

INSPECTION REPORT

**COUNTESS ANNE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Hatfield, Hertfordshire

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117482

Headteacher: Mr David Lodge

Reporting inspector: John William Paull
22028

Dates of inspection: 25 - 28 February 2002

Inspection number: 223374

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	School Lane Hatfield Hertfordshire
Postcode:	AL10 8AX
Telephone number:	0170 726 2840
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M P Scandrett
Date of previous inspection:	13 March 2000

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
22028	John Paull	Registered inspector	Foundation stage Special educational needs Mathematics Music	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9388	Anthony Mundy	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
11042	Viv Wakeham	Team inspector	Equal opportunities Art and design Geography Physical education Science	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
27635	Diana Cinamon	Team inspector	English as an additional language Design and technology English History Information and communication technology	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Countess Anne is a voluntary aided Church of England school for boys and girls of between four and 11 years old. It has 170 pupils on roll, which is smaller than most other primary schools, with slightly more boys than girls in most classes. It has 24 children in a reception class. Nearly all pupils are white, although a few are from other ethnic groups, such as from families that originated in the Asian sub-continent, China or North Africa. Around five and a half percent speak English as an additional language, which is higher than in most schools. Over 30 percent of pupils are identified with special educational needs, which is above average. Most of these pupils have learning difficulties, although another sizeable group experiences difficulty with speech and others have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Just over 20 percent are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is about average. Socio-economic circumstances in the area around the school are about average, although attainment on entry is below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Countess Anne Primary is an effective school, providing its pupils with good teaching that leads to good learning of basic skills. It no longer displays the serious weaknesses that were identified in its last inspection. However, gaps that these weaknesses caused in pupils' knowledge and understanding are still having an impact on standards by the time pupils leave in Year 6. Nonetheless, the headteacher, deputy head and supporting headteacher offer a very strong direction for raising levels of attainment. Consequently standards are beginning to rise. Bearing these judgements in mind, the school is now providing sound value for money.

What the school does well

- Teachers place strong emphasis on the need for pupils to work and play together harmoniously. As a result, pupils' relationships with adults and with each other are very good.
- Teachers work hard to ensure that pupils understand how to behave well in class. As a result, behaviour in lessons is usually good, sometimes very good.
- The overall quality of teaching is good, leading to good progress.
- Senior staff are identifying what the school needs to do to improve very well.
- The school provides well for pupils with special educational needs and for those who are learning English as an additional language, so these pupils make good progress at rates similar to other pupils.
- Pupils' personal, social and emotional development is promoted particularly well in the reception class.

What could be improved

- By the time pupils leave in Year 6, standards of attainment are currently below average in English, mathematics and geography, and throughout the school in information and communication technology.
- Towards the end of reception, pupils' running, balancing and climbing skills do not fully match what is expected.
- Responsibility for the management of subjects is not fully delegated to co-ordinators, restricting the monitoring and support of teaching.
- Arrangements for training in and policy for child protection are not sufficiently up to date.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has improved well since its inspection of March 2000. Improvement is evident in most aspects of its work, especially those in which serious weaknesses were found two years ago. For example, English, mathematics and science are now led and co-ordinated well, with good procedures for supporting the quality of teaching and what is taught. Developments in these subjects are planned systematically and are beginning to have a considerable impact on raising pupils' achievements as they move through the school.

The overall quality of teaching is now good, which is having a strong impact on learning and on pupils' good behaviour in classrooms. However, the impact of unsatisfactory teaching that was identified two years ago is still apparent in gaps that show up in the knowledge of older pupils especially. As a result, standards by the time pupils leave the school remain below average. That said, they are beginning to rise in younger age groups. An exception is the physical development of children in the reception class, which is caused by a lack of suitable large apparatus for climbing and balancing and which was also the case two years ago. The management and use of data have improved. For example, the deputy head teacher keeps a careful check on information that demonstrates how pupils are progressing. This information is shared with other senior staff and is passed to subject co-ordinators and class teachers to help them to set targets and to plan teaching and learning.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	E	C	D	C
mathematics	D	C	E	D
science	C	C	E	D

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

As the school is relatively small, just one or two pupils' results make a large difference to percentages that show attainment at different levels, causing large fluctuations when comparisons are made with other schools. The school's 2001 figures included the results of several pupils with identified learning difficulties and standards fell in all three subjects from those of the previous year. It is also likely that the unsatisfactory teaching identified in the last inspection was still affecting the knowledge and understanding of pupils who took these tests. For example, the 2001 results in English are below the national average and, in mathematics and science, are well below. That said, since 1997, the school's overall trend (all three subjects taken together) is broadly in line with the national trend, which means that, seen as a whole, results at the school have kept pace with national improvements. The school's targets are close to national averages, and are therefore difficult to achieve, given the numbers with learning difficulties. It did not reach them in 2001. During the inspection, standards in Year 6 were below average in English and mathematics, and average in science. These standards are similar to the 2001 test results in English, but better than those of mathematics and science. The most likely reason for the improvement is that good teaching is now beginning to have an impact. This effect is more apparent amongst younger pupils. The 2001 National Curriculum test results of pupils in Year 2 indicated that attainment in reading was well below average, and that it was below average in writing and mathematics. During the inspection, however, standards were broadly average in English, mathematics and science. Bearing in mind that attainment on entry to the school is below what is usually found, these findings suggest that pupils' achievements are now good amongst younger pupils, and are sound overall. Pupils also make good progress in the reception, although attainment in communication, language and literacy, and knowledge and understanding of the world is unlikely to reach the expected early learning goals by July. Pupils with special educational needs and with English as an additional language are well supported and make progress at rates similar to other pupils. Standards by the end of Years 2 and 6 are in line with national expectations in all other subjects, except in geography in Year 6, and information and communication technology in both age groups.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good – pupils come to school willingly and work hard in class. They enjoy carrying out jobs, such as answering the telephone at lunchtime.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good – pupils nearly always behave well in lessons, listening to their teachers and classroom assistants well. They understand the need for rules at school and they keep to them well. They are polite and helpful.
Personal development and relationships	Good – pupils include each other well when given the opportunity to choose their own groups. They show respect when they sing and pray during assembly, and relate well to their teachers and each other.
Attendance	Attendance is in line with the national average. Pupils usually arrive at school punctually, and lessons start and end on time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Overall, teaching through the school is good, including a high proportion of very good teaching and none that is unsatisfactory. Examples of excellence were observed in the reception class and Year 2. This quality is a considerable improvement since the last inspection. It contributes strongly to pupils' achievements in the early years and is helping to fill gaps in learning that occurred in the past. Teachers and classroom assistants are skilful in supporting pupils of different prior attainments, adapting work to meet needs. Planning, teaching of basic skills, classroom management and teachers' methods are nearly always good, leading to hard work and good concentration amongst pupils. Learning and progress are therefore good. Occasionally, in lessons that are nonetheless satisfactory, teachers miss opportunities to enrich pupils' vocabulary. Teachers use the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies well, leading to good teaching of English and mathematics. Good teaching in the reception class helps young children to settle at school quickly, offering them positive experiences of school and learning, and providing excellent teaching in the area of personal development. The teaching of pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs is good and they make progress at similar rates to other pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory – all subjects of the National Curriculum are planned adequately and information about health, safety, sex education and growing up is provided. The quality of planning of all required areas of learning is good in the reception.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good – individual plans are prepared to show each pupil's needs and targets. Knowledgeable classroom assistants are employed to support them

	and they learn successfully.
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Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good – pupils with English as an additional language are supported well. Teachers ensure that they understand how to make progress. Other pupils involve them fully in groups work and playground activity.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory – however, provision for pupils' spiritual development is good and social development is very good. Much of what is planned requires collaborative work. Pupils also receive opportunities to contribute to the running of the school, such as answering the telephone and showing visitors around.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory – teachers care about pupils' wellbeing. However, no recent training of staff has been carried out in child protection, which is unsatisfactory. Procedures for monitoring behaviour are very good.

The school's partnership with parents and the quality of information that is provided is good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good – very good leadership by the headteacher, deputy head and supporting headteacher has led to improvements in teaching and what is taught. However, monitoring and support of teaching are not fully delegated to subject co-ordinators, which limits their knowledge of the subjects that they lead.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good – governors understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. They question and support senior managers' decisions effectively, and are keen to secure continued improvements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good – the school's action and improvement plans reflect its strengths and weaknesses well and targets are sensibly prioritised. Teachers and non-teaching staff have great determination to make the school a success.
The strategic use of resources	Good – subjects and areas that are targeted for improvements are backed with appropriate spending. Best value is sought well by checking prices against quality and seeking expert advice when necessary.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are generally satisfactory, although the lack of a computer suite has limited pupils' attainment in information and communication technology. The physical development of children in the reception class is restricted by the lack of an exterior area with equipment that is suitable for their age.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children like school.• Good teaching, which helps their children to make good progress.• Behaviour at the school is good.• Their children are expected to work hard and do their best. The school helps children to be responsible.• Nearly all of them would be comfortable about approaching the school with problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The range of activities outside lessons.• A few parents believe that the school does not work closely enough with them, and that they are not well informed about their children's progress.

The school has clearly improved rapidly in the past two years and inspectors agree with parents' positive opinions. Nevertheless, parents at the pre-inspection meeting were very concerned that high staff turnover just before and after the last inspection has caused interruptions in their children's learning. Parents believe that the school's programme of after school sports and clubs was seriously diminished for the same reason. Inspectors agree with them about these factors. At present, staffing looks more settled, and nearly all teachers have permanent contracts. Extra-curricular activities are now available again and, for a school of this size, are good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Since the last inspection, considerable use has been made of assessments of work and information gathered from monitoring literacy hours to improve the school's standards in English. The 1999 National Curriculum test results of pupils in Year 6 were well below average. In 2001, they were below, rather than well below average, and in 2000 were broadly in line with the average figure. Results in these last two years are therefore better than previously, suggesting that the school's strategy has been successful. However, standards in mathematics and science are not as good as in the last inspection. Two further reasons have been found that account for overall differences in attainment. First, in mathematics and science, the unsatisfactory teaching identified in the last inspection occurred mainly in the middle years. Therefore, it included pupils who took the tests last year. Gaps in knowledge, owing to this unsatisfactory teaching, will have affected overall performance. Secondly, the class that took the tests in 1999 included several pupils with learning difficulties, which is also likely to have an impact on results.
2. The results of the 2001 National Curriculum tests of pupils in Year 2 were well below average in reading and below average in writing and mathematics. In comparison with similar schools, these results are below average in reading and in line with the averages for writing and mathematics. Similar schools are grouped according to the number of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals. This figure places the school in the broadly average group, whereas its pupils' attainment on entry is in reality below average. This comparison with similar schools may therefore be unfair to the school, measuring achievement at a lower level than it really is.
3. The school's targets in English and mathematics are set fairly close to national averages. They are therefore challenging, given the number of pupils with special educational needs in the school's classes for older pupils. These targets were not reached in the 2001 tests. However, results are likely to be closer to targeted levels in 2002.
4. When children enter the reception class, language, literacy and mathematical skills are often below what is usually found for their age. For example, speech patterns are characterised by short colloquial phrases, and often one word answers. Good teaching ensures that children make good progress towards the early learning goals (descriptions of what young children are expected to know by the end of the reception year). However, when pupils begin the National Curriculum in Year 1, despite this good teaching, attainment remains below what is usually found in the important areas of language, communication and literacy and knowledge and understanding of the world. The results of assessments when children begin the National Curriculum confirm this finding. Lack of suitable equipment for their age group also restricts children's running, jumping, balancing and climbing skills. However, in mathematical development, other goals in physical development and in creative development, children are on course to reach the early learning goals.
5. Good teaching continues through Years 1 and 2, leading to thorough learning of basic skills. As a result, during the inspection, standards in Year 2 were broadly average in English, mathematics and science, which is better than indicated by the 2001 tests. Present Year 2 pupils have experienced good teaching throughout their time in the school, and this is having the effect of raising pupils' achievements and bearing in mind their starting points, these achievements are now good.
6. By the end of Years 2 and 6, speaking and listening are below national expectations. In Year 2, pupils listen well both to each other in groups, and to adults. However, speaking skills are often restricted to short statements, lacking sufficient richness in vocabulary. By Year 6, pupils are

sympathetic listeners, providing speakers with an interested audience that takes account of what is said. Again, it is in speaking where national expectations are often not met. In Year 2, attainment in reading is about average, which represents good improvement since the last inspection. In Year 6, standards are currently a little below average. Pupils use literacy skills well enough in different subjects. However, several lower attaining and even a few otherwise average attainers find it difficult to draw inferences from texts, understanding stories only superficially. In Year 2, writing skills are around average. Pupils write freely when they are given a story line to follow. However, they are less successful when dependent on imagination. In Year 6, standards are below average. Pupils find it difficult to sustain their ideas into writing of any length and their uses of standard forms of English often contain errors.

