

INSPECTION REPORT

THE RYDE SCHOOL

Hatfield

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117313

Headteacher: Mrs J. E. Goddard

Reporting inspector: Tusha Chakraborti
12603

Dates of inspection: 13th - 16th November 2000

Inspection number: 224327

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Pleasant Rise
Hatfield
Hertfordshire

Postcode: AL9 5DR

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs B Holm

Date of previous inspection: January 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Tusha Chakraborti 12603	Registered inspector	English as an additional language English Religious education	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
Shirley Watts 9957	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Patricia Palmer 8165	Team inspector	Equal opportunities Science Information and communication technology Art Design and technology History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
John Carter 2751	Team inspector	Under fives Special educational needs Mathematics Geography Music Physical Education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Ryde is an average sized primary school, situated in the town of Hatfield in Hertfordshire. The school has grown significantly since the last inspection from 4 classes to its current size of 7 classes. A nursery has also been added to the school about two years ago. Pupils are drawn from much wider areas of Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City, as well as from the immediate neighbourhood. The school also experiences high rates of mobility as pupils from other primary schools within Hatfield enter the school in any year in Key Stage 2. It currently has 216 pupils on roll, including 30 part-time children in the nursery. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is also below the national average. The level of attainment of the children, on their entry to the nursery, is below average but it is average on their entry to Year 1, at the end of the reception year.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The Ryde provides good quality education which meets the academic, social and emotional needs of its pupils well. Pupils achieve satisfactory standards and make good progress throughout the Key Stages. The quality of teaching is good. The school is led effectively by the headteacher and she is supported well by the staff and governors. The school has a strong commitment to equality of opportunity and promoting the wellbeing of its pupils. Its aims and values permeate through its ethos and its curricular provision. It is an effective school and provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The quality of teaching is good overall, with a particular strength in the Foundation Stage
- The school's procedures for monitoring attendance are very good. As a result attendance is good
- The school has established very effective links with parents and provides them with very good quality of information, particularly about their children's progress
- Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very good. The school provides a rich and stimulating curriculum in this stage
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good
- Pupils achieve good standards in art in both key stages
- The headteacher provides effective leadership and she is supported well by the deputy headteacher, other member of staff and governors.

What could be improved

- Standards in mathematics at Key Stage 2
- Implementation of the information technology programme, as planned in the school development plan
- Pupils' skills in carrying out scientific enquiries
- Consistent use of assessment for future planning
- Analysis and use of test results to raise standards further

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in January 1996. Most of the key issues identified in the last inspection have been addressed effectively by the headteacher since her appointment in 1997, especially those relating to the curriculum and teaching. The school has improved in several areas, such as the quality of teaching, monitoring of the curriculum by effective planning and assessment, and provision for children in the Foundation Stage and pupils with special educational needs. A locally agreed syllabus for religious education has been implemented effectively. The implementation of information technology (IT) has been restricted by the delay in the establishment of the IT suite. However, a great deal of progress has been made in this area.

Standards have improved since the last inspection and are just about average. An IT suite is now ready and more computers are now being purchased. The school expects to start whole-class teaching of IT skills in the near future. Policies and schemes of work are in place. Assessment procedures are now implemented successfully in English and mathematics, and are in the process of being implemented in all other subjects. However, assessment is not used consistently for future planning. The quality of teaching has improved considerably, as a result of consistent monitoring by the headteacher and the local authority adviser. It is now good overall. Good management by the headteacher and the governing body now ensures that the school development plan supports curriculum and staff development effectively. These improvements have taken place while the school is expanding. Good teamwork involving the staff and headteacher ensures that standards are maintained in line with the national averages, in spite of the high mobility of pupils.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	A	B	B	C
Mathematics	A	B	C	D
Science	A	B	D	E

Key

Well above average A

Above average B

Average C

Below average D

Well below average E

The table above shows that standards have declined since 1998 in all subjects, particularly in mathematics and science. This is due to the high mobility of pupils and the high number of pupils with special educational needs in Year 6 in 2000. A high proportion of pupils joined this school in Year 5 and Year 6. Although these pupils receive good support, their short stay in this school has an adverse impact on their standards of attainment. This was confirmed by the current inspection where the standards are judged to be average in English and science in both key stages. Standards in mathematics are average in Key Stage 1, but below in Key Stage 2. In comparison to those in similar schools, the standards at this age are average in English, below in mathematics and well below in science. The trend in the school's results over time in all three subjects is below the national trend. Over all pupils achieve average standards and the school is successful in meeting its set targets for raising standards. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment.

Standards attained in art are above average in both key stages. Standards in other subjects, in both key stages are in line with the levels expected of this age, except in geography where insufficient evidence was available to make a judgement on standards. There was also insufficient evidence in design and technology and music in Key Stage 1 and, therefore, no judgement was made on these subjects.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good attitudes to learning. Pupils respond to class discussions and tasks responsibly and in a mature manner.
Behaviour, in and out of	Behaviour is good throughout the school. Pupils are polite and courteous. They know and show respect for school rules.

classrooms	
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is good. There are opportunities for pupils to take on a range of responsibilities which they carry out willingly and successfully. The relationships between adults and pupils and between pupils are good.
Attendance	Attendance is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	Aged 5-7 years	Aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Satisfactory

The quality of teaching is good overall. It is satisfactory or better in 98 per cent of the lessons. Over half of these lessons are good or better. Only two per cent of lessons is less than satisfactory. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection, when 20 per cent of teaching was less than satisfactory. The quality of teaching is good in English and satisfactory in mathematics. Teachers follow the literacy and numeracy strategies effectively. However sometimes slow pace and lack of challenge in lessons mean the pupils do not achieve the standards of which they are capable. Teachers follow the school's planning and assessment procedures well, which ensure that the learning needs of all pupils are met effectively.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum relevant to the range of abilities of its pupils. A good range of extra-curricular activities support pupils' learning and personal development well.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils have full access to all aspects of the curriculum and make good progress throughout the school.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils make good progress in developing their language skills.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for cultural development has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Overall, the school makes satisfactory provision for its pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school promotes the welfare of its pupils well through an effective support system and effective links with external agencies. It has now established assessment procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress.

The school promotes its pupils' personal development well. The school works very well in partnership with the parents who are very supportive of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides effective leadership and has set a clear educational direction for the school. She is supported well by the deputy headteacher, other members of staff and governors.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body fulfils its responsibilities effectively and plays an important role in shaping the direction of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school evaluates its performance effectively, in its development plan, and has begun to analyse the internal and national test results. Appropriate priorities for further improvement of educational provision and standards of attainment are identified in its development plan.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes satisfactory use of all staff and resources.

The school has an adequate number of staff and they are well trained. Accommodation is adequate to deliver all areas of the curriculum effectively. Learning resources are satisfactory. The governors apply the principles of best value in all spending decisions and monitor its impact on financial planning closely.

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 • The school helps their children to become mature and responsible • Children are making good progress • The teaching is good • The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best • Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school • The school is well led and managed • The school promotes good behaviour • The school works closely with them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents feel that their children in Year 6 would benefit from more homework • Some parents feel that the school does not provide an interesting range of extra-curricular activities • Some parents feel that behaviour in the playground is not always good

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive comments. However, the team did not find any evidence to confirm the concerns about homework and behaviour in the playground. The inspection team also concludes that the school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The attainment for children at the Foundation Stage, on entry to the nursery, is below that expected of children of this age. Children in the nursery and reception class make good progress. As a result, by the end of the reception year, the majority of children attain standards that are broadly in line with the expected levels in the Early Learning Goals.
2. The results of the 2000 national tests show that, at the end of Key Stage 1, pupils attain standards that are well above the national averages in reading and mathematics and very high in writing. In comparison with similar schools, standards are above average in reading, and well above average in writing and mathematics. The results for the year 2000 show significant improvement in reading and mathematics over the previous year. The number of pupils achieving higher levels is particularly high in all three subjects. At the end of Key Stage 2, in the 2000 national tests, standards attained are above the national average in English and in line with the national average in mathematics and science. In comparison to similar schools, the standards are average in English, below in mathematics and well below in science. The standards as shown in the national test results over the last four years indicate variation in attainment from year to year, reflecting pupil mobility and number of pupils with special educational needs.
3. The current inspection indicates that, by the end of Key Stage 1, the standards of attainment for the seven year old pupils are in line with the national averages in English, mathematics and science. It is in line with the national expectations in information technology and in line with the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. In art, pupils attain standards that are above what are expected of this age. Pupils' attainment in all other subjects is in line with national expectations, except in design and technology, geography and music, where no judgement was made because of lack of evidence during the week of inspection. Pupils make good progress throughout the key stage. By the end of Key Stage 2, eleven year old pupils attain standards that are in line with the national averages in English and science, but below in mathematics. Attainment in information technology is just in line with the national expectations. Attainment in religious education is in line with the locally agreed syllabus. Standards are above the expected level in art. In all other subjects pupils' attainment is at the standard expected of this age, except in geography where there was no evidence available during the week of inspection. Pupils in this key stage make satisfactory progress.
4. By the age of seven and eleven, pupils' attainment in speaking and listening is in line with the national average. By the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils respond sensibly to questions and express their ideas clearly during whole class and group discussions. They listen to the teachers and to each other carefully and are confident speakers in a variety of situations. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils become more articulate and confident as they discuss their work and share their opinions about books they read. They use a range of vocabulary and make relevant contributions to lessons and discussions.
5. Standards in reading are in line with the national averages at the end of both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils read stories accurately and with expression. They make good use of their knowledge of phonics as they read books and show clear understanding of the events and characters of the stories they read. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils talk about the books that they read with enthusiasm and explain what they like and what they do not like. Higher attaining pupils read very well from a wide range of interesting books that include non-fiction as well as well known fiction. They discuss preferences of author and character. All pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to read in the literacy hour and in other subjects.

