make the purpose of the lesson very clear to pupils and refer to that purpose during the lesson. They make effective use of resources to support pupils' learning. Teachers match work closely to the needs of individual pupils. This results in increased understanding and good gains in knowledge. Pupils including those with special educational needs, those from different cultural groups and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress in most lessons and gain new knowledge, skills and understanding.
26. Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They know and understand their pupils well. Throughout the school, the whole staff work as an effective team, recognise and address the needs of all pupils quickly and efficiently. This results in pupils learning rapidly. Teachers use time well and, by good preparation and organisation, ensure that lessons proceed at a very good pace. This keeps pupils very interested in their work and results in good learning. Very occasionally, when the pace dips, particularly in the middle section of lessons or when activities are not sufficiently practical, some pupils begin to lose interest in the tasks set, their behaviour deteriorates and the quality of learning is diminished.
27. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well in the nursery and in Key Stage 1, and satisfactorily in Key Stage 2. There is a whole-school approach to this. Teachers use many effective strategies to inspire pupils to behave acceptably and to enjoy learning. This encourages pupils to work together and to share resources and ideas productively. There is a small, but nevertheless significant, minority of pupils in Years 3 and 4 who find it very difficult to behave well constantly. There are occasions when their behaviour becomes unacceptable and reduces their ability to learn well. Very occasionally the behaviour of this minority affects the learning of the whole class but the teachers quickly rectify this. They work very closely with the support assistants to minimise the effect of such behaviour.
28. Teachers assess pupils' work regularly, both informally through questioning and by more formal testing. They assess systematically the attainment and progress made by individual pupils, and use this information effectively to plan the next stage for each pupil. This ensures that pupils make good gains in their learning. Work is marked regularly and positively, helping pupils to understand how well they have done. Homework is set and used successfully to support learning.
29. A strong feature of the good teaching is the way that teachers now share the learning intentions of the lesson with their pupils as the lesson begins. This helps pupils to focus. At the end of lessons teachers then refer again to the learning intention and pupils are made aware of whether they have achieved the learning target.
30. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is now good throughout the school. Therefore, pupils learn well and make good progress in developing their skills and understanding. In mathematics, they teach the pupils correct vocabulary and encourage them to discuss the strategies and methods used to solve problems. Teachers make satisfactory use of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning in other subjects, with particularly effective links in mathematics and science. It is particularly well used to support pupils with special educational needs.
31. Teaching is consistently good in the foundation stage and makes a strong contribution to the good progress that children make in the nursery. It also results in happy, secure and increasingly confident children. Teachers plan a wide range of practical activities. Teachers teach basic skills well and there is good emphasis on the teaching of reading, writing and number.
32. Pupils with special educational needs receive good teaching and a good level of support from learning support assistants. Teachers set clear, measurable targets for action that are reviewed regularly. All staff provide sensitive and encouraging support that enhances pupils'

self-esteem. This good practice enables the pupils with special educational need to make good progress and achieve the targets set for them in their Individual Education Plans.

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

33. As at the last inspection, the school provides a suitable curriculum that meets the needs of its pupils. All subjects are taught and, because of a recent reorganisation of the timetable, better use is now made of the available teaching time to provide lessons that are long enough to enable work to be completed. The national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are properly planned and delivered and religious education is correctly drawn from the agreed programme of work for Bedfordshire schools. Planning for all subjects has improved since the last inspection. All subjects have policies to guide teachers who produce detailed long-term teaching plans. The intentions are shared with the pupils who therefore can focus clearly on their learning.
34. The provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is now good. This represents a considerable improvement since the last inspection when provision was described as unsatisfactory. The school has successfully addressed the issues raised and, with the arrival of a new headteacher, now the special needs co-ordinator, pupils are receiving appropriate help. Teachers are encouraged to raise concerns early and this enables them to focus on a pupil's problem and assess whether further action needs to be taken. When necessary, quite specific targets are drawn up on Individual Education Plans and these are regularly reviewed. For example, targets for a Year 1 pupil: 'to say the sounds a, b, c, d, e' allow progress to be accurately assessed. Teachers plan appropriate work for SEN pupils and classroom assistants offer good support during activity sessions in lessons. For example, during an English lesson in Class 3, four pupils who have difficulty in copying words receive patient support from the teacher's assistant in completing their posters. There is less withdrawal from lessons now and information and communication technology is regularly used to promote progress, unlike at the last inspection. For example, a spelling program helps pupils in Year 2 to recognise the ending 'ook' and to read words as letters appear at the beginning to make 'look', 'cook' and 'took'. It also helps them to spell the words. Those pupils with a statement of their needs receive their entitlement and are well supported.
35. Teachers regularly plan work within their lessons for different groups, particularly in English and mathematics, enabling all to make at least satisfactory progress. Travellers' children receive help from the specialist support unit and are fully included in all activities. Extra-curricular clubs are open to all pupils with priority given to the older ones. For a small school, provision is good partly because of the willingness of the site manager to lead at least two sessions, in football and drama. Sporting and musical activities are enjoyed as well as sewing, drama and the computers. A competitive football tournament within the school last year with different teams taking on the identity of Premiership Football clubs attracted the attention of the local press. Some parents who replied to the pre-inspection questionnaire were critical of the provision, partly because younger pupils cannot join clubs that have no vacancies. This does not detract from the good range provided, something that was commended by parents who attended the meeting prior to the inspection.
36. The curriculum is enhanced by good links with the community and by educational visits that are enjoyed by all pupils and used to enliven subjects such as history and religious education. There are good links with local churches and, during the inspection, the local Church of England minister gave an informative talk to Year 3 pupils about his work. Local volunteers hear pupils read and the school regularly receives help from the local Round Table most recently to buy playground equipment. Local businesses offer prizes for the annual fete and the Education and Business Partnership sponsor stickers and certificates to encourage good attendance. These and other links supplement what the school can provide and support the efforts of the teaching staff to raise standards.
37. The school benefits from good relations with other local schools. There are proposals in the School Improvement Plan to liaise with other lower schools and the middle school to

standardise the curriculum for the foundation subjects in Years 3 and 4 so that work is not repeated. Some recent training in dance at the upper school has benefited teachers and increased their knowledge and enthusiasm. Year 3 and 4 drama club pupils performed for their parents and Year 4 pupils watched a middle school production at that school in preparation for their move there. There are satisfactory links between teachers to ease transition.