7. Attainment in mathematics is improving through the school, owing to better teaching than at the time of the last inspection. For example, standards are now around average at the end of Year 2. Bearing in mind their starting points, this level of attainment represents good achievement and is an improvement since the last inspection. By the time pupils leave the school in Year 6, standards remain below average, owing to weaknesses in calculation amongst several pupils of lower attainment, some of whom experience identified learning difficulties. When pupils are set problems in words, they do not always understand whether to use addition, multiplication, subtraction or division to get the answer. However, pupils are making rapid progress, including those with special educational needs.
8. The use and planning of literacy is sound in other subjects of the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 2 used their reading skills to find scientific facts about food and healthy eating. Further up the school, information is often recorded with the use of factual writing in several subjects. Pupils' skills in numeracy are used well. Counting and timing of events are often used well to support work in science, and good examples of practical measurement are planned in geography, and design and technology.
9. Standards in science are about average by the end of Years 2 and 6, which represents good achievement overall. In Year 2, for example, pupils identify insects and mammals. They describe simple properties of different materials and make simple electrical circuits, understanding that circuits will not work if incomplete. By the end of Year 6, earlier work on living things has been built on well. For example, pupils know about different types of micro-organism, including bacteria and how some of these live in their mouth. Pupils understand how light is reflected in a mirror and where a shadow will form in relation to a source of light. They carry out experiments that show how temperature affects the rate at which salt will dissolve in water. Skills in scientific enquiry are also in line with what is expected. Higher attaining pupils know that it is a good idea to repeat experiments to check results and that variables need to be controlled to ensure that tests are fair. Pupils with special educational needs also showed good understanding of the importance of fair testing. In science, gaps in knowledge attributable to past weaker teaching were identified. However, these were different from those in English and mathematics, as they were more apparent in Year 5 than in Year 6. For example, in an overall satisfactory lesson that was basically well planned, it became clear that very few pupils understood what was meant by "life cycles". As a result, considerable background information was needed before the teacher could introduce the main objective of her lesson. This objective was about flowering plants and how they reproduce themselves.
10. Standards in other subjects at different ages through the school are broadly in line with what is expected nationally, and achievement is sound by the time pupils leave in Year 6. Exceptions were found in geography, at the end of Year 6, and in information and communication technology at the end of both Years 2 and 6. In these subjects, attainment is below expected levels. In geography, a significant number of pupils display limited knowledge of the whereabouts of countries and continents on maps or on the globe. Other pupils have misconceptions about the causes of differences in temperature at the equator and nearer the poles. In information and communication technology, although word processing skills are satisfactory in the two age groups, pupils do not take sufficient

responsibility for saving, retrieving and printing their own work. Consequently such skills are neither sufficiently developed by the end of Year 2, nor as pupils move on through successive classes. By the time pupils leave in Year 6, lack of sufficient experience of computers is the main reason that standards do not reach expected levels. For example, in a good lesson, clear procedures for identifying cells and moving around in a spreadsheet were taught. However, despite the teacher's best efforts to ensure that as many pupils as possible had opportunities for hands-on practice, the lesson was less effective than it would have been in a computer suite.

11. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, albeit at levels below those of other pupils. Their individual education plans demonstrate that their needs are understood well, so realistic targets are set for them. These are usually literacy or numeracy tasks or both. Classroom assistants are employed to help pupils attain their targets, supporting them well. Teachers adapt their planning, so they attain well at their own levels of understanding. Pupils with English as an additional language are also supported well. As a result, they acquire English quickly and make progress across the full National Curriculum. By about Year 4, their attainment is similar to that of all other pupils, and by Year 6, it is often above the school's average.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils have much better attitudes to learning than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils' concentration during the inspection was at least good in nearly all lessons, and was often very good. This factor is beginning to have an impact on progress and attainment as pupils move up through the school. Over 90 percent of parents who returned questionnaires agreed that their children like school.
13. Children in the reception class learn positive attitudes by observing the good relationships between their parents and their teacher. They enjoy meeting other children, and are confident and secure, understanding the routines of their classroom. The children relate well to adults in their classroom, listening to them attentively. Their teacher works hard to ensure this high standard, as several children find it difficult to sit still when they first join reception. When working alone or in groups, they are encouraged to complete activities. The development of personal and social skills underpins all the work of the reception, which is another reason why good attitudes and behaviour are achieved.
14. Pupils come to school enthusiastically. They enjoy lessons, and frequently work independently without the need for direct supervision. They co-operate well with their teachers and with each other, responding politely to questions if, at times, in a brief manner. For example, excellent attitudes were seen in a Year 2 mathematics lesson. The teacher's skills in boosting pupils' self esteem and confidence resulted in controlled but intense competition to answer her questions. Pupils at various levels of attainment have similar good attitudes. In discussions with visitors, they are proud of their achievements and the recent improvements in the appearance and resources in their school. Attitudes in extra-curricular activities are good, and clubs are well supported at lunchtime and after school.
15. Behaviour in classes and in the open areas of the school is good, and has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Behaviour is very good at lunchtimes in the dining hall. Conversely, cloakroom spaces are sometimes very noisy when adults are not near. Nevertheless, pupils are thoughtful and mutually respectful and were sometimes seen reminding each other about responsibilities. Behaviour is often very good in classrooms. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulty are supported well and consequently usually work sensibly within groups. Pupils are aware that they should not fidget, especially when grouped on carpeted areas to receive instructions at the beginnings of literacy and numeracy hours. This good behaviour contributes to pupils' learning because, without frequent pauses or distractions, teachers are able to use time fully, moving lessons ahead at a good pace. Brief rules for behaviour are displayed in classrooms. Pupils nearly always conform to these rules, and respond very well to teachers' techniques of behaviour management. For

example, in another very good mathematics lesson – this time in Year 1 – the teacher corrected potentially disruptive behaviour very skilfully, neither raising her voice nor even issuing a direct command. As a result, confrontation was avoided and the lesson continued with a minimum of interruption. Pupils of different ethnic backgrounds also behave well within groups of different ethnicity. During the inspection, behaviour was impressive in all year groups during a rain-affected lunchtime. Pupils enjoyed a variety of classroom activities and indoor games, including a spontaneously organised competition of limbo dancing in Year 6! No unsatisfactory behaviour was observed during lessons throughout the inspection. Parents and pupils confirm that incidents of aggression or bullying are rare, and are dealt with promptly and sensitively when they do occur.

16. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory, including some strong features. They have good understanding of Christianity, and demonstrate respect for other faiths and beliefs, including Islam and Judaism. They are respectful during assemblies, following the good examples of the headteacher and other staff when praying and singing. They are generous of spirit, fund raising with kindness and enthusiasm for local and national charities. They enjoy taking harvest festival gifts to senior citizens, explaining that it is to show that they are thinking of them. In all year groups, they are interested in dance and other performance. In practical music lessons they are lively and well motivated. Boys and girls work together well, often choosing for themselves to be in mixed groups, without embarrassment or silliness. These social elements are very strong. Pupils work well in collaborative groups, talking about the lesson and exchanging ideas, without taking advantage of the situation to talk about other things. A school council meets regularly, and class representatives show good sense and restraint in deciding how to spend their allocated budget. Pupils in Year 6 informally support younger pupils at work and play. At lunchtimes, volunteers act as efficient receptionists in the school office. Pupils discriminate clearly between right and wrong, and understand that actions have consequences.
17. Relationships are very good in the reception class, and throughout the school. Pupils of different ethnicity get on well together. Pupils with English as an additional language are included very well in groups, both at work and play. Pupils respond politely and confidently to each other and to adults. They are not afraid to make mistakes, trusting their friends not to ridicule and their teachers to help them with corrections. Each member of the school community has equal status and receives sensitive and effective support at work and play. An example of this occurred in a very good music lesson in Year 5, when two girls sought out a pupil with special educational needs to join their group. This arrangement was achieved totally naturally, without any fussing, and it was clear from the outcomes that this pupil was treated with complete respect, as an equal. The girls incorporated his ideas into their composition and clearly respected his views highly.
18. Attendance is satisfactory in all year groups and, overall, is close to the national average for primary schools. Regular attendance has a positive effect upon pupils' attainment and progress. However, unauthorised absence is significantly above the national average. A small number of families do not fulfil their legal obligations of ensuring their children's attendance. The school rightly refuses to authorise absence under these circumstances, which accounts for the comparatively higher figure. Most pupils arrive punctually at school and settle quickly to work. Registration periods are efficient, and lessons begin promptly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

19. All parents who returned questionnaires and those who attended the pre-inspection meeting expressed the view that teaching in the school is good. Inspectors support this view. At the time of the last inspection, the overall quality of teaching was unsatisfactory and was a major contributor to the school's serious weaknesses. The amount of unsatisfactory teaching that was observed in the school was too high, especially in Years 1, 2, 4 and 5. However, teaching of children in the reception class was satisfactory. Teaching has improved considerably. It is now of good quality in all three key

- stages (the three national key stages are classes for children before they enter Year 1, Years 1 and 2 together, and Years 3 to 6 taken together). Examples of excellent teaching were observed in Year 2 and the reception class. As a result of this good quality teaching, pupils are now acquiring basic skills well. However, past unsatisfactory teaching caused gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. These gaps are still having an impact on pupils' achievements at the top of the school. Nonetheless, attainment is improving, owing to better teaching. In Year 5, for example, teaching is consistently at least satisfactory, and in Year 6, it is consistently good, sometimes very good.
20. In the reception class, all teaching was good, except for an excellent session, which focused on pupils' personal, social and emotional development, and a satisfactory lesson in the hall that consisted mainly of physical development. This overall good quality is resulting in good progress from the time that children start at the school to when they begin the National Curriculum. The teacher plans and successfully provides a good range of activities that encourage positive attitudes to learning. For example, children are encouraged to say why they enjoy what they do. The important aspect of social, emotional and personal development is approached very well. Children enter the reception class from a range of pre-school provision and a few with none. Several find it hard to settle at first, but the teacher, nursery nurse and, during the inspection, a trainee nursery nurse worked hard to help children feel settled and comfortable at school. This emphasis on their emotional wellbeing helps to ensure that they are ready to learn. Literacy and numeracy sessions are planned particularly well. All activities are supported by good assessment procedures based on ongoing observations, ensuring that each child has a balanced range of suitable work. Furthermore, evaluations of how children have got on are used well to support what is planned for them next. Other areas of learning, such as creative development, and knowledge and understanding of the world are well planned and effective. However, the school lacks climbing frames on safer surfacing and similar large apparatus for this age group. As a result, planning of opportunities for climbing, balancing and similar elements of physical development are limited. Children's learning is consequently restricted.
 21. The overall quality of teaching is also good throughout the main school. It is very similar to what is found in the reception class, ranging between satisfactory and an excellent lesson in Year 2. Most is good. Teachers' knowledge of the National Curriculum and the age groups that they teach is strong and, as a result, their expectations of what pupils can achieve are often very good. Nearly always, teachers are clear about what they expect pupils to learn by the end of a lesson. They invariably offer this information to pupils, which helps them to understand what to try hardest to remember. This good technique was especially evident in literacy and numeracy hours and science. Often, it was written up on a board for pupils to see throughout the lesson. Other aspects of teaching that contributed strongly to pupils' learning were good management of pupils, including good control and discipline, and good use of time. Lessons started and finished punctually, and good use was made of the time available within them. For example, in several lessons, and especially during literacy and numeracy hours, teachers reminded pupils how many minutes were available. They told them how long they had before they would need to "...come back to the carpet", enabling individuals to be ready at the right time. In this way, time is not lost unnecessarily, helping to maximise what is available for learning. Throughout the school, the range of appropriate teaching methods is good, and very good in the reception class. For example, particular strengths were found in the way that tasks were adapted for pupils of different prior attainments, and how teaching assistants were used to support teachers.
 22. Literacy hours at the school contain the nationally recommended balance between whole class teaching and working in groups. Lessons end with usually good sessions in which learning is summed up, consolidated and the next steps explained. Teachers encourage pupils to respond to questions, to listen and learn. Good and frequent opportunities are planned for pupils to use literacy skills in other subjects, reading information and writing factually to record their findings.
 23. Classroom management is very good in English lessons throughout the school. As a result, pupils understand exactly what they are expected to do and make a good effort. Teaching methods are usually good, enabling pupils to learn what has been planned for them. For example, plenty of good questioning, discussion and explanation preceded tasks. In the past, the teaching of handwriting was

unsatisfactory and, although it has improved, it is too soon to see an impact in the work of older pupils. A weakness is that opportunities to enrich general vocabulary and to insist on standard forms of English were sometimes missed. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are supported well. Teachers adapt work for them, so they are able to make progress at similar rates to other pupils, at their own level. Teaching assistants are frequently employed to help these pupils well, using skilful questioning and sympathetic encouragement.

