

INSPECTION REPORT

Westfield First School

Berkhamsted

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117254

Headteacher: Mrs D Allen

Reporting inspector: Kathryn Taylor
22424

Dates of inspection: October 1 - 4 2001

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4-9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Durrants Lane Berkhamsted Hertfordshire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs L Whitesmith
Date of previous inspection:	September 1999

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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2242 4	Kathryn Taylor	Registered inspector	Mathematics, Art and design; Design and technology; Physical education; Provision for the Foundation Stage of learning.	Standards, Teaching, Leadership and management, Assessment.
1552 7	Christine Laverock	Lay inspector		Partnership with parents, How well are pupils cared for, Pupils' attitudes and values.
2341 3	Robert Allen	Team inspector	English; Music; History; Geography; Provision for special educational needs.	The curriculum Equality of opportunity.
2006 3	Gerry Slamon	Team inspector	Science; Religious education; Information and communication technology.	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Westfield First School is a small primary which currently has 107 pupils aged between three and eight, and seven more children are due to start in the nursery in January. There is a fairly even spread of boys to girls across the school, but there are more boys than girls in Years 3 and 4. The main building houses five classes, mostly according to age although two classes have pupils from two different year groups. Children enter the nursery and reception classes in either September or January, depending on their date of birth. The children's overall attainment when they begin nursery schooling varies quite considerably and is low overall, especially their speaking skills. By the time pupils leave the foundation stage and join Year 1, overall attainment is better but their English skills overall remain below average despite the good progress. Most pupils attending the school are white. A total of twelve pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Five pupils speak English as an additional language, but only one pupil is at an early stage of English acquisition. Just over a quarter of the pupils are identified as having special educational needs and three pupils have statements of special educational need. The proportion of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is in line with the national average. There are very wide variations in the socio economic circumstances of the pupils and the intake is very mixed. A significant minority however, is especially disadvantaged and there are some very vulnerable pupils attending the school. A significant minority of pupils join or leave the school at other than the usual times.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an improving school that has seen considerable changes since the appointment of the current headteacher. The school is now well led and managed and the headteacher provides very good leadership. The school is inclusive; all pupils are welcomed and valued and staff work hard to support pupils, some of whom have complex needs. Staff morale is high and there is good teamwork and a strong commitment and a good capacity to continue to move the school forward. Pupils are now being challenged and making better rates of progress because the teaching is good. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The school is well led and managed.
- The quality of teaching is good which is helping to raise standards.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- The provision for children in the nursery is good.
- The very experienced learning support assistants make a very good contribution to pupils' learning.
- All the staff, governors and parents are committed to the school and are working together to improve it.

What could be improved

- Standards, in all subjects but particularly in writing and speaking can still be improved with further developments to the curriculum.
- The attitudes and behaviour of a significant minority of pupils, especially in Years 3 and 4.
- Pupils' independence in learning.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory progress overall since its last full inspection in September 1999. Progress since January 2001 when the new headteacher was appointed, however, is very good. Prior to this, the action taken to address the serious weakness identified in the last full inspection report lacked the necessary pace and rigour and improvements were limited. Good headway has now been made on all of the key issues. Results in the national tests for seven year olds have improved well and higher attaining pupils in all classes are now being challenged. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour have improved, although there is still some way to go to ensure some pupils' behaviour is of an acceptable standard. Standards in writing are better. There have been very good improvements in the quality of teaching and in the leadership and management of the school. Many effective systems have been established which, as yet have not yet had time to impact fully on standards throughout the school. There have been excellent recent improvements to the building making the school a much safer, cleaner, brighter and more pleasant place to work. The views of parents are much more positive and the school now provides sound value for money.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at age seven based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key <i>well above average</i> A <i>above average</i> B <i>average</i> C <i>below average</i> D <i>well below average</i> E
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
Reading	E	E	D	E	
Writing	E	E	D	E	
Mathematics	E	E	E	E	

Similar schools refers to schools nationally that have a similar proportion of pupil entitled to free school meals. Such comparisons take no account of pupil mobility or the proportion of pupils on the special needs register

Because of the small numbers of pupils in each year group, test results should be treated with caution. Although standards have not been high enough in the past they are now improving well as a result of better teaching and higher expectations of pupils.

In the national tests for seven year olds in the Year 2000, results in reading and writing were below what is expected nationally for children of their age and well below those of similar schools. In mathematics, standards were well below those nationally and in similar schools. Standards in reading and writing improved between 1999 and 2000 although too few pupils

attained the higher Level 3 in the tests. Whilst no national comparisons are available, results in the tests in 2001 in reading, writing, mathematics and science show a very good improvement with significant improvements in the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 3.

Most pupils in the current Year 2 are on course to attain at least the nationally expected level in English, mathematics and science by the end of the academic year. In Year 3, although most pupils are reaching or exceeding the nationally expected levels, a significant proportion of pupils in this year and in Year 4 attain standards below those expected. This is to some extent is due to the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs.

Inspection evidence shows that children make good progress during their time in the nursery and reception classes. By the time they join Year 1 most pupils attain the expected standards in each area of learning. In English however, pupils' achievements remain below expectations. Throughout the school, standards in reading are in line with those expected. Whilst the majority of pupils attain the expected levels in speaking and listening and in writing, a significant proportion of pupils have less well-developed skills. Pupils' mathematical skills are developing well and standards are in line with those expected. Standards in all other subjects are in line with those expected except those in art, which are above those expected for children of their age.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good overall. Most pupils have good attitudes to school and learning. However some children do not display positive attitudes and the staff has to work very hard to motivate them.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. The behaviour of most pupils in class is at least satisfactory and many pupils behave well. The behaviour of a significant minority of pupils, mostly boys and especially in Years 3 and 4, is, however unsatisfactory. Most pupils behave well in the playground, assemblies and in the dining hall.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Relationships are good overall. Pupils need to be encouraged to develop independent learning strategies and skills.
Attendance	Attendance levels are below the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The teaching is good overall. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection when teaching in a quarter of lessons was unsatisfactory and there was little evidence of good teaching. This improved teaching is contributing well to pupils' faster rates of progress. There are examples of good and very good teaching in all classes and in all subjects. English and mathematics are taught particularly well throughout the school. Teachers have a good knowledge of the range of subjects they teach. Lessons are well planned to ensure that work is well matched to the needs of pupils of different abilities. Teachers and support staff pay very good attention to assessing how well pupils understand and intervene quickly if pupils experience problems. Support for pupils with

special educational needs is good. In the vast majority of lessons teachers manage pupils very well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum covers all subjects and outline schemes of work are in place. These can be further developed to ensure they are fully relevant to the needs of pupils at this school, make consistently useful links between subjects and offer pupils an interesting range of learning opportunities
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils identified as having special needs, including those with statements, are well supported by class teachers and by the learning support assistants.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Pupils are taught the difference between right and wrong, and are encouraged to co-operate with each other. The curriculum effectively supports pupils' spiritual and cultural development and, with further developments to the curriculum this can be extended.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The staff takes great care to ensure the health, safety and well being of all pupils. Child protection procedures are well established and used effectively. Procedures for monitoring behaviour and attendance are good and are helping to improve attendance and behaviour. Pupils' academic progress is now being monitored and assessed regularly and the information is used well to plan work for pupils.

Parents have positive views of the school and made welcome. A good partnership is developing.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides very strong leadership and a very clear educational direction. She is effectively supported by the acting deputy headteacher and senior managers. There is a strong commitment to continue to make improvements in all aspects of school life
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. There have been very significant improvements in the past year. Governors are interested and supportive. They are now better informed about the school and the impact of its work.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The headteacher, governors and staff are now continually evaluating the school's effectiveness and the impact of any developments. Teaching is very regularly and rigorously monitored.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Financial and human resources have been clearly directed towards raising standards in all aspects of school life. The school takes appropriate steps to ensure that it obtains best value in its spending.

There is a good number of teachers and support staff for the number of pupils. The accommodation is of a good size, very attractive, clean and well maintained. Resources are good and of good quality.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teaching is good enabling their children to make good progress. • Their children enjoy school. • The school achieves good standards of behaviour and helps their children to become mature and responsible. • Staff is approachable and the school works well with parents. • The school is well led and managed. • Recent improvements to the school particularly, to the environment and pupils' attitudes and behaviour. • Most parents are happy with the level of homework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are not happy with the change in policy, which positively discourages taking holidays during term time. • The high turnover of teaching staff. • The range of activities outside lessons. • The amount of information about pupils' progress, especially in the annual reports.

The inspection team agrees with the positive views expressed by parents. The recently introduced range of activities outside lessons was judged to be good. The information about pupils' progress is good overall although annual reports on pupils in Years 3 and 4 last year were not as informative as those in other classes. The inspection team are aware that there has been a high turnover of teaching staff. However, this has not had a negative effect on the quality teaching and new teachers have formed good relationships with pupils. Attendance levels are adversely affected by the number of families who take holidays in term time.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children make good progress overall in the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception classes). By the time they leave reception and join Year 1, most have achieved the recommended Early Learning Goals. There are, however, significant variations between pupils and some children have complex needs, either socially or academically. Attainments in English, especially speaking skills, for a high proportion of pupils remains below the expected level when they leave reception and join Year 1.
2. Because of the small number of pupils in each year group, test results should be treated with caution. There is also a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and high pupil mobility; both of which affect overall attainment levels. Standards have not been high enough in the past and there has been some underachievement, particularly among potentially higher attaining pupils. Nevertheless pupils are now making better rates of progress and being challenged by the teaching.
3. In 2000, overall standards in reading and writing were below the national average and well below those found in similar schools. In mathematics standards were well below those found in similar schools and schools nationally. In science, standards were below the national average and well below those in similar schools. Standards in reading and writing had improved between 1999 and 2000 although too few pupils attained the higher Level 3 in the tests, which depressed overall standards. Results in the most recent tests in 2001 in reading, writing, mathematics and science show a very good improvement, especially in the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 3.
4. The headteacher has established effective systems to analyse pupils' results in the statutory and optional tests, as well as the outcomes of the school's own assessments of pupils' attainment. This information is now used well to address any weaknesses. The headteacher is also monitoring the attainment and progress of boys and girls and pupils from different minority ethnic groups to ensure that all pupils are making the appropriate level of progress. Inspection evidence did not highlight any differences in standards and levels of progress according to gender although there are more lower attaining boys than girls in Years 3 and 4. However the proportion of boys to girls is high and there are a number of boys with behavioural difficulties, which affect their progress and achievement.
5. Inspectors judged that current standards in English, mathematics and science are as expected in Years 1, 2 and 3. In Year 4, and for a fairly significant minority of pupils in Year 3, standards are below those expected. This is to some extent because in these classes there are a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Throughout the school a significant proportion of pupils do not speak confidently and use a limited range of vocabulary. Pupils' skills in using and applying mathematics are satisfactory and are improving well. The school is now placing emphasis on developing pupils' investigative and experimental skills in science although as yet pupils still lack the confidence to explain in scientific terms what they have discovered or record their observations in an organised way.
6. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are in line with those expected nationally for seven year olds but below those expected in Year 4. Standards are improving well as a result of recent and current developments in the subject.