38. As at the last inspection, the school makes satisfactory provision for the personal development of its pupils including their spiritual, moral and cultural growth. Their social development is well promoted. The school has a suitable programme of work for personal, social and health education. Issues involved with growing up are dealt with through the science curriculum and a 'Life Bus' visits the school regularly, enabling health issues to be tackled, particularly those associated with drug abuse.
39. Pupils' spiritual development is soundly promoted in assemblies, in religious education lessons and occasionally, although not often enough, through other subjects of the curriculum. Assemblies are planned around particular themes such as 'Forgiveness' and contain stories, often from the Bible, that often convey a suitable moral message. In one assembly during the inspection, pupils are enthralled as the story of Joseph is acted out. Their horror at his treatment by his brothers is clearly expressed as his coat of many colours is torn and dipped into blood in preparation for their lie to their father that he has been killed. Time is given to reflect on such events and to pray and there is a calm atmosphere during this appropriate act of worship. Pupils also have opportunities to reflect in religious education lessons. Year 3 pupils consider the concept of angels and wonder about their existence and appearance. They use art as a medium of expressing what they might be like. In their books, Year 4 pupils have been thinking about the recent disaster in New York. One confronts her fears movingly: "I feel I can't go to Disneyland in fear that another plane might crash into a roller coaster".
40. Provision for pupils' moral development is satisfactory. The new headteacher has introduced a range of measures to improve behaviour. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting commended the improvement. School rules are agreed by all and additional class rules, if necessary, are negotiated. There is a clear policy that stresses the importance of praising positive behaviour but that also has clear sanctions for unacceptable conduct. Contracts are drawn up with specific individuals who need particular help to moderate their actions. However, some pupils, particularly in Years 3 and 4, lack self-discipline and this limits their opportunities to use their own initiative and to be given responsibilities.
41. Provision for pupils' social development is good and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Opportunities are provided through clubs and through visits, such as to Stoke Bruerne for work on canals or to the local church, for pupils to interact in settings other than the classroom. A 'buddy' system enables older pupils to help younger ones, particularly in the playground and at lunchtime. A different charity is supported each term with particularly enjoyable, social activities on Red Nose Day to collect money for 'Comic Relief'. Pupils go into the community, distributing harvest gifts to nearby elderly residents for example, or taking part in local events, such as Sandy Festival where they recently won first prize in a drawing competition.
42. Pupils' cultural development is soundly promoted. A school council has just been elected for the first time and is already working on suggestions for improving the playground. Work in religious education introduces pupils to the values, traditions and beliefs of religions other than Christianity and to an appreciation of our multicultural society. A member of the school community has spoken to the children in the nursery about marriage traditions in her religion, creating interest and understanding. Through other subjects, pupils develop a satisfactory knowledge of their own heritage. They learn about famous artists and composers. For example, Edward Burne-Jones' picture of an 'Angel playing a Flagelot' inspires Year 3 and 4 pupils when they come to paint their own angels. Local geographical and historical studies help them to appreciate their own locality. Geography also helps them to understand life in other areas of Britain and the world. Year 2 pupils, for example, are currently looking at life in Africa and contrasting it with England. Events such as World Book Day are celebrated with pupils dressing up as their favourite characters and following a book trail.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS

43. The school provides a caring and supportive environment where pupils can flourish. Its provision for pupils' health, welfare and guidance is good and makes a significant contribution to their personal and academic development. Pupils are well supported and encouraged to develop their individuality. Parents spoke highly of the school, especially since the recent remodelling. They find it very friendly and supportive, and reported that staff promote a sense of community where everyone is valued. Their children like school, and they feel that the reduction in numbers means teachers and their support staff get to know the pupils better.
44. The school successfully promotes an environment where pupils have equal opportunities and fosters a policy of inclusion. Closely monitoring pupils' personal development the teachers work sensitively to challenge and support their specific needs. There are effective systems in place to promote the academic and personal development needs of pupils with special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language. The school has good links with the travellers' support group and the nursery has a good induction system, including home visits to ensure a smooth entry into the school. The transition arrangements to Sandye Place and other middle schools are also well managed.
45. The systems for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are good, and are reflected in the improved levels of behaviour in the school. A comprehensive policy provides clear guidelines and procedures for promoting good behaviour, and dealing with any disruptive pupils or incidents of bullying. The consistent application of these strategies is having a positive effect on raising the level of pupils' behaviour in the school. The balance of rewards and sanctions linking in with the weekly treat time works well and is valued by the pupils. They are well aware of the points system and generally feel that it motivates them to work hard and respond appropriately.
46. The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance in the school are very good. Attendance levels are improving since the recent introduction of the Compact scheme which records pupils' attendance. Pupils are enthusiastic about collecting the stickers and certificates, which is leading to more regular and prompt attendance. Parents are regularly informed about their responsibilities, and generally telephone the school on the first day their child is off sick. Appropriate links have been established with the education welfare officer who helps to follow up cases where necessary.
47. There are effective links with outside agencies to support pupils with special educational needs, for example, the Hearing Impaired Service. Recently the Behaviour Management Service has provided valuable advice for teachers in drawing up strategies for managing a small number of pupils with behaviour problems.
48. There are satisfactory systems in place for child protection and ensuring pupils' health, safety and welfare. The school has appropriate guidelines and procedures for ensuring child protection. The headteacher is the child protection officer and has recently received updating training. Other members of staff are aware of the procedures and are due to be updated regarding recent changes to the legislation early next term. There are sufficient numbers of staff trained in first aid to deal with accidents, or take care of pupils who may fall ill during the day.
49. The comprehensive health and safety policy and procedures ensure the safety of pupils in and around the school, and in the swimming pool. The headteacher, site agent and the health and safety governor undertake regular health and safety checks and risk assessments. The results of these checks are reported back to the governing body who take an active role in fulfilling their statutory responsibilities for health and safety.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

50. The school's partnership with parents is sound. They commented on the "open and accessible school", and "the excellent remodelling which provides a very good ecology for their children".

Parents feel confident that they can approach the school with any problems or concerns and they will be listened to. They feel teaching is good but are not very happy about the mixed aged classes. A small number of parents expressed concerns regarding the amount of homework given and the lack of out-of-school activities offered to pupils.

51. The quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory. Comprehensive information regarding the school is detailed in the nursery booklet, school prospectus and attractive governors' annual report to parents. There are regular newsletters to keep parents updated about what is happening in the school. The reading record provides an opportunity for contact between home and school. Coffee mornings are run for new parents and governors' surgeries are also held but rarely attended. The school consults parents on such issues as the home/school agreement. Curriculum workshops have been held to keep parents informed about initiatives such as the National Numeracy Strategy, or how they can help their children in their reading.
52. The school operates an open door policy. Parents are encouraged to become involved in the life of the school, and are invited to school productions and assemblies to see their children's performances. Twice yearly consultation evenings are well attended, and provide opportunities for parents to review their child's progress and achievements. The pupils' annual reports although providing a detailed outline of what has been covered, do not clearly identify pupils' progress and attainment in terms of what is expected of pupils at that level or of a similar age. Some parents feel that reports are not individualised, and they cannot always recognise their child.
53. Information is regularly shared with parents of pupils with special educational needs. Individual Education Plans are sent home prior to consultation evenings so that parents can discuss any concerns with teachers.
54. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is good; for example, their support of the behaviour policy, which is having a positive effect. The school has a number of enthusiastic parents and other volunteers who are involved in the reading partnership scheme, and help with swimming or trips, or mounting work or help with groups in the classroom. This additional focus on listening to reading is having a significant impact on improving standards in the school. The Friends of Laburnum School Association provides valuable support for the school. It organises a large number of fund-raising and social activities during the course of the year. These events are well attended and generate significant amounts of money for the school. This is used very effectively to help maintain the swimming pool, and to purchase playground equipment, computers, and books for the library. The 'Friends' also help out at other school events such as sports day and organise the distribution of the harvest food parcels.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

55. The leadership and management of the school are now very good. The headteacher, still in her first year in post, has brought much enthusiasm and great commitment to her job. She has built on the good practice previously in place and has been able to initiate strategies to improve several areas of weakness which she and her staff have identified. She works closely and effectively with her senior staff to bring about change. They enjoy the support of the very industrious staff and the loyalty and commitment of the governing body. Together they share a vision, firmly focused on raising standards and providing the best possible education for all the pupils in the school.
56. In the last inspection report of July 1998, attention was drawn to several weaknesses in the management and efficiency of the school. The School Development Plan had no clear and specific targets linked to financial planning and staff development needs. Long term planning was inadequate. Curriculum planning needed to be improved to give teachers a much sharper focus. The management of support staff needed to be improved to make more efficient use of their time. There was also criticism of the management of resources for special educational needs. Progress was initially steady but there is clear evidence of good improvement since the

appointment of the new headteacher. The key issues arising from the last inspection have been satisfactorily addressed. Specific targets for school improvement have been identified and relevant strategies for success and time scales have been made explicit. A clear and appropriate statement of aims and values now guides the school's work. Morale is good. There is a strong sense of community and shared commitment. The school has a good capacity to move forward rapidly.