6. Attainment in writing by the end of Key Stage 1 and 2 is in line with the national averages. By the end of Key Stage 1, higher attainers develop their ideas in sequence, use capital letters, spell most words correctly and use joined writing. They write for a suitable range of purposes. They compose their own stories, recall those they have heard, and write about things they have seen or done. By the time they are 11 pupils are beginning to write imaginatively for different audiences; for example, while studying 'Macbeth', pupils learn to identify the usage of language in the past and write their personal response in question and answer form. Most pupils write appropriately for a wide range of purposes. Opportunities for writing include stories, newspaper articles, persuasion, instructions, letters and poetry. However opportunities for developing imaginative and extended writing are very limited. The majority do not write in sentences or sustain ideas and develop them sufficiently. Most pupils at 11 use punctuation correctly. They write with joined legible handwriting and standards of presentation are generally neat. Literacy skills are developed well across the curriculum.
7. In mathematics, most pupils in Year 2 have an appropriate mastery of number work for their ages. They understand the structure of the number system to 100 and know their number facts to 10. They have a sound knowledge of shape, space and measures. For example, they can name two and three dimensional shapes and describe some of their properties. By the time they are eleven, many pupils are able to calculate accurately using different mental and written techniques. Higher attainers quickly choose the correct operation to solve number problems and confidently explain their reasoning, but other pupils are not yet sufficiently proficient in these skills. Almost a third of pupils in Year 6 are working and achieving at a lower level than that expected nationally, in part because of the large proportion with special educational needs but also because some pupils do not accomplish enough in their lessons.
8. In science, pupils in Year 2 are developing their knowledge of a range of properties of materials. They are able to identify situations requiring the use of electricity and construct circuits to make a bulb light up but their skills in accurately recording their circuits and explaining how they work are not as secure. In Key Stage 2 pupils are learning to gather data to answer enquiry questions. Pupils' skills in the process of presenting their data in graphical forms are developing but significant teacher intervention is needed to help many pupils construct graphs to complete the task. However some pupils in Year 6 do not yet have a secure understanding of basic scientific concepts.
9. In information and communication (ICT) technology, pupils by the age of seven can communicate ideas using both text and graphics as they demonstrated with their creation of a firework picture using Colour Magic. The end product was attractive and the pupils were able to evaluate the finished effect. By the age of eleven pupils have progressed in their capability to create works of art using the drawing tools. They have also developed their capability to edit work and to import text and information from other sources. However many pupils do not have a very well developed understanding of the extent ICT affects their everyday life and that of the commercial world.
10. In religious education, pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 show that they have established sound knowledge of Hindu worship. They can retell the story of Rama and Sita and know the significance of celebrating Dewali. In Key Stage 2, pupils study different religions such as Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism and the importance of symbolism in religion.
11. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are well supported in lessons and are able to gain full access to the curriculum. They develop skills in literacy and numeracy effectively in lessons and make good progress over time. By the time they are eleven years old, they express their thoughts clearly and confidently.
12. Pupils with special educational needs are usually well supported and achieve well. Generally they make good progress in developing their basic literacy and numeracy skills, although when tasks set for group work lack sufficient pace and challenge, progress is only sound.

13. There is no significant variation between the attainment of boys and girls that is markedly different from the national trend. The school sets appropriate targets for pupils, reviews the targets every year and meets them successfully.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Parents report that the children enjoy coming to school and this was supported by the way they arrived and quickly settled down. They have positive attitudes to learning and experience a number of learning situations in the classroom and playground. An example of this was the reception class making and then flying their kites. They are pleased with their achievements and many are displayed around the school. Pupils are proud of their school and this is seen on their transfer to secondary school.
15. The behaviour of the pupils in the classroom and around the playground is good, although there is a small minority who become easily distracted. The pupils are polite and courteous and no bullying was seen during the inspection week. There is a policy for behaviour and bullying to which the parents had the opportunity to comment and the monitoring is effective in eliminating oppressive behaviour. The golden rules, which were produced in conjunction with the pupils, are seen displayed around the school and are respected by the pupils. Staff have high expectations of the pupils' behaviour. There has only been one pupil excluded for one day during the last year, and the school has admitted children permanently excluded from other schools.
16. Pupils respond well to opportunities for personal development and they develop positive and friendly relationships with staff. The staff know the pupils well and encourage them in the tasks they do. Pupils are expected to take responsibilities and these range from returning registers to helping with assemblies looking after local residents who come into a lunch club and the older pupils helping the younger ones.
17. Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) is taught throughout the school and in Year 6 the nurse is involved in one of the modules. A group of pupils involved in the cycling proficiency test came first in a competition and were given money from Rotary. Pupils show a concern for others by raising money for charities and also giving away harvest produce. Relationships between adults and pupils, and between pupils are good.
18. Attendance is good overall and has improved in the last year. There is no unauthorised absence. The Education Welfare Officer visits regularly and responds if the school requires help between visits.
19. Since the last inspection the issue of group work and collaborative activities has been addressed and pupils generally mix well. Registration procedures now meet statutory requirements and statistics are recorded in the school prospectus.
20. Pupils with special educational needs generally have positive attitudes to their work and to the adults who support them. Mostly, they enjoy working in small groups with an adult because the activities are stimulating and well matched to their needs which helps them to improve their concentration. On a few occasions when group work is unnecessarily repetitive or uninspiring, older pupils quickly lose attention and motivation.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

21. The quality of teaching is good, overall. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection when 20 per cent of all lessons were judged to be less than satisfactory. The school has been very successful in improving teaching: 98 per cent of lessons are now at least satisfactory and over half the lessons are good or better. Nearly one in ten is very good. This improvement in the quality of teaching reflects the hard work and commitment of the headteacher and her staff.

22. Teachers plan their lessons carefully for pupils with varying abilities and ages. Most teachers share their intended learning with pupils at the start of the lesson, which ensures that pupils are aware of the purpose of their activity and what it has told them in terms of new knowledge; for example how to read food values on packaging when deciding which product to buy for a healthy meal. Plenary sessions are used efficiently to consolidate pupils' learning; for example enhancing pupils' writing skills so that they can edit their own writing with a clear focus on key areas in most English lessons. Teachers use appropriate strategies to ensure that pupils build on previous learning and develop the concepts systematically. This is particularly evident during mental mathematics sessions. In many lessons, teachers maintain a brisk pace so that pupils remain active and learn well. These features contribute positively to pupils' attitudes to learning and their progress.
23. Teachers are particularly skilled at managing pupils. In most lessons very good class management makes a positive contribution to children's attainment and progress. Teachers expect high standards of behaviour. Praise is used effectively to make pupils feel confident about their ability to learn and to reinforce good behaviour.
24. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Pupils respond positively by valuing their teachers and what they have to teach. Very good examples were seen in the nursery and reception where very good relationships between the adults and the children provide a safe and rich learning environment for the newly arrived children.
25. Most teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach and present and discuss subject material in a way that helps pupils to understand. This was seen in an English lesson where the teacher enhanced pupils' knowledge of the main features of recounted texts and, thereby, deepened their understanding of writing for different purposes. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught effectively. Teachers assess pupils effectively to ensure that they build on their previous learning and make consistent progress, especially in English, and mathematics.
26. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is generally good. Teachers adapt learning tasks appropriately and carefully target questioning to enable pupils with special educational needs to make progress and to participate fully in lessons. In the best lessons, there is some focused, skilled teaching of special needs groups by the class teachers, for example, in a Year 2 mathematics lesson when pupils enjoyed working through some additional examples with the teacher until they were confident in their understanding. Adults in the nursery provide high quality support for pupils with particular learning difficulties through firm, patient and sympathetic guidance and by the effective use of books and other resources to capture and maintain children's interest. The co-ordinator for special educational needs provides highly effective support for particular pupils. Support staff also make an important contribution to the progress of pupils with learning difficulties during independent work in class and when working with groups withdrawn from the classroom. However, some group work for older pupils is less effective because the tasks set by teachers do not provide sufficient challenge or variety, and are not always matched closely enough to the targets on pupils' individual education plans [IEPs].
27. A part-time teacher from the Ethnic Minority Grant supports pupils at the early stages of learning English effectively in collaboration with the class teachers. These features ensure that pupils with special educational needs and pupils who speak English as an additional language are able to make good progress.
28. In the unsatisfactory lesson, lack of subject knowledge led to unsatisfactory planning. In this lesson the teacher did not identify the learning needs of pupils and did not assess pupils' progress effectively. Pace is very slow and pupils are not sufficiently challenged. This means that very little learning takes place and pupils do not reach their full potential.