7. The work seen in other subjects shows that most pupils achieve the nationally expected levels by the end of Year 2. Standards are in line with those expected in Year 3, although in a number of subjects standards of a significant proportion of pupils are weaker in Year 4. Standards in art are above average throughout the school and pupils achieve well.

8. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in line with the targets set for them in their individual education plans. Pupils with English as an additional language attain standards similar to other pupils and make sound progress.

9. Addressing the weaknesses in attainment identified in the last inspection report initially lacked rigour. However, during the past year the rate of improvement has been much better. Pupil progress is satisfactory overall with better rates of progress being made in the recent past than had previously been the case.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Pupils' attitudes to learning are mostly good and have improved since the last inspection. Parents confirm that their children like coming to school. Children's attitudes are consistently good in the Foundation Stage where the youngest children enjoy all the activities provided for them. Pupils' attitudes are generally positive in Years 1 and 2. Younger pupils are eager to learn and keenly participate in activities. Most pupils readily answer and ask questions and are confident in expressing their opinions. This was particularly noticeable in a Year 2 history lesson. These positive attitudes contribute well to the progress pupils make in their learning. In lessons in Years 3 and 4, although many pupils have positive attitudes, the attitudes of a significant minority are sometimes unsatisfactory and this impacts on the amount of work and progress achieved. Some pupils need to be very closely supervised to ensure they stay focussed. Too many of the older pupils have under-developed learning skills and some lack concentration. Some of this behaviour emanates from pupils' low self-esteem as well as a lack of self-discipline. The school will need to continue to work very hard to find ways of engaging these pupils as well as to minimise the impact of their behaviour on other pupils.

11. Behaviour is satisfactory, an improvement since the last inspection. Parents also feel that behaviour has improved in the recent past. The majority of pupils behave well in lessons, although in some lessons seen the poor behaviour of a significant minority impedes their own progress and sometimes that of others. This is particularly the case with some of boys in Years 3 and 4 but also applies to one or two pupils in Year 1. Around the school and in the playground, behaviour is most often good. For example at lunchtimes in the dining room pupils behave well and enjoy chatting to their friends as well as pupils from other classes. Pupils treat their surroundings with respect and obey school rules and play happily together. A minority, mainly boys, sometimes cause disruption to those around them and on occasions some pupils can be very aggressive towards others. The school is taking a firm stance on this, including the use of temporary exclusions. Six pupils have already been excluded for a fixed period in this academic year.

12. Relationships are good, an improvement since the last inspection when they were satisfactory. The majority of pupils get on well together. When required to work in pairs and groups, they do so co-operatively and this contributes to the progress they make in their learning. Most, if not all pupils are aware of the impact of their actions on others and can

clearly distinguish between right and wrong. There are occasions in Years 3 and 4 when unpleasant remarks are made. Conversely, in the Foundation Stage, children's good relationships with each other give them confidence as, for example, when they practice speaking in front of the class.

13. Pupils willingly take on tasks such as being library monitors and playground buddies. They help keep their classrooms tidy and each class chooses representatives for the recently established School Council. This enables them to contribute to school improvements, such as playground behaviour. Pupils do, however, display a general lack of independence in their learning and this needs to be addressed if pupils are to realise fully their potential.

14. As in the last inspection, pupils' attendance is below the national average although there is evidence of recent improvement. There are two main reasons for the low attendance: the particular circumstances of some pupils living in temporary accommodation; and several parents have been used to taking their child on holiday during term time, which the school is now actively discouraging. There is currently a high incidence of unauthorised absence partly due to the school taking a much firmer stance over the definitions of all absences. The vast majority of pupils arrive punctually each morning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

15. The overall quality of teaching is good. In 38 of the 40 lessons seen, teaching was at least satisfactory and in just over two thirds of lessons seen, the teaching was good or better. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection when the teaching in a quarter of lessons was judged unsatisfactory. The follow up visit by HMI last year noted some, but not enough improvements to teaching. Very good improvements have been made as a result of in-service training, increased and more effective monitoring of teaching. The use of the three-part structure to lessons recommended in the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has had an impact on improving teaching. Learning intentions are now clear and teachers assess accurately how much progress pupils make in achieving them. The staff are now, for the most part, confident in their teaching and in a position to begin using a wider range of strategies and teaching methods, which will build on strengths and enable children to become more independent in their learning.

16. Teaching in the nursery is consistently good or very good in all areas, which contributes significantly to the good progress children make. Teachers and support staff have very high expectations and work effectively to provide a good range of learning opportunities. The children are very well managed, but in a quiet and unassuming manner. Adults gently, but effectively intervene in children's activities to question and guide them to move their learning on. On-going assessment is effective. A particular strength is the way in which children are both expected to be independent and trained to develop the skills of independent learning and behaviour. Children are, for example, expected to clear up after themselves and to perform simple tasks around the classroom. Planning in the nursery is good and staff have a good understanding of how pupils of this age learn. Classrooms, play areas and resources are carefully organised to encourage children's confidence and independence. The teaching of the basic skills is good and priority is given to the development of the children's social skills and to early reading, writing and mathematics skills within the context of a relevant and meaningful curriculum

17. In reception teaching is satisfactory overall with some good teaching. Teaching is not as effective as in the nursery because some is too formal and over-directed. More emphasis needs to be placed on the children learning from first-hand experience.

18. In Years 1 and 2 the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. There was good and very good teaching in about half the lessons seen and some good teaching in both classes. In Years 3 and 4 teaching is good overall with a high proportion of good and very good teaching seen here. Teaching in the Year 3/4 class is especially strong. The good quality teaching in Year 3 and 4 classes is particularly notable because the level of pupil co-operation is at its lowest and teachers have to work extremely hard to keep pupils on task, manage their behaviour and support and motivate them. Teachers do well to remain patient.

19. Teachers of all year groups have a good knowledge and understanding of their subjects enabling them to teach confidently and in most cases maintain a good pace to lessons. The basic skills are taught well and the use of assessment is a strong feature of most lessons. Teachers and learning support assistants use both focussed observations and effective questioning to check and monitor pupils' progress. In the vast majority of lessons, teachers manage pupils very well. Only where teachers are less experienced do they sometimes have difficulty when some pupils need skilful handling. Teachers and support assistants are very patient and kind to pupils. They encourage them well and treat them with respect and lead by example. They are quick to note when pupils are finding things hard and provide help. All of this contributes to the positive ethos for learning and the good relationships between teachers and pupils.

20. Teachers' encouragement of pupils' efforts gives them the confidence to try, knowing their contributions are valued. This is of particular importance in this school because of the significant proportion of children who are lacking in confidence. The staff recognises that a key feature of raising standards is developing pupils' self-esteem and their willingness to try.

21. Most teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and achievements, which is effective in raising standards. Teachers' planning is good. Teachers come to lessons well prepared and planned activities are very well matched to the needs of different groups of pupils, including those pupils with additional needs. Learning objectives are clearly stated and these are often shared with pupils, helping them to understand the purpose of the work and the tasks set. Resources are usually carefully chosen to meet learning objectives. Where the teaching has weaknesses or is unsatisfactory, teachers sometimes expect pupils to sit for too long listening and do not provide enough practical and first hand experiences. The quality of marking in the past, as seen in the work sample from pupils in Years 3 and 4 in the previous year, was unsatisfactory and often not completed. All work is now marked regularly. Homework is used well throughout the school to support children's learning.

22. The teaching of English is good. All lessons are well planned in accordance with the National Literacy Strategy with clear learning objectives against which pupils' progress is monitored carefully. Pupils' progress towards their individual targets is also monitored. The content of lessons is usually interesting. Occasionally the pace could have been brisker. Good use is made of other subjects to develop pupils' literacy skills. More attention should now be given to developing pupils' confidence and fluency to overcome pupils' weak oral skills,

23. Mathematics teaching is good. The teaching strategies promoted in the numeracy hour are being applied well. Good attention is given to mental arithmetic, to relating mathematics to everyday situations, and to giving pupils opportunities to apply skills to problem solving. Teachers generally use questioning well to assess pupils' learning and encourage pupils to explain their thinking and the methods used.

24. The quality of science teaching is satisfactory overall although it ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. Teaching in the Year 3/4 class was very effective. Here a very good introduction, challenging, direct questioning and very good use of resources motivated most pupils to work hard and to contribute effectively to the lesson. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, in a lesson in the lower school, pupils' behaviour was not well managed through structured and focussed teaching. Teachers are making increased use of practical activities and are particularly careful to emphasise the correct scientific terminology. This helps pupils achieve a greater understanding. In some lessons, teachers do not rigorously continue to teach and challenge pupils as they work on activities in small groups.

25. In most other subjects seen, the quality of teaching is good. Information and communications technology is taught well. In geography and history teachers successfully motivate pupils by arranging visits and by providing a range of interesting artefacts. In art and geography, ICT was successfully incorporated into lessons so that pupils learned the usefulness of ICT as a tool for learning. The teaching of art gives good attention to the development of skills. There is insufficient evidence to form an overall judgement about the teaching of history and design and technology.

26. In the two lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory, although the lessons were reasonably well planned the delivery of the lesson was too slow and pupils became restless. The teacher then did not respond to this by improving the pace and providing more practical activity for pupils to regain their interest. Instead she responded by keeping pupils sitting on the carpet and expecting them to listen when clearly they had listened for long enough.

27. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Class teachers are familiar with the targets in pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) and take these into account when planning and teaching. Pupils' individual education plans, although satisfactory overall, should provide more detail about pupils' needs and how they will be met. There are many good examples where teachers take great care to ensure pupils with special needs contribute in lessons and share their learning and ideas. Pupils with special needs are taught as an integral part of the class and work within a variety of groupings. Support for statemented pupils is used sensitively to allow pupils to develop independence and to have opportunities to work as part of a group.