57. The headteacher is a very effective leader who has a clear vision of the path that the school needs to follow in order to continue its improvement. Through her commitment and her professional skills, she has secured the respect of governors, staff, parents and pupils. In the absence of a deputy headteacher she has extended the role of the senior management team, involving two senior teachers who now offer her very good management support. The headteacher has made very effective use of money from the Standards Fund to remodel the office area to provide improved reception arrangements. Funds from the National Grid for Learning has been well spent on improving the school's computer provision. Teachers have been released to monitor their colleagues work in their own subject areas. By this sharing of vision and delegation of responsibility, she is developing a highly motivated, professional team, with a growing awareness of the strengths and areas for development of the school and a renewed commitment to the raising of standards.
58. The governors are very effective. They are very supportive and have the best interests of the school at heart. They include in their number, members who are very experienced and have much to offer. The governing body carries out its role of critical friend of the school very effectively. Governors are very closely involved in policy making; for example, in their review of health and safety provision. They have shared in the monitoring of end of Year 2 data and have recently set performance management targets for the headteacher. They are very well involved in financial planning. The recent very substantial "claw back" of allocated funds due to the downsizing of the school has meant that the headteacher and governors have had to monitor spending carefully and together they exercise very tight control of the school's finances. Governors have also agreed a development plan outlining the school's educational priorities for the longer term and showing how the use of resources is linked to the achievements of the school's goals.
59. The headteacher monitors teaching very effectively. She has carried out a series of formal observations, focussing on the skills of teachers and the attainment of pupils. The quality of teaching has improved markedly since the last inspection. It is now good throughout the school and contributes well to the good progress made by pupils. She shows very good leadership by identifying appropriate strategies for improvement and makes very good use of individual skills and expertise. This professional development of staff is complemented by the introduction of an effective performance management strategy. Teachers are encouraged to maintain and update records of their own training needs and achievements. This all contributes to the sense of team work and high staff morale, that was witnessed during the inspection. Effective induction procedures are in place for staff new to the school, and this includes the potential needs of newly qualified teachers. The school has sound potential for the training of new teachers.
60. In her short time at the school, the headteacher has been very active in identifying educational priorities and targets. She has worked consistently with all staff, focusing particularly on under-achievement and making best use of assessment and performance data to predict potential. Procedures are now in place, which will enable the school to allocate resources to support those pupils who are not reaching targets, which are deemed realistic. The headteacher, who has recently taken on the role of special educational needs co-ordinator, has overseen an improvement in provision. Early identification of need is now customary and Individual Education Plans have very specific targets for pupils to aim for.
61. The efficient allocation of resources is dependent on a budget based on a well-structured development plan, properly costed, evaluated and agreed by the governing body. The present School Improvement Plan is a very useful document and reflects the priorities identified by the headteacher in the early weeks of her headship whilst recognising the very severe financial restraints imposed on the school by the downsizing process and subsequent financial

"clawback." It makes a perceptive evaluation of the school's current situation, makes an honest assessment of recent targets, and identifies, in quite specific terminology, the priority areas for the school's future development. The headteacher and the governing body are well aware of the need to link future budgets to the development plans for all forecasts.

62. The arrangements for day-to-day administration and financial control are good. The school administrator is being appropriately trained to make good use of new technology in her work. She liaises effectively with the financial support service, provided by the local education authority. School routines run smoothly and teachers are able to focus their attention on the classroom. Any specific grants are used prudently for their designated purpose, for example, to support pupils with statements of their special educational needs.
63. An audit of the school's accounting procedures was carried out in November 2000, and its few recommendations have been implemented. The headteacher is very familiar with the principles of best value. Since her appointment, with the agreement of the governing body, she has reviewed all the arrangements for the school's domestic services in order to maximise value for money. Both the headteacher and the governing body are very conscious of the need to apply the principles of best value in their management and use of all resources.
64. There is an adequate number of teachers who are well qualified and suitably experienced to deliver the National Curriculum and religious education. The renewed commitment to the professional development of staff has a beneficial effect on teachers' confidence. The school makes good use of the expertise that exists amongst its own staff; as is illustrated by the procedures devised for subject leaders to monitor teaching in their own subjects. There is generous provision of classroom and nursery assistants. They provide good, constructive help to teachers, share in the planning and make a significant contribution to the pupils' learning. However there are instances during lessons when assistants are not directly involved with the pupils and this limits their efficiency. The caretaker and cleaning staff do an outstandingly good job in maintaining the school to a very good standard and the site agent in particular is a very important member of the school community.
65. Accommodation is very good. Classrooms are of good size and the additional teaching areas for all year groups provide valuable space which is used most effectively for small group work. There is a good sized hall, separate dining hall, computer suite and library. Throughout the school, the display of pupils' work helps to show their achievement and adds to the bright and aesthetically pleasing environment. The facilities outdoors are also very good. Children in the nursery have a secure, stimulating and safe, dedicated area for their activities. The main school playground incorporates a mix of hard and soft play surfaces suitable for a variety of ball games, gardens and seating. The school is fortunate in having its own swimming pool. Although the present financial constraints have not allowed the new headteacher to improve the school's resources, resources in all subject areas are satisfactory and meet the demands of the curriculum. The headteacher is aware of the need to invest further in books for the library but, in the meantime, the school is making good use of the resources available. Children in the nursery benefit from access to a good range of equipment, including large toys. Most resources are in good condition, neatly stored and readily accessible to teachers.
66. This is an effective school which gives satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

67. In order to further improve the quality of education and standards achieved, the headteacher, staff and governors should:
- (1) raise standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science by;
 - developing a speaking and listening policy (*paragraphs 9, 12, 13, 16, 79*)
 - continuing to develop the expectations of pupils so that they show initiative and take more responsibility for their own learning (*paragraphs 6, 14, 19, 26, 27, 93, 94, 95*)
 - (2) Further improve provision for pupils in the foundation stage by ensuring that planning and assessment of activities takes into account the stepping stones to ensure that work meets the needs of children of all abilities. (*paragraph 77*)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	28
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	31

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	5	15	8	0	0	0
Percentage	0	18	54	29	0	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 one three percentage points. Percentages may total more than 100 due to rounding.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	23	133
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	15

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	9	42

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	24
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	30

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.5
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.6
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	18	20	38

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	14	16
	Girls	16	11	16
	Total	30	25	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	79 (63)	66 (63)	84 (90)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	15	16	16
	Girls	16	19	19
	Total	31	35	35
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	82 (61)	92 (88)	92 (93)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	3
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	126
Any other minority ethnic group	4

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	3	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 – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.4
Average class size	26

Education support staff: YR – Y4

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	42

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	25
Number of pupils per FTE adult	11.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2
	£
Total income	328,340
Total expenditure	343,240
Expenditure per pupil	1,900
Balance brought forward from previous year	15,400
Balance carried forward to next year	500

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	143
Number of questionnaires returned	36

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	47	50	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	25	69	6	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	19	72	3	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17	58	8	11	6
The teaching is good.	33	58	0	0	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	44	19	8	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	33	3	3	6
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	31	58	8	3	0
The school works closely with parents.	22	42	31	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	28	58	6	3	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	22	64	8	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	19	39	17	11	14

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

68. There have been considerable improvements in the provision for children in the Foundation Stage since the previous inspection. Its organisation changed from September 2000, from admitting children rising five, to them starting on a part-time basis in the nursery class in three intakes, the term before their fourth birthday. In the academic year in which they are five, children attend full-time and move into the reception class. In addition, the accommodation is much more suitable to their needs. Parents are happy with this new arrangement and the nursery has a healthy intake, which contrasts with the small number in the reception class. Financial constraints mean that when the next intake of nursery children arrive in January 2002, this group will join the Year 1 class.
69. Not all pupils have experience of pre-school education and the overall attainment of each intake varies from year to year, covering the full ability range. Teachers concentrate on developing children's language and social skills to compensate for lower attainment in these particular areas. Early indications are that the new arrangements are a success and the children settle easily into school. Childrens' overall achievement shows an improvement since the last inspection. The majority of children make good progress and are on course to achieve the early learning goals by the end of the foundation stage.