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

29. The school provides a broad and mainly balanced curriculum for all its pupils. This meets all the statutory requirements for all National Curriculum subjects and religious education. The curriculum includes satisfactory provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) which incorporates appropriate sex and drug education. This is delivered as part of the science curriculum and through designated lessons and circle time. The curriculum provides learning experiences that are usually interesting and stimulating. Learning from separate subjects is linked well together, for example historical knowledge supporting a design assignment and works of art being used to develop personal and social awareness. This makes for relevant and meaningful activities that enable pupils to apply learning across subjects including the application of skills gained in literacy and numeracy lessons.
30. Provision for pupils in the nursery and reception classes and for pupils with special educational needs is a particular strength of the school. Pupils with special educational needs have good access to the curriculum provided to all children. Although some receive attention in groups withdrawn from the main class, care is taken to ensure that these group sessions are organised at suitable points during the lesson when other pupils are working on their tasks. Pupils with significant difficulties, for example, for behaviour, are given good levels of support and special attention to their needs.
31. The new curriculum for the Foundation Stage, introduced in September 2000, has been implemented effectively, although the policy does not yet reflect this progress. The curriculum for this stage is stimulating, vibrant and exciting, and suitably organised according to the maturity and age of the pupils.
32. The National Literacy Strategy has been effectively introduced and literacy is used well to support work in other subjects. The National Numeracy Strategy has also been introduced effectively and is beginning to make an impact on standards.
33. The relevance and depth of the curriculum is enhanced significantly by a range of after school activities and links with the community. Clubs include a range of sports, art and drama. The school takes part in local music and dance festivals and has good links with the local museum and public services. It engages in educational initiatives set up by companies such as the local newspaper and supermarket. The school also stages focused curricular events such as the very successful Millennium Arts Week and the proposed science week. The oldest pupils are able to attend a residential visit but the standard of the diary work resulting from this was disappointing. The school makes good provision for those pupils who do not wish to attend a residential visit by arranging adventurous outdoor activities including orienteering, abseiling and canoeing. The school also facilitates the opportunity for pupils to receive instrumental tuition and French lessons.
34. Since the last inspection the school has successfully improved both the quality and consistency of its medium and short term planning. The adoption of the nationally approved schemes of work for all the National Curriculum subjects as well as a framework for PSHE has enabled learning objectives and progression in learning to be planned and delivered in a more structured and progressive way. The school intends to review this new provision later in the year once teachers have become more familiar with the requirements. The absence of a long-term curriculum map restricts the school's ability to monitor and evaluate the balance of the curriculum and its effect on raising standards of attainment. The school is aware of the insufficient time currently spent directly teaching information and communication technology (ICT) and is set to improve this once the ICT suite is operational in the spring term.
35. The school makes satisfactory provision overall for pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development but there are some features that are good which is a slight improvement from the last inspection report. This aspect of the school curriculum still does not have such a high profile as might be expected from the school's stated values and ethos. The school presents a calm and caring community that rightly values the well being of all its pupils. The spiritual development of pupils is satisfactory. The school provides suitable opportunities for reflection in the daily act of collective worship but these are no

always developed as much as they could be. Opportunities for spiritual development are incorporated naturally into religious education lessons. Although some other subject lessons engender a sense of wonder in what is being discovered, for example when the reception class studied ice balloons, in many lessons there is an emphasis on factual learning. In the teachers' professional desire to deliver lessons clearly and thoroughly, there is an absence of opportunity to consider a deeper significance to learning.

36. The moral development of pupils is satisfactory. The school is effective in teaching pupils the principles that distinguish right from wrong. The golden rules negotiated with pupils are well understood and implemented as can be exemplified by the minimal disruption to lessons and the calm atmosphere when walking around the school. There is very little need for teachers to reprimand pupils for inappropriate behaviour other than poor listening skills and inattention. All staff consistently apply the common code of conduct and pupils are aware of the sanctions that will be taken if it is infringed.
37. Pupils' social development is satisfactory. There are opportunities for pupils to take responsibility around the school and in supporting charity and social initiatives, such as Year 6 sponsoring an animal and helping to serve dinners to senior citizens at the weekly lunch club. The elderly visitors welcome the opportunity to talk to the three children whose turn it is to serve them for the half term and enjoy being an 'adopted' grandparent! All classes use monitors to carry out tasks. Pupils are polite and readily hold open doors for adults and other children. Pupils' confidence at speaking clearly and purposefully in front of a large audience, as demonstrated in a class assembly, is underdeveloped. There is some collaboration between classes such as Year 4 pupils helping with reading in the reception class. Within lessons pupils work harmoniously together but there is limited opportunity for genuine co-operative and collaborative projects.
38. The school was criticised at the last inspection for its limited provision for cultural development. It has made significant improvements in this aspect and now makes good provision. The art and history curriculum strongly develop knowledge of cultures both in the past and more recent times, as does that for religious education. Visits to places such as Ashwell and Verulamium provide a more informed understanding of local heritage. The exploration of different faiths has improved since the last inspection and pupils from a range of faiths and cultures are encouraged to share their home experiences and contribute artefacts for display and discussion. Representatives of different beliefs visit the school. Attendance at music and dance festivals adds another dimension to the provision.
39. The school has good links with pre-school groups and secondary schools so that transition between the different phases of education is smooth. The headteacher and staff participate actively in the local schools' forum which is attempting to raise standards in the town as a whole by identifying and supporting common issues. For example there is joint funding for an ICT technician to keep the systems operational, a review of raising pupil self-esteem and shared curricular in-service training. Students are welcome in the school for work experience and training. These initiatives all have a positive effect on the professional expertise of staff.
40. There are a large number of visits arranged for the pupils to broaden and enhance their learning and social development. These include the Roman Baths, museums, Tesco, art exhibitions and the local railway station. There is a residential week for Year 6, which enables pupils to experience being away with others and developing their self-esteem. Visits to churches also mean that the clergy visit the school for assembly on occasions.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

41. The procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare, as well as their protection, are good. Records kept by the school indicate a depth of knowledge by the staff of the pupils encompassing both social and medical needs. Staff ensure that the aims of the school are understood by the pupils and are carried out in practice.

42. The school and grounds are clean and without litter or graffiti but the heating throughout the school is inconsistent and some of the classrooms are not warm enough for pupils to learn effectively. The entrance is welcoming and is used for pupils who are unwell thus enabling them to be near an adult. First aid boxes are available within the school and for the playground. The nurse is involved in the implications of growing up in Year 6 (the school has a question box which enables pupils to place a question without others knowing). She will also give advice and training in medical matters. Management for monitoring child protection is good and staff are aware of the procedures.
43. The school works hard in monitoring attendance and quickly identifies and follows up absences. The school contacts parents over absences and involves the Education Welfare Officer if necessary. The procedures for monitoring behaviour enable staff to work with parents to improve a situation through short-term home school/diary exchange.
44. The school together with the Park Education Support Centre has been effective in integrating two pupils who had been permanently excluded from their previous school and giving them a positive educational experience.
45. The school has sound assessment procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic and personal development. It undertakes a number of tests for all year groups. The national and internal test results are analysed to ensure that all pupils receive support that will enable them to make good progress in learning. This assessment system continues with various standardised tests as pupils move up the school. However, the results of these assessments are not used consistently for future planning. The school has an effective system for identifying pupils with special educational needs and for assessing their strengths and weaknesses. This information is used to construct individual education plans for each pupil.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

46. Overall, the parents' views of the school are very positive. Parents feel that the school has improved since the last inspection, although concern was expressed over homework and extra curricular activities. The inspectors judge that informal homework is good and the majority of pupils participate in reading at home and finding project information. Key Stage 2 have formal homework set and in mathematics this is included in the planning of the curriculum. Activities after school are varied and supported by approximately 30% overall of the pupils.
47. The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is very good and this was confirmed by the appreciation of parents for the work of the staff. There is a termly newsletter as well as information letters sent to parents. Each term, curriculum information is sent to each parent enabling them to know what the pupils will be doing. The prospectus is well presented and updated as appropriate. The school's annual report from Governors conforms to regulations and parents are provided with very good information about the progress of the pupil. Parents may contact the school at any time and the headteacher is in the playground on a regular basis when the pupils leave in the afternoon. Parents help in the classroom and also when pupils go out for visits.
48. Since the last inspection the information now given covers a variety of issues including curriculum. An evening on health education is available to Year 6 parents.
49. The parents and staff support the functions arranged by the Parent Teachers Association. The amount of money raised has increased as the school has grown larger and items such as playground equipment and computers have been purchased. This has a positive impact on pupils' learning.
50. Links with other education establishments are good and include young people coming into the school for "work experience" as well as NNEB students in training. Dance and music festivals allow the pupils to mix

with other schools and to develop and sense of competitiveness.

