

INSPECTION REPORT

GADDESSEN ROW JMI SCHOOL

Hemel Hempstead

LEA area: 919 Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117101

Headteacher: Mrs. Judi Helsby

Reporting inspector: Penny Holden
2731

Dates of inspection: 1 – 3 November 2000

Inspection number: 224494

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Gaddesden Row Hemel Hempstead Herts
Postcode:	HP2 6HG
Telephone number:	01582 840376
Fax number:	01582 840376
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs. S. Phillips
Date of previous inspection:	28 September 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Penny Holden	Registered inspector	English	What sort of school is it?
		Information technology	The school's results and pupils' achievements
		Art	How well are pupils taught?
		Design and technology	How well is the school led and managed?
		Music	What should the school do to improve further?
		Religious education	
		Equal opportunities	
		Special educational needs	
		English as an additional language	
Rosalind Hall	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?
Lyne Lavender	Team inspector	Mathematics	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
		Science	How well is the school led and managed? (support)
		Geography	
		History	
		Physical education	
		Under fives	

The inspection contractor was:

icp

360 Lee Valley Technopark
Ashley Road
London
N17 9LN

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Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Gaddesden Row is a small rural primary school with 41 children on roll. There are similar numbers of girls and boys. Most pupils are white with a small number of black pupils. The school is in an isolated location and several children come some way to get to the school. A small number of children, 10 per cent, are on free school meals. Sixteen pupils are on the special needs register for learning or behaviour needs which is well above average. No pupils speak English as an additional language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Gaddesden Row J.M. and I. School is a very effective school that has enormous strengths in all areas. The pupils receive an excellent educational experience; make good progress and achieve well, therefore despite the high costs incurred by a small school, value for money is very good.

What the school does well

- It is led extremely well. Its aim, to develop the potential in each pupil, is reflected in everyday life.
- Improvement since the last inspection has been excellent in spite of the threat of school closure.
- Excellent opportunities are given to pupils to develop their self-esteem and social skills, which results in great enthusiasm for school and what it offers.
- The broad and interesting curriculum, beginning with that for the youngest pupils, inspires and motivates pupils to achieve very well.
- Teaching and learning are both very good; teachers assess accurately how pupils are doing and set them useful targets for improvement.
- There is a strong partnership with parents and the impact this has on the pupils' education.

What could be improved

- Assemblies do not always add to the children's spirituality or to their otherwise excellent educational experience.
- The school development plan plots improvements for only one year, which does not allow longer term, strategic plans to be made.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made excellent improvement since the last inspection in all the areas identified in the previous inspection report. Teaching has much improved: in the last inspection nearly a fifth of lessons were unsatisfactory yet none were unsatisfactory this time. Standards continue to improve; there are now no subjects where standards are unsatisfactory. The curriculum is particularly good and is enhanced by excellent club activities. Behaviour in the playground is very good; pupils have fun and play together well. Leadership and management are excellent; everyone works together as a strong team for the benefit of pupils. Improvements have been brought about by the headteacher carefully checking what goes on in school; identifying what needs to be improved and by taking effective action. The team spirit engendered when everyone worked together to save the school from closure has strengthened the capacity and the resolve to improve.

STANDARDS

Pupils at the school attain well; many exceed the results they are expected to get in National Curriculum tests. For example, in 2000 in English and science three quarters of the 11-year-old pupils sitting the test attained Level 5 with the remaining quarter attaining Level 4, the expected level. The school's target for 2001 is that all 11-year-olds will attain Level 4s in the three subjects. The picture of attainment for seven-year-olds is similar, last year, 1999 all pupils achieved Level 2, the nationally expected level and several achieved Level 3. In 2000 the profile is very similar. Over the last four years virtually all pupils have attained at least the national average levels at seven and 11 in English, mathematics and science. Numbers for each year group taking the tests are so small it is impossible to compare results with those nationally. For example, last year there were four 11-year-olds and this year only two pupils sitting the tests.

The school has taken in a number of pupils who are in the middle of their primary schooling. These pupils have moved schools and transferred to Gaddesden Row because parents were concerned about their progress. Some pupils have special learning needs, others have fallen behind because of bullying whilst others have attended schools that have not matched their needs. This means that Gaddesden Row frequently has pupils for a considerably short time before they sit national tests. A real strength of the school is how quickly teachers find out where pupils have gaps in their skills, knowledge or understanding and plan a curriculum to address the deficiencies and build on what they already know. Pupils achieve well at the school because they make such good progress in their learning and produce an enormous amount of work during the year. Standards in information technology, music and geography are above national expectations and are in line in design and technology, history, art and physical education.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent: pupils are very enthusiastic about school and their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good: pupils behave well in class and boys and girls, the youngest and the oldest play together very productively. The occasional pupil needs firm and consistent management by staff to develop good habits of behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent: pupils take responsibility for themselves, become independent and think about and care for one another.
Attendance	Very good: pupils want to come to school.

Several of the pupils have joined Gaddesden Row after unhappy years in other schools. These children sometimes need sensitive handling whilst some find it very difficult to conform and demand a great deal of individual attention. The experiences they have at the school are very good; they feel known and respected as individuals and develop self-esteem and confidence. Many happily recount how badly they did at their last school and how well they are doing now and why. This all adds to the very positive feeling all pupils have about the school and their belief that it helps them learn and become better people.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good	Very good.

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

Teaching is very good, particularly in English, as teachers plan interesting and imaginative work, often making excellent links with other subjects. Literacy skills are extremely well taught. In mathematics, good teaching and planning and the successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy ensure that pupils achieve well. The school meets the needs of all pupils because each pupil is known extremely well by the teachers who give them individual targets in English and mathematics. In other subjects they plan work at different levels of difficulty for pupils of different abilities and ages. This challenges them well and helps them understand. A particular strength of teaching is the amount and quality of work in all subjects that pupils are expected to produce over a year. The work pupils do is consistently well presented throughout the year and it is easy for pupils to see the progress they have made. Teaching in all lessons is satisfactory or better and in 30 per cent is very good or better.

Pupils' learning is also very good. Pupils love school and are enthusiastic about their work. They know they make good progress at school. They understand their targets in English and mathematics and are sure about the strengths and weaknesses of their work and generally know what they need to do to improve.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Excellent: subjects are taught imaginatively and very good links are made from one subject to another to help pupils understand.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good: pupils' needs are identified quickly and special attention is effectively given to developing skills and filling any gaps in learning.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good: provision for pupils' social development is excellent and for moral and cultural very good. Pupils have very good opportunities to learn about and value other cultures. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory but assemblies could play a bigger part in this aspect of school life.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good: all pupils are valued individually and their strengths, weaknesses and needs known and provided for extremely well.

The school works extremely well with parents who are greatly supportive of the school. Great care is taken to give pupils a full and interesting experience in all subjects. This is very successful as the strengths of all staff are used well to cover the curriculum. The school looks after its pupils very well. It cares very successfully for their safety and well being as well as their progress in learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent: the headteacher steers with vision, drive and humour and all staff play a thoughtful and conscientious part in the team approach to the management of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good: responsibilities are taken seriously and the vision governors and staff have for the school match extremely well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good: all in the school are constantly looking to improve and make provision even better for the children. The development plan covers a year and does not help staff and governors look ahead.
The strategic use of resources	Very good: the school uses its money well to achieve its priorities and has been successful in raising funds for large projects such as the new building.