Personal, social and emotional development

70. Most children are keen to learn and quickly develop positive relationships with each other and with their teacher and nursery nurse. They play happily with each other and with some of their older classmates in the reception class and this helps them to learn to respect others. There are many opportunities provided to develop self-confidence and independence. Equipment and resources that children use are easily accessible to them and this encourages independence. The school's daily routines and rules help children to develop their understanding of living in a wider community. They are confident as they move around the classroom and share equipment and wait their turn patiently.

Communication, language and literacy

71. The quality of spoken language is variable. Children talk about their paintings and models and those in the reception class listen carefully to the teacher in the early part of the literacy lesson. They are encouraged to speak clearly when, for example, they respond to the teacher's questions. Children make satisfactory progress as they follow the text of a big book with the teacher and use a growing vocabulary to retell stories they have heard. The teacher uses elements of the Literacy Framework with children in the reception class and at this early stage in a new school year, they can write their names and, with help, write a significant number of the letters of the alphabet. However, their knowledge of letter sounds is not sufficiently developed, and so they are not yet confident to use these skills to write simple regular words. Although their overall achievement is satisfactory, in writing and reading it is not as rapid as in other areas of learning.

Mathematics

72. Most children make good progress in developing their numeracy skills and are developing an understanding of basic mathematical concepts. Many activities are practical, for example, in the 'greengrocer's shop', and using jigsaws to match numbers and shapes. In the sand and water trays, children use a variety of containers to develop their concepts of weight, capacity and space. Stories and rhymes are used effectively to extend children's mathematical language. By the time they are five, the majority of children can write simple addition sums and add correctly single-digit numbers to record answers up to ten. Children recognise and can draw some shapes, such as circles and squares.

Knowledge and understanding of the World

73. The children are making good progress in finding out about the world around them in and beyond their own environment. They look at the properties of different objects and materials, such as when preparing the wedding cake and cooking jam tarts. Children confidently use their senses to guess which vegetables are in the "feely" bag and use a magnifying glass to look closely at an apple. They quickly become familiar with the computer and, with help, use the mouse to match shapes on the screen. The simple properties of materials, such as which will keep them warm, cool or dry, are learned by sorting clothes in the dressing up box. Children are taught about their own cultures and beliefs and those of other people. A good example was seen when a visitor showed them the wedding clothes worn by a bride in India as part of their work on Celebrations.

Physical development

74. Pupils achieve well in this area and learn to move confidently, control their bodies and handle equipment. They use scissors to cut out shapes, and rollers to make patterns on salt dough. Fine motor skills are successfully developed in activities using pencils, crayons and brushes. There is a separate, enclosed outside space for use by children where they enjoy using large outdoor equipment and a variety of wheeled vehicles to develop their physical skills and strength.

Creative development

75. Children are encouraged to listen carefully to music and enthusiastically join in with action rhymes and songs. There are good opportunities for them to participate in imaginative play; they have lively conversations and take on a variety of roles. Good opportunities are provided to experiment with colour, texture and shapes in their art and design work using a variety of tools and materials. Most children recognise and name the primary colours. Large construction kits, joining pieces with nuts and bolts, give children useful opportunities to make and build their own designs.
76. At the time of the inspection, the class was taught by an experienced supply teacher, covering for a long-term absence, with the excellent support of a skilled nursery nurse and other helpers. Together they make an effective team, as the quality of teaching is consistently good in all areas of the Foundation curriculum. It is particularly good in communication, language and literacy. Fundamentally, this is based on the belief that young children need to develop communication and thinking skills, to formulate ideas and opinions through first hand experience. There is a secure and caring atmosphere where the contributions of all the children are valued. There is a good range of activities, which are very effective in keeping all children interested and involved. Their learning is highly active and all are busily engaged and show good levels of concentration for their ages. Children are managed well and there are high standards of behaviour. Relationships all round are good and children take turns and co-operate sensibly when moving between activities. The use of praise and acknowledgement of the children's good behaviour play an important part in the growth of children's self-esteem. The nursery nurse's calm manner brings out the best in the children and when they make mistakes they are encouraged to persevere.
77. The School Improvement Plan recognises the need to provide a nursery curriculum and this is in place. However, planning for this wide range of age and ability is a challenge and lesson objectives need to be very specific to ensure that all children are given work to meet their needs, particularly those in the reception class. The stepping stones in the Early Learning Goals provide an effective base on which to plan different levels of work and assess children's progress. This will also allow children in the reception class to move to the programmes of study of the National Curriculum when they are ready.

ENGLISH

78. Overall standards in English at the end of Year 2 are currently well below the national average and two years later are well below those found in the majority of Year 4 classes across the country. This appears to represent a worsening of standards since the last inspection but caution needs to be applied, particularly because the school has small numbers of pupils and each year-group is different. It only needs a small variation in the numbers with special educational needs, for example, to significantly alter the percentages that gain the expected levels in national tests. In the current Year 2 class, this is the case. Almost half the pupils have been identified as needing extra help in their learning. The school therefore predicts that fewer will achieve the expected standards than in 2001, when results, at least in writing, improved over 2000. Within each class too there is a very wide range of achievement. In the 2001 results for reading, for example, one in four failed to gain the expected Level 2 standard but conversely one in five gained the higher Level 3. The current Year 4 pupils achieved well below average standards when they took the national tests for seven-year-olds in 2000 and they have maintained these standards. They have therefore made satisfactory progress, as have the Year 2 pupils, because their skills were judged to be below-average when they entered school.
79. Standards in speaking and listening are well below those found in the majority of schools. Many pupils remain passive during class discussions and teachers do not always challenge these particular individuals to contribute. Learning support assistants, who are often engaged in less important tasks during lesson introductions, could provide helpful information for teachers if they made a record of those who rarely speak. In one Year 2 lesson, one in three did not contribute. This is partly due to a lack of confidence – many who do speak have quiet voices - and partly to a poor understanding of vocabulary. The Year 2 teacher, for example, has to explain what a 'moth' is when one boy quotes this as something that frightens him in the dark. Later in the lesson, a girl finds it difficult to say and therefore spell the word 'hospital' when she is trying to write a story about what happened to her after she cracked her head open. Year 4 pupils also have difficulty in using a broad vocabulary. In a lesson about adverbs, pupils offer words like 'greedily' and 'quickly' to describe how someone is eating but more imaginative adverbs are not forthcoming. Listening skills across the school vary but teachers generally have to work hard to maintain pupils' concentration. Lesson introductions are sometimes too long or are not varied enough. The teacher in Year 2 gets it right by talking for a short time about the features of instructional writing and then playing a practical game with pupils who have to find the friends who have a word with the same middle sound as theirs.
80. Standards in reading vary considerably within each class but in the school as a whole they are below those found nationally. Pupils' ability to understand what they are reading is not as good as their ability to read the words. The school has identified comprehension as a focus for attention. An above-average Year 2 pupil reads his book fluently and responds to the humour within it but it is too easy for him. He explains that he works out an unknown word by breaking it up and using the sounds of the letters to build it again. This contrasts with a below-average pupil who says, "I ask if I don't know a word". With help, the average pupil deciphers 'grass' but cannot work out 'sometimes' and 'why'. In contrast with the above-average pupil, she cannot identify the title or author of her book and does not know that she is reading 'fiction'. All these pupils, in common with those in Year 1, find it difficult to talk about favourite books or express what they like about reading. This reflects their poor vocabulary. Year 1 pupils are at the early stages of learning the sounds of letters but the teacher is addressing this. In her literacy lesson, for example, she helps the pupils to read the word as different letters are chosen to go at the beginning of 'at'. Pupils therefore make words like 'mat', 'cat' and 'fat'. This is good teaching of basic skills and pupils are able to make sufficient progress in acquiring them.
81. The difficulty in understanding text becomes more apparent as pupils get older. An average Year 4 girl, who is reading a book that is too difficult nevertheless reads 'glowered' but does not know what it means and cannot infer it from the text. Similarly, the above-average pupil who is a fluent and accurate reader, does not read with expression. He does not realise, for example, that a passage without a full-stop in half a page needs to be read frantically to show a mounting sense of desperation. The below-average pupils in both Years 3 and 4 need help with their reading. The Year 3 pupil, for example, does not readily recognise 'they' and is a hesitant reader. These older pupils, however are much more forthcoming about favourite authors and