28. Learning support assistants are highly skilled and well trained. They are clearly aware of pupils' individual needs and work well in partnership with teachers and under their guidance. They also monitor and assess pupils' progress well during lessons. Good use is made of the assessment information and the additional teaching support provided by teachers in the special needs base unit.

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

29. The school offers a curriculum of satisfactory breadth, balance and relevance which meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education. The curriculum in the nursery is planned in line with the recommended Early Learning Goals. Children benefit from a wide range of stimulating activities and the teacher and the nursery nurse work as a very effective team. The development of the Foundation Stage curriculum is currently a school priority. The school plans for the nursery and reception classes to work closely together as a cohesive key stage. To facilitate this, classes have been moved so that they are now side by side. Children in the reception class would benefit greatly from a curriculum similar to that presently experienced by pupils in the nursery.

30. Throughout the school appropriate time is allocated to English and mathematics with additional emphasis given to English in order to remedy the shortcomings reported at the time of the last report. Both literacy and numeracy are developed satisfactorily across the curriculum. Appropriate provision is made for personal, social and health education.

31. For the two terms before this inspection, considerable efforts were devoted to bringing curriculum planning and documentation up to date. Nationally produced schemes of work have largely been adopted, except in the cases of music where the local education authority's programme is used, in physical education where a commercial scheme is used, and in religious education where the locally Agreed Syllabus is applied. Detailed long and medium term planning provides clear guidance for teachers. The school has yet fully to adapt commercial schemes to its own school-specific documentation, which will then provide a curricular structure appropriate to the needs of pupils. This remains a priority. Such developments will need to provide the opportunity to maximise relevant links between subjects, to enhance the overall learning experience for pupils in ways that make it interesting and engaging and incorporates opportunities to extend pupils' skills in independent learning. As a result of staff changes and the number of teachers new to the school and to teaching, some subjects have a new co-ordinator and the headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior staff are co-ordinating many of the subjects.

32. The overall provision for pupils identified, as having special educational needs is good and follows guidance in The Code of Practice. Learning support assistants make a very valuable contribution to pupils' progress, including that of pupils with statements of special educational need. The newly appointed special needs co-ordinator is working with staff to improve the quality of pupils' IEP's and all other aspects of special needs work. No specific additional support is currently provided for one pupil at the early stages of English acquisition but class teachers and learning support assistants are aware of her needs, provide the help they require to ensure they are included in all activities. The staff also benefit from regular advice from the LEA services. The school has an appropriate policy for ensuring equal opportunities for all pupils. The school has also taken in pupils who have been excluded from other local schools.

33. A good range of activities outside lessons has recently been introduced. There is a popular football club, for which families pay a small fee. Other clubs include netball, singing, dance, recorders, signing (communication with the hearing impaired). Relationships with partner institutions are good. Visitors from the community also make a good contribution to pupils' learning. For example, visitors hear pupils read and there are regular volunteer helpers in school. The school also has good links with the pre-school playgroup and the learning support services. There are good links with the middle schools to which most pupils move on.

34. Good provision is made for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This represents a good improvement since the 1999 inspection when the provision for moral development was unsatisfactory.

35. The school has recently worked extremely hard to enhance the learning environment to provide pupils with a bright, cheerful school in which to learn. This, together with the supportive, caring atmosphere, forms a good basis for pupils' spiritual development. Pupils appreciate the flower arrangements in the dining hall and around the school. One pupil remarked: "They are pretty and it makes us happy to be here." Teachers make effective use of assemblies and areas of the curriculum such as art, religious education and science, to support pupils' spiritual development. They encourage pupils to reflect, for example on the beauty of the world. They value pupils' contributions during informal conversations and in discussions on issues such as friendship during personal, social and health education lessons. Work displayed around the school shows that younger pupils consider what it is that makes them happy or sad. The school meets requirements to hold a daily act of worship and this makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development.

36. The school's recent efforts to improve the moral understanding of pupils are effective and play a strong role in their personal development. The good relationships that exist and the very good examples set by all adults who work in the school support pupils' moral development. Themes used in assemblies, circle times and personal, social and health education lessons enable pupils to consider and assess moral issues such as bullying, respect, tolerance and drug abuse. The recently introduced behaviour policy is being used well by teachers as a way of strengthening pupils' understanding of right and wrong. Although many teachers are new to the school, this policy is beginning to be evident in practice, and is effective in strengthening pupils' understanding of right and wrong. Staff report significant improvements in lunchtime behaviour since the policy was introduced. Headteacher's certificates for good behaviour are also highly prized by pupils.

37. The provision for pupils' social development is good and it is closely linked with their moral development. The very good working relationships between adults set a good example to pupils. Assemblies, including class-shared assemblies which parents also attend, are used effectively to promote a feeling of community. Older pupils in Years 3 and 4 are given opportunities to take responsibility for younger ones, for example, in sitting with and helping them at lunchtimes. The newly formed School Council gives pupils from all classes the opportunity to play a full part in the life of the school and to shape its future. Pupils are encouraged to appreciate and contribute to the community in which they live. Local studies, taking part with the community in Arts Weeks, and meetings with local authors, are some good examples of this. Pupils are also encouraged to contribute to the wider community through fundraising for charities such as a local hospice, the NSPCC and the Marie Curie Cancer Fund. Extra-curricular activities and visits from local football and rugby clubs are other recent developments that further enhance pupils' social development and sense of achievement.

38. Pupils are encouraged to appreciate and develop their knowledge of British culture and traditions, in, for example, history lessons and visits to places of cultural and historical interest such as castles, museums and the local canal. An appreciation of the richness of other cultures and faiths is also a notable feature of the daily life of the school. Pupils' learn about festivals such as Hanukah and Diwali. In a reception class, for example, pupils were taught about Hindu traditions such as hand patterns and the food used during the celebration of Diwali. Pupils are also encouraged to share their own cultural traditions with each other. Two pupils, of Welsh extraction, were proud to dress up in national costume

on St David's day. The important contribution that music can make to pupils' cultural development has yet to be fully exploited.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

39. The staff know all pupils well and takes good care of them. Procedures for ensuring pupils' health and safety are now good and pupils are always well supervised. This is an improvement since the last inspection when welfare arrangements were satisfactory. Trained staff administer first-aid appropriately and individual pupils' needs are adequately catered for. Staff and governors now regularly assess that the school site is safe and address any areas of concern. For example, fire doors were recently sensibly replaced. Governors' involvement in this area in the past has not been rigorous enough. Detailed monitoring takes place of pupils' attendance and behaviour and any action taken as a result of irregular attendance or unsatisfactory behaviour is systematically recorded.

40. Strategies to improve attendance are proving very effective. The majority of pupils now arrive at school punctually and absences are reducing. Registration is carried out promptly in every class and pupils are given a friendly welcome when they arrive in school each day. The headteacher is the designated teacher for child protection, and in her absence the deputy headteacher. The staff are aware of the procedures to follow.

41. Procedures for promoting good behaviour are effective. There is a clear code of conduct with a system of rewards and sanctions, which are applied consistently throughout the school. Parents state that their children value the rewards they are given. Procedures for eliminating oppressive behaviour are satisfactory although some incidents still occur. Each class has a regular circle time in which such issues are discussed. These discussions contribute effectively to pupils' understanding of how their actions impact on others. The school has a fairly high incidence of exclusions but has also had a small number of pupils displaying inappropriate behaviour and causing persistent disruption to lessons, which has needed to be addressed. Part time inclusions are also being used effectively to include pupils who have been excluded permanently from other schools.

42. The school has worked hard and successfully in the recent past to establish good assessment procedures. There are effective procedures in the Foundation Stage for making initial assessments and for assessing how well children are doing in lessons. Teachers and other adults know the children well and ensure that children's individual needs are met. Baseline assessments are carried out when pupils transfer from nursery to reception. The headteacher has introduced good systems to monitor and track pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science as they move up through the school. Pupils' results in national tests and optional tests are also being used to track pupils' progress. In most other subjects, sound procedures have been established for assessing pupils' work, linked to the specific skills outlined in the teachers' planning.

43. The headteacher is using assessment effectively to help track the progress of different groups of pupils. Class teachers are now using assessment information well to group pupils according to ability, to determine which pupils will be given additional support to carry out activities and to set work matched to their prior attainment. The process for collecting the data has not been in place long enough to have contributed effectively to the early identification of pupils who are experiencing difficulty and therefore need additional help. There are clear indications that with earlier and improved identification of special educational needs, the proportion of pupils on the special needs register could well be significantly higher than current figures indicate. The school is working hard to improve this

aspect its work. The progress of pupils identified as having special educational needs is reviewed regularly against the targets set in their individual education plans.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

44. Parents and carers have very positive views about most aspects of the school. They feel that the school has improved considerably since the arrival of the current headteacher, particularly in managing pupils' behaviour. They also feel that their children are making good progress and that staff are approachable if they have any concerns. The one area that a significant number of parents are less happy about is the information they receive about their child's progress. The inspection judged information to parents as good overall. This represents a good improvement since the last inspection when it was identified as unsatisfactory and was a key issue for improvement.

45. Parents receive termly opportunities to visit the school and discuss their child's progress as well as an end of year report, which is thorough and detailed. Reports last year were better for pupils in the nursery, reception, Year 1 and 2 than those in Years 3 and 4, where they do not always cover how each child is doing in every subject. Useful targets are set for English, mathematics and science, which help parents to know what their child needs to learn next. In addition, parents are kept informed of successes and concerns relating to their child through individual correspondence. General information is also regularly sent and parents acknowledge this has improved recently. Copies of teaching plans are also freely available for parents to see.

46. A few parents also expressed concern about the high turnover of teachers and the disruption this had caused. Whilst the inspection confirms that the turnover of teachers has been high, there is now stability in staffing with the exception of the post of deputy headteacher, which, at the time of inspection, is still vacant although interviews are to take place in the very near future. Temporary arrangements to cover the vacancy with a deputy headteacher from a local Beacon school, are working well. Inspectors judged that changes to staff have not had a negative effect on the quality of teaching, which has actually improved since the time of the HMI inspection this time last year.