Resources are used very well to enrich pupils' work. The accommodation is very restricted but the school makes very good use of the room it has to give pupils a full education. Several part-time teachers teach the seven to 11-year-olds. The school uses the different subject specialisms of these teachers well to ensure pupils have challenging and stimulating teaching. This is a small school where all the staff play an important part in the team that manages the school. The headteacher checks what goes on in school systematically so she has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses. These she shares appropriately with governors and staff who take action to develop and improve. Everyone is committed to making the school better. The school applies the principles of best value conscientiously always trying to get the best for pupils.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children enjoy school. • Children make good progress. • Children are known as individuals. • The meetings they have about their children's progress. • Children are expected to work hard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parking at the end of the school day. • The amount of homework. • The building.

The inspection team agrees with all the positive comments of parents many of which have been identified as strengths of the school by the inspection team. The school has dealt with the difficulties of parking well by introducing a staggered ending to the day. Parents are very pleased that their concerns about this have been listened to and feel the new finishing times are working well. Homework is consistently set by all teachers, marked carefully and supports the work being done in class. The school has problems with its accommodation; the canteen building is being shored up so that it can be used safely this term. There is no school hall so the local guide hut is rented for physical education. The governors, parents, headteacher and staff have raised money to add a teaching base, which will replace the canteen and can be used as a hall. The new demountable building is on order and should be in place for the new year.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Pupils at the school attain well; many exceed the results they are expected to get in National Curriculum tests, for example, in 2000 in English and science three quarters of the pupils sitting the test attained Level 5 with the remaining quarter attaining Level 4, the expected level. The school's target for 2001 is that all 11-year-olds will attain Level 4s in the three subjects. The picture of attainment for seven-year-olds is similar, last year, 1999 all pupils achieved Level 2, the nationally expected level and several achieved Level 3. In 2000 the profile is very similar. Over the last four years virtually all pupils have attained at least the national average levels at seven and 11 in English, mathematics and science. Numbers for each year group taking the tests are so small it is impossible to compare results with those nationally. For example, last year there were four 11-year-olds, and this year, two taking the tests.

2. The school has taken in a number of pupils who are in the middle of their primary schooling. These pupils have moved schools and transferred to Gaddesden Row because parents were concerned about their progress. Some pupils have special learning needs and others have fallen behind because of bullying whilst others have attended schools with philosophies that have not matched their needs. This means that often Gaddesden Row has pupils for a considerably short time before they sit national tests. A real strength of the school is how quickly teachers find out where pupils have gaps in their skills, knowledge or understanding and plan a curriculum to address the deficiencies and to build on what they already know. Pupils achieve well at the school because they make such good progress in their learning and produce an enormous amount of work during the year.

3. By the end of the foundation stage, when children are five, most meet the early learning goals set nationally.

4. Standards in English at seven years old are above average and at 11 years old are well above average. Literacy skills are good because they are extremely well taught. Pupils start in reception with average speaking and listening skills and because of the many opportunities they get during the day by the time they are 11, these are good. Pupils are confident and happy to debate issues in their class about which they feel strongly. Pupils love reading from their start at school and make consistent progress; by seven the majority read at average levels and by 11 their reading is above average. They read with expression and understanding, able to identify the elements in the story they particularly enjoy. Pupils make equally good progress in a really good range of writing tasks and achieve above average standards by the time they are 11. The different styles of writing are used to record work in different subjects, for example they take useful notes to help them remember facts in history and write brief accurate records of experiments in science. By age 11, pupils write extended and complex stories with strong structure and story lines. They write effective play scripts and are skilful poets, using interesting and appropriate imagery.

5. Standards in mathematics by the age of seven are at least average and some achieve beyond. Pupils know addition and subtraction facts to 10, and work out simple multiplication and division sums accurately. They know the names and properties of two-dimensional shapes and enjoy drawing them. Using their hand and foot spans, then centimetres, they measure and compare lengths. Many can recognise quarter and half past the hour when telling the time. By the age of 11, standards are above average, they are competent mathematicians able to add, subtract, multiply and divide large numbers with

ease. They have a good understanding of place value and use this well in calculations involving money, decimals and percentages. In fraction sums, pupils learn the correct names for each part and can convert proper to improper fractions and change these to mixed numbers.

6. Pupils' achievement in science is better than at the time of the last inspection when it was broadly satisfactory. At age seven and 11 all pupils now reach a good standard of work. By seven, they know why plants need roots and flowers, and that they develop from seeds. Pupils have begun to understand how light and sound travel to the eye and the ear and record on a chart the sounds they like and dislike. Most understand how to make a simple electrical circuit and can conduct a fair test on whether electricity can pass through various objects.

7. By the age of 11, pupils have built effectively on these solid foundations. In the one lesson seen pupils prepared to build more complicated circuits. They felt the wire used to conduct electricity through a cable and understood the safety implications and the need for a plastic insulator. In other investigations, pupils look at graphs and ask questions such as "What is the fat content of a large baked potato?"

8. Standards in information and communication technology are above national expectations. Pupils readily use computers in the infants as a regular part of their lesson in most subjects. By the time pupils are 11 they can use spreadsheets, word processing packages, logo programmes and graphics programmes. Pupils can use the Internet to find out information they need for their research and they can send and receive emails. As soon as they are in the juniors they save their work onto their own floppy disc.

9. In music and geography standards are also above national expectations. Pupils sing 'sweetly' and with enthusiasm. They learn from their first days in school to use percussion instruments properly, to keep time and to beat out a rhythm. The regular and good quality school productions give every pupil the opportunity to rehearse and perform in public, adding to their musical experience.

10. Pupils' work in religious education is at the standards expected for pupils of their age. Standards at seven and 11, in design and technology, history, art and physical education are in line with those expected.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. The pupils at Gaddesden Row are confident and outgoing. They have high levels of self-esteem and have very individual personalities. An atmosphere has been created where pupils feel secure and able to speak out, voicing their ideas and opinions knowing that they will be listened to, treated seriously and that they will not feel foolish if their answer is wrong. This is particularly important to those pupils who have joined the school from another where their experience has not been so enjoyable and a large number of parents commented that their children had flourished during their time at the school.

12. Pupils are very keen to come to school; they have excellent attitudes. They enter wholeheartedly into their lessons and all the activities. They arrive on time ready and enthusiastic to work. Their behaviour is very good. A small number of pupils are more challenging but they are well managed by staff so lessons run smoothly and behaviour is good. There have been no exclusions.

13. The behaviour at playtime was found to be a key issue for the school after the last inspection. It is now very good. Boys and girls of all ages play well together and enjoy using

the small play equipment provided. Lunchtime provides a good opportunity for pupils to relax and chat together as they eat.

14. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Pupils are very respectful to adults and are treated with fairness and respect. They are very polite and courteous to others and as they become older have a growing understanding of the effects of their own action on others. They develop a respect for other people's differences. They are very supportive of each other, for example, in a Year 5 and 6 English lesson when a pupil was told to pay better attention to the book the class were reading his friend quickly made sure he knew the line they were reading. They show a high degree of self-responsibility; older pupils are very mature in their attitudes. They have many opportunities for responsibility such as team captains and vice captains or in jobs such as setting up assembly and looking after the playground equipment. They use a high degree of initiative in their work and independent skills such as research are developing very well. These are fostered in many areas, for example, as part of the maths homework older pupils have been asked to look for information on interest rates and currency exchange.