books. Dick King-Smith, Roald Dahl and J.K.Rowling are favourite authors and the above-average Year 4 pupil says he has read all the 'Harry Potter' books. The older pupils too explain how to find books in the library – both fiction and non-fiction - using the catalogue and the classification system. They also know how to use an index and a list of contents to find particular pages within a book. Teachers are therefore beginning to use the library, not only for changing reading books, but also for introducing pupils to the methods of finding books to conduct their own research.

82. Standards of writing are well below average across the school and this has been identified as an area that needs attention. Suitable strategies are being introduced to help pupils with their writing. Everyone has a target to aim for, such as 'start two sentences with capital letters' for some Year 2 pupils. Words have to be learnt each week and they are practised every day by repeatedly writing them on whiteboards and using them in sentences during written activities. Frameworks for planning a story are helping pupils to work out ideas clearly before beginning the final version. Nevertheless, the standards of writing at present are hampering work in other subjects, such as history and religious education. Teachers often devise a pictorial method of recording work in these subjects because they know that pupils find it difficult to produce written accounts. Conversely, by doing this, opportunities to develop these very skills are being avoided and chances to develop literacy skills are missed. Information and communication technology, however, is being used satisfactorily to support literacy, particularly spelling. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils regularly use the computers to help them. Those in Year 4 look at each word as it appears on the screen and type in the letters to achieve the correct spelling of 'ph' words and are successful.
83. Most Year 2 pupils are aware of the need for sentences but not all use full-stops and capital letters consistently or correctly. The above-average pupils attempt to join letters and, on the whole, do so correctly though some letters with descenders, like 'g' and 'y' are not positioned properly when using lines. They write simple stories, however, despite having difficulty with spelling. Good attempts are made to reproduce words as they sound – like 'stomercake' – but speaking difficulties again influence spelling with 'stopped' being spelt as 'stogt'. Average pupils usually print their letters but they are properly formed. Stories can be understood, although spelling of simple words like 'sum' for 'some' is a problem and a sentence like "Someone play wiv me' reveals again the way in which speech affects spelling. The below-average pupils find writing very difficult and often their work needs interpretation because words are not separated. Many correctly have the target 'to use finger spaces between words'. Year 1 pupils are at the early stages of writing in sentences. However, when re-writing the story of 'Little Red Riding Hood' it is possible to decipher some work. It is clear, for example, what the above-average pupil is writing: "The waf got in to deb".
84. Judgements about standards in writing for pupils in Year 4 are difficult because very little unaided writing was available for scrutiny at this early stage of the school year. The school has correctly identified the need for English lessons besides the daily Literacy Hour when pupils can practise their 'free' writing. Nevertheless, Year 4 pupils have been concentrating so far on the mechanics of writing. For example, most are now joining their letters and some use ink. They have been considering alternative words for 'nice' and studying how a script is different from a story. Spelling continues to be difficult. Below average pupils struggle to describe a character who has 'ise wiet' (eyes white). Year 3 pupils understand that a story has a beginning, middle and end but some produce work that has very little action. A below average pupil writes 'but it grod (growed) and grod...' and continues with six more repetitions of 'grod'. This is why the story-planning framework is needed.
85. Teaching was good in all the lessons seen in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory overall in Years 3 and 4. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and this is an improvement over the last inspection. The National Literacy Strategy is now well embedded and teachers are planning appropriate activities and structuring their lessons well to develop skills and knowledge in accordance with the recommendations. They use resources effectively to maintain interest and the teachers of younger pupils in particular use practical activities to aid learning. In Year 1, the teacher has a number of labels that pupils have to read and then stick in the correct place around the room. This helps their reading. When one pupil says the word is 'picture' the teacher uses the opportunity to get others to identify that the word begins with 'w' and together they

build the word 'window'. This is good teaching of basic skills and is a feature throughout the school. Teachers plan different activities so that the needs of all pupils are met. They are all therefore fully included and are able to make similar satisfactory progress over time. In individual lessons, progress is sometimes good, reflecting the good teaching. Learning support assistants are well used in activity sessions to help pupils with special educational needs in particular. In a class 3 lesson, where pupils are producing a poster advertising a holiday club, they find it difficult to copy words without considerable help from the assistant but she provides this sensitively enabling them to make sufficient progress. Pupils with special educational needs across the school are well supported and are making as much progress as everyone else. They benefit from specific targets on the Individual Education Plans such as: 'to form letters a, g, o, d correctly'.

86. Teachers in Years 1 and 2 manage their classes very well. Amongst the older pupils there are a few with less positive attitudes. The need to periodically correct them sometimes affects the pace of the lesson. Some teachers are better than others at communicating their expectations for good behaviour and high standards of work and insisting that pupils adhere to them. Most however mark work fully so that pupils feel supported by comments that praise what they have done well. In the best examples, teachers also point out how work can be improved. To do this, one teacher consistently refers to the writing target when the work indicates that it has been forgotten. Pupils regularly take their spellings and reading books home. Most of those who were listened to reading by inspectors say that they read regularly at home, often to one or both parents. Teachers feel, however, that not all parents are playing their full part in this joint venture. A new Reading Partnership initiative, involving four volunteers, is targeting particular pupils for extra reading on a regular basis for a ten-week period. It is too early to judge the effect of this help. The school also has volunteers from amongst retired members of the community who offer help. One in particular has shown an interest in overseeing the library.
87. The co-ordinator has just taken on the role. She has a good understanding already of how English is organised and delivered within the school and aims to systematically monitor planning and work in books as well as observing lessons. She has a budget and has just received a generous amount of money for books from the Friends of the School. Resources are adequate, including suitable programs for the computer. The library has a good stock of books but some, both fiction and non-fiction, are poor quality and out-of-date. Reading books too, although sufficient, have been well used and are losing their good quality appearance. Good assessment systems are used to acquire data about pupils' attainment and to set targets for improvement. Recently acquired standardised tests for reading and spelling supplement the tests already taken at the end of Years 3 and 4 and give teachers information about younger pupils too. The practice of writing an unaided story at regular intervals throughout the year is also useful in providing evidence of progress.