24. Numeracy is taught and used in a variety of subjects across the curriculum. For example, teaching of graphs, charts and tables that present information is good in science. In music, older pupils are taught values of different notes in a bar. Teachers in all classes understand the National Numeracy Strategy well. As a result, it strongly influences teachers' planning, which is invariably good.
25. The overall quality of teaching of mathematics is good. During the inspection, it was generally very good in Years 1 and 2, and included an excellent lesson in Year 2. Very good uses of resources such as individual whiteboards and number fans contributed strongly to the very high quality observed in these younger classes. In Year 2, the pace of teaching, humour and ongoing assessment contributed to a lesson that exactly met pupils' differing needs. As a result, the level of challenge and adaptation of tasks for a wide range of differences in prior knowledge led to a fast rate of progress in how to tell the time. Teachers in both these classes questioned well and used resources to involve all pupils in their questioning. Management of pupils was a very strong feature in Year 1. The teacher's calm, firm and positive approach set a very good example to pupils. A small group, who were not at first inclined to listen properly, became completely absorbed in learning about how to order objects. They counted "first, second, third..." and so on, up to "...tenth". Teaching is of an overall good quality in lessons for Years 3 to 6. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is good, and is leading to good learning. As a result, gaps in knowledge that were caused by unsatisfactory teaching in the past are beginning to be identified and rectified. Nevertheless, overall standards remain below average by the time pupils leave in Year 6.
26. The overall quality of teaching in science is good. In lessons, it was good in Year 6 and very good in Year 2. In two other lessons, it was satisfactory and no unsatisfactory lessons were observed. As a result, pupils' are learning effectively. This good teaching is characterised by a good pace, which ensures that pupils are attentive, sound planning and often very good management of pupils. However, as in the other core subjects of English and mathematics, current improvements in teaching are not yet having a full impact on pupils' knowledge and understanding. However, in science, this factor is more apparent in Year 5 than in Year 6.
27. Teaching in other subjects is similar in quality to that observed in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Generally, it is good, and examples of very good and satisfactory teaching were also seen, with none that was unsatisfactory. Two lessons were observed in information and communication technology. Teachers' knowledge of the subject has improved. Consequently, it is being used to support work across the curriculum more frequently than previously and pupils are acquiring basic skills. Throughout the school, with the support of a technical consultant, teachers instruct pupils well on the uses of particular programs and then allow them to practise in pairs or small groups. However, the school has no computer suite, which reduces the amount of direct practice that teachers are able to offer their classes, both in information and communication technology itself and in lessons in other subjects. Progress is therefore not as rapid as it might be. For this reason, attainment throughout the school is below average. Insufficient evidence was gathered of teaching in art and geography to make secure judgements, although in one lesson that was observed in Year 2, it was good in geography. Overall, it was good in history and good in design and technology. Very good teaching based on very good knowledge of the subjects was observed in music. Overall teaching was good in physical education, including several very good features.
28. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught. Work is adapted for them and teachers ensure that classroom assistants know what to do to help pupils with their work. As a result, learning of

basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics is good. Pupils with English as an additional language are similarly well taught and supported. A specialist teacher ensures that their needs are understood and met. Other pupils are also supportive of different groups, involving them well in both classroom and playground activity. This feature helps them to acquire social English quickly, so they can make their needs known.

29. Marking in all subjects is thorough and up to date. However, variations were observed in the quality of teachers' comments. At best, these explained how pupils might improve, offered guidance about presentation and challenged pupils to do even better. In other cases, commentary was brief, offering just a word or two of encouragement. Several situations arose in which teachers were observed setting or encouraging pupils to find something out at home. A large majority of parents who returned questionnaires were satisfied with the school's arrangements for homework and, overall, inspectors found that amounts are reasonable for the age groups in the school.

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

30. The school bases much of its planning for the different subjects of the National Curriculum on recommendations of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (a government agency that gives advice about what should be taught, when and how). This approach ensures that what is taught meets statutory requirements adequately. The National Literacy and Numeracy Projects are followed closely in English and mathematics. They follow the recommended patterns for planning lessons closely, and recommended methods and strategies for the teaching of literacy and numeracy have been fully implemented. As a result, the teaching of basic skills is sound in literacy, and often good in numeracy hours, where it is having a stronger impact on standards. The six areas of learning that are laid down in *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* (a nationally published scheme that shows what children in nursery and reception classes should learn) are planned well, ensuring that a full curriculum is taught in the reception class.
31. A review of the school's curricular arrangements is planned for when they have been in place for one year, in order to establish effectiveness and to correct any omissions that occur. A strong feature is that many opportunities are planned and arise that allow pupils to collaborate in groups. Brainstorming, discussing ideas, planning musical compositions together and talking about designs were amongst many examples that were observed. This represents exceptional improvement since the last inspection, when this feature was identified as weak. However, as it is a recent development, it is too soon to make judgements about its impact on attainment. The amount of time spent on different subjects has been increased for Years 3 to 6 and now meets national recommendations. Good use is usually made of the time available. However, in one class, literacy and numeracy lessons sometimes last longer than the recommended time, which limits opportunities in other areas.
32. This year, considerable development on enriching the curriculum with educational visits and visitors has taken place. This represents good practice and contributes to pupils' increased pride and enjoyment in school, as well as enthusiasm for learning. Last term all the pupils were taken to a pantomime. Two theatre groups have also visited. During *Art Week*, pupils had the opportunity to meet and work with a good number of professional artists. The Science and Technology Regional Organisation (a travelling group of scientists and technicians who bring exhibits into schools) has provided workshop sessions in science and further visits are planned. Classes are also taken on educational outings related to their work. For example, Year 1 visited the local police station and Year 3 were taken to areas that are not open to the public in a local supermarket, gaining insights into its organisation. Museum visits are also planned. However, the school acknowledges that not all classes have benefited equally from this kind of experience, owing to staff changes over the past couple of years.
33. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Adaptations of planning are made that meet requirements outlined in their individual education plans. Teachers and support staff work together well, ensuring that such planning is put into practice. An imaginative feature is the employment of an art therapist, who works with a small number of pupils with special educational needs. The aim is to raise their self-esteem and, thereby, their ability and willingness to try hard

across the whole curriculum. Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is good also. A specialist visits from the local authority and teachers and classroom assistants are aware of these pupils' needs, making sure that they know what to do in order to make progress. Records show that these pupils are well represented amongst the school's higher attaining pupils by the time they leave in Year 6. Further examples of the school's strong emphasis on equal opportunities are seen in the way that boys and girls play an equal part in lessons and work and play together very co-operatively. They attend clubs in roughly equal numbers. An equal opportunities policy reminds staff of the need to involve all pupils in the whole range of tasks, regardless of gender, background, faith or ethnicity.

34. The provision of extra-curricular activities is good. Year 6 pupils run a good range of clubs for younger pupils at lunchtime, supported by the deputy headteacher. These include construction, sports, dance, "star-pop" and a book club. At the same time, these activities provide good opportunities for personal development for older pupils, enabling them to demonstrate responsibility for those younger than themselves. The headteacher has recently started a football club and Year 6 pupils have a weekly club funded by the New Opportunities Fund (finance provided from the National Lottery). Activities change termly, and at present a drama club is operating. There are also springboard classes for the older pupils (lessons to boost pupils' knowledge and understanding of mathematics). Very creditably the school offers two opportunities for pupils to participate in residential journeys. In Year 4, they visit a campsite for schools. In Year 6, another journey is planned, which is to include further opportunities for outdoor and adventurous pursuits in physical education. In questionnaires, a significant number of parents indicated that they thought a good range of extra-curricular activities was not provided. However, inspectors did not find this. In fact, for a school of its size, this provision is good. However, the school acknowledges that during the past two years, frequent staff changes led to the disappearance of this provision, and it is only recently that it has re-emerged.
35. Pupil's personal, health and social education, and ideas about good citizenship are strongly promoted through the use of sessions known as "circle times" (occasions when pupils sit in a circle and talk about features and incidents in their lives that affect their feelings and attitudes). Teachers have received training in how to develop the use of these lessons and they are planned weekly in every class. In Year 2, for example, a very effective session helped pupils to deepen their ideas of the nature of friendship. Ideas about healthy food and nourishment are largely provided in science lessons about life and living things. During the inspection, examples included what we need to do to stay healthy, in Year 2, and a lesson on dental hygiene in Year 6. The governors' policies for sex education and education about the harmful effects of misusing drugs are sound and meet statutory requirements.
36. The community makes a good contribution to pupils' learning. The chair of the governing body has encouraged governors to help in school on a voluntary basis, and the local rector, another governor, has encouraged members of his congregation to offer assistance in the school. These initiatives are beginning to bear fruit, and the number of adults in the school is clearly increasing. Parents help with reading, mathematics and during science workshop sessions. Local clergy help with collective worship in assemblies and pupils' work is exhibited in local churches. The school has established links with a local supermarket and Year 6 pupils are undertaking a project to promote reading with support from a local newspaper.
37. The school has good relations with other educational institutions. It is a member of the Hatfield Consortium of Schools, which arranges joint in-service training. This group made the original bid for money from the New Opportunities Fund, referred to above. Newly qualified teachers have observed lessons in other schools and a leading teacher from another school has provided further support for them. Links with a local nursery, from which children join the reception, and the secondary school to which most pupils transfer have also been established. During the inspection, a trainee nursery nurse from a local institute of higher education was working in the reception class, providing extra support for children, while undertaking her training.

38. Provision for personal development is generally satisfactory and includes elements that are particularly strong. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. Every class has a prayer table, where pupils can reflect quietly. The prayer tables for older age groups have books of prayers written by the pupils themselves. Those in Year 3 promote particularly thoughtful ideas and values. Pupils in Year 6 write reflective "recipes" for *Loving thy Neighbour*. Throughout the school pupils often demonstrate excitement about their work, and teachers are good at taking opportunities to let them express it, without fearing loss of control. Teachers offer good role models, often expressing values of care, kindness and respect for others and their beliefs.
39. The provision for pupils' moral development is good. Christian virtues of patience, respect, happiness, sharing, encouragement of others, consideration, kindness, politeness, honesty and forgiveness are displayed. Pupils receive stickers to add to their 'smart cards' when they are witnessed carrying out such values. Every class has its rules on display, devised in consultation the teacher and pupils. Playground rules are also prominent. Statements are displayed clearly in areas where pupils pass by frequently, reminding them about what is expected. Teachers provide good role models of how to behave towards other people. Stories in assembly point to the differences between right and wrong and how to resolve dilemmas. Similarly, opportunities arise in literacy hours, in which the plots of texts demonstrate the consequences of characters' actions, both good and bad.
40. The provision for pupils' social development is very good. In an awards assembly each week pupils from every class nominate a classmate to receive a 'golden leaf' for displaying the values of co-operation and friendship. The names of those who have received one of these leaves are on display for all to see. Many opportunities are planned and provided for pupils to work together in lessons and to discuss their ideas with each other. Registration makes a strong contribution to social development in classes for younger pupils. In Year 1, for example, pupils have the opportunity to tell their teacher matters of importance to them. In Year 2, pupils tell their teacher what they have played at lunchtime, and with whom, which presents a good opportunity for their teacher to monitor pupils' socialisation. In the playground, a 'friendship bench' is available for pupils to sit when they want someone to play with them. Pupils in Year 2 give many examples of the effectiveness of this in their circle times.
41. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils have opportunities to work with professional artists and musicians. In assembly, pupils listen to music when they enter and leave, and a pupil shares reasons why he or she likes what has been chosen. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in concerts at Christmas and in the summer. The last inspection found that pupils' knowledge and understanding of cultural traditions other than their own were limited. However, improvements in this respect are underway. For example, just before Christmas, the teacher for pupils with English as an additional language spoke about his religion and put up a display about Eid. Pupils in Year 1 produced lively paintings based on Australian aboriginal work. In these ways, pupils are being introduced to life in a multicultural world.
42. Other features that contribute to personal development are also provided. For example, pupils have been involved in charitable work. This includes giving presents to go in boxes for less fortunate children at Christmas, fund-raising activity for *Children in Need* and opportunities to collect for *Blue Peter* appeals.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

43. Although the school is a caring community, and pupils are never knowingly at risk to their health and safety, formal procedures for child protection are unsatisfactory. This judgement is made for two important reasons. First, because staff and governors have not yet ratified an up to date policy for child protection that fully includes local arrangements. Secondly, because the supporting

headteacher, who has responsibility and sensitivity to the issues of child protection, has not received recent training. The new headteacher is fully aware of these shortcomings and is planning to undertake training himself. Principles of child protection are displayed prominently in the staffroom. All staff, including teaching assistants and midday assistants, are provided with written guidelines for action. This advice includes what should be done in the event of disclosure by a pupil, or other cause for concern or suspicion.