15. Attendance levels are very good and there is little unauthorised absence. Very few pupils are late.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. Teaching throughout the school is very good. It has much improved since the last inspection when nearly a fifth of lessons were less than satisfactory yet none were unsatisfactory this time. A distinct strength of teaching is the amount of work in all subjects that teachers get pupils to produce over a year. Teachers show very high expectations: they also expect pupils to present their work very well throughout the year. This very good presentation shows the pride pupils take in their learning and helps them see the good progress they have made.

17. Teaching is particularly good in English, as teachers plan interesting and imaginative work, often making excellent links with other subjects. Year 5 and 6 pupils, for example, did a comprehension exercise on their historical text. As part of their geographical work, looking at other countries, pupils discussed passports and in English they had to fill in real application forms for themselves. Literacy skills are extremely well taught, lessons are lively and interesting and pupils have to work at a good pace. Often literacy lessons are broken down into short parts: pupils listen to the teacher and are then involved in a 10 to 15 minute activity before the responses are looked at together. This ensures lessons are pacy and that pupils are fully involved and learn as much as possible.

18. In mathematics good teaching and planning and the successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy ensure that pupils now achieve more at both seven and 11 than at the time of the last inspection. The school meets the needs of all pupils because each pupil is known extremely well by their teachers who plan individual targets and work for them in English and mathematics. In other subjects they plan different work for different abilities and ages. This challenges them well and helps them understand. A very few mathematics lessons are rather long for 3 and 4 year old pupils who find it difficult to concentrate really well for the whole time, even here teaching and learning is satisfactory.

19. Teachers make the subject interesting and meaningful for all pupils, for example, by encouraging parents to take the school teddy bear on their travels. They keep photographs of the countries visited and on return talk about them. Pupils then write captions to match the pictures, for example, "When bear went to Israel, he saw some dolphins in the Red Sea".

20. Pupils' learning is very good. Pupils love school and are enthusiastic about their work. They know they make good progress at school. They understand their targets in English and mathematics and are sure about the strengths and weaknesses of their work and generally know what they need to do to improve.

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

21. The quality and range of learning opportunities the school provides is excellent. At the last inspection it was found satisfactory. Every opportunity is taken to enhance the curriculum and to increase the breadth of experiences through imaginative teaching. A very good range of extra-curricular activities and educational visits supplements pupils' learning. Religious education and all subjects of the National Curriculum are taught regularly. There is a strong emphasis on practical work and learning from first-hand experience. Pupils are given choices, encouraged to be independent and are rightly proud of what they achieve. Because of its small size, whole-school curriculum projects can be organised to involve everyone, as in the Victorian day.

22. Given its size, the school does well in ensuring that all subjects are taught effectively. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been successfully implemented. Increased staffing has helped to keep the teaching groups small and pupils are given more individual attention in English and mathematics. English is a particular strength in the curriculum. Handwriting skills are well developed and pupils present their work neatly. In other work, pupils use their literacy skills well, often writing up their findings on a computer. Excellent links are made between subjects so as to make learning more meaningful and realistic. For example, information communication technology enhances work in English, mathematics, history, geography and music. The length of a very few lessons, for example some mathematics, is long, especially for the younger juniors.

23. The provision for personal, social and health education is excellent. In particular, the programme for sex education and drug misuse is extremely thorough and is taught by one of the non-teaching staff. Pupils are given the opportunity to discuss their thoughts and feelings in a sensitive way and to ask questions of the visitors who come to talk about related aspects.

24. The new Curriculum 2000 has been introduced well. This, together with the national guidance and school programmes of work, forms the basis of teachers' planning of what pupils should learn and when. Particular care is taken with the mixed ages, to ensure that they do not repeat work unnecessarily and that knowledge and skills are systematically built on from year to year.

25. The curriculum for the children in the foundation stage is very good. Teachers plan tasks carefully so that skills are learned and used across the six areas of learning. Children enjoy a wide range of practical, written and investigative tasks that are particularly effective in promoting their personal, social and emotional development. They soon become confident learners with good self-esteem. Role play, for instance in 'the cafe', extends and enriches children's communication skills. In class discussions they are becoming more confident in speaking up. National guidance for literacy and numeracy is followed and prepares children well for later work on the National Curriculum. There is currently no designated outdoor area for the younger children although every opportunity is taken to use the playground immediately outside the classroom.

26. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities to support the curriculum. Children play cricket in the summer, and Watford Football Club teach football during the

winter months using a pitch nearby. Recorder groups play twice a week at lunchtimes and once after school. The newly formed computer club has excited interest and helps to develop the skills of the younger juniors.

27. Profitable use is made of visits to places of interest such as St. Albans, Hatfield House and more local farms and houses. A school journey is organised every three years, providing opportunities for pupils to learn about a different environment in another social setting. Visiting speakers, including parents, are a valuable resource and are effectively used by the school to broaden the curriculum. On one such occasion recently, a parent talked about her home country of Argentina.

28. The arrangements for pupils to grow morally and culturally are very good. The provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. In the last inspection social development was a key issue as it was found unsatisfactory. This aspect is now excellent.

29. In addition to the opportunities provided in religious education lessons, there are other occasions for pupils to reflect on their own beliefs, attitudes and values. In lessons they learn how events can be seen in different ways and develop a tolerance of individual difference. They are moved by the experience of others, expressing their feelings about what it was like to be a working child in Victorian times. They respond to the beauty of the world around them in their drawings, paintings and in their effective work about the environment. Pupils realise they have a duty to protect it. They learn the strength that comes from being able to say 'sorry', and the importance of fairness, truth, honesty and justice.

30. Acts of worship are sometimes effective in promoting spirituality. Not enough is done on each occasion to encourage reflection or for pupils to consider aspects of their lives and beliefs more closely. Assemblies often do not link with each other and there is no overall termly or yearly plan to ensure that the best possible use is made of them.

31. Social and moral development is encouraged through pupils' participation in extra-curricular activities and through class work, when they are given opportunities to work co-operatively. There is a very good team spirit among staff and this presents pupils with an excellent model of positive relationships. All adults in school treat pupils with respect and this encourages them to do the same. Older children happily take responsibility for younger ones, helping them at playtime and joining in games together. The school's good record of raising funds for charitable organisations is evidence of social responsibility in a wider world, for example, the shoe-box appeal. Good use is made of stories in the literacy hour to illustrate moral principles and through discussion, pupils are able to draw the necessary conclusions. Parents are right in their high regard for the school's work in these areas.

32. Pupils' awareness of their own and other cultures is enhanced by visits to a range of places of worship and visiting speakers such as those talking about the Second World War and the regular Victorian day. Through the teaching of such subjects as music, geography and art pupils gain knowledge of how people live in other parts of the world and express their cultural identity. In English, studies of Inuit and aboriginal legends enable pupils to appreciate different races. The school's provision for visits and visitors plays a very important part in pupils' cultural development, and includes talks on Romania, Bosnia and Albania.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

33. A strength of the school is the caring approach taken by all staff which, coupled with the formal assessment and targets set, ensures that each child is supported well throughout their time at the school. A high number of children have joined the school after the start of

their formal education. They, together with the new arrivals in Reception, benefit from the effort made by all to welcome and settle them in.

34. The procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good. Health and safety is given a high priority; the policy is followed closely and regular risk assessments undertaken. Coverage for first aid is good and all incidents are recorded carefully. Child protection procedures are in place and all staff are aware of the needs and circumstances of individual pupils. The school monitors registers and encourages attendance very well. Parents are informed through the newsletter of the need for regular attendance and pupils are rewarded with cups and certificates.