51. Since the last inspection the information given is now very good.
52. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are appropriately and regularly kept up to date about their children's progress.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

53. The school is led and managed well. The headteacher provides good leadership and gives a very clear educational direction. Over the last 3 to 4 years, since her appointment, the headteacher has systematically introduced and implemented several new initiatives in order to establish an educational provision which is of good quality and which ensures equal opportunity for all. She is supported well by the deputy headteacher and other members of staff. A senior management team has been established and good teamwork has been promoted. All staff with management responsibilities have a clear understanding of their roles and lead most areas of the curriculum effectively. Good planning and appropriate assessment procedures have been devised and are being implemented successfully. However, assessment in foundation subjects is not fully developed yet. The school has begun to analyse the standards achieved in national and internal tests. However, this analysis and other assessment results are not used consistently to inform future curricular planning.
54. Teaching is monitored well by the headteacher and the local authority adviser. The subject co-ordinators monitor planning and audit resources, but their roles in monitoring the quality of teaching in their subjects are underdeveloped.
55. The governing body has a clear structure with appropriate terms of reference. Regular meetings of the governing body and its committees have clear agendas and are well minuted. Governors are very supportive of the headteacher, who reports to them monthly keeping them well informed about the work of the school. They visit the school regularly and have a clear strategic overview of the performance of the school. They are proactive and take active part in shaping the direction of the school. They meet their statutory responsibilities effectively. However the test results are not analysed and evaluated rigorously enough to raise standards.
56. The school has a positive ethos which is well reflected in the work of the school. The aims and values of the school are reflected well in its practice. The school development plan is an effective document for guiding school improvement. It is based upon a realistic evaluation of what needs to be done in the school in order to take it forward.
57. The school has a strong commitment to special educational needs and invests considerable time, energy and funding in providing a thorough and comprehensive approach. The headteacher is the co-ordinator for special educational needs. She manages the provision effectively, ensuring that the additional support that she and other staff provide is carefully targeted. Pupils' progress is regularly and systematically reviewed, and support staff redirected in accordance with the changing needs of pupils. However, there is not enough monitoring of the work of support groups to ensure that work is sufficiently challenging and well matched to pupils' needs. Effective use is made of external agencies to supplement the expertise of the school staff, and appropriate training is provided for both teaching and support staff. The specific funding available to the school for special educational needs is used wisely and supplemented by a large amount from the school's own budget. The designated governor for special educational needs is well informed, fully involved and works in a productive partnership with the headteacher and staff. All statutory responsibilities for special educational needs are met.
58. Provision for the pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) is good. The school has very few pupils at an early stage of learning English who are supported well by a peripatetic teacher from the

Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant and the teachers and classroom assistants.

59. The number, qualifications and experience of teachers and classroom support staff match the demands of the curriculum. All teaching and support staff are conscientious and work effectively as a team. The classroom assistants are well qualified and experienced and make a good contribution to the progress made by pupils, especially the pupils with special educational needs. However, the school does not have teachers with expertise in music and physical education. Arrangements for the professional development of all staff are good and are linked effectively to whole-school needs identified in the school development plan. A policy for performance management has been introduced to the staff and further arrangements for its successful implementation are planned.
60. The induction programme is good and consistently applied. Newly qualified teachers and new members of staff receive good support. In addition to the local authority training, newly qualified teachers are well supported by the headteacher and their mentors. Teachers and classroom assistants have undergone training in literacy and numeracy. Arrangements for a systematic programme of training in information technology for all staff is due to take place soon.
61. The accommodation has improved significantly since the last inspection when it was an open plan small school. The building has been extended, providing individual classrooms for all year groups. The school now provides children and pupils with pleasant and good quality accommodation. The buildings and grounds are kept clean and in good condition by the caretaker. The grounds of the school are spacious. Outdoor facilities are good and are used very effectively to support and enhance pupils' learning in various areas of the curriculum, such as science and physical education. However, the heating system in the school is very inefficient. As a result the school building is unusually cold during winter. The inspection team confirms this and concludes that this affects pupils' learning adversely.
62. Resources for learning have been developed and improved across the curriculum over the past three years and are now satisfactory.
63. The school has a thorough approach to financial planning. The governors have a strategic overview of budget management. The chair of the finance committee manages financial planning efficiently, in collaboration with the headteacher. The school has accumulated the amount of money it is required to spend for the IT suite. This was shown as underspent in the financial report. Most of this underspend has already been used for buying resources and the remaining amount is kept in the contingency fund. This is appropriate and good practice.
64. School administration is efficient. The draft budget, carefully prepared by the headteacher in consultation with staff, is presented to the governing body for approval, with appropriate reference to the school development plan. Grants for pupils with special educational needs are used appropriately and effectively monitored. The deployment of the Ethnic Minority and Travellers Achievement Grant (EMTAG) is appropriately targeted to support pupils. The governors apply the principles of best value in all spending decisions and monitor its impact on financial planning closely.
65. The deployment of support staff is effective, although that of teachers needs reviewing for matching the expertise of teachers to the curriculum more effectively. Resources are used effectively to enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding in most areas of the curriculum. Good use is also made of visitors and outside visits to enhance pupils' learning. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

66. In order to raise standards further, the governors, headteacher and staff should now:

- raise pupils' standards of attainment in mathematics in Key Stage 2 by improving teacher expertise further;
- ensure effective implementation of the information technology programme throughout the school;
- improve pupils' skills in carrying out scientific enquiries in order to raise standards in science;
- ensure consistent use of assessment for future planning;
- analyse and evaluate the test results more rigorously and take appropriate actions to raise standards in all subjects.

In addition to the above the school may wish to address the following minor issue:

- subject co-ordinators' role in monitoring the quality of teaching

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	60
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	32

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	22	38	38	2	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	14	189
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		44

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.6
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	14	15	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	14	14
	Girls	14	13	14
	Total	27	27	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (81)]	93 (88)	97 (85)]
	National	84 (82)]	85 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	14	14
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	27	28	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (88)	97 (88)	97 (92)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	13	8	21

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	10	12
	Girls	7	6	6
	Total	18	16	18
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	86 (80)]	76 (76)	86 (88)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	9	9	9
	Girls	7	6	7
	Total	16	15	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	76 (80)	71 (76)	76 (84)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	80 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	2
Indian	4
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	1
White	150
Any other minority ethnic group	2

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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)	8.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.3
Average class size	27

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	59.5

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	28

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	30

Number of pupils per FTE adult	4
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
	£
Total income	£368,466
Total expenditure	£356,163
Expenditure per pupil	£1,746
Balance brought forward from previous year	£39,824
Balance carried forward to next year	£49,791

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

203

Number of questionnaires returned

71

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	32	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	58	38	1	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	61	38	0	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	60	9	0	2
The teaching is good.	62	37	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	54	36	10	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	73	25	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	32	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	45	46	6	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	77	21	0	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	42	0	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	35	12	3	13

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

67. Children's attainment on entry to the nursery is slightly below average. As they move through the nursery and reception classes, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and higher attainers make good progress in almost all areas of learning and satisfactory progress in the remainder. They make particularly good progress in developing personal, social, speaking, listening, mathematical and creative skills so that, by the age of five, attainment in these areas exceeds the expected standards and many pupils are working within Level 1 of the National Curriculum. Overall attainment is average in the other areas of learning but the work of higher attainers is appropriately above average.
68. In the nursery, children quickly develop the confidence to talk about their work and their experiences at home. They willingly offer their own ideas when making up a class story or when working in a small group with an adult. Children in the reception class can describe and explain their work with clarity and make good use of appropriate vocabulary, for example, when discussing with a visitor the use of the planning board during 'free choice' or how they made their kites. All the children enthusiastically learn nursery rhymes, songs and chants and enjoy sharing them in a group. The children also develop good listening skills. They listen carefully to instructions and quickly become absorbed in the stories they hear, eagerly participating in discussions about the characters and events in them.
69. Children attain the expected levels in reading and writing by the age of five. Nursery children understand that print carries meaning and know the difference between words and pictures. They enjoy being read to and can interpret information from pictures and the book title. They enjoy looking at books and handle them carefully but the current organisation of the nursery limits their opportunities to choose and use books for themselves. Children in the reception class have developed a satisfactory knowledge of sounds that they use to help them read and write an appropriate range of common words. Some nursery children can write their names and form some letters correctly. Most children know the difference between drawing and writing. All enjoy mark making with pencils, crayons and paint in guided activities but few have the confidence to experiment on their own. Activities such as manipulating dough, jigsaws and drawing help the children to develop the skills they need for writing.
70. Many of the children exceed the Early Learning Goals in number and shape work. Nursery children have a very good knowledge of simple geometric shapes such as squares, rectangles and triangles. Most can count reliably to 5, for example when counting out snacks at milk time, but higher attaining pupils can count to at least 30 when they see how many children are present each day. Reception children apply their number knowledge to simple problems through practical activities involving 'more than' and 'less than'. Some can add number pairs mentally, count on or back from given numbers in simple patterns and correctly apply terms such as 'longer' and 'shorter' in their measuring. Many are already working from the early stages of the National Curriculum.
71. Children's creative development is generally good and many exceed the expected levels by the end of the reception year. Nursery children enjoy making pictures by painting, printing and sticking with different materials and objects. Reception children experiment with pencils to make patterns and mix white paint with different colours to make lighter shades. In music, pupils perform well. They thoroughly enjoy music making, using a variety of instruments with control and imagination, and singing songs and rhymes they know with great enthusiasm. Nursery children find out about the sounds made by different musical instruments when they pass them round and then make up songs about themselves and the instruments while reception children use a variety of kitchen utensils to accompany a musical story. The two groups meet weekly when they sing and perform enjoyable action songs such as 'Old McDonald had a band!'
72. The physical development of children is satisfactory. They run, leap, jump and balance with appropriate

control and awareness of space when they use the adventure equipment and large wheeled toys outside. Reception children show sound co-ordination when they throw and catch balls and bean bags. However pupils' access to these activities is limited by the lack of a secure external area and the consequent need for timetable outdoor play. Pupils develop appropriate fine motor skills with satisfactory control of brushes, crayons and tools when making pictures and models and working with jigsaws, construction kits and musical instruments.