44. The school has adopted the local authority's health and safety policy, including procedures for ensuring the safety of pupils on site and during off-site visits. Good health and safety practice is established, although procedures for risk assessment are still in draft. One member of staff is qualified in first aid, and all staff are sensitive to the needs of pupils. Periodic practices of evacuating the single-storey building are arranged. The school site and buildings present no apparent risks to health and safety.
45. Procedures for monitoring pupils' personal development are satisfactory, but informal. Teachers and other adults know the pupils well, and are skilled in assessing their needs. Good supervision ensures pupils' safety in the playgrounds at break times and lunchtimes. Midday assistants are conscientious and attentive, and they take close interest in pupils' activities. Pupils receive good individual care and support from class teachers, deputy head, supporting headteacher and headteacher. All these adults are accessible and reassuring in their manner towards pupils. Teaching assistants develop good relationships with pupils, and are skilled in providing curricular and personal support. Although teachers have good knowledge and understanding of individuals, the system does not provide a permanent and cumulative record, which might cause weaknesses in passing on information when staff leave the school and new teachers are inducted. However, a good induction system helps children settle quickly into the reception class. Pupils who join other year groups have few difficulties in adapting to the school's routines. Good procedures in Year 6 prepare pupils for transfer to secondary education.
46. Behaviour is monitored well. Records are kept that show how pupils behave, and incidents of poor behaviour are noted. The school's merit system acknowledges pupils' good behaviour, good work and effort very well. Teachers are encouraged to award a variety of stickers for achievement and effort. Sustained good work and personal qualities are rewarded with merit certificates, presented at weekly achievement assemblies, where parents are invited to applaud their children's successes. The school's policy for managing behaviour is sound, and teachers use its advice well. Pupils and parents have few concerns about bullying. They know that discussion and serious attempts to reach compromise and reconciliation are used to solve reported incidents. However, the brief policy against racism and for anti-bullying fails to do justice to what the school actually provides, and staff and governors have not yet agreed policies on the use of force to restrain pupils if the need should arise.
47. The policy for special educational needs meets present statutory requirements and the school is beginning to adapt its practice in line with new national guidance. It is clear and good procedures are in place for monitoring pupils' individual plans and the progress that they make. The special educational needs co-ordinator, teachers, pupils and parents are involved in this process. Similar arrangements apply for pupils with English as an additional language.
48. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are satisfactory. Records show that a few parents, often with children demonstrating poor attendance, are antagonistic to the reasonable enquiries of the school or the educational welfare officer about their children's absences.
49. Monitoring and assessment of pupils' academic progress is satisfactory. In the reception class, pupils are assessed through the local authority's baseline programme. In Years 1 to 6, a new system of assessment has been introduced. Additional to National Curriculum tests and Statutory Teachers' Assessments in Years 2 and 6, the school uses the voluntary materials of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. These tests are used thoroughly in other year groups to

assess standards and levels of attainment in English and mathematics. Assessment in most other subjects is beginning to develop, although it is restricted, owing to inconsistency in the delegation of responsibilities for the co-ordination of these other subjects.

50. Information following assessments is used satisfactorily. Teachers check the progress of individuals towards their targets. The school is beginning to analyse the information that it gathers and to use it to guide planning. For example, data about English has guided staff to amend the time allocated to the various aspects of the subject. The assessment co-ordinator has worked hard to develop and implement the new policy, and has encouraged teachers to attend specialist courses and to share with colleagues their developing expertise.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

51. Parents make a good contribution to their children's learning, and they have favourable views of the school. These have improved a little since the last inspection. At the pre-inspection meeting, parents' views were positive, and were confirmed by most responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire. However, 18 percent or more of parents indicated disagreement with statements about the quality of information provided, how closely the school works with them, and the range of activities offered outside lessons. Inspectors looked closely at these areas, and concluded that provision is satisfactory and often good. However, improvements are only recent. For example, out of school activities fell away during the time when the school displayed serious weaknesses and only now has this provision been restored.
52. The school has good links with parents, and the inspection confirms good relationships and good two-way communication. Some parents and friends provide regular, valuable help in lessons to groups of pupils and to individuals. The parent-teacher association organises regular social and fund raising events. It raises significant amounts of money for the school each year. Recent purchases have included curtains for the hall, overhead projectors, a cover for the swimming pool and numerous small items for classrooms. Good co-operation is established between the parents' group and the governing body, and some families are active on both committees.
53. The quality of information for parents is good. Teachers provide curricular outlines each term, and the school's regular newsletters are informative about events and important dates. Significant numbers of parents attended meetings to learn about the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. An additional meeting offered parents the opportunity to acquire skills in supporting their children's reading. With three consultation evenings each year, the school clearly offers parents sufficient opportunities to hear formally about their children's progress. Annual written reports to parents are of sound quality, showing in some detail what pupils know and can do in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and suggesting how attainment might be improved. However, the present report provides limited space for teachers to write fully about other subjects, including specific progress in English as an additional language, when relevant. The parents of pupils with special educational needs are invited to meetings whenever their children's individual educational plans are changed. These arrangements meet statutory requirements.
54. The 2001 governors' annual report to parents conforms to legal requirements and governors invite parents to open meetings every term, which is good practice. An informative new school prospectus is currently in draft.
55. Parents are well informed of the school's routines and expectations when their children enter the reception class, or join other year groups. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are well informed of progress, and they understand the school's procedures for support and discipline. Good records are maintained by the special needs co-ordinator, and she is available by appointment to discuss pupils' progress.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

56. At the time of the last inspection, leadership and management were unsatisfactory. Although the headteacher and senior staff had worked hard to produce systems and policies for the school, many of the suggested procedures had not been implemented. Furthermore, the effort put into producing these policies had, to some extent, diverted energy and direction away from improving core weaknesses in teaching and learning. Governors had begun a review of their work and contributions to management, under a new chair, but development was slow. Evaluation and monitoring of the school's performance was also unsatisfactory. The collection of information and data about pupils' learning was underway. However, it was insufficiently used and shared with staff and governors to be an effective tool in setting targets, driving future developmental change or raising attainment. As a result, too much teaching was unsatisfactory and standards appeared to be falling, rather than improving. Important improvements have been made in these aspects, despite many changes of staff, including several amongst senior managers. For example, leadership is now offering a strong vision about how provision can be improved and what the school could be like in a few years' time. Furthermore, the new headteacher, supporting headteacher and deputy head are good at communicating these ideas. As a result, morale and teamwork amongst staff are better now. Governors, who were unclear about the school's strengths and weaknesses at the last inspection, are now determined to know whether or not standards of attainment and behaviour are good enough. They have a much better grasp of their roles and responsibilities. All of this is creating conditions for raising general attainment, and it is reflected in the improving standards that are now emerging.
57. Leadership is very good, whereas systems of management are currently satisfactory. The leadership of the new headteacher, his deputy head and the supporting headteacher provides very clear direction for the future that includes raising attainment, and good ideas for improving the involvement of parents and the community. Arrangements for managing the school do not yet match this high quality of leadership for a number of reasons. First, high staff turnover has restricted opportunities for the delegation of responsibility to middle levels of management. Secondly, considerable support was given by the local authority and diocesan advisers to help the school through a difficult period. This help made it possible for senior staff to carry out many of these duties directly. Thirdly, several of the school's recently appointed teachers, although good classroom practitioners, were at first inexperienced as managers. However, owing to training, and the good role modelling of link advisers and senior staff, many of these teachers are now ready to play a fuller part in management and decision making. For example, monitoring and supporting the quality of teaching, observing lessons and offering advice and feedback has in the past been restricted to local advisory staff, senior staff and key co-ordinators. However, now that the school's serious weaknesses have been improved, self-reliance is growing. With this renewed confidence, new ideas and suggestions are being made and a broader range of subjects and aspects are being identified for development. Therefore, it will no longer be possible for senior managers alone to carry out work of information gathering, data analysis, monitoring of teaching, feedback and support, or to manage policy about what is taught. The school now has several teachers of its own whose skills and expertise are good, sometimes very good. Present arrangements for the management of subjects and aspects are not sufficiently strong to ensure that this good practice will be shared evenly to all staff in the school in the future.
58. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities well. A range of committees with delegated areas of provision has been set up to analyse information and data about the school. These committees are informed about the work of the school and involved in decisions. They report back to the main governing body. This procedure has effectively increased governors' knowledge of the school since the last inspection. Governors realise that a strong contributory factor in past serious weaknesses was that they did not know enough about what was happening in the school. This feature has disappeared and governors are now very clear about strengths in what is provided and features that require review and development. A relatively weaker feature is that they are less clear about how to check and ensure that their decisions are having the precise effects that were intended when they made them.

For this type of information, they are very dependent on what senior staff tell them, rather than seeking and analysing it for themselves. Nonetheless, the improvement between what was reported previously and what was found in this inspection is impressive.

59. Overall, the school's evaluation of its own performance is good and action taken to improve the quality of teaching has been particularly effective since the last inspection. For example, teaching contained unsatisfactory planning and expectations of pupils were too low. However, this monitoring has proved effective and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen in this inspection, which has already begun to raise standards in both the reception class and by the end of Year 2. Furthermore, gaps in previous learning are also being rectified in older classes, except in a few respects, in science. Systems for managing and improving performance are sound and continuing to develop. Priorities for development are good and what has been identified for improvement by the school is very similar to what has been raised in the inspection. Two important examples of this are information and communication technology and outside provision for the physical development of children in the reception class. Induction for new staff is generally good and teachers who have joined the school recently report that they felt welcome and supported. Morale in the school is now good and the shared commitment and capacity to improve are particularly strong elements.
60. The school's use of its resources, including its funding, is good. Decisions are based on excellent information about the school's future financial position. For example, potential budgets have been set for three years ahead, so governors and senior staff are able to understand future implications of spending decisions. A larger sum of money than is usually recommended has been retained in the budget and carried forward to the next year. However, this figure is inflated by the inclusion of private funds and does not therefore exactly reflect the school's position with regard to its contingency. For example, it has access to finance from a diocesan trust that supports its pupils' education and final decisions about how to use some of this money are due shortly after the inspection. Items involving new technology and equipment for the reception class are under discussion. The officer from the bursaring service that the school has purchased is very efficient and contributes much to the smooth running and understanding of financial accounts, keeping thorough electronic records. The school's own office staff is also efficient and effective. Best value is sought by comparing prices in different catalogues, seeking quotations for repairs or maintenance works, and taking relevant professional advice about the quality of proposed purchases. Systems for checking pupils' attendance are also in place. Uses of new technology to help manage the school are satisfactory and the school is ready for the introduction of a computer suite. Funds that are provided for specific purposes are recorded under separate budget headings and are spent legitimately.
61. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are generally adequate. The school now has a full complement of teaching staff and is aiming to increase opportunities for development as an incentive to recruitment and retention. Teaching assistants are sufficient to match pupils' learning needs and these members of staff understand their roles well. Aspects of accommodation are unsatisfactory. For example, in information and communication technology and for the physical development of children in reception, it has a limiting effect on pupils' progress. Plans to rectify these weaknesses are already in place. Learning resources are adequate and storage and accessibility of equipment are also improving. For example, during the inspection, new space and storage arrangements for physical education were put into place. Pupils in Year 6 responded well to this, appreciating the improvement when it was shown to them before a lesson.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

62. The school has passed through an unsettled period when changes to its teaching staff, including its senior management team, were at a high rate. Its Chair of Governors also changed during this time. Morale was affected and delays occurred in the development of vital areas of provision. Present governors and staff are well aware of these factors and there is no hint of complacency about what needs to be done. In fact, the school's capacity to improve is very good, owing to the commitment of its new headteacher and his staff. Nearly all the features that inspectors identified for improvement were already known in the school, with planning under way to rectify them.

- The headteacher, staff and governors should:
 - (1) Raise standards especially in English, mathematics and geography, by the time pupils leave the school, and in information and communication technology by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, by:
 - placing a strong emphasis on increasing pupils' general vocabulary, both in what they say and what they write (see paragraphs 4, 6, 23, 80 and 81);
 - helping pupils to use and understand standard forms of spoken and written English throughout the school and across the curriculum (see paragraphs 6, 14, 23, 80, 81 and 101);
 - explicitly teaching pupils that texts often contain meanings beyond what appears literally (see paragraphs 6 and 83);
 - encouraging parents to spend more time talking with their children about reading books, rather than simply hearing them read (see paragraph 82);
 - introducing all pupils to the skills of skimming and scanning texts (see paragraph 83);
 - placing a lot of emphasis on how to plan and develop a plot or story-line (see paragraphs 84 and 85) ;
 - in mathematics, improving pupils' confidence and strategies for mental calculations (see paragraph 91);
 - ensuring that pupils, especially of average and lower attainment, know and understand which type of calculation to use and when (see paragraphs 7 and 92);
 - in geography, improving the availability and use of large-scale maps to show pupils where countries and continents are located (see paragraphs 10 and 119);
 - improving pupils' knowledge of physical geography and the main causes of the world's climatic zones (see paragraphs 10 and 119);
 - completing work on the new computer suite as quickly as possible (see paragraphs 10, 61, 124, 132 and 133);
 - bringing the new computer suite into use as soon as possible (see paragraphs 10, 61, 112, 124 and 132);
 - increasing pupils' opportunities to use information and communication technology in support of work in all subjects and classes (see paragraphs 10, 27, 124, 134 and 137).
 - (2) Improve the physical development of children in their reception year, by
 - providing access to outside space and shelter, where they can run and play at times whenever their teacher plans or assesses the need (see paragraphs 4, 61 and 65);
 - providing equipment that is designed for them to learn to climb and balance effectively (see paragraphs 4, 20, 64, 75 and 141).
 - (3) Rationalise the responsibility for leading and managing subjects of the curriculum, by
 - where appropriate, delegating the monitoring and support of teaching and of assessment and its uses to co-ordinators and other managers (see paragraphs 49, 57, 89 and 113);

- where co-ordinators identify members of staff with good practice in their subjects, ensuring that it is always shared with and modelled for others (see paragraphs 57 and 89).