35. The rules within the school are understood by all; pupils have ownership of them, as they were involved in deciding what they should be. All adults are skilled in managing behaviour, including that of the few more challenging children. All pupils appreciate the reward system whereby points are awarded which contribute to certificates for the individual as well as towards the team totals. The system is straightforward and is implemented consistently and fairly by staff. There were no incidents of bullying or aggressive behaviour seen during the inspection; records kept by the headteacher demonstrate that the very few such incidents that have occurred over the last few years have been resolved quickly and effectively. Behaviour, both good and poor, is monitored very well by staff.

36. The arrangements at lunchtime contribute to the ethos of the school. It is a time for social development and pupils enjoy chatting in an unhurried atmosphere as they eat. Playground behaviour had been raised as an issue by the previous inspection but has significantly improved and is now very good. The school has purchased a variety of small equipment and children enjoy using it. They are well supervised by midday staff with whom they have very good relationships. Boys and girls of all ages play very well together.

37. Since the last inspection the school has made great improvements in the area of assessment and procedures are now excellent. Pupils are assessed both in the core subjects and across the curriculum. Opportunities for assessments are highlighted in planning and formal tests are undertaken regularly. The information gained is used to inform curriculum planning very well, for example, in maths the teaching has been modified in the light of the assessment of pupils' understanding of aspects of money. It is also used to group pupils and as a result ensures that each child is appropriately challenged. The assessments are also used to set each pupil targets. These are sometimes very individual and are written in the annual report so parents are aware of areas that pupils need to work on. They are manageable in number and the work seen in books shows that they are acted upon. Marking is regular and consistent and is linked to targets. Targets are discussed regularly with pupils and with parents at parents' evenings. A few targets are too general and do not help pupils know what they need to do to improve. The best examples of pupils' work are retained and show the progression made by pupils throughout their time at the school.

38. At whatever stage they join the school, all pupils are given the very highest levels of educational support and guidance which ensures they become well-rounded mature individuals who achieve to the best of their ability.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

39. Since the last inspection the school has faced the trauma of closure. The news that the future of the school was threatened united parents, staff and governors and they produced convincing counter-proposals that ensured it stayed open. The resulting publicity has led to an increase in the school roll as other local parents seeking a similar style of education for their children moved them to the school. The relationship between school and

parents which was judged good at the last inspection is now strongly forged and is a strength of the school.

40. At the meeting and in the questionnaire parents expressed very positive views about the school. In questionnaires the great majority of parents were particularly in agreement with the statements that their child likes school, that the school is well led and managed and encourages pupils to become mature. They strongly agreed that they felt comfortable in approaching the school with problems or concerns. These views were backed up at the meeting where parents also stated that the school was active in building the confidence of children and they liked the size of the school. They felt the school was open with information and that they were particularly well informed about the progress their child was making. They also commented on the support they gave to the school in many areas including a large amount of fundraising. The amount of homework set by the school was raised as a concern by a very few parents. The findings of the inspection team support these very positive views. With regard to the few parents who raised concerns about homework the team judged the provision to be good.

41. The positive views of parents about the openness of the school demonstrate that a key issue from the last inspection about the receptiveness of the headteacher to views of parents is no longer an issue. The headteacher has also addressed this positively by keeping records of all queries and concerns brought to her and the action taken by the school to resolve them. The effectiveness of the schools links with parents is now judged to be very good. Parents receive very good information from the school in the form of an attractive prospectus and regular newsletters. They receive good information about what their children will be learning each term through a meeting at the start of every term when each teacher outlines what they will be teaching to particular children that term. Homework is set regularly and explanations are clear so as to allow parents to participate in this area fully. There are termly meetings to discuss individual pupils' progress and their targets for development and the annual report, which also itemises targets, is detailed, individual, and more than meets requirements.

42. The great majority of parents ensure that homework is completed well and this has a positive effect on pupils' achievement. Parents support the school in many other ways, by assisting with the transport for swimming, for example, as well as by very active fundraising. A group of parents and friends have also repainted the library recently. Some parents regularly work in the school; ordering the library, working in class with pupils and supporting teachers.

43. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school since the last inspection has been excellent and continues to be so.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

44. The headteacher leads the school with vision, drive and humour and all staff play a thoughtful and conscientious part in the team approach to the management of the school. This is a small school so all the staff and governors play an important part its success. Governors' responsibilities are taken seriously and although it is a comparatively small governing body individual governors use their time flexibly to cover the many tasks they have effectively. Individual governors, for example, come into the school to work on specific issues with the headteacher and then this work is shared with the rest of the governing body before final decisions are made in formal meetings. This also ensures all governors are fully informed and involved in school concerns; consequentially the strengths and weaknesses of the school are well known to governors. This also means that governors' and staff's vision for the school match extremely well. Everyone is committed to developing the full potential of

each individual child so that they become well-rounded individuals. There is also a shared aim to make the school better.

45. The headteacher monitors pupils' standards of work carefully to check that pupils are all making enough progress. She keeps useful examples of work for each child to act as accurate evidence for assessing that they are achieving high enough standards over time. These samples used alongside the regular assessments made of pupils effectively keep their progress under review and help teachers know where they need to focus their efforts to help pupils improve. This information is also used to set individual targets for pupils and these allow pupils to know where their weaknesses are and what they can do to get better. This helps pupils make the good progress they do.

46. Very good improvements have been made in teaching in part due to the headteacher's observations of teaching. After each lesson she observes, she gives teachers useful feedback so that they know what they do well and where they can improve. This with the other monitoring she does ensures the headteacher has a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. These she shares appropriately with governors and staff. Everybody in the school is constantly looking to improve and provide even better educational opportunities for the children. Staff and governors contribute to a school development plan, which is written year by year. Over the past few years the school has had major issues that have overtaken all other developments within the school. For example, for some years the campaign to save the school became the one focus for development. More recently the unsound canteen building and the need for a replacement has been the area for develop. Now that both these issues appear to be successfully resolved the school has to plan for more ordinary improvements over time. The current development plan covers a year at a time and does not help staff and governors plan ahead sufficiently. Whilst governors can talk knowledgeably about the past and the present goals for the school they are less clear about where they go in the future to continue the development.

47. Resources are used very well to enrich pupils' work. They are used to interest pupils and help them understand. The accommodation is very restricted but the school makes very good use of the room it has to give pupils a full education. Several part-time teachers teach the seven to 11-year-olds. The school uses the different subject specialisms of these teachers well to ensure pupils have challenging and stimulating teaching. Careful planning ensures that although a pupil has several teachers there are no gaps in their learning. For example, homework is set according to a timetable and is completed in one book, so teachers know what other teachers are demanding.

48. The school applies the principles of best value conscientiously always trying to get the best for pupils. The way governors and staff have planned and selected the new building is a very good example of this.

49. The previous inspection report identified several weaknesses in leadership and management including lack of sense of purpose in the school, high achievement not being evident in the school and difficulties in relationships. None of these areas are weaknesses now. There is a very clear, shared sense of purpose, achievement is very good and relationships positive and focused on helping pupils learn.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

50. Gaddesden Row is a very good school and should now make these improvements to enhance the already excellent provision.

(1) improve the development of the pupils' spirituality:

- by reviewing the quality and content of assemblies;
- by identifying opportunities for pupils to reflect about aspects of their lives and beliefs in lessons and assemblies. (paragraph 30)

- (2) enhance the long term strategic view governors and the senior management have for the development of the school
- by increasing the length of time covered by the school development plan. (paragraph 46)

Other issues which should be considered by the school.