MATHEMATICS

88. By the end of Year 2, standards in mathematics are satisfactory and pupils have made good progress. This represents a steady improvement, shown in the results of the 2000 and 2001 Statutory Assessment Tasks results at Year 2. Most graphically, the number of pupils attaining Level 2 B or above (those pupils expected to attain Level 4 or above at Year 6) has increased from 58 percent to 76 percent with almost double the percentage of pupils reaching Level 3. The picture at Year 4 is not so positive where attainment overall is still unsatisfactory. However, there is reason for optimism as the prospects for this improvement to continue are favourable. Progress for pupils with special educational needs is good when their abilities are considered. Standards in numeracy are generally satisfactory throughout the school.
89. Pupils in Year 2 are developing useful mental strategies and use these effectively in their everyday work. They recognise the difference between odd and even numbers and use estimation in their every day work. Most pupils are secure in number bonds to 10 and recognise and understand place value to two and sometimes three digits. Pupils complete addition and subtraction equations of the type $34 + 9 = 43$ and $47 - 5 = 42$, and understand the concepts of 'more than' and 'less than'. Most pupils recognise the different characteristics of basic two and three-dimensional shapes, such as a rectangle and triangle, cylinder and cuboid.

They measure in non-standard units, such as the length of a chair in handspans, and by the end of Year 2 are comparing these with simple standard measurements.

90. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 continue to develop their mental arithmetic skills, such as learning quick ways of adding and subtracting 19. They are developing an understanding of how mathematics works, for example, that division is continuous subtraction and the importance of the place value of numbers when adding 901 and 432. The oldest pupils find the cost of a meal when given the prices. However, a significant number of pupils are not confident which rule to apply when solving a mixture of written problems. Pupils are confident with shapes and measures, measuring length accurately to the nearest millimetre. In their geometry work they know the value in degrees of right and straight-line angles. Little evidence was seen of pupils' work in data handling.
91. Numeracy skills contribute to learning in other subjects such as pupils in Years 3 and 4 measuring wood for photograph frames in design and technology. Information and communication technology and learning support assistants are used effectively to support pupils' work, particularly those with special educational needs. This is a very useful way of ensuring that all pupils are given equal access to the curriculum at their own level. Streaming according to ability is having a positive effect in improving standards. There is no discernible difference in the progress made by pupils with special educational needs those from different racial groups and those for whom English is an additional language.
92. The quality of teaching overall is good. Introductions to lessons are always well structured so that they keep pupils' interested and remind them of previous learning. Planned objectives are shared with pupils and the plenary session is used well to consolidate and assess their learning. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and results in some interesting advice for pupils, for example, "always put the biggest number in your head and add the smaller one". Relationships between teachers and pupils are mainly good and this is evident in the way that teachers deal positively with pupils' answers and in the use of praise to motivate them. In the best lessons, pupils are given challenging work and this has a direct effect on their interest and involvement.
93. A more structured approach to using and applying mathematics is needed to further improve standards and pupils' understanding, ensuring that all the requirements of the programmes of study are met through the application of other attainment targets. The school needs to consider establishing criteria for assessing pupils' attainment against national levels as part of this approach.

SCIENCE

94. In the year 2000, teachers assessed standards in Year 2 as below-average compared with those of all schools. Only a very few pupils succeeded in achieving the higher level 3. Inspection findings confirm that standards in the current Years 2 and 4 are below-average. Whereas the majority of pupils develop a sound understanding of scientific concepts, they lack the scientific thinking and verbal skills to articulate them. At the time of the last inspection standards were said to be in line with national expectations in Year 2 and below those expected in Year 4. Learning is now satisfactory in most lessons and over time and the majority of pupils achieve satisfactorily. However there is a need for a more investigative approach to challenge the thinking of the potential higher attaining pupils. The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress.
95. Year 2 pupils use their reading skills to sort animals according to common features, but their lack of well developed speaking and listening skills impedes the development of their scientific thinking. Teachers prepare work which suitably challenges pupils of all abilities and this adds to the sound learning which takes place. Pupils learn the ideal conditions needed for good plant growth. They experiment with variables to study different effects on growth. The highly practical nature of the work enthuses them and holds their interest, thus increasing the quality of learning. Pupils in Year 4 learn about how exercise causes changes to happen to the human body. Pupils carry out practical tests involving temperature and pulse rates but offer few

suggestions themselves. An analysis of work shows that the majority of pupils including those with special educational needs, those for whom English is an additional language and those from different racial groups make consistently sound progress and achieve satisfactorily after starting from an initial low level of understanding. However there is a sizeable minority of pupils who find concentration very difficult. These pupils do not make much progress and do not achieve well. Outbursts of poor behaviour can also hamper the progress of the majority. Teachers place great emphasis on teaching the vocabulary needed to succeed. This means that pupils increase their understanding of the topics covered. Most pupils enjoy practical work and this is especially beneficial to those with poorer literacy skills who find it difficult to write up their findings. The pupils receive good quality support from the learning support assistants and this improves the quality of learning significantly.

96. The quality of teaching was good in both lessons seen. Teachers have high expectations that pupils will work hard and learn and behave well. This contributes positively to the good progress made in these lessons by the majority of pupils. Teaching is planned and based on secure subject knowledge. This, and the very good understanding of their pupils' needs, enables teachers successfully to match the work to the ability of each pupil. They organise their lessons well so that pupils receive maximum benefit from interaction with the adults working in class. This increases the opportunities for talking about their work and has a positive impact on learning. Teachers manage their pupils very well, working hard to minimise the effects of unsatisfactory behaviour.
97. Pupils' attainment and progress are assessed regularly. Good records are kept and this works effectively in influencing what happens in the next lesson. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and in a positive way, to inform pupils on how they can improve their work. The subject is led well and the subject leader monitors teaching and learning effectively. Resources are satisfactory for the current curriculum.

ART AND DESIGN

98. Standards in art and design throughout the school match those expected nationally, particularly in skills such as drawing and painting.
99. By the end of Year 2, pupils investigate and use a variety of materials to communicate their ideas and meanings. They use paints and other media to produce pictures and designs of a sound standard that create a good feel for the subject and have good precision in detail. Pupils use the work of other artists, such as Kandinsky to influence their own work. They produce good quality pictures of a wide range of fruits using pastels and watercolours. They learn to vary their brush techniques when painting robots and learn to imitate canal art. Pupils in Year 4 listen to La Mer by Claude Debussy and "thought about what feelings the sea made us have" as they painted. They successfully explore line, texture and tone, and talk confidently about these features. They have also made a study of Aboriginal art. They make sculptures and collages out of a wide range materials. Throughout the school, pupils' artwork is displayed sensitively and thoughtfully. In classrooms these displays reinforce pupils learning whether it is a bright display of silhouettes of different places of worship or a variety of observational drawings of plants and foliage or the insides of fruit. This reinforces pupils' interest and makes them believe that their work is being valued thus helping to raise their self-esteem. Pupils' collage and montage work is displayed very attractively setting a tone of high standards for pupils to aspire to. Teachers and other staff work very hard to produce these displays which do much to enhance the learning environment of the school.
100. The teaching of art and design throughout the school is good. Pupils are well managed and are given good opportunities to engage in a good range of focused practical activities. Teachers effectively use a variety of ways to teach art, including using the work of famous artists, and by demonstrating techniques. This variety enables the pupils to learn well. A particularly good example of this is when the Year 3 class are shown clearly how to compose their picture of an angel. They are shown good models from famous artists and given a clear expectation of how well they can use the space available on their paper.