(4) Improve the school's formal arrangements for child protection, by

- ensuring that the person designated as responsible for child protection and, ideally another who can act as his or her deputy in case of absence, receives relevant training as soon as possible (see paragraph 43);
- writing and ratifying a child protection policy that reflects the school's practice and meets local requirements (see paragraph 43).

Other features that governors may wish to include in an action plan

- For pupils in Year 5, review what has previously been taught and experienced in science, in order to rationalise and inform their present needs in the subject (see paragraphs 9, 26, 59 and 98).
- Ensure that marking in all classes meets the school's policy, matching the best practice found in the school (see paragraphs 29 and 103).
- Ensure that in gymnastics, by the time equipment has been put out and checked, enough time remains for pupils to make progress (see paragraph 144).
- Review and re-write policies against racism and for anti-bullying that reflect what the school actually provides, and agree a policy on the use of force to restrain pupils (see paragraph 46).
- Ensure that reports contain enough space to report on all subjects separately, including English as an additional language for pupils for whom it is relevant (see paragraph 53).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	41
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	28

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	11	16	12	0	0	0
Percentage	5	27	39	29	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	169
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	35

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

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

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	10

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	21

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

Unauthorised absence

%

School data	5.6
National comparative data	5.6

School data	0.7
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
	2001	12	13	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	11	11
	Girls	9	9	11
	Total	19	20	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	76 (77)	80 (80)	88 (80)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	10	12
	Girls	11	7	11
	Total	22	17	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (67)	68 (80)	92 (83)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	18	10	28

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	10	15
	Girls			
	Total	19	17	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	68 (73)	61 (80)	82 (93)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
	Boys	12	10	14

Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Girls			
	Total	19	17	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	71 (67)	61 (77)	79 (87)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

The figures for girls are not included as there were fewer than 11 girls in the year group.

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	4
Black – other	3
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	2
White	146
Any other minority ethnic group	11

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.8
Average class size	26.1

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	133.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-01
	£
Total income	487,585
Total expenditure	482,421
Expenditure per pupil	2,526
Balance brought forward from previous year	33,125
Balance carried forward to next year	38,288

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	6
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1.5
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.5
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: 17%

Number of questionnaires sent out	169
Number of questionnaires returned	28

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	47	44	3	3	3
My child is making good progress in school.	38	54	4	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	61	3	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	67	7	4	0
The teaching is good.	46	54	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	43	18	0	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	39	54	3	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	39	61	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	18	64	18	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	21	64	11	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	54	7	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	18	39	29	7	7

Other issues raised by parents

At the pre-inspection meeting, parents expressed concern about high staff turnover around the last inspection. Inspectors agree with them about this factor. At present, staffing looks more settled. Nearly all teachers have permanent contracts.

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

63. Currently, 24 full-time pupils attend the reception class. They are taught the six areas of learning for their age group as laid down in *The Curriculum for the Foundation Stage* (a government publication that explains what to teach children in nursery and reception classes). Improvements for these children have been made since the school was last inspected. The most important of these concerns the quality of teaching. Teaching in this class was satisfactory in the last report, whereas it is now good, including examples of very good and excellent teaching. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed.
64. The overall quality of teaching was consistently of this good quality across the areas of learning. The only exception was in a lesson that focused on physical activity, in which the teacher was hampered by a lack of resources that met the specific requirements of the age group. Even in this lesson, she made the most of what was available and the lesson was satisfactory, including good features such as its pace and management of the children. As a result, children acquire skills well and make good progress. Children have equal access to what is taught and arrangements for those with special educational needs are good. Children with English as an additional language are few in number, but are also well catered for. This improvement since last time is based on thorough planning and very good uses of other adults in the room. The teacher sets high standards, but at the same time is very sympathetic towards the needs of the young children in her care. They respond well to her approach, listening attentively and trying hard. Ongoing assessment and evaluation procedures are good and the information that is gained is used to plan and adapt future lessons.

Personal, social and emotional development

65. Children's personal and social development covers a wide range when they enter the reception. A substantial majority has come from local nurseries or playgroups, but a few come straight from home. At first, adults have to work hard to ensure that all children understand the need to sit still and listen and to take turns when speaking and using resources. Nevertheless, by the time they leave the reception class, nearly all achieve the early learning goals in this area. This represents a good rate of progress, which is based on good teaching. The teacher and nursery nurse are very ready to praise and encourage children when they help each other; show respect for others, and good attitudes towards work. Frequent opportunities are planned for children to share toys, equipment and resources, and to work and play together in ways that structure social learning. However, it does not end here. At the end of sessions, they are often brought back together to explain what they have done and how successfully they carried out their work. In this way, they acquire a measure of independence and gain in accepting responsibility for what they do. Adults in the reception are quick to offer children praise for kindness and sensitive attitudes towards others' achievements. They are also sensitive to different needs. For example, when a child became self-conscious about making mistakes, the teacher very quickly assessed the situation and gave her a task where she could regain self-esteem through success. As a result of good teaching, children learn to co-operate well with adults and to show interest in what they and each other do. However, opportunities for children to play freely whenever their teacher assesses that it is necessary are restricted. This restriction is caused by a lack of direct access to a secure area.
66. Adults provide good examples for the children. They co-operate with each other, and consistently speak with respect to the children. This good teaching sets the tone for personal and emotional development. The children learn well from it. They settle quickly and acquire good habits of behaviour. They learn to listen and concentrate and to follow the required routines of their classroom and the school.

Communication, language and literacy

67. Pupils join the school with language and literacy skills that are at a low level, and they have not made up enough ground to reach the early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1. Nevertheless, they make good progress in relation to their starting points. When they begin, their speech is often characterised by restrictions in vocabulary. At first, their communication involves few words and rather short, sometimes incomplete, sentences. Adults in the reception are very aware of these factors and use talk to good effect. They listen attentively to the children during activities, encouraging them to be more precise in their uses of language. Despite this good teaching, children's speaking skills remain below what is normally expected, largely because their reception year is not long enough for them to make up the ground. Nevertheless, they develop confidence in talking to each other and to adults. An example of this was seen in an excellent lesson when several children spoke about their ideas of the forthcoming Easter season. They remembered that Jesus was on a cross, but had a new life, "...because God gave it to him". Attainment was, however, very widely ranging. While several children spoke clearly and projected their voices confidently for everyone to hear, others were quiet and hesitant, giving the impression that they did not have the right words to explain what they wanted to say. Storybooks are used well during literacy hours that are adapted for the age group. These sessions are planned very well and succeed in raising interest in characters and what will happen next. During a good lesson that focused on knowing that words in sentences are ordered from left to right, the teacher used a variety of approaches. Different methods included writing words down, in which the teacher took the opportunity to model sentences with her own speaking; looking at sentences in shared reading books, and lots of good questioning. Nearly all children are beginning to understand that print conveys meaning. They handle books well and point out titles and authors when asked. Higher attaining children showed that they remember the stories that they hear and re-tell them in the correct sequence.
68. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is based on good knowledge of what each child can do and should do next, and the use of good methods that are appropriate to the age group and its needs. The sounds of letters are introduced systematically. As a result, nearly all children make good progress. Children with English as an additional language are taught well, as are those with special needs. Planning is adapted to meet these different needs, and adults are well aware of those children who require extra help, supporting them carefully and ensuring that they know what to do next.

Mathematical development

69. Children's attainment in mathematical development is on course to match what is normally expected in the early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1 and achievement is good. Nearly all children can say their numbers up to five or ten, and a few higher attainers go beyond this to fifteen, twenty or even more. However, a few, of prior lower attainment, still struggle when asked to count in a practical situation, missing a number out, or continuing to say numbers, without actually relating the count to objects in front of them. Good teaching is focusing well on these issues, ensuring that children understand the nature of counting. In a good lesson that featured Martin the Monkey, the teacher's puppet held up what children were expected to know at the end of the lesson. He then counted objects up to fifteen, sometimes making mistakes. This very good teaching method gripped children's attention, so they concentrated well, acquiring the basic learning very securely, calling "no", when Martin got it wrong. Higher attaining children are beginning to form numerals correctly, to record them, and to add or take one away.
70. Several children in a small group showed that they could separate shapes and sort them, naming them accurately. However, only a few could point out examples of triangles that were around the room. Overall, the teaching of mathematical development is good. Adults in the class used everyday situations to help with counting, adding and taking away. The teacher's management and

organisation of children are strong and, when group work is planned, she checks carefully to see that none misses the planned activity. Cross-curricular opportunities exist to learn about numbers in simple counting rhymes and songs, as was seen in a music lesson that a specialist taught.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

71. Many children enter the reception with a low level of general knowledge in comparison with what is usually found, and by the time they begin work on the National Curriculum, their knowledge and understanding of the world remain below what is described in the early learning goals for this area. However, progress is good, because interesting activities are offered and children are given opportunities to find out about their surroundings and other places. During the inspection, for example, an interesting display about an alpine farm contrasted with Old McDonald's Farm. Children observe displays on tables in their classroom and they explore, for example, ideas such as dry and wet and use water for pouring, measuring and similar activities. They plant seeds and watch them grow.
72. To develop an understanding of the past and present, children are taught, for example, to compare new toys with old ones. Plans are adapted well to meet the needs of different groups of children, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language.
73. Cross-curricular links are good. Resources are available to structure learning about roads, other places and the life-styles of other people, such as farmers. Programs are set up on the computer to support further learning. During the inspection, children were seen using the mouse to click areas of the screen accurately in order to make a program work.
74. Teaching is good. All adults, including a nursery nurse and a trainee nursery nurse provided good levels of support and encouragement. Activities are set up in advance, so that time is not lost during lessons. At the end of sessions, they are asked to report their successes. Questioning is good and is often directed to the needs of individuals. As a result, learning is of good quality.

Physical development

75. Children's physical development is in line to meet what is normally expected for their age, as described in the early learning goals for this area, except with respect to balancing and climbing. The main reason is that the school lacks suitable equipment for these young children to practise these skills successfully. However, their teacher is resourceful in finding alternative means for them to jump and run which they do with increasing confidence and control. They make good use of space in the hall, honing skills such as throwing and catching, developing hand and eye co-ordination. However, during an otherwise satisfactory lesson, by not putting them into two groups of different prior attainment, opportunities were missed to group children more effectively. As a result, the needs of those who could already catch well and of those whose skills were weak were not focused as well as they might have been.
76. Children build and construct models and work on paintings, using kits, re-cycled boxes, cardboard, plastic, paint, crayons and other tools and materials provided in their classroom, joining parts together in different ways and colouring. During the inspection, simple models were on display, showing that children develop the skills of controlling and moving simple craft tools with their hands and fingers, as well as learning about the properties of glue.

Creative development

77. Attainment in creative development is on course to meet the early learning goals by the time children enter Year 1. Children use a range of media to create their own objects of art and craft. During the

inspection, their classroom was attractively decorated with items of their work. Their singing of number rhymes and similar songs was also of the standard that is normally expected for their age. They sang clearly, keeping together well. They acquire a good repertoire of simple songs and experience specialist teaching of rhythm, using percussion instruments and how to pitch their voices accurately.

78. The quality of teaching is good, because of good knowledge of the area of learning and good management of children. As a result, children spend due amounts of time on activities and acquire skills well.

ENGLISH

79. Standards are currently as expected for pupils at the end of Year 2, but below average when pupils leave the school in Year 6. Pupils in the present Year 2 have therefore made good progress and their achievement is good. These findings indicate significant improvement since the last inspection, and are also better than those of the 2001 National Curriculum tests, which refer to a different group of pupils. The 2001 results for pupils in Year 6 were better than those at the time of the previous inspection, but not as good as those of the year before, so the trend remains erratic. However in general, standards in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 are improving, so even though the current Year 6 are not expected to reach the national average, inspection findings are that, overall, the school's trend is now upwards. However, only a few pupils are currently attaining at levels higher than expected for their age, which is the main contributory reason that results in Year 6 are unlikely to be higher. Bearing in mind the number of pupils with identified learning difficulties, this pattern of attainment represents sound achievement overall. Pupils with special education needs, also those with English as an additional language, do well against their earlier attainment. Teachers include all pupils in all aspects of the subject and pupils are well supported by teaching assistants.
80. When children begin in the reception class, their communication, language and literacy are below that expected for their age and, for several pupils, this remains the case in standards reached further up the school, and currently by the time that they leave in Year 6. However, nearly all pupils listen well. They are sympathetic listeners, providing speakers with an interested audience that takes account of what is said. It is in speaking where national expectations are often not met. Although pupils usually project their voices well, showing awareness of an audience's needs, many find it difficult to express complex ideas, owing to weaknesses in vocabulary and lack of knowledge of standard forms of spoken English.
81. The school has recognised the need to improve pupils' speaking skills in order to raise general attainment across the curriculum and is taking steps to achieve this. More opportunities have been created for pupils to speak to larger groups, such as during assemblies. Pupils are being trained to answer the telephone and, in many lessons, they are encouraged to work in pairs or groups to discuss what they are doing and this collaborative approach is beginning to have an impact. Teachers' planning is beginning to include an emphasis on the specific vocabulary that pupils might lack, in both literacy hours and in lessons across the curriculum. Furthermore, the headteacher is aware that further improvements can be made in this aspect. In addition to vocabulary extension, teachers sometimes point out a standard model of the way in which pupils should respond. For example, in a design and technology lesson, the teacher told pupils what patterns of speech that she was expecting to hear at the end of the lesson. Pupils were able to reproduce this pattern and also used the vocabulary that had been taught. As a result, they spoke clearly and distinctly in accurate English to tell others what they had found out. However, this type of good practice was not seen frequently during the inspection and opportunities to enrich general vocabulary were sometimes missed.