Make every learning target given to pupils as clear as possible, so that they know what they need to work on and how they can improve:

- by writing all the individual targets given to pupils in words they understand and
- by telling them what they need to do to achieve their goals. (paragraph 37)

Improve the learning of the few pupils in Years 3 and 4, who begin to lose concentration in some long morning lessons;

- by reviewing the timetable and shortening the length of some lessons.. (paragraph 22)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	20
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	7

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	30	45	25	0	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)	0	43
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	16

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.3
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	2
Indian	0
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	35
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	13.4
Average class size	21.5

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	25

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
	£
Total income	115,925
Total expenditure	125,580
Expenditure per pupil	3,140
Balance brought forward from previous year	59,935
Balance carried forward to next year	50,280

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	41
Number of questionnaires returned	13

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	69	31	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	54	46	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	8	85	8	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	46	15	38	0	0
The teaching is good.	54	46	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	54	31	8	8	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	69	23	0	8	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	85	8	0	0	8
The school works closely with parents.	54	31	8	0	8
The school is well led and managed.	62	8	15	8	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	62	38	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	0	69	15	8	8

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

51. There was no requirement to report on the foundation stage in the last inspection report. Since then, the school has adopted the new national guidelines that have recently been updated. Training on the required six areas of learning has recently been attended and implemented very well. Children have a minimum of two and a half terms in reception. Those who started this September are making good progress and are on course to reach the nationally expected outcomes in all areas by the age of five. Detailed records are kept on each child and work is carefully planned to match their individual needs and abilities.

Personal, social and emotional development

52. Excellent provision and very good teaching for personal, social and emotional development mean that children do extremely well in this area of learning. They treat others with respect and are helpful and caring in everything they do. In the café area, for instance, one child, acting as mother, was seen to help another make a decision on the size of spoon with which to feed the baby. Behaviour is very good and children can be trusted to work on their own or with others without constant adult supervision. All concentrate on what they are doing and are well supported by staff. It is made clear to them what is expected and they respond quickly when given praise for carrying out a task successfully. Relationships are good all round, and adults in turn are courteous and caring. Both teacher and classroom assistant work well together and provide very good role models for children to copy.

Communication, language and literacy

53. Most children have confident speaking skills when they start school. Staff allow time for them to share their news or explain the work they have been doing. Many are confident in speaking within a large group, whilst a few prefer to keep silent. Children listen with enjoyment to stories, songs and rhymes and join in where possible. They watch others answer questions and follow their example.

54. In literacy sessions, the teacher includes interesting activities to make learning more meaningful for the younger children. They share a large poem together, for instance, on 'trees' and pick out words that rhyme. To help develop their vocabulary, children 'feel' autumn leaves and describe them as 'crunchy' and 'munchy'. Everything in the classroom is labelled or named so that children are surrounded by print. Frequent opportunities are given to practise joined up writing and some have already grasped how to write simple words. Others are at an early stage in forming their letters and are still learning how to control a pencil. This achievement is typical for the age group.

55. Great emphasis is put on reading. This year's reception children are currently at the early stages of learning to read and are making steady progress. 'Big books' containing popular stories are used successfully to help them associate words and print. Occasionally, some can read when they start school and have already developed the skills needed to become a fluent reader. Books containing funny incidents are particularly popular and children are keen to share their humour with others. They take books home regularly and their excellent records show that parents hear them read daily, sometimes more than once. The home-school reading diary enables parents to be kept informed of their child's progress.

Mathematical development

56. Most children are likely to reach the standards expected by the age of five. Singing number rhymes reinforces counting forwards and backwards and ordering numbers up to ten. Children use words such as tall and short when sorting objects into different groups and using construction apparatus. They sort coins up to 10p and rub over them with pencils on a chart. Children recognise and name shapes such as, squares, circles and triangles and use coloured sticky paper to make pictures of people using these shapes. Opportunities for measuring are linked to activities in other subjects, such as weighing ingredients for making pancakes. The range of activities is well planned so that skills and knowledge are built up systematically.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

57. The teacher makes very good links between different areas of learning and children do well as a result. For example, they grow cress seeds, make bread and scramble eggs to put into sandwiches. They observe frog spawn closely and draw and write about the tadpoles. Children compare different types of clocks and lamps, noting the difference between old and new. They learn about the world by looking at maps and from listening to a parent talking about her home country of Argentina. The seasons of the year are effectively used to teach children about change and the differences in the world around them. They learn about harvest and visit a local farm.

58. Teachers give children good opportunities to explore their ideas. For instance, they took part in a whole-class 'christening' ceremony, after which there was much discussion. Not all worksheets that are given to the class following religious education lessons are appropriate for this age. Children lack the skills to be able to complete them. A good range of computer programs extends learning and children work on these enthusiastically. For instance, they move pictures around the screen to match clothes to different sized teddy bears.

Physical development

59. Children's physical development is satisfactory. In games, they throw and catch using beanbags and balls and some are able to do so single-handedly. They improve their aim by throwing a beanbag at a quoit on the ground. More successful ones increase their distance away from the target. In a circle they carry out simple movements such as clapping hands together and on their knees and stretch and curl their bodies into different shapes. The teacher gives very clear instructions and children do their best to follow these. They make good use of equipment during the breaks from class, and often join in skipping and ball games with older children.

60. They learn to handle tools, objects and construction equipment safely and with increasing control. For instance, children successfully mould dough to make bread and play untuned percussion instruments with skill.

Creative development

61. Children sing a variety of songs and rhymes together. They learned to distinguish high and low notes by becoming different shapes to show the difference between tall and thin, middle and broad, crouching down and low. Children find rhythms in their names using such percussion instruments as the tambourine. Lessons are made exciting and interesting as the teacher is a skilled musician and has a piano in the classroom.

62. Paint, collage materials and pastels are used to produce imaginative and creative pictures to a very good standard. Often the whole class contributes to a display and there

are many which are of a high standard. Children are proud of their particular contribution, such as to the 'Treasure Chest', and want to talk about it. In role-play, children dress up and visit the class 'café'. When tasks are finished, some choose to do cutting and sticking independently.

63. By the time they are five years old most children reach the early learning goals set nationally all areas of learning.

ENGLISH

64. Standards in English at seven years old are above average and at 11 years old are well above average. Literacy skills are good because they are extremely well taught. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

65. Pupils start in reception with average speaking and listening skills and because of the many opportunities they get during the day by the time they are 11, these are good. Pupils are confident and happy to debate in their class about issues that they feel strongly about, for example, 'Should we pay for the rest of the world to have clean water?' This subject is then well argued in writing.

66. Pupils love reading from their start at school and make consistent progress; by seven the majority read at, at least average levels and by 11 their reading is above average. They read with expression and understanding, able to identify the elements in the story they particularly enjoy. Seven year olds love reading and are generally well supported from home. They delight in humour and giggle readily at jokes and funny events. They are able to predict the outcome of the story they are reading; retell what has happened; and often discuss characters perceptively. Eleven year olds have had a breadth of reading experience: they enjoy a wide variety of authors and types of books. They discuss genre and plot astutely, for example, they know what a tragedy is and can identify a Shakespeare play and they have strong views about their preferred authors. They have a sophisticated understanding of how mood, atmosphere and setting can enrich a narrative. Some pupils have arrived within the key stage with poor reading skills, well below what is expected for their age. Their motivation and hard work and the excellent teaching they have received have ensured excellent progress, with several years' progress being made in one year.