47. Parents make a very positive impact on the work of the school. Several help in classes and give good support to children's learning, as was seen during a reading lesson with reception pupils and on a daily basis in the nursery. Many parents attend weekly class and celebration assemblies. The Friends Association raises an impressive amount of money, which is put to good use. Computer equipment has been purchased and garden furniture and plants have improved the external environment. The majority of parents help their children with reading and other homework tasks. Children's reading diaries, however, indicate that not all parents regularly listen to their children read.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

48. The last full inspection report and the follow up report from the Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) identified significant weakness in school management, in particular the inability of the leadership to effect improvements to teaching and learning. The role of co-ordinators was also weak. Improvements to the school during the year following the full inspection were limited. Since the appointment of the current headteacher, improvements have been very good. The headteacher has worked tirelessly with the staff to address the serious weaknesses highlighted in the last inspection report.

49. The headteacher provides very good leadership and a clear educational direction. She has established good systems for curriculum planning and assessment, monitoring and guiding the work of staff, all of which have been instrumental in improving the quality of teaching and learning. A particular strength is her determination to establish a better climate for learning, both by improving the physical environment and by setting clear standards and expectations of pupils' and staff. Communication is good. The headteacher's success is evident in the very positive attitudes of staff, the strong support from parents and the improvements in pupils' behaviour and attitudes.

50. The headteacher is well supported by the temporary deputy headteacher who is seconded to the school this term from a neighbouring Beacon school. She has been particularly effective in supporting new teachers to settle in and become established. The quality of her teaching is having a significant impact on improving the behaviour, attitudes and standards of work of pupils in the Year 3/ 4 class she teaches.

51. A new senior management team has recently been set up after a number of staff changes. Senior managers are firmly committed to the development of the school and are working well together. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Because there are a number of new teachers, some of whom are in their first years of teaching, most subjects are being overseen by the headteacher and more senior teachers. Developing further the work in many subjects and the role of the subject co-ordinators will be a priority for the school during the coming year. Because the school had been placed in serious weakness the monitoring of teaching has largely been carried out by the headteacher and local authority advisers. This has been very rigorous and regular and has been effective in establishing clear expectations. Regular guidance and feedback to teachers has been crucial in improving the overall quality of the teaching.

52. The co-ordination of special education needs is satisfactory. The co-ordinator is new to the post, but is an experienced teacher with particular skills in this field. The quality of teaching and advice she provides is good. However, due to financial constraints she is employed for only one day a week, a limited time in relation to the proportion of pupils on the special needs register and the need to improve early identification of pupils with additional needs.

53. Very good attention has been given recently to the professional development of teachers and support staff. Teachers have also had opportunities to observe others teaching, including the headteacher who regularly takes part in lessons and opportunities to visit local Beacon schools. This has helped broaden teachers' experience and skills. Systems for the regular appraisal and performance management of teachers are in place.

54. The school improvement plan is a good working document that has been clearly focussed on addressing and rectifying the serious weaknesses identified in the last inspection report. Priorities are regularly and rigorously reviewed to ensure that targets are met. The available resources, both financial and human, have been targeted on the priorities for improvement.

55. The governors are interested in and supportive of the school and they now fulfil their statutory responsibilities well. They bring a strong commitment to the school. Good improvements have been made to the work of the governors in the recent past and they are now better at holding the school to account than at the time of the last inspection. Governing body meetings and those of sub-committees take place regularly and governors are kept well informed about the school and about its progress. Governors have a good

understanding and overview of the curriculum, and support the school appropriately and monitor developments. Governors will need to continue to maintain a sharp focus on their role as critical friend a role that was neglected in the past to the detriment of the pupils. The local education authority has worked in very close partnership with the governors and the staff to assist in addressing its serious weaknesses. This has contributed well to the school's improvement

56. The school is well staffed with teaching and support staff. The headteacher and governors have decided to use monies carried over from previous budgets to increase the number of teachers and reduce class sizes. There is a satisfactory range of skills, qualifications and experience amongst teaching staff. Deployment of teachers across the school is effective in ensuring a balance of experienced and less experienced teachers within each of the key stages. Induction arrangements for new staff are effective, especially for newly qualified teachers. Newly appointed staff are welcomed to the school and are quickly accepted as part of the team. Learning support assistants are experienced, well trained and effectively deployed. The contribution they make to the pupils' learning, personal development and welfare is a particular strength of this school. A number of support staff have dual roles, working, for example, in the classrooms and carrying out lunch and playground duties. This enables a good level of continuity, for example, with behaviour management and the personal development of pupils. All staff with whom pupils come into contact, including dinner ladies, lunchtime supervisors, the caretaker and the administrative staff, are kind and caring, providing very good role models for pupils.

57. The accommodation is of a good size and excellent improvements have been made in recent months to make the buildings safe and more attractive. Parents are very pleased with these improvements. Standards of cleanliness are high and great care is taken to make the environment aesthetically pleasing, welcoming and attractive. Displays around the school are informative and celebrate pupils' achievements. The school grounds are good and well maintained. They include adequate hard surfaces for play and physical education as well as grassed areas. Space in teaching areas is adequate for the delivery of the curriculum and facilitates a range of teaching strategies, including access to regular outdoor facilities for pupils in nursery and reception. Good use is made of available space. The quality and range of resources is good.

58. The administrative staff effectively support the work of the headteacher and class teachers. They are conscientious and efficient, ensuring a good standard of day-to-day administration and control of the school's budget as well as a welcoming contact point for parents and visitors to school. The school has good systems for financial planning and for monitoring the budget. Systems to ensure best value and to evaluate the impact of any spending decisions on pupils' overall attainment and progress are now firmly established. The headteacher and governors have introduced systems to regularly monitor and evaluate the school's performance in relation to schools nationally and similar schools. There are effective systems to ensure value for money is obtained when purchasing goods and services. Weaknesses highlighted through the external audit have been addressed. The school makes good use of ICT to keep a regular check on its spending and for an appropriate range of administrative tasks. Funds allocated for specific purposes are effectively deployed, for example those for staff training and curriculum developments. The specific funds allocated to the school for special educational needs are used appropriately.

59. The teaching is now good and standards are improving well. There is still some catching up to do bring some pupils' work to standard, especially some of those pupils who are higher up the school. The school provides a caring and supportive environment for

pupils and the provision for their personal development is good. The school is well led and managed. The cost per pupil is fairly high. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory and the school has a strong commitment and a good capacity to continue to make improvements. When consideration is given to all of these factors, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The headteacher, governors and staff should raise standards further by:

- Improving the curriculum by:
 - * Developing the Foundation Stage curriculum so that work in the reception class builds securely on that in the nursery and provides plenty of opportunities for pupils to learn through practical experience.
(Paragraphs: 17,29,61,66,69)
 - * Developing and adapting the curriculum guidance in Years 1 to 4 so that it is wholly appropriate to the pupils' needs and utilises the relevant links between subjects.
(Paragraphs: 31,51,107,108,115,120)
 - * Providing more opportunities for pupils to improve their speaking skills and practice writing independently.
(Paragraphs: 73,74,77,81,88,92)

- Improving the attitudes and behaviour of a significant minority of pupils, especially pupils in Years 3 and 4 by:
(Paragraphs: 4,10,11,12,18,41,43,79,80,84,87,93,95,101,109,111,117,124)
 - * Ensuring that all those pupils with specific behavioural needs are appropriately identified, are placed on the special needs register and appropriate educational plans are drawn up;
 - * Making a clear distinction made between those pupils with additional needs and those who are simply behaving badly;
 - * Ensuring that any disruption to other pupils' learning is kept to a minimum;
 - * Working with parents and seeking advice and support from the appropriate external agencies;
 - * Exploring ways of engaging and interesting disaffected pupils, particularly older boys.

- Extending all pupils' independent learning skills by using a more diverse range of teaching methods that result in pupils having to be less reliant on the teachers' direction.
(Paragraphs: 14, 15)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	40
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	21

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	10	17	11	2	0	0
Percentage	0	25	42	28	5	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR - Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	9	98
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	3	12

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR - Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	6	30

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	18

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.7
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	10	6	16

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	8	8	10
	Girls	4	4	5
	Total	12	12	15
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	75(63)	75 (56)	94(69)
	National	83 (82)	84(83)	90(87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	8	10	10
	Girls	4	5	4
	Total	12	15	14
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	75(63)	94(63)	88(75)
	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	1
Black – other	1
Indian	3
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	95
Any other minority ethnic group	6

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	2	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes:

YR– Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.8
Average class size	19.6

Education support staff:

YR – 4

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	100

Qualified teachers and support staff: Nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19
Total number of education support staff	0.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	15
Number of pupils per FTE adult	9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	300, 993.00
Total expenditure	304, 706.00
Expenditure per pupil	2,487.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	41,066.00
Balance carried forward to next year	37,923.00

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	8

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1.0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	107
Number of questionnaires returned	42

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	78	22	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	51	45	2	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	24	68	5	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	56	3	3	10
The teaching is good.	29	59	5	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	47	24	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	28	2	5	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	42	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	40	50	5	5	0
The school is well led and managed.	51	42	7	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	37	59	2	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	55	8	0	15

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

60. Provision for children at the Foundation Stage is good. At the time of inspection there were 19 children under the age of five in the nursery and six in the reception class. Arrangements for admission to the nursery are very good and include home visits and interviews with parents. Parents are provided with useful information about the curriculum and how they might help their children at home. Children enter the nursery when they are three and attend five mornings a week until they transfer to the reception class in the September or January of the school year in which they are five. They enter the nursery with a range of attainment. While some have satisfactory speaking skills and general knowledge, others have limited skills in communication and little experience beyond their own home environment. Overall, attainment is below average on entry. Assessment procedures are good. Teachers and other adults know the children well. Good attention is paid to children's individual needs and pupils with special educational needs are supported well. There are currently no pupils in the Foundation Stage who speak English as an additional language.

61. The curriculum in the nursery is planned to meet the recommended Early Learning Goals. Children benefit from a wide range of stimulating activities and the teacher and the nursery nurse work as a very effective team. The development of the Foundation Stage curriculum is currently a whole school priority. The school plans for the nursery and reception classes to work more closely together as a cohesive key stage and classes have been moved so that they are now side by side. Pupils in the reception class would benefit greatly from a curriculum similar to that presently experienced by children in the nursery. At the time of inspection, children in the reception class took part in suitable activities with adults but at times these were over-directed and too formal and did not allow children enough independence in their work.