82. Standards in reading are about average in Year 2, and this shows good improvement since the last inspection. Pupils read their class's texts aloud and together with enthusiasm. In a science lesson their ability to read well enabled them to work independently. When reading on their own, pupils read texts for their age group accurately and often with expression. Most know when they make a mistake and correct themselves. Nearly all of them are willing to attempt new or unfamiliar words, confidently using their knowledge of the sounds that letters make. However, lower attainers are hampered as much by their lack of understanding of enough words, as by the mechanics of reading itself. For example, a few pupils in Year 1 decoded words well, using their knowledge of sounds, but paid little attention to meaning. Furthermore, several Year 2 pupils claimed that, although their parents heard them read at home, they rarely asked them to talk about their books; to give opinions, or to predict what might happen next in the story. Nevertheless, nearly all pupils are clear about what authors and illustrators do, and are competent in finding their way in non-fiction texts, referring well to contents and index pages.
83. Currently, the overall standard of reading in Year 6 is a little below average. Pupils use literacy skills well enough in different subjects to make sense of text-books, non-fiction and similar reading matter. The class teacher offers very good encouragement for pupils to read at home and pupils' own records show that they are putting in a lot of effort, which is having a positive impact on their skills. For example, when reading individually, a pupil of above average standard read at a high level, drawing inferences from a complicated story by J.R.R. Tolkien. However, by contrast, several pupils found it difficult to follow anything other than the literal meaning of what they read, so understood their stories only superficially. Many pupils name favourite authors and books. However, only a few explained their preferences in any depth. As in the younger age groups, pupils know how to seek information, but advanced techniques such as scanning and skimming are not developed well enough. Older pupils demonstrated that they could find books in the library, using its system of cataloguing and arranging texts. However, during the inspection, no lessons were held in the library to develop these skills.
84. The writing of pupils in Year 2 is about average in terms of the use of accurate sentences, full stops and capital letters. However, several pupils have a restricted vocabulary, which prevents them from demonstrating a varied, imaginative use of language. Spelling of short words is usually accurate, although common longer words are phonetically recognisable but often misspelt. Presentation is improving, and teachers give due emphasis to the encouragement of neatness. Pupils write more confidently when they do not have to create a story line for themselves. For example, in response to illustrations from *Come Away from the Water, Shirley*, their writing was far more lively than usual and flowed well.
85. Despite present good teaching, by the time pupils leave the school in Year 6, standards in writing are below average. Writing displays similar characteristics to that of the younger pupils, but at a slightly higher level. Ideas are neither extended sufficiently nor developed through the plot of a story, so that pupils often have difficulty in knowing what to write next. Lower attaining pupils especially struggle with writing at length. However, all pupils are clearly making progress in their uses of different styles of writing, employing vocabulary that is specific to a particular subject. For example, they wrote about "this historical era" and wrote down evidence from the past competently in their history books. Pupils of above average attainment demonstrated accurate use of paragraphing, dialogue and punctuation. Several pupils are beginning to express opinions in their writing, although at present this work often lacks details and examples that support their views. Presentation remains a weakness, as improvements that have begun lower down the school have not had time to work through. As a result, past unsatisfactory teaching is still affecting pupils' work in older age groups.
86. Teaching is now good through the school. It contains a high proportion of good teaching and a little that is either satisfactory or very good in approximately equal amounts. Teachers make objectives clear to pupils, so they know what they are to learn. Pupils' relationships with teachers and other pupils are good and good management of pupils leads to good behaviour. Pupils co-operate well on shared tasks, enjoying frequent opportunities to collaborate in groups. In the very good lessons, what

has been taught in sessions at the beginning of lessons is developed thoroughly in the subsequent group work. Plenty of questioning, discussion and explanation precede written tasks. For example, in a lesson about the use of capital letters the teacher was very good at encouraging pupils to listen. Her questions were directed at getting pupils to recognise capitals and the proper nouns that required them. The group tasks that followed were planned for different levels of attainment but all thoroughly reinforced learning about capital letters. Similarly, in a very good lesson in Year 6, plenty of opportunities were provided for discussion about words that join sentences. Specific vocabulary, such as “connectives” and “conjunction” was revised and emphasised. The teacher of this class used very good ongoing assessment to check pupils’ understanding. She probed pupils’ thinking well, encouraging them to be more specific in their use of language. As a result, all pupils were able to employ connectives to join short sentences into more complex ones. Teachers’ methods, and their use of time separated otherwise satisfactory teaching from what was good and very good. For example, in a lesson in Year 5, the teacher asked pupils about a rhyming pattern, but then did not allow them enough time to think about an answer. Instead, she told them the response that she wanted. Furthermore, the meanings of vocabulary that was required in a wordlist were not available in pupils’ dictionaries. For this reason, the method of teaching this vocabulary was not sufficient to the task, owing to inadequate resources. In these situations, time is lost and learning slows down. Nevertheless, learning was satisfactory overall. In Year 5, pupils demonstrated a good grasp of the text that the teacher chose. For example, a higher attaining pupil used inference to explain that “...the mayor is frustrated, because if the people leave the town, he’ll lose his job”. Teachers mark their pupils’ work conscientiously. Marking is up to date and teachers make encouraging comments. However, marking is not always used to feed back how to improve, and the approach to correcting errors is not consistent.

87. The National Literacy Strategy is having a sound impact on standards but group work does not always meet pupils’ writing needs. Because teaching is generally good, pupils’ grasp of what is taught is usually secure. However, when they go into groups during literacy hours, writing tasks often do not require practice of what was taught during whole class sessions. Also, insufficient emphasis is sometimes placed on the implications of what is taught for pupils’ own writing. Pupils often share their work at the end of lessons, but occasionally opportunities are missed to reinforce learning further.
88. Co-ordination is good. A lot of work has been done to improve pupils’ attitudes towards writing and its presentation. Co-ordinators have a well-focused set of priorities for making improvements. As a consequence of assessing test data, changes have been made to the curriculum and extra time given to the teaching of handwriting, spelling and extended writing. Opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects of the curriculum have also been increased. These initiatives are likely to have a good impact on standards over the next few years, as they increasingly take effect. Individual target setting has also been introduced, although at the moment it is at an early point of development. The school uses the local authority’s early literacy support programme for pupils who will benefit. The additional literacy strategy for older pupils is, however, not yet in use, although teaching assistants have received training, so are ready to provide this programme in the near future.

MATHEMATICS

89. At the time of the last inspection, attainment in mathematics was below average, largely because few pupils in Year 6 achieved at levels higher than expected. The results of National Curriculum tests supported that finding. The quality of teaching was too often unsatisfactory, which meant that pupils’ progress was inconsistent through the school, and often not fast enough. Co-ordination was unsatisfactory in the important aspect of monitoring teaching and offering feedback to teachers about their performance in the subject. Many of these weaknesses have since been subjected to a process of review and development. As a consequence, considerable improvement has occurred. For example, the National Numeracy Strategy, which had only recently been introduced, is now fully

established and lessons follow its planning and recommendations well. Since the last inspection, a new co-ordinator has taken up responsibility for the subject. She has begun to have an impact, sampling work and plans and offering advice. She also teaches lessons after school to raise the attainment of pupils who are likely to benefit. These extra-curricular activities are very good provision, as they have a potential to raise standards directly. This practice is contributing strongly to pupils' overall achievements. Together with the good class teaching in Year 6, it is raising attainment. The achievement of nearly all pupils is at least sound now, despite the unsatisfactory teaching reported in the last inspection. The co-ordinator is a good practitioner herself and has modelled numeracy lessons for other staff. Regular monitoring and support of teaching has also been put into place, although much of it has been in the hands of senior staff and the local authority's link adviser. Nevertheless, this pattern is rightly beginning to change, and the co-ordinator has observed lessons in Years 2 and 3. As the school puts its past serious weaknesses behind it, confidence is growing. As a result, it is assuming greater responsibility for its own future. Co-ordinators will therefore need to take on an increasing supporting and monitoring role. All these improvements have already been effective in raising the overall quality of teaching, which is now good. Because of this feature, standards are likely to continue to improve.

90. In fact, better teaching is already beginning to have an impact on standards. By the time they reach the end of Year 2, a high proportion of pupils are likely to attain at the expected level for their age, including several attaining above this level. This pattern is also apparent in Year 1. It represents good achievement. However, it is uncertain that these improvements will be reflected in the school's overall National Curriculum test results. The main reason is that both these classes also contain a significant group of pupils of low prior attainments, including several with identified learning difficulties. These pupils will achieve very well to reach even expected levels of attainment and, if they do not, it will have the effect of reducing results overall. The results of the 2001 tests of pupils in Year 2 are below the national average, although they are in line with the average of similar schools. By the time pupils leave the school in Year 6, overall attainment is currently below average. Good teaching is therefore not yet having as strong an impact on this older age group as on younger classes. The main reason is that unsatisfactory teaching identified in the last report had the most impact on these older classes, causing gaps in their learning that current good teaching has not had time to rectify. The well below average results of the 2001 National Curriculum tests of pupils in Year 6 reflect this judgement. Nevertheless, as particular difficulties with understanding are uncovered, the teacher is addressing pupils' learning well, contributing well to their overall achievement. This feature is also true of the needs of higher attainers. For example, these pupils' books showed that they understand how to plot co-ordinates against axes in all four quadrants. They used negative numbers successfully to carry out this task.
91. In Year 1, pupils practise their number bonds, recalling addition and subtraction facts up to 10. In a very good lesson, they showed understanding of how to use ordinal numbers, using a sequence of "first, second, third..." and so on. Many pupils succeeded in this work, which is further evidence that standards are rising. In an excellent lesson in Year 2, pupils demonstrated their developing numeracy skills when they handled two- and three-digit numbers. They swapped the positions of digits to alter the value of numbers over 100. Higher attaining pupils, for example, were quick to see that 413 would need to be changed to 134 to make the smallest possible number using the same three digits. Their books demonstrate that they carry out simple additions and subtractions, and that nearly all pupils can name different two- and three-dimensional shapes accurately. Lower attaining pupils try hard with the support of teaching assistants, who are both knowledgeable and guided well by teachers. Good teaching continues in classes for older pupils. Standards are gradually rising in these classes. In Year 3, for example, in a good lesson, pupils investigated how four or five squares could be moved and tessellated to make different polyominoes. Planning was adapted well, with lower attaining pupils using plastic squares practically, so they could understand the ideas involved. This work represented good achievement for these pupils, bearing in mind their previous results and attainment. Evidence that attainment is rising in Year 6 is apparent in the amounts of work that pupils are producing. This good effort is helping them to make up parts of what they missed in the past. It is happening because

of good management and control of pupils and teaching that is interesting them. A good proportion of these pupils correctly adds and subtracts numbers containing up to four or five digits. They multiply and divide two or three digits accurately and a few higher attaining pupils are beginning to do so using long methods. They understand decimals and simple fractions. In a good lesson on triangles, several pupils recalled and used good mathematical language, such as “isosceles” and “equilateral”, although others required a lot of prompting. Nevertheless, by the end of the lesson, most pupils knew how to work out missing angles, using the fact that the internal angles of a triangle add up to 180 degrees. Several higher attaining pupils were proficient at making such calculations in their head. However, it was clear that lower attainers and even a few otherwise average attainers lacked such strategies. Weaknesses in mental strategies were also evident in Year 4, when a few pupils struggled with simple factors, whereas higher attainers recognised immediately that 13 had only 13 and 1.