73. The children acquire a sound understanding and knowledge of the world. They make model buggies and buildings using different materials and construction kits, sometimes using pictures to guide them, and play imaginatively with 'small world' toys such as garages, cars, trains and farms. Pupils in the nursery know how to use the mouse to control the computer while those in reception can click and drag to create the context for a story. Pupils' scientific understanding is developing well. Nursery children have an appropriate awareness of the natural world through their nature walks in the school grounds and have begun to develop a sense of time through their study of photographs of themselves as babies. They show in their imaginative play that they know animals need food and water to live. They can discuss the properties of damp sand and describe how to use a magnifying glass. Reception pupils build steadily on these earlier skills, for example, they can describe the different properties of balloons filled with air, ice or water, and discuss how one state could be changed to another.
74. Nursery and reception children make good progress in the development of their personal, social and emotional skills. They are interested, eager to try new activities and well motivated. Generally, they listen attentively, sometimes in awe when the story is gripping or when they are amazed by an experiment in science. They patiently wait while others speak, and are usually keen to demonstrate what they can do when discussing their work together. The children behave well and are generally polite and caring towards each other. Nursery children are beginning to share and take turns, for example, with play costumes and popular toys, and to remember to say 'thank you' and 'please'. They happily play and learn alongside each other, offering advice and help when playing games or when discussing the best way to cook pizza or make tea in the role play area. They are learning to take responsibility as they put on their coats for themselves and help to clear up in the classroom. This they do with speed and efficiency.
75. The teaching of children in the reception and nursery is never less than satisfactory but is usually good or very good. The adult-child relationships are very strong and inspire confidence in the children. Daily routines are well established and there are high expectations of children's behaviour and work. As a result the nursery and reception classes provide calm, orderly and well managed learning environments. Teachers and support staff have a good understanding of how young children learn and of the foundation curriculum. They work very effectively together as a team sharing roles and responsibilities. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives for learning which are usually explained simply to the children. Most activities are challenging and exciting, with an appropriate emphasis on learning through play and talk. Pupils' progress is carefully assessed against the learning objectives and good use made of the information when planning the next lessons. Some very skilled support, including systematic tracking of progress, is provided for pupils with special educational needs. This ensures that they are able to participate in the full range of learning opportunities. Higher attaining children are also taught effectively and make progress appropriate to their abilities.
76. Generally adults interact well with the children as they work in both formal and spontaneous situations. They are very aware of the need to promote good language development. However, there are occasions in the nursery when the enthusiasm of the adult overwhelms the children, restricting the opportunities for children themselves to initiate and extend conversation, or when not enough use is made of role-play to extend vocabulary. The organisation of books in the nursery makes it difficult for pupils to access them at certain times of the day. During the inspection, few children were seen freely choosing books, or using the writing area on their own. It is important that staff address this situation by supporting and encouraging children in these activities outside the formal teaching situations.
77. The curriculum for the under-fives is stimulating, vibrant and exciting, and suitably organised according to the maturity and age of the pupils. A very caring and positive atmosphere has been created. Children

enjoy their learning and look forward to coming to school. The new foundation curriculum for under-fives introduced in September 2000, has been implemented effectively although the policy does not yet reflect this progress. Curriculum planning is systematic and of high quality with an appropriate emphasis on personal, social and emotional development. All areas of learning are covered but the absence of a secure external area for the under-fives means that it is not possible for the school to integrate the indoor and outdoor learning environments as expected for nursery education. In the circumstances, teachers do the best they can by timetabling regular outdoor sessions but this still falls somewhat short of the expected curriculum provision for children of this age. There is a suitable balance between formal learning activities taught or supervised by an adult, and opportunities for pupils to initiate and choose activities for themselves. Through such devices as the 'planning board' teachers and children together carefully monitor the choices that children make in order to ensure that each has a broad learning experience.

78. Good links have been established with parents, some of whom help in the nursery although few do so in the reception. Admission and transfer arrangements are good, with adequate information provided to parents, meetings held and opportunities for children to make preliminary visits to their class.
79. The management of provision for the under-fives is effective. The nursery and reception staff work well together to ensure progression and continuity from class to class and from term to term. They have provided training on the new curriculum to other colleagues and are strongly committed to improve provision further. However, there is no development plan for the under-fives to provide direction and vision for future development, nor is there a designated budget.
80. The under-fives provision has changed significantly since the last inspection. Children's abilities on intake to the school are now more mixed as the school has grown and serves a wider area than before, and the school now has a nursery in addition to the reception class. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection in maintaining similar standards and progress to those found four years ago.

ENGLISH

81. The results in the national tests this year show a significant rise in standards at Key Stage 1, especially in reading, improving by approximately 12 per cent over the 1999 results. Standards attained by eleven year old pupils, at the end of Key Stage 2, remain above average in both the 1999 and 2000 national tests. When compared with similar schools, standards are average in both key stages in 2000 national tests. Over the last 3 years, results show some decline in standards. This is due to high pupil mobility and a high proportion of pupils with special needs in Year 6. Evidence from the current inspection indicates that pupils in both key stages attain standards that are in line with the national averages in all three elements of English. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 and satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2.
82. By the age of seven and eleven, pupils' attainment in speaking and listening is in line with the national average. By the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils respond sensibly to questions and express their ideas clearly during whole class and group discussions. This was well exemplified in a Year 2 lesson where the whole class was gainfully engaged in a discussion on spoken and written language while analysing the text in a shared reading session. Pupils listen to the teachers and to each other carefully and are confident speakers in a variety of situations. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils become more articulate and confident as they discuss their work and share their opinions about books they read. For example Year 3 pupils discussed the difference between the play-scripts and prose and how to incorporate stage directions within the texts. They use a range of vocabulary and make relevant contributions to lessons and discussions.
83. Standards in reading are in line with the national averages at the end of both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils read stories accurately and with expression. They use a range of strategies to help them in their reading and discuss a variety of texts. They use these well when they read independently. Most pupils predict what might happen using their knowledge of the plot and characters and show clear

understanding of the events of the stories they read. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils talk about the books that they read with enthusiasm and explain what they like and what they do not like. Higher attaining pupils read very well from a wide range of interesting books that include non-fiction and fiction. They discuss preferences of author and character. All pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to read in the literacy hour and in other subjects. Library facilities are good and each class is timetabled to use the library once a week, but opportunities to use books for independent research are limited. However, the school makes good use of the local library service which support pupils' learning effectively.

84. Attainment in writing, by the end of each Key Stage is in line with the national average. By the end of Key Stage 1, higher attainers develop their ideas in sequence, use capital letters, spell most words correctly and use joined writing. Most pupils write for a suitable range of purposes. They choose vocabulary imaginatively and some start reviewing books and comment on story structure. They compose their own stories, recall those they have heard and write about things they have seen or done. By the time they are 11 pupils are beginning to write imaginatively for different audiences, for example while writing a character sketch, in a Year 4 lesson, pupils describe the physical characteristics and personality, using a range of imaginative vocabulary. In Year 6, while studying 'Macbeth', pupils learn to identify the usage of language in the past and write their personal response in question and answer form. Most pupils write appropriately for a wide range of purposes. Opportunities for writing include stories, newspaper articles, persuasion instructions, letters and poetry. However, opportunities for developing imaginative and extended writing are very limited, especially in upper Key Stage 2. Most pupils at 11 use punctuation correctly. They write with joined legible handwriting and standards of presentation are generally neat.
85. The National Literacy Strategy has been effectively introduced and literacy is used well to support work in other subjects. For example, pupils write reflectively in history and religious education.
86. The quality of teaching is good overall, most lessons being good and some very good. Where teaching is good or very good learning objectives are thoroughly rehearsed with the pupils to focus their attention and revisited at the end to check their understanding. Effective questioning is used to consolidate understanding of text. Teachers plan effectively and ensure that activities match the learning needs pupils appropriately. Behaviour management is good. As a result, pupils are keen, well focussed and engage well with activities.
87. Pupils with special educational needs have detailed individual action plans, which are followed carefully. Pupils' learning is enhanced by the very good contribution made by the learning support assistants who facilitate the involvement and contributions of those pupils with special educational needs and support them in their individual tasks. Pupils speaking English as an additional language are supported effectively and make good progress.
88. Management of English, shared by two co-ordinators, is good. They are knowledgeable and monitor planning and audit resources regularly and effectively. However, the co-ordinators' role in monitoring teaching is not developed yet. Class libraries contain a good range of books. Newly purchased big books are being used very effectively with the younger pupils who enjoy the related activities. Assessment procedures are well established and they are used efficiently to chart pupils' progress. Standards in English have been maintained at a similar level since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

89. The attainment of pupils aged eleven in the 1999 national tests was above the national average but below that of similar schools. The test results for 2000 were average compared to all schools but below average compared to schools with a similar proportion of pupils taking free school meals. This test information

also shows that pupils have made only modest progress during Key Stage 2 when compared to other similar schools. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher level 5 was above the national average in 1999 and at the national average in 2000. The test results of the last two years show a downward trend although there are significant variations in the characteristics of each year group. Observation and scrutiny of pupils' work during the inspection indicate that standards in the current Year 6 are below average but that attainment in the current Years 3 and 5 are well above average. The statutory Year 6 targets set by the school reflect this difference. They are projected below the national average in 2001 and well above the average in 2002 but are equally challenging for the age groups concerned. Current performance indicates that the school is on track to achieve these targets.