Personal and social development

62. Teaching in this area is very good in the nursery class and good in reception. The development of children's personal and social skills is given high priority by the school. Children settle well into a caring and safe environment where high expectations are fostered. They are encouraged to listen to others, as, for example, during daily 'plan-do-review' sessions, to share, take turns and relate positively to adults. As a result, they soon begin to sustain concentration for longer periods and positive, supportive relationships are quickly established. Children soon become accustomed to the well-established routines and behave well, gaining a good understanding of right and wrong. They play, work and co-operate well together as, for example, when making a straw house for the three little pigs. Very good emphasis is placed on the development of children's self-esteem and independence. They respond positively to new challenges, displaying enthusiasm and enjoyment in their work and play. The very well structured activities support children's personal and social development, encouraging co-operative play and consideration for others. Adults are careful to promote good practice in health and safety and they wash their hands carefully at the end of activities and before eating. Children are expected to tidy up

and members of staff are quick to make them aware of the consequences of their actions. There is appropriate emphasis on continuing to build on this work in the reception class. Children were observed changing quickly and independently for physical education lessons in response to the teacher's expectations. When required to work in pairs or groups on practical activities such as scientific investigations and collaborative art activities, children respond well. By the time they leave reception and join Year 1 most children reach the expected standards in this area of learning.

Communication, language and literacy

63. Children in the nursery make very good progress in all areas of language because of the high quality teaching they receive. A significant number have a limited vocabulary when they first come to school and are unable to engage in extended conversations with adults. Rich opportunities are provided for children to improve their speaking and listening skills through stories, poems and rhymes, which are well linked to other class activities. One child, for example, was not only able to describe the particular features of the straw house she was making but was also able to explain that the wolf would come 'and huff and puff and blow the house down'. This very good linking of activities is a strength in the nursery and makes learning meaningful and enjoyable.

64. Children enjoy sharing books and understand how books are organised and that words and pictures convey meaning. They listen with pleasure to stories such as *The Gingerbread Man* and these are well read by the adults. As a result, children of all abilities are enthusiastic about books and like to retell the stories they have heard. Their writing is developing well and there are many opportunities for nursery children to develop simple writing skills in the writing corner when, for example, writing their own versions of stories heard. Work is carefully displayed to increase children's self-esteem and their understanding of the use of writing as a means of communication. Children in the nursery make good progress because the teacher and nursery nurse are skilled in teaching the basic skills of reading and writing. Children in the reception class benefit from the daily literacy session and continue to make sound progress in all aspects of language and literacy.

65. Despite the good progress they make, a significant number of pupils, because of their low attainment on entry, do not achieve the expected standards in language and literacy by the time they leave reception and join Year 1.

Mathematical development

66. The teaching of this aspect is very good in the nursery and good overall in the reception class, although here occasionally the teaching is too formal and pupils are expected to make too big a jump in their understanding. In the nursery, children learn to count, match, and sort and learn to recognise numbers and objects. In their pictures of *The Gingerbread Man* they write the number of buttons they have drawn on his tunic. They show awareness of numbers being used in everyday life, as, for example when they use the phone in the role-play area. Members of staff use every opportunity to develop pupils' mathematical understanding. A very good example of this was seen during 'snack time' when pupils were challenged to count the number of items on their plates and to take six items from a plate. Throughout the Foundation Stage, teachers introduce mathematical language effectively, and consequently children begin to name shapes such as circles,

squares and triangles. They experience a good range of practical activities, such as weighing and measuring, to further their understanding of number, shape and measures. Children in the reception class make simple tally charts to show favourite chocolate bars and make simple tessellating patterns. Most children attain the early learning goals for mathematics by the time they join Year 1.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

67. Children's attainment is broadly as expected for their age and most are on course to attain the Early Learning Goals by the time they join Year 1. The quality of teaching is good because it is well planned and builds on children's own experiences and natural curiosity. Teaching seen in this area is good in both the nursery and reception. Children in the reception class however, need more opportunities to explore and discover independently because it is in this way that their learning is most effective.

68. Activities provided are interesting and exciting. Nature walks within the school environment are well used to develop children's understanding of nature and location. They like to look for mini-beasts when exploring the different habitats in the school grounds. Children in the nursery are given many opportunities to talk about everyday experiences and events and about the themes they are working on. In ICT, children are taught to use the mouse and to control the screen cursor when moving images across the screen when, for example, they painted the houses of the three little pigs. Through well-planned activities in the nursery and reception, children show an emerging scientific knowledge of plant growth and the conditions needed for these. Children in the nursery have studied tadpoles and other baby animals and, as a result, recognise that living things grow and change. Children in the reception class have good opportunities to learn about mini-beasts and their habitats as they are taken out and about in the school grounds to explore different to find out what lives there and to set up a simple investigation. In both classes early geographical understanding is promoted effectively through local walks, including those around the school site, identifying different buildings and routes. During a lesson in reception class pupils also learned some simple facts about life in India, including the weather, the significance of the sari and some basic customs. Children in both classes develop an understanding of their own personal history through the use of photographs of themselves at an earlier age.

Creative development

69. Teaching of this aspect is very good in the nursery and satisfactory in the reception class. In the nursery, there is a very good balance between guided activities and opportunities for children to explore. These opportunities are less frequent in the reception class and are not an integral part of everyday activities. However, by the time they leave reception, most children reach the expected standard in this area of learning.

70. Activities in the nursery are very well planned, effectively linked to other areas of the curriculum, and well matched to the needs of the children. They are used to reinforce aspects of learning and to create fun and enjoyment. This was evident as the skills of printing and making rubbings were being developed. A very good example of links between creative development and literacy was seen where children, motivated by the reading of *The Gingerbread Man*, designed and made rafts and boats in a variety of materials so that he could escape. Opportunities for imaginative play are stimulating and are often well used to develop children's problem solving skills as well as their social

development. Musical instruments are always readily available and children are encouraged to experiment with these to make patterns with sounds. In the reception class, where a good music lesson was observed, children used untuned percussion instruments to imitate sounds heard in the environment. With guidance, they began to choose instruments to accompany class songs. Similarly, as part of their work on Diwali, children learned about and explored the use of rangoli and mendi patterns with some good results using a variety of media including henna and pavement art when they coloured their own personal responses in the courtyard.

Physical development

71. Teaching in this area of the curriculum is good in the nursery and satisfactory in the reception class. Use of the school hall is regularly timetabled for both classes. Children in the nursery have regular access to a secure play area and, because of the well-planned activities, they are becoming increasingly confident in using a range of wheeled toys. Many of these toys, however, were stolen during a recent break-in and there is no outdoor climbing apparatus. Children in reception also have some opportunities to use the outdoor facilities although these opportunities need to be extended. The children's fine motor skills are well developed in both classes. Children show good skills when using tools, scissors, pencils, crayons and construction kits in their work in other aspects of the curriculum. By the time the children move on into Year 1 their attainment is in line with the Early Learning Goals.

ENGLISH

72. At the time of the last inspection, standards were below national expectations for seven year olds and by the end of Year 4. Attainment in writing was particularly low. Overall standards in the test in 2000 were below the national average in reading and writing and too few pupils attained the higher Level 3 in reading and writing. However, two pupils did attain above the expected level (4). In the follow up review by HMI last October, reading had improved and was in line with national expectations. There were good improvements test results for seven year olds in 2001, particularly in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher level, Level 3. In reading, 39 per cent of pupils achieved Level 3 with 35 per cent in writing. Although test results indicate that boys do better than girls, comparisons need to be viewed cautiously when there are so few pupils and because boys significantly outnumbered girls over the past two years. Inspection evidence did not indicate differences based solely on gender although the behaviour of a minority of boys in Years 3 and 4 does affect the standards that some achieve.

73. Most pupils in the current Year 2 achieve standards that are in line with those expected nationally, although the standards of a significant proportion of pupils in Years 3 and 4 are below national expectations. A significant proportion of pupils throughout the school have speaking skills that are below average.

74. In Years 1 and 2, pupils' speaking and listening skills overall are below national expectations. While most pupils are eager to reply to teachers' questions and to give their views, a high proportion have immature speech which spills out without much thought to structure. When teachers' questions are well framed and pupils know what is expected of them, standards of speaking improve throughout the lesson. Older pupils in Year 2 show that they can tell a well known story such as *The Three Little Pigs*, sharing the pleasure of repeating phrases such as "Little pig, little pig, let me come in". This improvement

continues in Year 3, where higher attaining pupils speak confidently and coherently about their experiences and opinions when, for example, they talked about how Romans might regard Queen Boudicca. Average and lower attaining pupils answers are often brief and they do not

attempt to give reasons to support their views. Some pupils still use a very restricted speech and vocabulary. Even in Year 4, some pupils do not yet show that they understand the conventions of ordered speech. Opportunities to practice good speaking and listening during lessons are sometimes compromised by a group of pupils, largely boys, who do not try to explain their ideas and thoughts and prevent others doing so.

75. In reading, attainment in Years 1 to 4 for the majority of pupils is in line with national expectations. Average attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2 read simple texts fluently and accurately, and can use strategies such as sounding out the letters or using picture clues to help work out unfamiliar words. Higher attaining pupils read more complex texts fairly accurately. They can recall what they have read so far and attempt some realistic predictions about what will happen next. Lower attaining pupils are restricted to a limited number of words they know by sight and they experience difficulty when they encounter new words.

76. In Years 3 and 4, higher attaining pupils read well with good understanding and accuracy even of quite complex words. However, their reading lacks expression and pupils tend to read too quickly. Both average and lower attaining pupils in these year groups have sound strategies to decipher and decode unfamiliar words. Throughout the school most pupils have a positive attitude to reading. They enjoy using the library and selecting books. They talk about their reading and their favourite stories with engagement and enthusiasm.

77. In writing, attainment is broadly in line with national expectations in Years 1, 2 and 3 but below expectations in Year 4. In the work seen from higher attainers in Year 2, handwriting was rarely joined but spelling was phonetic and often correct and full stops were often used accurately. There was some good descriptive writing. Average attaining pupils have clearly formed and positioned handwriting and produce some quite extended narratives. Work, however, is rarely punctuated by full stops and capital letters. Spellings are recognisable. Lower attaining pupils are able to communicate meaning, but their free writing is very brief. Pupils need to be given more opportunities to develop their independent writing both during English lesson and across other subjects.