92. Examples of good uses of numeracy were seen across the curriculum. Pupils used charts, graphs, histograms and tables to record data in science. Younger pupils clapped and counted rhythms in music lessons, and measurements were used in diagrams and designs. Pupils demonstrate understanding of the relative sizes of numbers at levels broadly expected for their ages as they move through the school. Some evidence was seen in books that, through the school, pupils’ literacy skills hamper their performance in solving problems set with words. They do not always understand what mathematics to use to work out their answers, although they demonstrate in straightforward sums that the difficulty is not with the mathematics itself.
93. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is very good in Years 1 and 2, and consistently good in Year 6. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. Planning is consistently good and results in thorough and appropriate adaptations of work for pupils of different prior attainments. As a result, pupils are suitably challenged by their work and interested in it. Excellent and very good teaching in Years 1 and 2 was based on good uses of ongoing assessment. As a result, pupils were taught skills at exactly the right time for secure learning to occur at fast rates.
94. Co-ordination is very good. Optional National Curriculum tests are carried out each year to check and establish pupils’ annual progress. Results are analysed to find whether any gaps in learning emerge. Information is passed to teachers so that action to rectify any difficulty can be taken and targets set. Plans to sharpen the approach to mental mathematics are in place.

SCIENCE

95. Statutory Teachers’ Assessments in 2001 indicated that standards were in line with national expectations towards the end of Year 2 and the proportion of pupils attaining at a level higher than normally expected was above that found nationally. These results represent good achievement, bearing in mind the low starting point on entry to the school and are a significant improvement from the previous inspection, when standards were below the national average, and contained little evidence of any high attainment. Standards are also about average in the current Year 2.
96. National Curriculum tests in 2001 indicated that standards in Year 6 were well below the national average. A smaller percentage than nationally attained at both the expected level and at a level higher than normally expected. However, inspection evidence indicates that, in the current year, standards are about average, which represents good achievement.
97. Very good teaching in Year 2 characterised by good uses of questioning and constant praise for pupils who achieve well means that pupils understand how living things, including themselves, need to eat properly to grow. They know that they need to eat the right amount and kinds of food, and about the role of medicinal drugs. They understand that germs can cause diseases and are able to suggest places where germs will be found, including some quite sophisticated ideas such as “under

fingernails". They can identify safe and dangerous practices with drugs. Recent improvements in pupils' reading enable them to undertake tasks independently. They describe materials in everyday language and a few higher attainers are beginning to understand why materials are suited for the different purposes to which they are put. They can make circuits and understand that a circuit will not work, if it is incomplete. Higher attaining pupils have a good idea of how this fact can be used to make a switch.

98. As they move on into the next class, previous knowledge is built on well. In Year 3, for example, pupils identified common materials and began to sort them according to simple properties. They investigated magnets and recorded observations. They identified common foodstuffs that were derived from plants and many pupils went further than this, when they explained the part of the plant that is edible. However, in Year 5, knowledge is not as good as it should be. Pupils identified only the most basic parts of plants (flower, leaves, stem and roots). They knew that seeds are found inside fruit, but were unsure about the life cycle of plants, and many did not know that seeds enable the plant to reproduce. Because their prior knowledge is so limited, what pupils are studying may not be appropriate. For example, recommendations in the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority make assumptions about what pupils will have learnt in earlier years. The main reason for this low attainment is weaknesses in what pupils in Year 5 were taught in the past.
99. In Year 6, pupils understand the role of micro-organisms in growing mould, and that bacteria are micro-organisms that are present in their mouths. A formal discussion with a group of them confirmed that their skills in scientific enquiry are in line with national expectations. They are able to make predictions and some are able to give scientific reasons for them. They can identify an investigation they would like to carry out and can plan a suggested investigation ensuring that it is a fair test. They can describe how to alter one variable in an investigation without affecting others. Some can identify the key factors in a fair test and understand that it is important to repeat observations or measurements to check results.
100. Workshops provided by *The Science and Technology Regional Organisation* (SATRO) have enriched the teaching of science. Practical, experimental and observational activities were set up in the hall and pupils circulated around them. Further visits are planned, so other classes can take advantage of this provision. The arrangement has the added advantage of increasing teachers' skills and subject knowledge.
101. The use of literacy varies from class to class. For example, in the best practice, they write what they find out in their own words, using factual writing that is modelled for them, so it contains clear ideas of prediction, what was done and conclusions. In other cases, too much is copied directly from what is written on boards or sheets, missing the opportunity to teach and extend literacy skills. Numeracy is used more consistently. Pie-charts, tables and column graphs are employed to present data and findings.
102. Teaching of Years 1 and 2 is often very good. Very high expectations of what pupils can achieve lead them to do their best. Good use is made of open-ended questions and pupils' responses are used well. The pace of work is brisk and all pupils are kept on task. The constant use of appropriate praise ensures enthusiasm for learning.
103. Teaching in other classes is never less than satisfactory, and includes good teaching in Year 6. The good teaching is based on a brisk pace; very clear use of language, and clear explanations of what pupils are expected to know at the end of lessons. In all lessons, very good relationships exist between pupils, teachers and teaching assistants. As a result, behaviour is nearly always good and pupils pay attention well. Where teaching is less effective, what pupils are expected to know by the end of the lesson is not explained at the start or, otherwise, the planned task does not match it well enough. Ongoing assessment also varies. For example, when it is good, teachers' marking asks

further questions for them to answer, which extends learning, whereas little marking of this kind was seen in other books.

104. In some classes teachers assess what pupils have learned at the end of each half term. This practice is also inconsistent. It is followed thoroughly in Years 1 and 2 and in two classes for older pupils, but less so in others. In spite of these inconsistencies, teaching is much improved since the last inspection. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed, lessons are well planned and teachers question pupils clearly, demonstrating good knowledge.
105. Pupils enjoy their work. They behave well in practical lessons, co-operate with each other well, and have a due regard for safe practice.
106. Leadership and management in the subject are strong. The deputy headteacher has recently taken on the role of co-ordinator. She has a very clear understanding of what is entailed, identifying priorities for development in an action plan. Standards are beginning to rise. She has monitored pupils' work and is aware of what needs to be done to make further improvements. She has also rightly identified the need to review and increase resources in the subject.
107. The school has an exterior area for studying nature. This is currently underdeveloped and little used. However, the new headteacher has plans to rectify this, so it can make a positive contribution to pupils' attainment.

ART AND DESIGN

108. At the time of the last inspection, standards in art and design were in line with national expectations. No lessons were observed during this inspection as art teaching, including an art week, took place earlier in the term. However, pupils' work was on display in classrooms and around the school. Currently attainment in Years 2 and 6 is also in line with national expectations, so standards have been maintained.
109. Art week followed an in-service training day for school staff. This training was organised jointly with the Hatfield Consortium of schools, of which Countess Anne is a member. The art week is clearly very good provision, adding strongly to what pupils attain and therefore to their overall sound achievements. Five professional artists and a specialist art teacher, who already works in the school regularly, introduced pupils to a range of media and techniques. Two of the artists had a non-European background, contributing specific Indian and Chinese ideas. In addition to these opportunities, the week also gave pupils the insight that art can be a job or profession, as well as recreational.
110. In Year 1, pupils use paint confidently. Their work in the style of aboriginal artists, depicting a journey, is skilful for their age group and shows that their achievements are sound. It is full of life and colour and catches the essence of the original. In Years 1 and 2, printing with the use of tiles is effective and carefully executed.
111. As they move through the school, skills develop well, building on what has gone before. For example, printing in Year 4 used string and other objects on blocks and they printed on to tissue paper, which requires careful control. The teacher used their work to form an extremely effective stained glass window, which is now part of their prayer table. In Years 5 and 6, pupils worked collaboratively. They produced a single life-sized figure with a strong impression of movement, using Indian patterns and symbols. Pupils selected appropriate patterns for the different parts of the body, talking about and comparing their ideas, modifying initial suggestions to improve their work. This finding demonstrates that overall achievement in art is sound. Teaching was clearly good, including a good range of

appropriate methods. For example, pupils were shown a video recording of a programme that offered ideas about what could be achieved with particular materials and techniques. Other work in Year 6 demonstrates further good progress in the use of printing, employing press methods and printing ink. Images in the style of Warhol are particularly impressive, linking with British since the 1930s. Furthermore, pencil drawings of footwear demonstrate good observational work in line and shading.

112. All older pupils have experience of portraiture, either as part of art week or in regular lessons. Many use paint confidently with good brush control, producing good quality works that are full of character and catch the likeness of the model. An interesting feature is that some portraits follow the Eastern tradition of not painting face on. The last inspection found that pupils' sketchbooks were underused, and this remains the case. Little work was included in those that were made available to inspectors. Little art that was generated with new technology was on view in the school. The school's lack of resources in information and computer technology is restricting the further development of this type of work.
113. Pupils are enthusiastic about artwork. They enjoy the creative opportunities that the subject offers. Aspects of co-ordination are currently under review. However, resources for art have been increased as a result of art week and the school acknowledges a need to increase them further.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

114. Standards have largely been maintained since the previous inspection and are broadly in line with expectations. For example, a sound balance exists between designing and making in the work of Year 2 pupils. Their puppets are imaginative and individual, which is evidence of good teaching that encourages pupils to pursue their own ideas and plans. First, they used books to find out about different types of puppets. Then they drew plans that are labelled to indicate the style of puppet and choice of materials. The relationship between the design and finished product is good. Pupils are clear about the processes involved and evaluated difficulties encountered and how these were resolved. This type of work is evidence that achievement is generally sound.
115. Design and technology is used successfully to develop understanding in other areas of the curriculum. For example, Year 3 pupils made a model of a "shaduf" that clarified the mechanisms used by ancient Egyptians to draw water from the Nile. Pupils who designed biscuits on the computer made a credible start, but were not familiar enough with the program to make further progress. Conversely, Year 6 pupils used their computer skills to design calendars that had a very professional look. This work demonstrates an imaginative use of information and communication technology. However, this was not typical of work through the school, in which the full possibilities of new technology were rarely seen to support design and technology.
116. Teaching is generally good. Lessons are well planned and resources are used well to stimulate learning, so activities appeal to pupils. In turn, interest is well maintained. Sometimes opportunities to use the subject to develop pupils' language are missed. When this aspect is well planned, oral skills are developed in describing mechanisms and processes that make products work. Year 6 pupils were able to use vocabulary that they had learnt to stand up and give a formal presentation of their findings. Good planning of the lesson had brought this feature about. It demonstrated that pupils' achievements in this respect are sound.
117. Because most of the term's design and technology projects had just begun, lessons that were observed involved preparatory observations, prior to pupils working on designs. Plenty of opportunities for them to handle materials were effective in sparking their interest and getting them to think about the purposes of their products. For example, pupils were very excited by pop-up books in Year 4, which enabled them to explore mechanisms as part of the early process of designing. They were

given plenty of encouragement and time to look at the linkages involved, and acquired many good ideas. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 increased their understanding of food technology through observing and handling a range of biscuits and bread.

118. The school follows national recommendations for the subject. However, this guidance has not been in place long enough for management to evaluate all aspects of the curriculum to ensure its continuity of learning. For example, both Years 5 and 6 are currently working within food technology. While the overall approach to teaching in Year 6 is at a higher level, what is being taught is not very different. Teachers make good use of the resources they have. However, tools and resources could be better stored and organised for more efficient use.

GEOGRAPHY

119. At the time of the last inspection, attainment in geography was in line with national expectations at the end of Years 2 and 6, although elements of unsatisfactory teaching were found. Currently, by the end of Year 2, attainment is in line with national expectations. However, standards towards the end of Year 6 are below national expectations. The main reason is that pupils' factual knowledge of the subject is limited. For example, their knowledge of where places are located is weak. A group of pupils in Year 6 could not identify and locate the countries of the United Kingdom and were unsure of the world's continents. Not all of them found the British Isles on a world map. However, they used a key and they identified "north" on a map. Some pupils have misconceptions. For example, they believed that it is hotter at the equator because it is nearer to the core of the Earth. They also stated that the further south you go the hotter it gets, not properly understanding that this feature reverses in the southern hemisphere. What has been taught recently is understood well. However, it is clear that their knowledge contains many gaps. A likely reason is that it stems from past unsatisfactory teaching.
120. In Year 1, pupils identify places they like and dislike and express ideas about their locality. For example, they studied a map of the area and made a graph of how they come to school. They know several different jobs that people do. In Year 2 pupils identify different types of housing, such as flats and bungalows. Good teaching with clear explanations and very high expectations help them to understand some of the natural features of landscapes. They use these ideas to make comparisons between other landscapes with that of the area around Hatfield. Geographical vocabulary is developing well and pupils are beginning to use evidence to justify observations. Literacy skills were well used when pupils took what they read as evidence for some of their findings.
121. Pupils in Year 6 understand reasons for coastal erosion and the way in which human activity might contribute to it. They use geographical language to describe different places that they know about. For example, they described similarities and differences between the Himalayas and the Lake District but were unable to suggest reasons for the differences that they identified. They know that mountains are not all formed in the same way. They know about volcanoes and folding types. They have a basic knowledge of the water-cycle and the effects of water on the landscape.
122. In a lesson that was observed in Year 2, teaching was good. The teacher used clear geographical vocabulary and her questioning was good, helping pupils to see the logical connections in what she wanted them to learn. She made good uses of pupils' responses to her questions, assessing their understanding as teaching proceeded. Her planning was clear and she had high expectations of what pupils could achieve.
123. Pupils' attitudes to geography are positive. Year 6 pupils reported their enjoyment of activities, especially when the work is practical. In the lesson that was observed, pupils were attentive and enthusiastic in their willingness to answer their teacher's questions.