101. Coaching by classroom assistants is of sound quality, and teacher and assistant form a good team. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and critically evaluate work as it progresses to help raise standards. An opportunity is missed to develop pupils' speaking and listening skill however, by failing to ask them to review each other's work. The majority of pupils including those for whom English is an additional language, those with special educational needs and those from different racial groups enjoy their lessons, as they like to be busy. They concentrate well on their work and try hard to do their best and this enables them to take advantage of the evaluations given by the teachers and to achieve well. A minority of pupils who find concentration difficult do not make such good progress. Teachers use Information and Control Technology programmes to good effect, to enhance the provision of the subject which makes a useful contribution to pupils' cultural development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

102. At the end of Years 2 and 4, most pupils reach the standards appropriate to their age and have made satisfactory progress. This is similar to attainment at the last inspection although progress for pupils in Years 3 and 4 has improved.
103. In Years 1 and 2, pupils develop skills in a range of activities. They use a variety of materials, for example wood, card and disposable cartons. They can estimate, measure, mark out and cut simple shapes in a range of materials. By the age of seven, most pupils use a range of techniques to successfully join materials and make judgements about the end product of their work.
104. In Years 3 and 4, pupils use their skills to design structures with strong shapes, such as triangles and test these for rigidity and strength. They use construction kits in a similar way, to bridge a gap between two desks, capable of holding a two-kilogram weight. Mathematical skills, such as accurate measurements, are usefully applied. Their skills are further developed in the safe use of a saw when cutting wood to the correct length and a vice to hold it steady. Finishing skills such as rubbing down are taught to enhance the presentation of picture frames. By the end of Year 4, pupils have a sound understanding of the processes involved in the making aspect of design and technology, but less secure in the design process itself, a criticism in the last report. To challenge pupils further, they need to develop an understanding of the design process itself, to plan their ideas formally and adapt them as they see necessary to make a finished article. To complement this approach pupils should learn to be critical of their own work and that of their classmates and use this evaluation to improve their finished designs and models.
105. Teaching is good. Skills are taught well with health and safety as a priority when using sharp tools. Learning intentions are specific and shared. There are good routines in place; for example, pupils in Year 1 know where to go to find materials, a pencil or the glue. Teachers use the correct technical language, such as mechanisms and support. Classrooms are busy places and reflect the pupils' good attitudes towards design and technology. They talk about their work with enjoyment and enthusiasm. Learning support assistants are used effectively to help pupils and play an important part in ensuring that all pupils have access to the lesson. A good example of this inclusion is the support given to a pupil with hearing problems. Resources are sufficient, with a good selection of large and small commercial construction kits together with a range of tools for measuring, marking, cutting and joining.

GEOGRAPHY

106. Pupils in Years 2 and 4 attain standards expected of their ages. These have been maintained since the last inspection. Good use is being made of the local area in current work and this contributes to pupils' cultural development. Year 2 pupils have found Sandy on a map of the United Kingdom. They know that it is in England. They are now comparing life in this country with life in rural and urban Africa, realising that much is similar but that there are significant differences, particularly in the type of animals that roam in the wild. Their recall of previous work is not completely spontaneous but, with prompting, they remember what has been taught. Learning therefore is satisfactory. Pupils in Year 4 are aware of the leisure facilities that are

available in Sandy. They identify man-made and natural features of the area, linking well with work in science. They realise that larger places, like Bedford and London, have different features and that people travel to these places for particular reasons – for work or for leisure opportunities, such as Premiership football matches that are not available in Sandy. These pupils also have difficulty recalling previous information but when they begin practical work on a poster advertising local leisure facilities, their recall of past learning is better.

107. Work is planned against a two-year cycle and pupils in Years 1 and 2 study the same topic in Year A and a different one in Year B. The same system applies to Years 3 and 4. Teachers are aware of the need to ensure that older pupils study topics in greater depth so that skills can be developed. They do this satisfactorily by planning different work for them. The higher attaining pupils within each year-group are also expected to achieve more. For example, an above-average Year 4 pupil considers features of Greece that are distinctive from towns and cities in England. The majority of pupils therefore, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language or those from different cultural groups, make satisfactory progress over time.
108. Teaching overall is satisfactory taking into consideration the two lessons seen and the scrutiny of pupils' work. Teachers use resources well. Year 2 pupils concentrate well when learning about life in Africa because of the quality of resources, for example, a set of photographs that forcefully illustrate similarities and differences. Sometimes the structure of the lesson is not quite right with an over-long introduction. A good lesson seen in Year 3 begins with skilful questioning to assess what pupils understand from previous lessons. The teacher then introduces the vocabulary that she wants pupils to learn – words such as 'locality' and 'habitat' - and proceeds to explain the task clearly. The work soundly promotes the development of literacy skills. Pupils have to decide, for example, on the type of lettering for their poster that will attract attention and to ponder on correct spellings. They are hampered somewhat by their poor literacy skills but the teacher and her classroom assistant offer help when 'birds' is spelt 'buds' and 'come' is spelt 'cum'. All pupils are fully involved during the activity and those with special educational needs receive particular attention from the learning support assistant, enabling them to make sufficient progress.
109. Opportunities to develop literacy skills are not always fully exploited. Teachers often devise pictorial ways for pupils to record their work that does not include writing. Teachers acknowledge the value of the Internet in calling up maps, using the digital camera and collecting information in a database. The co-ordinator was absent during the inspection and has only assumed the responsibility this term so it is not possible to judge her leadership qualities. Resources are adequate although the headteacher is not happy with the atlases. There is no system for assessing the standards and progress of individual pupils.

HISTORY

110. At the end of Years 2 and 4, attainment in history is appropriate to pupils of this age. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 develop an understanding of the passing of time by using their own lives as a starting point. Timelines are used imaginatively by putting on the years in which pupils were born, started walking and first came to school. They look at toys and contrast the differences with those of today and how some old characters, such as Pinocchio have been developed in order to remain popular. Pupils learn about major events in British history such as the Great Fire of London. They are finding out the reasons why some people become famous by looking closely at their lives, for example, Dr Barnardo. The local environment is used to see how Sandy has changed. Pupils understand that the way people shop has changed dramatically and continues to change.
111. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 build on these foundations. They extend their knowledge of Sandy and its past and use local evidence to reconstruct how people lived, for example, using maps and census information to build up this picture. In their wider study of British history, pupils look closely at the culture of the peoples who invaded and settled in this country. They increasingly understand about life in the past and confidently compare the similarities and differences between their own lives and those of the Anglo-Saxons.

112. As only one lesson was seen, there is insufficient evidence to make a firm judgement on the overall quality of teaching and learning. However, in the lesson with Year 2, it was clear that pupils enjoy history lessons. They enter into discussion sessions enthusiastically and confidently share their ideas. At the last inspection there was an over-reliance on worksheets, which limited pupils' learning. Lessons are now planned more imaginatively to meet the demands of teaching mixed aged and mixed ability classes and include opportunities for assessment. Visitors to school such as 'Roman Steve,' or a local resident talking about her childhood really involve pupils. Classroom support assistants are used to ensure that all pupils are included in the work, for example, helping those pupils with special educational needs. History makes a useful contribution to pupils' cultural development. Although resources are adequate and those for local studies good, the co-ordinator wishes to collect a wider range of artefacts, reference books and videos when finances allow.
113. There is little evidence of information and communication technology being used to develop pupils' historical enquiry skills and so opportunities to simulate the past and bring it to life are missed.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

114. Since the school was last inspected, the quality of resources is much better through the grant from the National Grid for Learning. The accommodation has also improved and there is now a separate computer suite. Pupils work on computers regularly and from observations and discussions with teachers and by looking at pupils' work, it is clear that standards are steadily improving and are generally satisfactory overall.
115. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 use computers confidently. They load and save work and use word processing in their everyday work, and change the font, and cut and paste. They control the mouse accurately, and use the toolbox when using art packages to draw their portraits. With the teacher they talk about how technology is used in everyday life. Pupils collect information in a simple database and, with help, produce a graph. However, opportunities to use control are limited.
116. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 further develop their word processing skills and use these in their presentations. They import clip art into their work and used the tools to change the image to suit their needs. Databases and spreadsheets are used to collect information, for example, about leisure in Sandy as part of a geographical study. In control pupils write on-screen commands to move objects accurately around the screen sequencing a set of traffic lights. Simulations are used to a limited extent, for example, in mathematics.
117. All staff are confident in teaching information and communication technology after New Opportunities Funding training. Insufficient teaching was seen to judge the quality of teaching overall although in the lesson seen it was satisfactory. Pupils enjoy working with computers. They have a marked effect on their interest, involvement and concentration. This enthusiasm is shown in the good attendance at the co-ordinators lunchtime club. Learning support assistants are used effectively and pupils use computers to help them with their literacy and numeracy work. Good examples were seen in helping pupils to double numbers and in spelling. The school recognises that there is still a challenge ahead to further improve standards but the potential is there.
118. Areas identified to be studied at greater depth include:
- (1) At Key Stage 1,
 - using control to direct signals or commands.
 - (2) And at Key Stage 2,
 - extending the control work covered in Key Stage 1;
 - monitoring using sensors;
 - and using simulations to bring pupils' work in other subjects to life.