78. In Year 3, handwriting is joined, but not always well formed. Grammar, punctuation and spelling are usually correct among higher attainers, who produce some lively and imaginative compositions. Average attaining pupils try hard to arrive at the right choice of words and express their ideas carefully, for example, in some effective poetry writing on the theme of sounds. Lower attaining pupils have poorly formed handwriting and experience difficulty with spelling, and often omit punctuation altogether. However the meaning is clear. Standards in writing are higher in Year 3 than in Year 4. A particular weakness in writing in Year 4 is the limited use of simple vocabulary and a lack of differentiation between written and spoken language. There are, however, a small number of pupils in Year 4 whose standards in writing are above the expected level for pupils of this age. This writing is lively, and thoughtful and words are chosen for good effect. Sentence structures are varied and these pupils express themselves as they speak, sometimes hastily and clumsily as, for example, in "The king got all his money by acting nice but really evil". Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. They make good progress when given additional support. The support provided is good and enables the pupils to be fully involved in lessons and the work is well matched to their needs.

79. Throughout the school pupils are now making good progress in lessons although this has not always been the case and there is still some catching up to be done, especially in

Year 4 and for a fairly high proportion of pupils in Year 3. This better rate of progress and learning directly reflects the current good teaching. The quality of English teaching seen was satisfactory in one lesson, good in another and very good in two. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and all lessons are well planned to reflect the wide range of prior attainment within each class. Questioning is usually skilled, even among the less experienced teachers. It is designed to probe, to motivate, enabling pupils to make good gains in their learning. Where teaching was at its best, expectations of pupils were very high and the pace brisk. The learning objectives were explained to pupils at the beginning of the lesson and pupils' progress was measured against these objectives. The content of lessons is usually interesting so that, in most cases, the need to control and discipline pupils is minimised. However, this is sometimes necessary with a minority of poorly motivated pupils. Where teaching was otherwise satisfactory the pace was not brisk enough so that pupils occasionally went off task. A scrutiny of pupils' work from the previous year shows that the quality of marking in Years 3 and 4 was unsatisfactory and often incomplete. All work is now marked regularly. Pupils throughout the school are given individual targets in English against which both they and their teachers can measure their achievement. This is good practice, which although in its early stages, is developing well and is an example of good practice.

80. Most pupils want to learn. They enjoy their work in English, and respond very readily to the demands teachers make of them, particularly when these are clearly stated and the work is interesting. Pupils then can stay on task for what are often quite prolonged periods of time. However, pupils have still to develop habits of independent learning and group co-operation. Few children have, as yet the ability to evaluate their own work. In most classes behaviour is good, but a small minority of pupils in Years 3 and 4 behave unacceptably, calling out and disobeying their teachers, which detracts from their learning. It is to the credit of most pupils that they refuse to be diverted by this behaviour, ignoring it and getting on with their own work. However, such behaviour makes very hard and unnecessary work for the teachers and the school will need to eradicate such behaviour.

81. The subject is very well managed by the headteacher. She is well aware of what needs to be done and has introduced a number of strategies to improve standards. She has spent considerable time and energy in sorting and renewing many of the resources, particularly reading books and improving the quality of teaching. The positive attitudes of pupils to reading and to their work in the Literacy Hour are evidence of the effectiveness of these measures. She is aware of the need to produce a scheme of work to incorporate the development of pupils' speaking and listening skills. Assessment procedures and practice are developing and there are now good procedures in place for tracking pupils' progress in reading and writing.

82. Resources are good, well stored and accessible. Teachers make good use of their large classrooms. The school library contains a satisfactory collection of non-fiction books and the school also loans books and topic boxes from the Schools' Library Service. There is also a range of storybooks and a fiction library where books are organised into different levels of difficulty. The school has invested considerable time, money and energy in creating an individualised reading scheme. These books are also used to support reading at home. There is some use of information and communication technology to support work in English, but this is in need of development. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' moral and social development, particularly where pupils have opportunities to work collaboratively and to express themselves.

MATHEMATICS

83. In the tests at age seven in 2000, overall standards were below the national average. Results were depressed overall because no pupil attained the higher Level 3 in the tests. Results in 2001 show a significant improvement with 42 per cent of pupils attaining Level 3. This is largely a result of improvements in teaching, which, in particular, ensures an appropriate level of challenge for higher attaining pupils.

84. Most pupils in Year 3 are achieving at least the expected standards. However, a high proportion of pupils in Year 3 and in Year 4 do not achieve as well as they should. Some pupils lack sustained concentration and others are distracted. Work in books from pupils currently in Year 4 shows that during the past academic year their progress was not being monitored well enough. Work is often incomplete and frequently not marked. There is little evidence of pupils of different abilities being set appropriately challenging tasks. Although some of the lower attaining pupils currently in Years 3 and 4 demonstrate reasonable skills in working things out in their head, they find paper and pencil activities more difficult. This was evident in a lesson when pupils in the Year 3 and 4 class were calculating answers to money problems using the partitioning method. Lower attaining pupils experienced considerable difficulty setting these out on paper and some could not do so without considerable adult support. Similarly, in a lesson in Year 3 some lower attaining pupils demonstrated a lack of basic learning skills. When asked to estimate the length of certain items in and around the classroom, some pupils did not realise that they needed to look at the object as a means of reaching an estimate. Once their attention was correctly focussed, these children quickly improved and achieved quite well. Teachers will need to continue to work with the lower attaining pupils in Years 3 and 4 to improve their basic skills. Importantly, teachers will need to improve pupils' attitudes overall as a minority of pupils sometimes give up far too easily. Continuing to give focussed attention to mental mathematics and to encouraging pupils to explain their thinking, and the strategies they use, should help pupils to sort their ideas into more logical sequences.

85. In the current Years 1 and 2, standards are in line with those expected for pupils of this age. Evidence from a scrutiny of current and past work shows pupils have been making good progress over the past year, not just in developing basic number and mathematical skills but also in applying these into everyday problems. The good attention now being given to practical activities and to relating mathematics to everyday situations is a significant improvement since the previous inspection in 1999 and one that the school has worked hard to achieve. .

86. Standards in using and applying mathematics have also improved throughout the school and are now at least satisfactory for most pupils. Higher attaining pupils often show good skills in mental mathematics. Pupils in Year 2 confidently count back from 20 and 10 and are developing speed and accuracy at counting back from a given number. Most pupils are confident in explaining the different strategies they use to create as many problems as possible by using two silver coins. They have good skills in mental calculations up to a pound: higher attaining pupils calculate this in their heads and average attainers independently use a variety of tools to help, such as number lines, fingers and coins. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported in all lessons seen and the input from learning support staff is focused and of a high standard. Pupils with special educational needs usually make good progress in lessons.

87. The teaching seen was always at least good and in one Year 1 lesson very good. Improvements in teaching are helping pupils make faster progress than at the time of the previous inspection. Teachers have good subject knowledge and a good understanding of the National Numeracy Strategy. Plans outline clear objectives, which are explained to pupils. Good open-ended questioning challenges pupils to think for themselves and make good progress. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils were repeatedly asked questions such as, "Can you think why?" Similarly, pupils in Year 2 were asked: "What is a good way to record your answers?" and, "Now how can you do that and use fewer coins?" Teachers have high expectations of pupils and work is well matched to their abilities, challenging the most able. Most pupils respond well to this, although in Years 3 and 4 a minority of pupils show resistance and the teacher has to work extremely hard to engage their interest. Not all pupils demonstrate the same degree of effort.

88. The mental mathematics sessions are conducted well. Explanations of tasks and concepts are good which means pupils know what to do. The majority of pupils, if not all, show an increasing level of independence and perseverance during group activities and when set individual tasks. Sometimes, more time needs to be allocated to pupils working individually. Some pupils are slow to get started because they find things hard and do not always have enough time to practise and consolidate. In all classes the teachers and learning support assistants use questions and focused group work well to assess pupils' developing understanding. Resources are well used and carefully chosen. Particularly impressive was the availability of real money when pupils were solving problems; plastic alternatives can be confusing for young children. The plenary sessions are used well to share and consolidate learning or to introduce new ideas. They also provide good opportunities for pupils to talk about their learning, which is an important element in improving standards.

89. In Years 3 and 4 teachers, have to work extremely hard to maintain good discipline because a significant minority of pupils in each class, mostly boys, display inappropriate behaviour and unsatisfactory attitudes. They find it difficult to persevere and quickly give up if the task presents a challenge. Some pupils constantly try to interrupt, distracting others and detracting from the flow of the lesson, slowing the pace of teaching.

90. Pupils can apply their numeracy skills satisfactorily across the curriculum, for example in their work in geography and science. Displays in classrooms show teachers making good use of opportunities to link mathematics to work in other subjects and science in particular. This helps pupils understand the importance and applications of mathematical skills.

91. There are good systems for regularly assessing pupils' progress which, although introduced in the fairly recent past, are being consistently applied and helping to raise standards. The co-ordinator has a clear understanding of the subject requirements and has taken on board the weakness identified in the last inspection report and the follow up HMI review, and has worked well with the current headteacher and advisory staff to bring about improvements. Resources are of good quality and have been improved including those to support investigations. There is some use of information and communication technology to support pupils' mathematical development but this needs to be extended.

SCIENCE

92. Standards attained by pupils in Year 2 are in line with those expected for their age. Pupils in Year 4 attain standards that below those expected because the skills required to

investigate and experiment have not been progressively developed in the past. Although the school is now placing appropriate emphasis on this area of pupils' work, many still lack the confidence to explain in scientific terms what they have discovered, or to record their observations in an organised way. At the time of the 1999 inspection, the quality of teaching and learning was unsatisfactory. Teachers' expectations of what pupils could do were too low and there was an under-emphasis on investigative work. The follow-up report of October 2000 and evidence from the current inspection shows that the situation remained much the same until the recent appointment of the headteacher. Changes have resulted in improved learning through better planning and more rigorous monitoring of teaching. This, together with training to increase staff confidence in teaching pupils the important skills of scientific enquiry across all elements of the subject, is having a positive impact on learning. This is evident from the teachers' assessments of seven year olds in 2001, when a significantly greater percentage of pupils achieved the higher Level 3 than in previous years. The school is now well placed to continue to raise standards throughout the school, and there is a strong, shared commitment to succeed.