124. Co-ordination is satisfactory, although several features of the subject have not been a main priority, owing to more serious weaknesses elsewhere. Resources for geography are growing and the school purchases necessary items for topics and themes as they are taught. Sufficient atlases are available, but few large-scale maps are on display. The lack of a computer suite restricts the use of geographical software and its impact on standards of research and use of information. The school makes use of the local area for fieldwork. During the inspection a class visited a local supermarket. Younger pupils have visited a wildlife park and Year 1 visited the police station. Such visits offer good opportunities for pupils to gain insights into land use and human geography. Pupils in last year's Year 6 had a residential visit to Dover, during which they undertook geographical fieldwork, which prepared them well for such activities in their secondary schools.

HISTORY

125. Standards are broadly in line with what is nationally expected at the end of Years 2 and 6. This finding maintains the standard that was reported in the previous inspection, when attainment was also in line with expectations.
126. Year 1 pupils have less idea about the passage of time than is normally expected for their age, partly because below average language skills make it difficult for them to grasp and explain. They identify old and new toys, and know that the former once belonged to older members of their families. Good teaching is ensuring that pupils in Year 2 have a well developing sense of chronology, and try to give dates to events. They know about the Great Plague and gave several details of the Fire of London, explaining that it started in Pudding Lane, and burnt so fiercely because the houses were wooden. A boy was able to explain how fire-breaks were used to control the fire and eventually to burn it out. Pupils also described the effects of the plague in graphic detail, solemnly chanting the phrase "bring out your dead". As a result of good teaching about Remembrance Day, they know that poppies are used to commemorate the soldiers of the First World War. Their achievement, bearing in mind that starting points are relatively low, is generally sound.
127. Teachers' frequent use of timelines through the school is helping pupils to acquire good basic understanding of chronology. Pupils in Year 3 compare artefacts from different periods and develop good ideas of life in Ancient Egypt. In Year 5, good planning makes links with art work. For example, much of their knowledge of Ancient Greece is expressed through making scrolls written in the Greek alphabet. Pupils have also used collage to decorate images on Greek vases. Good uses of the Hippocratic oath were made, when pupils were encouraged to think about their own values and beliefs. As a result of very good teaching in Year 6, pupils learn the distinction between primary and secondary sources of historical evidence. For example, they used these ideas to think about change and continuity, comparing life in the sixties with today. Pupils examined school reports from the 1960s with those of today and they noticed developments in technology as businesses moved from typewriters and filing to computers to process and store data. Several pupils in this class experience learning difficulties, and overall achievement in this class, bearing this in mind, is good.
128. Good teaching is having a strong impact on pupils' personal development. They receive many good opportunities to collaborate effectively. As a result, they learn to select and organise information for presentation to others. This good teaching combines interesting resources with imaginative tasks, helping pupils to gain insights into cause and effect and to understand that actions, good or bad, have consequences for others. Pupils in Year 6 wrote thoughtful accounts about the plight of oppressed peoples, including Jews and Roma gypsies, in World War II.
129. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. However, in lesson in Year 6, it was very good. Lessons are planned to include good uses of resources and tasks that interest pupils. This planning is clear

about what pupils are expected to learn. Pupils are encouraged to talk about their ideas and to work together, sharing artefacts and findings. On occasions, both historical and general vocabulary are insufficiently stressed for the needs of lower attaining pupils. On these occasions, what is recorded is then short and rather superficial, whereas in the very good teaching, the selection of resources and the thought given to speaking and listening enabled all pupils to communicate their ideas well.

130. Co-ordination makes good use of national guidance and teachers are increasingly encouraging pupils to use the Internet as a source of information. Resources in the school are satisfactory, but many of the most interesting were those that teachers provided themselves.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

131. Good progress has been made to improve standards since the last inspection. Teachers and pupils are more confident in the use of information and communication technology and computers are in working order and used frequently in classrooms. However, not enough time has passed for these improvements to make a full impact. Attainment is, therefore, below that expected nationally and pupils' overall achievement could be higher.
132. Standards are uneven from class to class through the school, as the subject has not been developed systematically over the years. Few pupils are independent in their uses of computers and are less likely to log on and off, take responsibility for saving, retrieving and printing their own work than is nationally expected. Part of the reason is that classroom computers are usually already set up when pupils go to them, which under the circumstances saves time. This factor is linked to the lack of a computer suite, in which each class might have its own password and set of programs to access. Word processing skills are the most developed area and are usually broadly in line with what is expected. Most pupils have sound skills in using a mouse to control applications, although their experience of handling data is limited, as is use of the Internet. Nevertheless, Internet use is being encouraged in, for example, history. Computers are used to improve pupils' presentation. For example, Year 4 pupils wrote their own versions of a T.S. Eliot poem. They used a word processing program and then imported graphics using *Clip-art*. Year 6 pupils designed calendars on a standard Word program, choosing their own layout and fonts and then introduced applications from *Print Shop Deluxe*.
133. Overall, teaching is satisfactory through the school. However, the systematic teaching of skills varies with the confidence and expertise of teachers. When confidence is high, pupils are taught well. Even then, the impact of teaching on learning is limited as a result of weaknesses in the availability of computers, which restricts pupils' experiences and opportunities to practise what is taught. In Year 6, for example, clear step by step teaching of the procedures for identifying cells and moving within a spreadsheet was good. The teacher correctly identified that pupils then needed to consolidate their learning with hands-on experience. Despite her best efforts, it was not possible to provide it for all pupils quickly enough. As a result, the lesson was less effective than it otherwise might have been.
134. In most lessons across the curriculum, pupils use the skills that they are taught in information and communication technology to access programs with which they are familiar. Examples were seen in history, mathematics and the recording of findings in science. Often, a learning consultant assists with new programs. In this sense, information and communication technology is used effectively as another way to reinforce what has been learnt in these other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 1 wrote the days of the week. They used a word processing program that required them to use capital letters that they had learnt about earlier in the lesson. However, this is another aspect in which the lack of a computer suite is key. It restricts access to computers, so that such uses become limited to a few pupils at a time and software may not be consistently well matched to the prior levels of attainment of pupils.

135. Priorities for the development of the subject are appropriate and management has made good decisions in order to implement rapid improvement. A scheme of work has been adapted to match the limited prior knowledge of pupils and the consultant has put computers into working order. His willingness to talk teachers through the possibilities that the school's stock of programs present has increased teachers' confidence in their use. Teachers are soon due to start a training programme and the school recognises the lack of a computer suite as a serious inhibitor of further progress. Recent cabling work has in fact been completed as the first step towards rectifying this situation.

MUSIC

136. At the time of the last inspection, standards in music were in line with national expectations at the end of Year 2, and by the time that pupils left the school in Year 6. However, minor weaknesses were identified. For example, very strong learning in Year 3 was not sufficiently built on elsewhere in the school, and composing and performing was stronger than listening to and appraising music. Nevertheless, a specialist teacher was beginning to have an impact on raising standards. Attainment has clearly been maintained since then and, in some respects, improved upon, owing to the continued influence of the specialist. For example, opportunities for listening to music are now included daily in assemblies, with an opportunity for an older pupil to explain to the whole school what he or she knows and likes about what has been heard. As a result, all pupils from the youngest onwards gain experience of what appraisal might mean, so it becomes a normal musical activity for all. Pupils in Year 6 sang well in assemblies, adding much to the accuracy of pitch and rhythm through their good example. In Year 2, in a well planned lesson, pupils demonstrated early knowledge and uses of notation, reading beats from "worms", "pebbles" and "rests" that gave performers information about what to do on their instrument.
137. A music specialist teaches a lesson in all classes, which ensures that pupils benefit from his very good knowledge of the subject. Class teachers assist in these lessons, which is good practice, as it helps to spread knowledge, raising confidence to teach the subject in others. As a result, further teaching is taking place in some classes. Where this is the case, the quality of learning is even more secure. The overall high quality of teaching is resulting in high levels of enjoyment and concentration amongst pupils. As a result they listen well in lessons and put in a strong creative effort, which also contributes to good learning and progress. Pupils with special educational needs are involved well. Pupils display very mature attitudes towards others, making no fuss about who is in which group or whether they work with boys or girls. For example, in a very good lesson in Year 5, two girls chose to work with a boy with identified learning difficulties. They sought his opinions, listened to his ideas and incorporated them into their composition. Their performance of their own version of *Sinbad's Island* was of a very high quality, and included solo passages, duets and a trio section. Other groups in this lesson produced equally high quality work, including a very imaginative vocal part. A weaker element through the school is the use of new technology, such as computer programs to generate musical works.
138. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Lessons are well planned and include opportunities for pupils to perform what they compose, raising their confidence and self esteem. At the same time, they are invited to comment on performances, evaluating what could be improved. Control and management of pupils is good, leading to good use of time. Plenty of opportunities for pupils to work together and collaborate are included in planning, which is providing good personal development. These strong elements result in good learning and progress. Singing is taught well and is of good quality in lessons. A repertoire of sacred and secular songs is taught. *I'm going to paint a perfect picture*, *A World of Make-Believe* and *The Lone Star Trail* are examples. In performances of the first two of these songs, pupils showed awareness of how to vary the tone and dynamic quality of their voices, matching the words that they sang. However, this aspect was not consistent in assemblies.

139. Music contributes well to the cultural life of the school. Brass instrumental lessons are available. Musical concerts for infant and junior aged pupils are staged in December and July each year. Each class takes part in these concerts, as do other musical groups, such as the brass players, recorder groups and reception children. Music of different styles and cultures is included in what pupils perform. For example, jazz and music from North and South America were included in the most recent concerts.
140. Co-ordination is good. It includes a meeting each term at which the specialist teacher passes on information about planning and outlines what class teachers can do to support learning in their classes.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

141. Only one lesson was observed for pupils in Year 2. In this very good dance lesson attainment was above average. Pupils danced expressively, demonstrating imaginative combinations of movement in good sequences. They were aware of each other's space and the requirement to be safe. At the end of Year 6, standards are clearly in line with national expectations. This represents very good improvement since the last inspection when standards at the end of Year 2 were in line with national expectations, and were below national expectations at Year 6. Achievement through the school is clearly good, bearing in mind the slow start that pupils make in this subject, owing to the poor equipment that is available in reception.
142. Performance in Year 2 was poised and smart. This element contributed to their spiritual development when they were invited to describe the feelings that they had while moving. Pupils reflected well on what had been achieved with responses such as, "I felt calm and relaxed".
143. Pupils in Year 3 knew that they must warm up before physical activity, and they understood and described the effect of exercises on their bodies. Their ability to control a ball varies considerably, but very good teaching offered coaching about how to improve and opportunities to practise hard. As a result, pupils responded to these opportunities well, putting in a good physical effort. Teaching through the school uses appropriate ideas, planning and equipment to help pupils learn and acquire skills successfully. By Year 5, for example, pupils demonstrated knowledge of different elements of warm-ups for themselves. They were able to use a range of passes with a ball and to attack and defend effectively. In Year 6, further progress on warm-ups was evident when pupils outlined the precise effects that such activities had on muscles. They also commented on cooling down work. Pupils sequenced the movements required to hit and control a tennis ball, understanding the tactics required to prolong a co-operative rally.
144. The teaching of physical education is generally good, and included several very good lessons. The weaknesses noted in the previous inspection have been corrected. Lesson planning is good, demonstrating good subject knowledge. Teachers use high quality demonstration to exemplify the standards they expect. Well-managed opportunities are provided for pupils to demonstrate their work and to evaluate and reflect on the quality of performances, both from a technical and aesthetic viewpoint. Expectations are often high and the level of challenge is good. Skills tactics are related to their use in games and pupils have the opportunity to apply them. As a result, learning is good and attainment is rising. Teachers' assessment of previous work is beginning to inform planning and pupils are given clear guidance about how to improve. Lessons are of an adequate length in dance and games, which is an improvement since the last inspection. However, in gymnastics, when there is a need to put out apparatus, the allocated time may need further review. Behaviour in lessons is good, owing to very good management by teachers. Pupils co-operate well and are patient with less skilled members of their classes. They have due regard to safety and use the available space well. They enjoy their work.

145. In the short time since his appointment, the new headteacher has shown strong leadership in the subject. He has worked hard to improve teaching and learning, especially in games. He has modelled lessons and provided support for planning. Resources have been re-organised and now make a positive contribution to standards in the subject. The range and quality of equipment for gymnastics is good. The school benefits from a large playing field, which the headteacher plans to develop for a greater range of uses. A swimming pool is available for use in the summer months. At the pre-inspection meeting, parents were concerned that this pool is not used more frequently. However, its size means that it is really only effective as a 'learner' pool. Once pupils swim effectively, in order to develop further skills, the use of a full-size pool is required. Attainment in swimming broadly meets the government's minimum requirements for water safety. A residential visit is planned for Year 6 later in the year. This will enable them to experience outdoor and adventurous activities.