- (3) At both key stages,
- using of E-mail and researching information.

119. An audit of the software available in school will be useful in identifying cross-curricular opportunities; formal assessment procedures should be developed to monitor pupils' progress.

MUSIC

120. It was not possible to see lessons in Years 2 and 4 and so firm judgements about standards cannot be made. However, teachers' plans show that the full programmes of study in music are covered. Standards at Years 1 and 3 are in line with those expected of pupils of these ages. Standards in the school as a whole are satisfactory and have been maintained since the last inspection.

121. Pupils sing tunefully in assembly, are enthusiastic and show proper attention to the words of songs. Pupils in Year 1 enjoy their lesson when they devise sound effects to accompany the story that they have been studying in the Literacy Hour. They confidently use their voices to make appropriate sounds for the owl, for bees, a clock and a woodpecker among others. They then work co-operatively in groups with instruments to produce sound effects so that they can accompany the story as the teacher reads it. They listen carefully to each other and play their instruments properly when it is their turn. Teaching is very good and opportunities to let pupils exercise their initiative are not missed. The learning support assistant works effectively to make sure that all pupils are included in the activities and the teacher ensures that all have a chance to participate in the final performance.

122. The two lessons seen demonstrate that, over time, pupils make satisfactory progress in their appreciation of music and their ability to create their own accompaniments. No particular provision is made for pupils with special educational needs but most make suitable progress. Information and communication technology is not yet used extensively to support work in music. Pupils in Year 3 display great excitement when they are given the chance to use instruments. They demonstrate a reasonable standard of singing holding the tune appropriately. They identify that notes are 'going up' or 'going down' and successfully maintain a steady 4-beat rhythm by clapping. They play instruments properly but the performance is somewhat ragged as over thirty are involved in the 'orchestra'.

123. As at the last inspection, pupils have the opportunity to play a variety of instruments, including the violin, cello and guitar. Extra-curricular clubs cater for the choir and recorder groups (although these were not operating during the inspection) and for playing hand-chimes. In this lunchtime activity, five pupils accurately played 'This Old Man', producing a pleasant sound. Musical groups sometimes perform in school, notably a recorder group from the Upper School and pupils experience a suitable range of music as they come into assemblies. The title and the composer are displayed and reference is made to the music during the assembly.

124. The co-ordinator is new to the school and is only just settling into the role. She has assessed the need for better quality percussion instruments, both tuned and non-tuned but resources overall are barely adequate. The school is fortunate in having a specialist music room. There are no systems for assessing the standards achieved and the progress made by individual pupils.

125. Music makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

126. Standards are satisfactory at Year 2 and in Year 4. This is a similar picture to that at the time of the last inspection. There is no difference in the standards between boys and girls. During their time in the school the vast majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, English as an additional language and those pupils from different racial origins, achieve well. Most pupils start school with below-average physical skills. By the time they leave the

school at the end of Year 4, their attainment is in line with the expectations of the National Curriculum. This represents good progress over time.

127. Throughout the school, the majority of pupils work enthusiastically in lessons; for example, they work hard learning to throw and catch balls and to develop the co-ordination required for bat and ball skills. They begin to use space efficiently, although younger pupils have to be reminded constantly to 'work in a space where they can't touch anyone else'. They thoroughly enjoy their work and begin to co-operate. They show increasingly improved balance when working on apparatus and develop their swimming strokes systematically in the school swimming pool. When their movement lessons are linked to a theme, for example, a topic on The Creation, they develop simple sequences of dance movements with imagination.
128. Teaching is at least sound and sometimes good. The main reason is that teachers teach the basic skills that pupils need to succeed in their work. They demonstrate and explain clearly what pupils need to do to improve their skills; for example, when learning to catch a ball saying "watch the ball right into the cage". This means that the majority of pupils achieve well and progress in lessons is consistently enhanced. However, there is a sizeable minority of pupils for whom any sustained concentration is difficult and they quickly wander off task. Teachers plan lessons so that pupils build systematically on the skills that they have learned and thus improve their techniques. Pupils are suitably challenged in lessons and a good range of out-of-school activities develops the skill levels of the pupils taking part.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

129. As at the last inspection, standards for pupils in Years 2 and 4 are in line with those laid down in the Agreed Syllabus for Bedfordshire schools. 'Myself' is the theme for younger pupils and particularly the importance of friends and family in shaping us. Stories from the Bible help to illustrate Jesus' teaching about friendship. Pupils know about 'The Good Samaritan' and that Jesus had special friends called disciples. They realise that religious beliefs affect the way that people live: that Hindus, for example, have a particularly strong tradition of family links. Older pupils in Years 3 and 4 study different places of worship. They have visited the local church and have drawn and named different parts of the building. They know the names of the places of worship of other faiths and have produced attractive pictures using silhouettes of these buildings placed on a colourful background.
130. Progress is satisfactory for all pupils including those with special educational needs who are often well supported by classroom assistants, as in a Year 2 lesson about Jesus' disciples. Lessons are planned on a two-year cycle. Care has to be taken to ensure that older pupils within each department – infants and juniors – study the topic at a deeper level than younger pupils. Teachers achieve this by requiring more detailed explanations from older or more capable pupils. For example, an above-average Year 4 girl does not just identify a Hindu place of worship as a temple but explains that this is where Hindus make offerings.
131. Only two lessons were seen during the inspection. Both were judged good but, taken with the scrutiny of work, teaching overall is satisfactory, as at the last inspection. Teachers provide for all pupils in their lessons. Two travellers who have only recently entered the school in Year 2 have the topic clearly explained to them so that they know what has led up to that week's lesson. Teachers have good control of discussions and insist that all pupils listen closely to what is being said so that no-one misses out. This is particularly important in a Year 3 lesson when the local Christian minister talks to the class about the robes he wears and the nature of his job. Pupils are particularly intrigued as a girl is dressed in the different robes and this practical demonstration promotes learning and provides a necessary break from discussion. Teachers use visits and visitors well to make the subject relevant. They have good resources in school to help them, including books, religious objects and videos. The Internet is increasingly being used to good effect, for example, to find out information about places of worship, such as Ripon Cathedral.
132. Pupils are restricted in their written work by their lack of language skills. Teachers try to develop these skills in informal ways. In Year 2, for example, an appropriate book about Jesus'

disciples holds the pupils' interest and, in Year 3, they learn new words like 'cassock' and 'stole' and read them from cards. However, teachers often devise pictorial ways for pupils to record work when perseverance with the use of language would more usefully encourage the development of literacy skills.

133. Religious education makes a significant contribution to pupils' cultural development, helping them to become aware of the traditions, values and beliefs of other religions. Their spiritual development is also promoted satisfactorily. Opportunities are provided to think about feelings in Year 1. Older pupils ponder on the nature of angels and, through art, express the wonder that these thoughts generate. The subject is well led and the programme of work is properly tried and tested. There is no systematic assessment to determine the standards achieved by individual pupils but all teachers mark work in books so that they are aware of the quality of pupils' response to the lessons.