93. The quality of teaching and learning in lessons seen during the inspection was very good in one, satisfactory in one and unsatisfactory in one. This, together with other evidence, indicates that pupils in both key stages are now making satisfactory progress. The unduly variable and unsettled teaching over the past two years is still affecting the standards and progress being made by pupils in Year 4. The very good teaching of these pupils during the inspection was the direct result of the class teacher challenging them to find things out for themselves when considering ways of varying a current in a circuit to make bulbs brighter or dimmer. A very good introduction, challenging, direct questioning and very good use of resources motivated most pupils to work hard and to contribute effectively to the lesson. This was not the case when unsatisfactory learning was observed in another class where pupils' behaviour was not well managed through structured, effective teaching based on clear learning objectives. However, lessons are generally carefully planned and teachers are aware of what they want pupils to learn. Teachers are making increased use of practical activities. They are particularly careful to emphasise the correct scientific terminology and this helps pupils to a greater understanding. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and provide clear explanations, but in some lessons, teachers do not rigorously continue to teach and challenge pupils as they work on activities in small groups. Most pupils are well motivated by the teaching, but when they have to spend too much time listening to the teacher rather than being engaged in active learning, a significant number lose interest and disrupt the learning of others.

94. Although there was little evidence of pupils' past work for Years 3 and 4, all other evidence, including discussions with staff and analyses of teachers' plans, indicate that all aspects of the subject are now given due consideration. However, much of the work in Years 1 and 2 is recorded on worksheets. Not only does this limit pupils' ability to record their observations in interesting and meaningful ways, but it also deprives them of opportunities to extend their writing skills.

95. Pupils in Year 2 consider the impact of healthy eating and apply their knowledge of living things to describe conditions basic to animal's and plant survival. Most pupils know that humans and other animals are able to produce offspring, these in turn growing into adults. Higher attaining pupils were observed using their research skills to discover the names for young and adult animals, for example, cub for fox and lion. These pupils extended their skills when challenged to find and group animals that lay eggs. Pupils with special educational needs were well provided for within the lesson planning and were effectively supported by a well-trained learning support assistant, so that they could play a full part in the lesson. Planning also takes into consideration the needs of higher attaining

pupils; this is another good improvement since the 1999 inspection. The school is committed to educational inclusion and boys and girls from different backgrounds and abilities are appropriately provided for in lessons. Although the inappropriate behaviour of a significant minority of boys in some lessons disrupts the learning of others, there was no evidence of difference in the overall attainment of boys and girls.

96. Planning shows that by the end of Year 2, pupils have been taught to describe similarities and differences between materials and go on to explain how materials are changed by heating, cooling, bending and stretching. They study the uses of electricity in everyday life but there was little evidence in their books of pupils building their own circuits, or of opportunities to explain phenomena such as why a bulb does not light because a circuit is not complete.

97. Pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 are increasing their understanding of the importance of predicting and testing their predictions because of the recent emphasis on scientific enquiry. As a result, they are beginning to carry out fair tests efficiently, recognising and explaining why they are fair. In a lesson on electricity, the class teacher was challenging pupils to consider how they would alter one variable while keeping the others the same. Pupils were challenged to consider how they would reach a solution, through effective questioning such as: 'What do we keep the same and what do we change to make a bulb brighter within the circuit?' In their work on materials pupils predict which materials are suitable as conductors of electricity and test these predictions. Planning shows that by the end of Year 4, pupils will have had opportunities to identify ways in which an animal is adapted to its environment. In their science and personal, social and health education lessons, they learn the importance of healthy living and the effects of exercise on the body.

98. The curriculum manager had been in post just a matter of weeks before the inspection, but she has already monitored teachers' plans and pupils' work on display. She has reorganised resources so that they are more readily accessible to teachers. Planning has improved since the previous inspection and meets National Curriculum requirements. Pupils' work and progress is regularly assessed and the resulting information is generally well used to set individual targets and to support the learning of pupils of differing attainment. This represents a good improvement since the previous full inspection and the resulting follow-up inspection, when the needs of higher attaining pupils were not being satisfactorily provided for. The improved provision for information and communication technology allows pupils to employ an increasing range of methods such as tables and charts to convey data in appropriate and methodical ways. Teachers make good use of the school grounds and the local environment to develop pupils' awareness of life processes and living things, as when recognising that different living things are found in different habitats. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development and their sense of citizenship.

ART AND DESIGN / DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

99. Although only two lessons in art were seen, additional evidence from displays shows that pupils throughout the school make good progress in art and attain standards above national expectations. There is a wide range of work on display. Pupils in Year 1 used a mirror to look closely at themselves and then produced self-portraits of happy and sad faces, which were good representations of themselves that caught the mood well. Abstract painting in Year 2 inspired by the artist Paul Klee, shows an imaginative use of strong colours to create an impact. Other work on display in the classroom shows effective use of colour mixing and some good observational drawings of fruits. In Years 3 and 4, pupils'

work shows effective use of contrasting colours when, for example, they explored patterns found in nature. There are some very bright and well-painted wall panels depicting "Children at Play" to which every child in the school has contributed. Similarly, as part of the millennium celebrations, each child made a clay tile. These were painted and varnished and put together to make large displays representing the four seasons, which were photographed and used to produce a calendar that was sold to raise funds for the school and a charity.

100. In the two lessons seen, in Year 2 and Year 3, the teaching and learning was good. Teachers gave good attention to the development of skills. In Year 2, the teacher used the work of other artists as a good starting point. Pupils learned about the techniques that famous artists used in their work and had the opportunity to apply some of these skills to their own paintings. Colour mixing was particularly well taught and these still very young pupils responded well to the challenge of using the palettes and powder paint to mix small quantities of the desired colours.

101. In Year, 3, explanations were good and the teacher used ICT well in designing wrapping papers. The overall standards of work produced was disappointing as some pupils made little effort, despite the good quality teaching. However, evidence of pupils' past work in their sketchbooks is of a better standard with some interesting use of patterns being generated. Evidence from work seen and lesson plans shows pupils have good attitudes and most take a pride in their work. There are good opportunities provided through art to promote pupils' personal development; for example, to reflect and appreciate the beauty of the world and opportunities to work collaboratively and co-operatively

102. Time-tabling arrangements during the inspection made it impossible to see any lessons in design and technology and as a result there is insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement on teaching and learning. However, teachers planning and work on display show that the subject is regularly taught and standards of work are satisfactory. In Year 1, pupils designed and made hats, which they evaluated in simple terms. Pupils in Year 2 designed a coat of many colours. As part of the proposed development of one of the school courtyards, pupils in Years 3 and 4 drew up plans and produced models to outline their proposals. All teachers' plans incorporate opportunities for design and technology including food technology.

103. Work in both art and design and technology is similar to that at the time of the last inspection. However, standards in art have improved and teachers now give better attention to art appreciation. Resources are satisfactory and the management of both subjects is satisfactory. The school is also fortunate to have its own kiln, which contributes well to the good standards achieved. Some examples of ICT being used to support pupils' artwork were seen.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

104. At the time of the last inspection pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in history and geography were in line with those expected; no judgement was made about teaching as none was seen. Neither subject had appropriate procedures for assessing pupils' standards and progress.

105. During this inspection it was possible to observe only one geography lesson. Apart from work completed at this early stage in the school year, very little other evidence of past work was available. It is therefore not possible to make a judgement about standards in

geography at the end of Year 2. In Years 3 and 4 the standard of work seen was satisfactory. Pupils have an appropriate understanding of geographical concepts such as location and they have a good understanding of the effects of climate. They still experience some difficulty with making maps and using symbols. In history the standards of work seen throughout the school are in line with those expected. Pupils' display a good social awareness and empathy. This was seen when pupils in a Year 2 class were learning about Florence Nightingale and the Crimean War. They demonstrated a good understanding of how it would feel to suffer the conditions of that time. They also showed a good understanding of the differences between now and then, as seen in the clothes they wore. The time line on display in the classroom was helping to place this period of history in context although pupils find this difficult. Pupils in Year 3 showed sound knowledge of the Roman conflicts in Britain and of Queen Boudicca. In the combined Year 3 and 4 class, pupils are beginning to understand how historical questions may be answered in different ways and by using different sources of information, for example by looking at buildings, such as Berkhamsted Castle which they had just visited.

106. In history and geography lessons, all pupils including those with special educational needs are making appropriate progress. Teaching was seen in four history lessons. The overall quality of teaching was good. It was very good in two lessons. What made these lessons particularly effective was the teachers' own enthusiasm which motivates pupils well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they plan well, and do a great deal to motivate their pupils and provide first-hand experiences. For example in Year 2 bandages of the kind used in the Crimea were shown, and in a lesson in Year 3 Roman artefacts were displayed. In a good geography lesson, the teacher had brought her own small collection of African artefacts, which captured pupils' interests. All teachers set appropriate tasks for pupils who have a wide range of ability. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported, particularly when they have additional support. In one lesson in Year 4, ICT was used well, to scan pictures of castles and to research information using the Internet. In one history lesson where the teaching was unsatisfactory, the pace of the lesson was too slow to maintain pupils' interest and they were expected to sit for too long on the carpet listening, rather than getting on with some work of their own.

107. The headteacher is currently managing both subjects, she has developed policies and plans for improvement, Following consultation with the staff, she has begun to implement schemes of work recommended by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. As a result of this strong leadership, planning systems are secure and identify the need for more detailed curriculum planning, further staff training and improved resources and systems for assessing pupils' progress and attainment. There is the potential to develop these subjects further, by incorporating the skills outlined across a range of subjects including literacy, numeracy and ICT. Both subjects offer good opportunities to make pupils overall learning experiences more interesting and meaningful.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

108. The development of information technology has recently been a major focus for the school. At the time of the last inspection, standards were broadly in line with national expectations but skills in monitoring and handling data were less well developed. The school has provided training for teachers and support staff, and plans to extend this in light of recent new appointments. Teaching is now well supported by national guidance for the subject. This provides a good basis for planning and helps to ensure the systematic development of skills and knowledge. These initiatives, including improvements in computer provision and the development of a small computer suite, are having a positive

impact on standards. Current inspection findings are that attainment is in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1 but below expectations for pupils in Year 4. These pupils are now making good progress, they have not, however, had sufficient experience across all elements of ICT, as development of the subject has been slow until the recent appointment of the headteacher. The school is currently considering ways of making greater use of computers in the classrooms and in the computer suite throughout the school day, so that information and communication technology can be used more fully as a tool for learning in all subjects of the curriculum.