67. Pupils make equally good progress in a really good range of writing tasks and achieve above average standards by the time they are 11. The different styles of writing are used to record work in different subjects, for example they take useful notes to help them remember facts in history and write brief accurate records of experiments in science. By 11 years old pupils write extended and complex stories with strong structure and story lines. They write effective play scripts and are skilful poets, using interesting and appropriate imagery. For example, they turned a chapter of a well-known story, 'Goodnight Mr Tom' into a play script with interesting and dynamic dialogue and appropriate stage directions. A particular strength of the pupils' writing and reading is their work on poetry. This begins in Key Stage 1 but is very strong in Key Stage 2. Pupils read and write a wide variety of poetry which shows sensitivity, rhythm and imagination. Their choice of language is often excellent, for example, in a riddle about a hamster a pupil writes 'A night waker, A furry runner, A small nibbler, A fast scurrier, A bed maker, A deep sleeper....'. Writing opportunities such as writing their own CVs, filling out real application forms for their own passports, for example, really interest and motivate the pupils who take great care with their work and learn well. They punctuate work well, for example, using bullet points, lists and tables aptly. They use computers very well to help them draft and organise their work well.

68. Seven year olds are given good opportunities to develop their vocabularies, for example, they felt and described orally leaves the teacher had brought in, before writing about autumn. This helped them write vividly, one pupil included evocative phrases such as 'leaves fanning out from the trees'. They develop their skills in writing by thinking about the simple structure of stories and writing a beginning, middle and end. The good range of tasks they get ensures their writing skills are developed appropriately. Tasks range from writing about things they have done, to book reviews, to thank you letters for trips they have been on, to stories and to instructions such as how to make a papier mache puppet head. By the time they are seven their punctuation is accurate and they use full stops, capital letters and question marks correctly. Many use commas and speech marks well. Some begin to organise their work well into paragraphs. As with the older pupils, computers are used well to help the pupils improve and present their work.

69. Handwriting is legible and cursive from the end of Key Stage 1 and throughout the school pupils take extremely good care with their work and the presentation of every subject over the whole year is exceptionally neat. Pupils take great delight in keeping their work neat. One six year old, said aloud, as he put his written work away, 'I do love the work in my folder!'

70. Teaching of English is consistently very good and occasionally excellent. Teachers set challenging work which stimulates the pupils who try very hard. They structure the help and guidance they give very well so that pupils make the very best progress they can. Lessons are pacy and pupils work at a good rate. The literacy hour is a demanding and rewarding experience for pupils who are achieving high standards. Other occasions are found to encourage the pupils to write at length and to have opportunities for a range of different writing tasks in other subjects, such as science.

MATHEMATICS

71. The school is doing well in mathematics. Pupils now achieve more at both seven and 11 than at the time of the last inspection. This is as a result of good teaching and planning and the successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. As only a small number of pupils take the annual tests, comparisons cannot be made with national results.

72. Attention to the development of mental and oral skills has improved the speed and accuracy in number work. More time is given to teaching numeracy since the last inspection and excellent emphasis is placed on using mathematical skills in other subjects such as in information communication technology. Computers are used well in data handling. One very good display in the library shows how skills and knowledge are effectively built on from one stage to the next. Older pupils record June temperatures on spreadsheets and analyse the results. Younger ones construct meaningful bar charts on their favourite colours using a 'starting graph' program. They ask questions about the information, such as 'Which is the least popular colour?'

73. Considerable time is invested at the infant stage in counting, reading, writing and ordering numbers to at least one hundred, and to using coins and notes of different values correctly in shopping activities. By the age of seven, pupils know addition and subtraction facts to 10, and work out simple multiplication and division sums accurately. They know the names and properties of two-dimensional shapes and enjoy drawing them. Some know the names of three-dimensional shapes. Using their hand and foot spans, then centimetres, they measure and compare lengths. Many can recognise quarter and half past the hour when telling the time.

74. By the age of 11, they are competent mathematicians able to add, subtract, multiply and divide large numbers with ease. They have a good understanding of place value and use this well in calculations involving money, decimals and percentages. In fraction sums, pupils learn the correct names for each part and can convert proper to improper fractions and change these to mixed numbers. Previous work shows evidence of skill in drawing and measuring angles accurately to the nearest degree. Pupils know how to work out the perimeter of a shape and have a good knowledge of the three-dimensional ones such as pentagonal pyramid and hexagonal prism. They know how to use pie diagrams and line graphs and select which one is best to show the information clearly. In geography, they plot the rainfall in Delhi on a bar chart. In history, time lines are effectively used to show the passage of time in different eras.

75. Pupils are taught in small groups in the juniors. Everyone is given individual attention and any difficulties are quickly explained. Year 6 pupils particularly do well because of this and respond to the challenging work set for them. They act as good examples to the rest of their group, several of whom attempt to do even harder work when they see what is possible.

76. Teaching is mainly good and pupils are given a thorough grounding in the basic skills. The curriculum is interesting and diverse as pupils are given the opportunity to use their mathematics skills in other work. As a result, they respond well in lessons and show positive attitudes. They do not waste time and their behaviour is good. This means that pupils produce a great deal of work over the year. Written exercises are neat, diagrams are clear and carefully labelled, and pupils are proud of what they achieve. Teachers' planning is good and work is well matched to pupils of different abilities including those with special educational needs. They know their pupils very well having taught them for a long time. This makes it easier to track individual progress and ensure that targets are met. Pupils know the purpose of each lesson as it is written on the board and reminders are given as work progresses. Homework is very relevant and includes for instance, collecting brochures about money exchange or interest rates to support work done in class. A very few mathematics lessons are rather long for 3 and 4 year old pupils who find it difficult to concentrate really well for the whole time, even here teaching and learning is satisfactory.

SCIENCE

77. Pupils' achievement in science is better than at the time of the last inspection when it was broadly satisfactory. At age seven and 11 all pupils now reach a good standard of work. As the numbers who take the tests are so small, comparisons with national data are not reliable.

78. Only one science lesson was seen during the inspection. Other evidence was sought from teachers' planning, displays and work folders. The science programme covers all the required elements of the curriculum, including learning about plants and animals, materials, and forces. Pupils do well in all aspects of the subject.

79. By seven, they know why plants need roots and flowers, and that they develop from seeds. Pupils have begun to understand how light and sound travel to the eye and the ear and record on a chart the sounds they like and dislike. Most understand how to make a simple electrical circuit and can conduct a fair test on whether electricity can pass through various objects.

80. By the age of 11, pupils have built effectively on these solid foundations. In the one lesson seen pupils prepared to build more complicated circuits. They felt the wire used to conduct electricity through a cable and understood the safety implications and the need for a

plastic insulator. In other investigations, pupils look at graphs and ask questions such as "What is the fat content of a large baked potato?" Good use is made of mathematical skills in calculating the energy, protein and carbohydrate portions of a hamburger meal. Most can classify materials as solid, liquid or gas and can explain how substances change their state and the different ways mixtures can be separated. For example, pupils work systematically in testing which materials flow easily through a pipe. To check sound vibrations, they hold a ruler over the edge of the table to investigate wavelengths.

81. Teaching is good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and make it interesting, for example, using a 'feely' bag in which pupils put their hands to describe the rocks inside. They provide imaginative ways for pupils to record their work, often in tables, charts and pictures. Good support is given to pupils on a one-to-one basis and regular checks are made during the lesson to see that tasks are properly understood. Special arrangements are made for older juniors to be taught separately for science. This makes it easier for teachers to match work more closely to their age and ability.

82. Past work shows that pupils can devise simple experiments of their own, and know how to control factors affecting the accuracy of their tests. This evidence also shows that work is being planned so that skills and knowledge are being built on from year to year. Pupils are interested in science, particularly when they are involved in practical work. This is especially true of those with special educational needs who when it comes to recording, have difficulty in using reference books for finding information.