90. At Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment in the 1999 tests was at the national average but well below average compared to similar schools. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher level 3 was above the national average. The 2000 test results show that standards are well above average compared both nationally and to similar schools, including the proportion of pupils achieving the higher level 3. Evidence from the inspection indicates that current standards at Key Stage 1 are average.
91. Pupils' achievement varies between classes because of shortcomings in some aspects of the teaching but is satisfactory overall. Those with special educational needs generally make good progress because of the effective support they receive while higher attainers are usually suitably challenged by more difficult work. Test results and work seen during the inspection indicate that the attainment of boys and girls is not significantly different.
92. Pupils apply their skills in numeracy satisfactorily in other areas of the curriculum. Younger pupils count to see how many are present in their class and use their understanding of graphs to make and interpret graphs showing the colour of their eyes. In Key Stage 2, pupils read scales on scientific instruments, construct 3 dimensional shapes and nets, and use computer programs to create geometric designs and patterns. In one class, pupils enjoyed applying their calculation and problem-solving skills in some exciting work based on the several thousand conkers they had collected. There is appropriate use of information technology within the subject.
93. The quality of teaching in both key stages is at least satisfactory but there is scope for greater challenge. A third of the teaching is very good because lessons are well structured with a brisk and purposeful pace to the learning throughout. Such lessons begin with some rapid mental practice in which pupils improve their recall of number bonds and tables. Teachers make skilful use of questioning to develop pupils' mathematical strategies and help pupils to deepen their understanding by asking them to explain their calculations to the class. Well chosen follow-up tasks such as the use of a target number for pupils to match in their calculations, provide a practical approach that motivates and challenges pupils. Pupils achieve well, often at a higher level than expected of their ages. Their progress is carefully assessed during the lesson and detailed notes made which are used to guide the next stage of planning.
94. Lessons that are satisfactory often have some of these good features but also contain weaknesses associated with the pace or structure of one or more parts of the lesson. These prevent pupils from achieving as much as they could in the time available and hinder pupils' progress, particularly at Key Stage 2. Although teachers plan their lessons carefully with clear aims, some lessons start without an explanation of the purpose of the learning, leaving pupils unsure of what they are trying to achieve. Sometimes the questioning and discussion is too laboured, and far too long is spent listening to the teacher, leaving insufficient time for pupils to develop their work. At such times, some pupils become restless and lose concentration. In one lesson, much good learning took place during oral work at the beginning and end of the lesson but expectations were not high enough in the middle of the lesson and the tasks set involved more writing than mathematics. Despite these shortcomings, the teaching of mathematics has improved since the last inspection when there was little direct teaching, questioning and problem solving. Effective use is made of homework to extend and consolidate the work begun in school.

95. Pupils generally behave well in their mathematics lessons except when the pace drops and their attention wanders. They respond positively when challenged and most are keen to participate in discussions volunteer answers to questions and explain their reasoning. Pupils in Key Stage 1 enthusiastically use number fans to hold up their answers, while older pupils work intensively on problem solving tasks in groups, arguing sensibly about possible solutions and strategies.
96. Considerable work has taken place to introduce the National Numeracy Strategy. For example, key staff have undertaken intensive training, teaching approaches have been modified and monitored, and all teachers plan conscientiously to the national framework. Opportunities for pupils to develop their mental skills, to work on tasks adjusted to their level of attainment, and to meet together in a plenary to discuss their work are present in every lesson. In some classes these recently introduced improvements are beginning to make an impact on standards. However, there is still considerable variation between classes in the quality and effectiveness of these methods which indicates that further monitoring and support are necessary in implementing the strategy. The school has identified the need to raise standards in mathematics as a priority in its development plan but the plan lacks specific strategies to achieve this improvement.
97. The school is experimenting with the use of setting at Key Stage 2 in order to reduce the ability range of the groups taught by each teacher. While this is proving clearly beneficial to pupils in Year 5, the current approach to planning does not enable all Year 6 pupils to reach the levels expected of their ages.
98. Appropriate arrangements are in place to test pupils' attainment and progress as they move through the school but the test information is not evaluated with sufficient rigour to pinpoint weaknesses in the teaching and learning of mathematics and enable appropriate action to be taken.
99. The school has made some satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection although standards remain much the same as before. There has been some effective monitoring of teaching during the first year of the National Numeracy Strategy that has led to important improvements in practice. Teaching is more effective with no unsatisfactory teaching seen and appropriate attention is given to each area of mathematics.

SCIENCE

100. In 2000 the standard attained in the science tests by pupils at the end of Year 6 was average compared to those of other schools nationally, but the proportion of pupils attaining high levels was below average which is a decrease in standards from the previous year. In comparison with similar schools the standards are well below average. Inspection finds that standards currently in Year 6 are just about average, but with a very limited proportion of high attainment. In 2000 the teacher assessed standards at the end of Year 2 to be well above average compared to schools nationally. The proportion attaining highly was close to the national average. Inspection finds that standards are currently average but with limited high attainment. These school standards are the same as those at the time of the previous inspection in 1996. Standards in the scientific enquiry component of the science National Curriculum are below what is expected. This and the underachievement of some pupils was an identified weakness at the last inspection.
101. During the inspection progress in many lessons was good, but through observing pupils' completed work across the school and talking to pupils, it is judged that progress overall is satisfactory, including that of pupils with special educational needs. Pupils' skills in scientific enquiry, where they need to demonstrate how to plan, obtain, present and evaluate evidence to support ideas or answer questions, is underdeveloped.
102. Pupils in Year 2 are developing their knowledge of a range of properties of materials and linking these to the reason for choosing a specific material when making an object. Some pupils are starting to learn and apply new scientific terminology such as rigid and malleable when describing materials. Pupils are able

to identify situations requiring the use of electricity and to construct circuits to make a bulb light up, but their skills in accurately recording their circuits and explaining how they work are not as secure.

103. In Key Stage 2 pupils are learning to gather data to answer enquiry questions, for example when considering the rate of growth since their birth and the proportion of fat in various foods to inform their choice of a balanced and healthy diet. Pupils' skills in the process of presenting their data in graphical forms are developing but significant teacher intervention is needed to help many pupils construct graphs to complete the task, particularly in Year 6. Pupils record scientific work effectively in a variety of ways so as to communicate accurately. Some of the pupils in Year 6 do not yet have a secure understanding of basic scientific concepts such as the explanation for day and night, dissolving and separating, but they can explain reasonably accurately how sound travels. Most cannot explain how to test systematically whether sound would travel best through a thick string in a string telephone.
104. Pupils enjoy science lessons and usually are attentive, well behaved and work co-operatively when required. In some classes during the teacher's introductions and discussion there is quiet inattention and a reluctance to contribute information and ideas for discussion. Occasionally this is because the pupils are required to listen for a lengthy period but this is not always the situation. These pupils' attitudes generally improve once they start the activity. There are, however, many pupils who are very articulate well informed and anxious to share their ideas. Their ability is not always extended sufficiently.
105. The quality of teaching is good overall, which is an improvement since the last inspection, but there are still some unsatisfactory features. All teachers plan thoroughly and resources are usually well prepared to deliver the intended learning at a good pace. Most teachers share the intended learning with the pupils at the start of lesson. In the best lessons, they also refer to this throughout the session and in the plenary, which ensures pupils are aware of the purpose of their activity and what it has told them in terms of new knowledge; for example how to read food values on packaging when deciding which product to buy for a healthy meal. These lessons also have a good balance between short, focussed teaching inputs and periods of pupil experimentation, data gathering or analysis. This provides clear instruction for the pupils and then allows them to put into practice what has been discussed or to explore new ideas before coming back and consolidating and challenging findings; for example when measuring their skull circumference and their height to compare the size of their skeleton now and when born. However, in some lessons, for example when introducing the construction and interpretation of line graphs, the learning is not clearly delivered and pupils do not make the gains in knowledge and skills that they should. Some teachers have insufficient expectations for their pupils. They permit them to work at too slow a pace and provide a recording task that does not have sufficient challenge, particularly for the more able pupils, for example when they are asked to simply record what the teacher has done. The limited amount of recorded science work, particularly in Key Stage 1, indicates that there is insufficient emphasis given to developing recording skills and enabling pupils to show independence and depth of knowledge. There is some effective marking of pupils' work but this is not consistent across the school and in some instances is more aligned to improving literacy than science. Pupils with special educational needs are generally well supported either by the class teacher or support staff. Teachers' assessment still lacks rigour particularly for science enquiry, and as a result lessons are not always planned to extend all pupils appropriately.
106. The school has just changed its scheme of work and this is helping the clarity of teachers' planning. Resources have been increased to meet identified needs. The school makes good use of workshop loan resources such as 'Lightworks' to stimulate pupils' interest and is planning a science week for the spring term. The school grounds provide ample opportunity for environmental work. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' plans thoroughly to ensure staff are covering the intended learning, but as yet there is no requirement to monitor for the effectiveness of the chosen activities in raising standards within a class although data and targets are in place for each class. As yet the school has not sufficiently analysed the results of the Key Stage 2 tests to inform future curricular planning. The co-ordinator has identified the need to carry out whole school moderated assessments of pupils' work, particularly scientific enquiry and to start reviewing the curriculum.