109. Two lessons in which skills were directly taught were observed during the inspection. The quality of teaching was good in one and satisfactory in the other. These, together with observations made when pupils were working alone or in groups on computers, guided by useful teacher interventions, indicate that the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Although pupils generally make good progress this is not so in all lessons, even where the teaching is good. In some classes, the inappropriate behaviour of a small number of boys disrupts teaching and learning. Teachers plan their lessons well using national guidance. They work hard, despite the disruptions, to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, have full and equal access in lessons. Explanations and demonstrations are clear and, consequently, most pupils understand what they are to do. Lesson plans clearly indicate the technical vocabulary to be taught, and the subject gives good support to pupils' literacy skills.

110. By the end of Year 2, guided by direct teaching, most pupils use the mouse confidently. They become familiar with simple word processing skills and are taught to save, retrieve and print their work. Pupils in a Year 1 lesson were being taught to use 'Clicker 4' to identify words to be used in sentences, punctuating these with capital letters and full stops. By the end of the lesson, most pupils could devise sentences such as 'The car is shiny and red.' The teaching not only improved their computer knowledge but also their literacy skills. In control technology, pupils are taught to program a robot with simple instructions. Teachers' planning shows that pupils are taught how to enter, analyse and present simple data.

111. Skills learnt in Years 1 and 2 are now being built upon effectively in Years 3 and 4. Although their keyboard skills are generally slow, most pupils sustain concentration and their finished work is accurate. Year 3 and Year 4 pupils were observed organising and amending text as they unscrambled instructions for making scrambled eggs. They were successfully highlighting sentences and using the mouse to drag these across the screen. Lower attaining pupils make effective use of a writing frame to support their literacy skills. Pupils in a Year 3 lesson were being taught to create a design using the 'Colour Magic' programme. The class teacher demonstrated good knowledge of the subject as she explained and carefully demonstrated what to do. Most pupils were interested, but, once again, the unsatisfactory behaviour of a minority of pupils made teaching difficult. Planning shows that, by the end of Year 4, pupils will have been taught to develop images using repeating patterns, to collect and present information and data, to use ICT models to assist in finding things out and to solve problems by making suitable choices.

112. The acting deputy headteacher was effectively managing the subject at the time of the inspection. She provides good support for teachers, monitors the effectiveness of teaching and has worked closely with the local adviser to improve provision. The school is very grateful to those parents who have helped to link the school to the Internet and to network the school's computers. One of the parents has also helped to develop the school's own website. All these initiatives have successfully helped raise the profile of the

subject and to enrich pupils' experiences. Assessment activities are identified on teachers' lesson plans, and the information gathered in lessons is well used to plan future work.

MUSIC

113. No judgements about teaching or pupils' attainment were made during the last inspection. During this inspection three lessons were seen and one assembly in which pupils were heard singing. Standards are broadly in line with those expected nationally. In Year 1, pupils understand in simple terms the qualities of musical instruments, and can identify some by the sounds they make. About half of the pupils can make meaningful pictorial representations of sounds heard. Pupils in Year 3 showed a good understanding of how music may reflect or influence mood. They sang a well-known song enthusiastically, if not very tunefully. They understand the need to collaborate in ensemble work, and their performance improved with practice. In Year 4, pupils sing confidently and can apply actions to a song but again the singing is not in tune. This was also the case when singing was heard in assembly.

114. All pupils' learning, including those pupils with additional needs, is at least satisfactory and sometimes good or very good as seen in a Year 3 and 4 class where pupils were sorry when lesson ended. Pupils have an interest in and enjoyment of music and this is supported by the teachers' enthusiasm. Pupils with special educational needs are fully involved and make the same progress, as do other pupils. In the three lessons seen, teaching was good in one, and very good in another. The third lesson was satisfactory. In the good and very good lessons the teachers' subject knowledge was used well. Singing and piano skills were used effectively, pupils' performance was evaluated and shared and the planning ensured all pupils were suitably challenged. Where teaching was satisfactory the pace of the lesson was rather slow with the result that there was some misbehaviour. Pupils' behaviour in most lessons is good.

115. At the time of the last inspection a commercially produced scheme of work was in use. This has been replaced by the scheme produced by the local education authority. While this prescribes a good programme, some elements of a commercial scheme could usefully be combined to assist the non-specialist teachers. There is a small singing group and a recorder group. All pupils in the current Year 2 have started to learn to play recorders. There is the potential to extend work in music, to raise its profile and pupils' achievements. This would help to promote pupils' cultural and spiritual development further and could contribute to improving overall attitudes and behaviour. Some pupils who misbehave in other lessons were fully engaged in music lessons. There are at present no formal assessment procedures. Resources for music are adequate and are used well.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

116. It is not possible to make a judgement about the standards pupils achieve in physical education at the age of seven as it was not possible to see any lessons in Year 2. Standards in Years 1, 3 and 4 are in line with those expected. By the time they leave the school at 9, most pupils can swim and some can swim 50 metres. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in lessons although the attitudes and behaviour of a significant minority of pupils in some lessons, detracts from the overall progress that pupils make, despite the good teaching.

117. Average and higher attaining pupils in a Year 1 lesson were able to hop, skip and leapfrog around their mats and over small apparatus. All pupils used their bodies effectively to make large and small shapes and some were able to combine these into a sequence of movements. Most pupils in this lesson made satisfactory progress. In a dance lesson in the Year 3 and 4 class where work was linked to the topic of space, most pupils were able to create steps that followed a beat of 2, 4 and 8 and they responded appropriately to changes in the music. By the end of the lesson most pupils were able to link their movements into a phrase and some pupils performed well. Pupils' overall progress in this lesson, although satisfactory, was compromised by the poor attitudes of some pupils, mostly boys, whose attention was focused on their interactions rather than their efforts to improve their own performance. This is regrettable as teaching was in many ways very effective and focussed and, clearly some pupils are talented. There are therefore missed opportunities for pupils to achieve as well as they could.

118. In a very good games lesson in Year 3 standards achieved were satisfactory and pupils made very good progress in developing the skills of underarm, shoulder, chest and over arm passes. Although some pupils were inclined to misbehave, it was made very clear that inappropriate behaviour would not be tolerated. A notable feature was the very brisk pace of the lesson, which helped to keep pupils on task.

119. Teaching was good overall. In a Year 1 lesson it was satisfactory, and in Years 3 and 4 it was good in one and very good in another. All lessons were well planned with clear learning intentions and appropriate attention to pupils' safety. Where teaching was good or very good, expectations of pupils were high, the pace was very brisk and the teachers' subject knowledge very good. Teachers' demonstrations were usually good and instructions clear. The school will need to continue to work to improve the attitudes and behaviour of a minority of pupils if all pupils' potential is to be fully realised. At the current time the teachers are often working extremely hard in lessons yet some pupils are not.

120. Teachers' planning shows that there is appropriate coverage of the National Curriculum requirements, and arrangements for assessing pupils' attainments are in place and are linked to the learning objectives identified in lesson plans. A good range of extra-curricular activities has recently been introduced enhancing the provision made in lessons. Since the last inspection the development of work in physical education has not been a school priority. There is the potential to develop work here further, to motivate pupils and to raise standards

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

121. Standards in religious education match those expected by the locally Agreed Syllabus for pupils currently in Years 2 and 4, as at the last full inspection. Four lessons were observed during the inspection. The quality of teaching and learning was good in two and satisfactory in two. These lessons, together with other evidence, suggest that all pupils, including those with special education needs and for whom English is an additional language have made satisfactory progress in their learning over time. Throughout the school, pupils are increasing their knowledge of the nature of religious belief and gaining an understanding that Christianity and other faiths share some common features, such as caring for others and the environment.

122. By the end of Year 2, pupils show a sound understanding of the richness and diversity of different religions by looking at Christianity and Islam. Through regular visits to the local church, pupils learn to recognise and understand the purpose of different parts of

the building. In a good lesson in Year 2 about the Christening ceremony, pupils were well motivated and listened with interest as others spoke about the rituals surrounding their own Christenings. As a result of this good use of pupils' own experiences, all pupils gained a good understanding of the significance of baptism as a sign of belonging. This lesson was followed up the next day, when pupils further extended their understanding of the ceremony by taking part in role-play activities depicting the Christening service. Pupils are taught key events in the lives of Jesus and are told a range of Old and New Testament stories. An example of this was seen in a Year 1 lesson, where pupils were listening to the story of how Jesus miraculously fed 5000 people, and they considered the significance of this in relation to Harvest Festival. By the end of the lesson pupils knew that these services are held to 'to thank God for our food.' Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are also taught about festivals in other faiths, as, for example, when they learn about the significance of light in many of these, such as Diwali and Hanukah, as well as in the Christian festivals of Advent, Christingle and Christmas.

123. By the end of Year 4, pupils have increased their understanding of the origins and principles of Christianity and of other major faiths practised in Britain. Most are beginning to relate some of the concepts of different faiths to their own experiences and to discover more about religious beliefs, ideas and structures. As well as continuing to study the Islamic faith, they are introduced to Sikhism. In a Year 3 lesson, pupils were considering the feelings of the young Muhammad when he was travelling with his uncle, Abu Talib. The teacher built effectively on what pupils had already learnt in previous lessons. Through effective questioning, pupils could recall the mosque as the Muslim place of worship and Mecca as the place of pilgrimage. By the time they leave the school at the end of Year 4, most pupils know the main features of the faiths studied, and that each has a place of worship and key leaders such as Jesus, Muhammad and Guru Nanak. They also know that each has a holy text, the Bible, the Qu'ran and the Guru Granth Sahib, and that these give rules and examples for living. Past work shows that they understand that a major common feature of many faiths is that of sharing what we have with others, as, for example in the Sikh practice of langar, where food is shared with people of all creeds and backgrounds who visit the Gurdwara.

124. Teachers plan their lessons well and make effective use of strategies such as role-play and discussion to stimulate pupils' interest. A good example of planned, stimulating discussion was seen in a lesson in the Year3/4 class, when pupils were considering the importance of individuals within a group. As a result, pupils made good progress in understanding how common shared beliefs of what is right and wrong affect behaviour. Most pupils respond well and behave with respect in lessons. However, a significant minority of pupils in several classes lack self-control and concentration, and this disturbs the learning of the other pupils.

125. Visiting speakers such as the vicar, as well as visits to the local church, effectively supplement work throughout the school. The recently appointed curriculum manager is planning visits to other places of worship. The school ensures that the subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers make good use of stimulating artefacts, which are imaginatively displayed around the school. This increases pupils' understanding of the richness and diversity of different faiths and cultures. Pupils treat these artefacts with respect.