ART

83. By the time they are seven and when they are 11 pupils achieve standards that are expected for these ages because of the good opportunities they get for art. Standards have improved since the last inspection.

84. Pupils in the Key Stage 1 class have good opportunities to draw and paint from first-hand observation. They have looked at seeds and made careful drawings of both the inside and the outside of fruit using pastels. Their observation and drawing skills have been developed by then looking at themselves and making accurate and effective portraits. The pupils use a variety of materials and develop good skills using them. When recording what he had done during half term a pupil had painted a strong and colourful account of going to a steam rally. The pupils love the opportunity to draw and paint and often choose this as an activity when finishing other work. If they have the opportunity to illustrate their writing they produce careful and high quality pictures often with a great deal of detail and colour. Computer programmes are well used to let the pupils develop an understanding and skill in graphics, drawing pictures and repeating and ordering patterns.

85. In Key Stage 2 pupils have very good opportunities to develop their drawing skill often as part of other subjects. For example, in history pupils made excellent exact pencil drawings of a Victorian clock and a miner's lamp. They keep a sketch book and use this to collect ideas and images which they use for future work. They develop their skills in painting and in using other materials. Pupils look at and discuss images and work from other cultures, for example, they discussed Malaysian patterns when looking at textiles before printing. They study Rangoli patterns and investigate patterns in Islamic art. Pupils had made string prints and then decided how they might print them in a variety of ways. This task matched one they had done on the computer where they repeated a shape they had drawn in a variety of ways. Very good links between these activities to inform and improve the printing activity were not made. However, computers do play a significant part in helping the pupils understand and develop skills in art. They use a famous artists CD ROM to learn about other artists and their work. Pupils make small but interesting pottery work and are about to study a sculpture topic looking at sculpture in public places.

86. Pupils thoroughly enjoy art and use materials and equipment carefully. They generally work hard with good creative effort although on some occasions the task they are given is comparatively easy, such as colouring in, and they do not have to think hard enough. Teaching overall ensures pupils have interesting tasks and that they develop new techniques and skills.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

87. In design and technology pupils at seven and 11 are working at the level expected for their ages. This was the case at the last inspection.

88. In Key Stage 1 pupils made bread and discussed the materials and equipment they needed. They examined the ingredients carefully and could describe what these felt and smelt like. They could talk about what each ingredient contributed towards the finished product and how important food hygiene is. Pupils also grew cress, cooked scrambled egg and made sandwiches and afterwards could talk about and draw the process. Good links were made with science discussing how egg changes as it is heated. Pupils designed and made their own 'living' creature and could suggest how they might improve their design next time.

89. The older pupils, those in Key Stage 2, design and produce cards, both by hand and on the computer. They are adept at choosing appropriate designs and lettering to suit the event and their Christmas cards were of good quality. During the key stage pupils design, make review and evaluate money containers using a variety of materials. On a few occasions the materials selected for topics limit pupils' designs too much, for example, in the money container topic all pupils end up making purses as only fabric is available. Pupils also make storybooks requiring a selection of moving mechanisms to delight the younger children in the school, other very good opportunities include making musical instruments, a lighting project and moving toys. These activities ensure pupils develop a good range of making skills and they have good opportunities to plan, review and improve their ideas.

90. The pupils love making things and are highly motivated in design and technology. Teaching and learning are good. The teachers' good planning and teaching ensure pupils get the most out of activities and develop sound skills.

GEOGRAPHY

91. By the age of seven and 11, pupils achieve well in geography and have improved since the last inspection. No lessons were seen due to timetable considerations. The school has kept all the past year's work to show what has been covered and the standards pupils reach. This, together with teachers' planning, displays of work and discussions with pupils shows that a broad range of topics is taught. These include weather and knowledge of countries and continents such as the Netherlands and North America. Parents give information about the countries they were born in and answer questions prepared by younger pupils, for example, "Are there any volcanoes in Argentina?" Opportunities are also provided for pupils to research information for themselves, and one boy chose Brazil for a personal study.

92. Teachers make the subject interesting and meaningful for all pupils, for example, by encouraging parents to take the school teddy bear on their travels. They keep photographs of the countries visited and on return talk about them. Pupils then write captions to match the

pictures, for example, "When bear went to Israel, he saw some dolphins in the Red Sea". A member of staff visits other countries in the course of her charity work and brings home videos and artefacts for pupils to look at and handle. Environmental awareness is well developed through studies and debates about the relationship between man and nature, for example, the destruction of coral reefs. An attractive, well-written folder on killer whales made by a Year 5 pupil includes research using the computer.

93. The work in geography includes some good links with other subjects, for example, bar charts of rainfall in Delhi and wind strengths using the Beaufort Scale. Objects from other countries are brought in for study, such as a carved wooden box from India for sketching. From an early age pupils learn to read maps of the local area, the United Kingdom and the world. The school is well placed in the middle of an agricultural community and groups visit nearby farms and houses as part of their studies.

HISTORY

94. Two lessons were seen during the inspection. These, together with the scrutiny of previous work, teachers' planning and displays show that by the age of seven and 11 achievement in history is satisfactory. There has been improvement since the last inspection.

95. In the infants, pupils learn about King James and Guy Fawkes, and this is made more real for them through a visit to the Houses of Parliament to see where the Gunpowder Plot took place. The teacher skilfully uses one pupil's remarks to develop an understanding of the passage of time: "You know King James I is dead now." "Why?" "Because it happened so long ago." Pupils are encouraged to ask historical questions like "What does treason mean?" and this is effectively used as a basis for further discussion. During an interesting visit to Berkhamstead Castle, pupils completed a questionnaire to record what they discovered.

96. In the juniors, pupils use old birth certificates as source material to find out the occupations of people, such as a coachman. They use CD ROMs to research information about famous Victorians about whom they then write biographies. Dressing up as Victorians helps pupils to understand differences between now and then. In one lesson, the teacher used a video effectively as a visual stimulus to show how railways were built. Pupils are keen to bring information from home. One brought a coloured portrait of Queen Victoria to add to a display and another told the class more about the Victorians after a family excursion to a museum in Birmingham. A visit to St Albans to see the remains gave extra impetus to the work on the Romans. Pupils wrote accounts of this visit but did not follow it up in sufficient depth. Worksheets are often used to help pupils' record information, but teachers are not selective enough when using them with the younger ones.

97. Teaching is good. Teachers expect pupils to work hard and behave well and most do. They ask pertinent questions and involve the whole class in discussions. In one activity, pupils compare their school now with what it was like in the last century and have designed interesting pamphlets for visitors which one pupil has called, "Welcome to the best school in England". Learning is made very meaningful when for a day the whole school dresses up in Victorian costume and takes a step back in time. Many visitors, including grandparents, give talks about their past, such as what it was like in the Second World War.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

98. Provision for information and communications technology is good. There are good numbers of up to date computers in each class, for example, there are seven in the Key

Stage 2 class. Computers are used regularly in every subject and are also used for interesting activities during the very popular computer club. Teachers have been trained to use the new equipment and some teachers are very interested in the subject; the school is soon to have its own web site. Consequentially standards are good. By the time pupils are 11 they are proficient computer users with skills, knowledge and understanding that are better than expected for their age. Pupils in Key Stage 1 make good progress from beginning the school with very little experience of using computers to developing confidence and skills by the time they are seven years old. Information and communications technology is much improved since the last inspection.