ART AND DESIGN

107. Throughout the school standards in art are good and this is a situation that has been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils in both key stages are able to work confidently with a very wide range of materials in both two and three dimensions. Work is generally prompted by a stimulus or by research and so has purpose. Work of many artists provides the stimulus for pupils' own experimentation, such as Pau Klee's 'Senecio' for creating portraits; Renoir's 'Les Parapluies' to exploring relationships and the use of shades of blue; Matisse's 'Snail' to create animals using a computer drawing package.
108. Pupils manipulate tools and materials skilfully, which results from clear teaching of basic techniques such as brush control, colour mixing and the use of templates for pattern accuracy when cutting multiple copies. There is a strong ethos for enabling pupil experimentation and creativity and pupils respond well to this challenge, having great pride in their work and effort.
109. Progress is obvious in the work displayed. In Year 1 pupils observe faces carefully and paint portraits with clear shape and line, whilst Year 2 pupils, as part of developing their knowledge of primary colours and colour mixing, have produced vibrant, abstract patterns by rolling paint-covered balls across paper observing and predicting the effect of colours blending. By Year 3 pupils demonstrate very good observational drawing skills and use of pencil shading in their still life sketches of vegetables. The ability to create and repeat patterns is demonstrated within Year 4. Pupils in Year 5 are aware of the impact of their work, for example the use of a sunset background and silhouettes to present a large-scale frieze for work on World War 2. By Year 6 pupils use Egyptian tomb paintings as a stimulus for their carefully executed water colour paintings, demonstrating good technique and knowledge of colour.
110. Very few art lessons were taking place during the inspection week and so no judgement can be made about the quality of the teaching, but the high quality of the work displayed infers that teachers enable pupils to make good progress. Evidence exists in photographic form of high quality work involving individual and group projects and many different media produced in the last few years. During Millennium Arts Week at the beginning of the year all pupils worked together in mixed age groups on a wide range of projects, including producing a beautiful quilt demonstrating the life of the school. Art makes a strong contribution to the welcoming ethos of the school. The work is displayed to create an attractive environment that celebrates all pupils' work, both within the art curriculum and depicting knowledge of other subjects, such as models of mummies using historical knowledge about ancient Egypt and the illustration of significant events in a book being studied in the literacy hour.
111. The co-ordinator provides enthusiastic and knowledgeable support and is monitoring the implementation of the new government produced scheme of work. The impact of her attendance at in-service training to develop the use of the computer in art is already visible. Similarly staff training in textiles has raised the profile of this aspect of the curriculum and creative thread work is displayed in the library. The co-ordinator continues to seek to improve provision and is currently purchasing resources to further increase the multicultural dimension in art lessons.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

112. Due to the school's topic framework very little work was available for inspection and few lessons were observed. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement about standards attained by the age of seven or the overall quality of teaching. Using evidence seen in two lessons and work available from last year, standards by the age of eleven are judged to be average which means the school has maintained

standards since the previous inspection in 1996.

113. The school has just changed its scheme of work to that provided by the government. The topics currently being taught provide good opportunities for pupils to use their historical knowledge and research skills to inform their designs. Year 4 pupils are able to apply their knowledge of the character of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon when designing a throne for their wedding. This knowledge has been further informed by prior research into chair design. Pupils can generate a design, evaluate and amend construction issues and label finishing details. Year 5 pupils contributed personal examples to extend the class collection of historical and cultural headgear. They analyse these carefully for fitness of purpose and key design features in preparation for designing and making their own headgear.
114. Teaching in the two lessons observed in Key Stage 2 was good or better. Introductions in these lessons were clear; objectives were constantly referred to, to ensure pupils were clear about the purpose of why they were doing things; there were high expectations for pupil achievement; interventions were timed appropriately to identify problems and provide strategies to overcome them. Good resources added to the motivation of the task. Most pupils enjoy the challenge of design and technology but some suffer minor frustration by not being able to fulfil their mental image in design. These are well supported to enable them to succeed. Pupils concentrate well, are willing to think decisions through and discuss their reasons for choice.
115. There has been little opportunity to develop the subject further since the last inspection apart from implementing the scheme of work and review resources to meet topic demands. The new co-ordinator monitors planning thoroughly, but assessment information to guide curricular planning and pupils' personal development is still underdeveloped.

GEOGRAPHY

116. Timetabling arrangements meant that it was possible to see only one lesson during the inspection. There was insufficient evidence on which to make overall judgements about pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, or about the extent to which standards have improved in geography since the previous inspection.
117. In the lesson seen, pupils in Key Stage 1 could describe accurately and clearly features and journeys in the local area. They make elementary sketch maps of their journey to school, showing an appropriate sense of direction for their ages. Higher attainers are beginning to represent buildings on their maps with symbols rather than pictures. The teacher uses effective question and answer techniques to establish why maps are useful and ensures that the lesson develops with appropriate pace and tasks that challenge and motivate pupils.
118. The way in which the curriculum is organised is unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 2 in particular, the majority of geography is taught during one term in the year although some incidental work, based for example on news events or on links with topics in other subjects, is covered throughout the year. For most pupils the gap of a year before they return to any in-depth work in the subject makes it difficult to build on previous learning and hinders the development of their skills. The school has adopted national schemes of work in the subject. However, there is no long-term plan to indicate which units and topics are to be covered in each year group so that the school cannot be certain that pupils experience progression and continuity in their learning, or that all aspects of the geography curriculum are adequately covered. An analysis of timetables suggests that little time is provided for the subject over the year which may also limit the breadth and depth of work covered in the subject.
119. The management of the subject is satisfactory in that the recently appointed co-ordinator has a clear view of the need to review the geography curriculum and of the steps that need to be taken to bring this about. Some useful resource packs have been compiled to support the study of locations such as India and Kenya but there are insufficient resources for the new units of work being taken on.

HISTORY

120. Standards are the same as they were at the last inspection. By the end of both key stages the pupils reach the standards expected for their age.
121. By the age of seven pupils have developed their knowledge and understanding of the past, for example by considering what it was like to live in London at the time of the Great Fire of London. Many are able to compare those times with modern London and are starting to gain a sense of change over time. A few can provide additional factual information including dates that they are eager to share, which reflects the level of interest generated by the topic and the desire to research information at home. Most pupils show great interest in how evidence is gained, for example they were amazed by the fact that Samuel Pepys diary had survived the Great Fire. This is due to the skilful way in which children are engaged in the account. Pupils continue this enjoyment of gaining historical facts and information into Key Stage 2 and many are keen to carry out further research, particularly using sources on the Internet or on CD-ROMs. At age ten and eleven, pupils have sound knowledge of life in this country at the time of the Second World War and of the society that existed in Ancient Egypt. They can explain the Egyptians' awe of the power of the Gods and their views concerning life after death. In both Years 5 and 6 pupils are developing the skills of analysing evidence sources for clues about the past, for example in Year 5 when creating a descriptor of a person from the luggage in their suitcase. The interesting objects in the case and the opportunity for first hand observation made this particularly successful.
122. Teaching is generally effective in promoting the way evidence of the past is gained and ensuring that pupils are well informed of the factual details of the period. Opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their ideas through discussion. Pupils are provided with interesting ways of applying this knowledge, for example in Year 3 when writing about their life in Verulamium to another person and in Year 4 by putting themselves in the role of Henry VIII to devise a daily diary that shows understanding of the role of a monarch. Sometimes information and instructions for tasks are not given with sufficient clarity and teachers have to visit individuals to explain what is expected of them, which reduces motivation and the pace of learning. In Years 2, 4 and 5 consolidation of the information gained during the lesson focused pupils clearly on what they had learnt and how this added to the wider body of knowledge that they were acquiring about the period.
123. The newly implemented scheme of work is helping teachers to clarify objectives for a lesson. Although curriculum planning is monitored for coverage of designated learning objectives, as yet assessment information about pupils' attainment is not used to guide curricular planning sufficiently to target and extend the capabilities of all pupils. There are very good opportunities to visit historical sites such as Ashwell and Verulamium and these significantly contribute to pupils' enjoyment and historical knowledge. The good resources within the school or acquired through museum loans and contributions from pupils' families have a positive impact on pupils' first hand experiences and opportunities for research.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

124. Standards are better now than they were at the last inspection. Improvements have been brought about through the implementation of the school action plan and the guidance of the co-ordinator. By Year 2 and Year 6 standards are just about average. Further improvements in standards are still needed, particularly for those pupils who are already very confident in their use of the computer, and for all pupils to increase their understanding of how technology affects their life and when it is most effective to use it. Progress in implementing the subject development plan has been restricted by the delay in the establishment of the computer suite and its new generation computers, which is a frustration to the staff. The school has a clear development plan linking staff professional development provided through the new opportunities for funding for ICT with the opening of the new computer facility, hopefully in January 2001. Staff have also received in-service training to increase confidence and expertise and this has contributed significantly to the increased opportunities offered. The school makes good use of co-ordinator expertise to support

staff in the classroom.