99. Pupils by the time they are seven can enter text and are proficient in using the keyboard to amend and improve their writing. In Key Stage 1 pupils use the computer to produce pictures and are proficient in using the mouse to draw using graphics programs. They can change colours and use the tools to draw regular shapes and most can save and print their work. Pupils use an atlas program and a program to find out information to help them with their topics. They are adept at using the mouse to drag and to place objects, learning about how to put things in the right order, for example, when dressing teddy. In music, pupils use a computer program well to practise and develop their ability to identify high or low sounds. Pupils can use the computer to keep tally charts and produce simple graphs as part of their mathematics work when counting traffic outside the school or as part of a time survey.

100. At Key Stage 2 many pupils have good keyboard skills and can enter text at a good speed. Year 6 pupils writing a play-script version of a chapter of the book they were reading could proficiently manage layout in order to follow the conventions and their keyboard speed ensured they produced a good amount of work. All Key Stage 2 pupils keep their own work on individual floppy discs and all can save and load this when needed. This does much to encourage the pupils to work independently and on most occasions pupils turn their own computers on and start up programs without adult help. Pupils can send and receive information with computers, for example, they sent an email to Blue Peter and had a reply. They frequently use the Internet to research topics, Years 4 to 6 were asked to advertise their own driving school and before doing so collected ideas and information from the Internet. Pupils can give the computer directions to draw complicated shapes using logo program. They can make a short animated program linking at least eight different screens using their own text and pictures. The pair who produced one about scorpions had also drawn their picture on paper, scanned it in and then coloured it on the computer. Other excellent opportunities for using computers have included producing their own CVs, designing games, producing pie graphs, bar charts and straight line graphs. Pupils can design spreadsheets, using and setting formulae such as addition when calculating the sales of a drinks machine.

101. In the after school computer club pupils have interesting tasks to do such as designing and printing party invitations. They have a good understanding of how to change the layout and font to make the style suit the occasion. A girl suggested the font needed to be a 'funky' one to suit her invitation and was quite sure when she had found the right font.

102. The pupils love using information and communications technology, are very well motivated and their attitudes to learning are very good. They use the equipment responsibly and with care and can work together extremely well. Pupils concentrate fully on their work and clearly enjoy using computers. Girls and boys are equally interested and skilful in the subject and during the inspection all but one of the participants in the club that afternoon were girls.

103. Teaching of information technology is good. Teachers ensure pupils have many interesting opportunities to use computers as part of their work in most subjects. Teachers

combine ideas and expertise to give all pupils a good information and communications technology experience. Very good monitoring of the work pupils have produced in all aspects of the programme of study ensures that pupils cover all the necessary aspects.

MUSIC

104. Pupils develop good skills and understanding in music. By the time they are seven and 11 years old their standards are better than those expected at these ages. This is a big improvement since the last inspection.

105. A particular strength of music is the broad experience the pupils have, ranging from music lessons to recorder clubs and the high quality musical events that are put on for performance. Pupils have opportunities to sing solos from their earliest days in the school and these opportunities develop confidence as well as musicality. In performance many pupils possess clear, true voices and have the self confidence to take leading parts in musicals and concerts.

106. The pupils in Key Stage 1 sing clearly and tunefully and can play tuned and untuned instruments in time to a beat. They recognise and can repeat a rhythm and singing rhymes and chants. The vast majority can accurately identify instruments from hearing the sounds they make within an orchestra. Many know the instrument family each comes from. Pupils can identify the length of different notes. They can record their own simple compositions using their own symbols and then play them back.

107. In Year 2 and throughout Key Stage 2 pupils can learn to play the recorder and those that do quickly become skilful, breathing and fingering correctly and reading music accurately.

108. In Key Stage 2 pupils' singing is good and they can carry two and three harmonies well. They sing with enthusiasm and sensitivity, able to sing sweetly and quietly, or strongly and vigorously, for example, as the music and words require. Many become much more adept at using instruments and can compose and accompany each other well. By the time they are 11 pupils know about many composers and have a good understanding of different instruments and the sounds they make. Assemblies give additional opportunities for pupils to listen to and learn about the work of famous composers. They can talk about music using a more specialist vocabulary using words such as pitch, tempo and structure.

109. Teaching is good overall and frequently very good. Teachers' good subject knowledge ensures pupils learn well, for example the youngest pupils learn how to hold instruments properly not just when to use them. Pupils are given excellent opportunities to develop skills and good teaching challenges and improves each pupil's understanding.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

110. Physical education has improved since the last inspection and pupils at age seven and 11 now make satisfactory progress. The time allocated to the subject has increased and all aspects are taught including gymnastics, dance, games, athletics and swimming. Not all of these were seen during the inspection although planning shows that they will be taught at different times during the year. The amount of teaching has increased significantly as the neighbouring guide hut is being used for lessons that would otherwise not be taught due to the lack of specialist accommodation on the school site.

111. Two lessons were seen during the inspection. Years 3 to 6 went to the local sports centre for swimming lessons taught by trained instructors, one of whom is a parent and gives

her services voluntarily. All improve their stroke and breathing techniques during these enjoyable sessions. Nearly all learn to swim 25 metres before they leave in Year 6. Parents play a valuable part in transporting pupils to the sports centre free of charge.

112. Years 1 and 2 make good use of all the available space in an outdoor games lesson. Pupils practise hard at throwing and catching activities using bean bags and quoits. On their own, they develop the skill of aiming at targets accurately and in pairs send and receive a ball over different lengths. Teaching is good and pupils respond well to this, often getting out of breath with their exertions. They have positive attitudes, behave well and show confidence in their abilities. All dress in proper PE kit, and set out and collect apparatus in a responsible manner.

113. In the playground pupils use the school's good equipment to improve their skills in stilt walking, ball control and simple games. Whole groups skip together, waiting patiently for their turn. At these times pupils help each other and this contributes effectively to their social development. In winter, Watford FC train junior pupils who are interested in football on a nearby pitch. During summer months, extra cricket is organised by the headteacher.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

114. Pupils at seven and 11 have a good experience of religious education. They discuss interesting ideas of moral and religious importance. Pupils throughout the school are eager to share their views about what is right and wrong and are keen to learn about all religions. They work at the level expected for pupils of their age. The youngest pupils have excellent opportunities to talk about and experience important religious events. Key Stage 1 pupils re-enacted a Christening, learning about what takes place and why. They learnt enormous amounts about the reasons behind and the symbolism involved in such an event. For some pupils the written tasks following such good events were inappropriately abstract and did not add to their understanding. Pupils learn about special books used in religions and can talk about various festivals, such as Christmas and Divali, in different religions.

115. In Key Stage 2 pupils can discuss with real empathy and understanding some of the things they have learnt about. Those studying Islam who learnt about how Mohamed received God's message wrote with sensitivity about what it must have felt like to be in the cave as he was. Other religions are covered well, and children develop a respect and understanding of other cultures. The subject is made interesting by encouraging practical activities as well as discussion. When exploring Harvest festivals the pupils looked at the Jewish Festival of Sukkot and made their own tree branch shelter in the library. Bible stories from both the New and the Old Testament are told to the pupils throughout the school and most pupils can identify the messages behind each story accurately. Some opportunities to develop the pupils' spirituality are missed in both assembly and religious education lessons. Teaching and learning is good when stories are told, discussions are held and practical activities are given. Written activities are most appropriate for the older pupils in Key Stage 1 and those in Key Stage 2. Some current written forms of recording are not appropriate for the youngest pupils.