125. Although during the inspection week there was only a limited amount of ICT taking place, the co-ordinator has a well annotated portfolio exemplifying the wide range of activities undertaken, demonstrating that the school, despite current inadequacies in hardware, is providing a reasonable coverage of ICT experiences in line with statutory requirements. Work displayed around the school also demonstrates a range of appropriate uses of ICT to communicate findings in a variety of ways.
126. Teachers provide some direct instruction of new techniques such as the use of a paint package in Year 2, but much of the learning is gained by pupils working systematically in pairs completing set tasks, often related to the literacy curriculum. This is time consuming and some of the work is unsupported resulting in the rate of progress being slower. Records are kept to ensure equal access, but there is little additional teaching for more capable pupils, which is an unacceptable situation, as some of the activities lack a high level of challenge in terms of increasing ICT capability. In some designated ICT lessons the objectives are confused with the objectives for literacy, so that instead of teaching ICT skills as planned for example, the lesson focuses more on improving use of adjectives, not improving ICT skills.
127. Pupils by the age of seven can communicate ideas using both text and graphics, as they demonstrated with their creation of a firework picture using Colour Magic with a shaded background, spray can effects and geometric shapes into which, when challenged, they were able to insert a text box and provide a title for their picture. The end product was attractive and the pupils were able to evaluate the finished effect. By the age of eleven pupils have progressed in their capability to create works of art using the drawing tools and flipping, rotating, reducing and extending shapes, for example when interpreting the style of Matisse. They have also developed their capability to edit work and to import text and information from other sources, such as adding a graph to their account of a science experiment. They are gaining the confidence and skill to search the web using carefully framed search commands. They can then access significant information to aid their topic work, for example importing a map of the River Nile and listing major benefits that the river provides. However, many pupils do not have a very well developed understanding of the extent ICT affects their everyday life and that of the commercial world.
128. Most pupils enjoy using ICT and are eager to demonstrate their capability. Many have computers at home and put these to good use to support their topic work. The school is starting to implement the new government scheme of work and is well placed to improve its provision for ICT once the new facility is operational.

MUSIC

129. Timetabling arrangements meant that it was not possible to observe a range of lessons at each key stage. Consequently, there was insufficient evidence on which to base overall judgements about pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. Discussions were held with the subject co-ordinator, and the school development plan and teachers' planning were scrutinised. Assemblies, one dance and one music lesson were observed.
130. Despite the absence of a music specialist, teachers conscientiously provide a coherent approach using national schemes of work. This ensures that pupils receive the full breadth of the music curriculum with adequate opportunities to sing, to listen to a variety of music from different times and cultures, and to compose their own music using a range of instruments. Pupils have also benefited from a visiting brass teacher and from opportunities for older pupils to perform at the Hatfield Music Festival. Teachers make appropriate use of pre-recorded music programmes to extend the range of pupils' experiences and make some effective links with other subjects, for example, when Year 5 pupils learn songs associated with such events as the Second World War as part of their work in history.
131. In the one lesson seen, Year 6 pupils of all abilities achieved well when recording their own musical ideas. Individually, they designed symbols to represent the sounds made by an instrument of their choice, and

with others, composed a simple score. They behaved responsibly, showing initiative in designing and discussing their scores and working effectively in groups. The teaching was well planned with clear explanations and a lively pace to the challenges provided. Opportunities were provided for pupils to practise and refine their scores and to listen to and critique those of others. The same pupils listened carefully to music in a dance lesson and adjusted the mood and movement of their work sensitively to the music. Standards in these lessons were average and were similar to those found at the time of the last inspection.

132. In assembly, pupils listen well to the music provided and some can name the piece and its composer. However, standards of singing in assembly are below average. Without a pianist on the staff, recorded singing is played for the pupils to accompany. Although many pupils clearly enjoy these opportunities others sing without enthusiasm or inspiration and at times their voices cannot be heard over the recorded singing.
133. The co-ordinator is recently appointed. She has monitored planning and audited resources and has some sound ideas for further developing music provision in the school. She is aware that the policy needs to be revised in line with the new curriculum. Since the last inspection resources have been substantially improved, giving pupils a good range and quantity of instruments from which to choose. However, the main challenge facing the school is to find ways to improve standards of singing.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION (PE)

134. In physical education, pupils generally make satisfactory progress and attain standards that are appropriate for their ages in both Key Stage 1 and 2. During the inspection, lessons in games, gymnastics and dance were observed in different age groups. Pupils in Year 3, 4 and 5 attend weekly swimming sessions in the town. Due to timetabling, it was not possible to observe any of these lessons but records show that standards are above average with most pupils able to swim 25 metres by the end of Year 5. Standards in PE are similar to those found at the time of the last inspection but the provision and standards in dance have improved. However, in a number of games and gymnastics lessons, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to refine and improve the quality of their work and standards could be higher.
135. At Key Stage 1, pupils show the agility and co-ordination to be expected of their ages in the gymnastics lessons seen. They use space safely during warm up for stretching, bending and running movements. On the apparatus they perform different ways of travelling with reasonable control and aesthetic awareness but their movements lack refinement. Higher attainers show very good control and poise as they jump from equipment and land softly.
136. The Year 5 gymnastics lesson observed indicates that pupils are making steady progress through the school. These older pupils confidently build sequences of movement involving shapes, balances, twists and jumps.
137. Games lessons were observed at Key Stage 2 in Years 3 and 4. Pupils improve their ball skills by working in pairs to pass, throw and catch. Most show adequate control for their ages, particularly when they concentrate on improving their techniques following demonstration by the teacher or another pupil. They are beginning to develop appropriate positional sense when playing group games that involve passing and intercepting a ball. The only dance lesson seen was in Year 6. Pupils responded imaginatively to the stimulus of Native American music, interpreting the music and its moods with feeling and working effectively with their partners to plan, practise and refine their sequences.
138. Most pupils have positive attitudes to physical education and enjoy their lessons. They work with concentration and determination, sustaining a good work rate and achieving appropriately. Occasionally however, a small number of pupils behave immaturely, usually because they have too long to wait or because the teacher's expectations of behaviour are not sufficiently high.

139. Teaching is satisfactory in two-thirds of lessons seen and good in one third. Lessons are usually thoroughly planned with clear aims and a sound progression of suitable tasks including warm-up activities. However, the organisation of groups and apparatus in some gymnastics lessons results in pupils spending too much time waiting for their turns. Although they are very safety conscious, not all teachers have a good understanding of how pupils should carry the apparatus and further training for teachers and pupils is necessary.
140. Where teaching is good, teachers have high expectations of pupils and effective strategies to ensure good behaviour. In particular, they have good subject knowledge so that they are able to teach pupils specific techniques to improve their work, for example, hand and eye co-ordination in passing a ball or the use of a motif in dance. Teachers intervene at critical points to extend pupils' skills and provide good opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own and others' work. In other lessons, there is less emphasis on the quality of the work produced. Although all teachers provide encouragement and draw attention to examples of good movement, they are not as skilled at drawing out the learning points and are less sure about how to challenge and extend pupils.
141. Since the beginning of term, the subject has been managed by the deputy and headteacher. Developments since the last inspection have included staff training to improve dance and the purchase of additional equipment with the support of the PTA. Each required area of physical education is taught each year but there is no overview to show when each strand is taught and the policy needs to be updated in line with current practice once the school has taken on the new curriculum. The curriculum is enhanced by a range of extra-curricular clubs that include rounders, cricket, football, netball and country dancing and by the participation of school teams in local leagues.
142. The school is well resourced for physical education. It has a good range and quantity of modern lightweight gymnastics equipment. The grounds provide both adequate hard and grassed playing areas and also include two adventure play areas, one used regularly by the nursery and reception pupils as part of their curriculum and the other by the older pupils, mostly at break times.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

143. Standards are in line with the locally agreed syllabus in both key stages. Pupils make good progress in gaining knowledge and understanding of different religions.
144. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 show that they have established sound knowledge of Hindu worship. Pupils in Year 2, retell the story of Rama and Sita and know the significance of celebrating Dewali. Year 3 pupils learn about the Sukhot festival, draw a 'sukhah' and recognise that Jewish people celebrate this by sharing a special meal with their friends. In Key Stage 2, pupils study different religions such as Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism and the importance of symbolism in different religions. By the time they are ready to leave the school pupils have an appreciation of the main religious traditions and are able to identify the significance of each faith's festivals and celebrations. For example, Year 6 learn about the Buddhist festival of Loy Kratung and know that the lotus flower is a symbol of spiritual growth in Buddhism. Overall, pupils have quite a clear knowledge of different religious traditions: they know about the importance of the different holy books in Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism and Buddhism.
145. Only two lessons were observed. Based on these lessons and scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work, teaching is judged to be satisfactory in both key stages. Teachers plan their lessons well, ensuring that the activities match the learning needs of the pupils. They have secure knowledge of the subject and use a range of methods to ensure that pupils gain clear understanding of the world religions and learn to respect each other's beliefs and values. They manage pupils effectively and have established good relationships with their pupils. As a result, pupils respect their teachers, listen to them carefully and learn well.

146. Religious education has improved since the previous inspection: teaching has improved so that it has a positive impact on learning and pupils' achievements have improved in that they now have a broad understanding of the main religious faiths.