

INSPECTION REPORT

STEPHENSON LOWER SCHOOL

Bedford

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109502

Headteacher: Mr David Saunders

Reporting inspector: John William Paull
22028

Dates of inspection: 18th - 22nd September 2000

Inspection number: 224936

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:	3 - 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Carvin Way Bedford Bedfordshire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Napper
Date of previous inspection:	July 1996

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Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
John William Paull 22028	Registered inspector	Music Religious education	What sort of school is it? What should the school do to improve further? Results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How good are curricular opportunities? How well is the school led and managed?
Ron Elam 9092	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Curricular provision for personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How good is the school's partnership with parents?
Marion Wallace 15011	Team inspector	English Design and technology Geography History Physical education	
Bernice Magson 18143	Team inspector	Science Information technology Special educational needs Equal opportunities	
Bimla Thakur 5565	Team inspector	Mathematics Art English as an additional language Children under five years old	
Carol Parkinson 11642	Team inspector	The unit for pupils with hearing impairment	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Stephenson Lower is a community primary school, with a nursery. It educates boys and girls of three to nine years old and has places for pupils with hearing impairment. It is bigger than other primary schools, with around 340 on roll, of whom 57 are currently in the nursery. The majority of pupils are white, although several other ethnic backgrounds are represented. A significant group is from families originating in the Asian sub-continent. About 13 per cent speak English as an additional language, which is high compared with other schools. About a quarter of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is above the national average. These needs are mostly related to hearing or learning difficulties, although another significant proportion is for emotional or behavioural reasons. Nearly four per cent have a statement of need maintained by the local education authority, which is well above average. The school is part of an Education Action Zone, a national initiative to promote local partnerships between schools, education authorities, parents, businesses and other institutions to raise standards. Nearly half the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average. Attainment on entry to the school and socio-economic circumstances in the surrounding area are both well below what is usually found.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Stephenson Lower is an effective school. Taking into account the low educational starting point of many of its pupils, overall achievement by the time they leave is good. This judgement includes those with hearing impairment, other special needs and those with English as an additional language. Teaching is good throughout the school, including the nursery, and produces generally good attitudes and behaviour amongst pupils, contributing to secure learning. As a result, although overall standards at the ages of seven and nine years old are below national averages, progress for nearly all pupils is good and standards are improving. Management is generally good and is characterised by the strong leadership of the headteacher, deputy head and Chair of Governors, who operate as a team, employing good complementary skills. The school's basic funding is a little above normal, but it is used well, resulting in good value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching is good in the main school and nursery. Teachers work very hard to ensure that pupils have good attitudes to the school, contributing to good conditions for learning and good overall progress.
- Arrangements to promote good behaviour through agreements and positive rewards are excellent.
- A very good range of out-of-school clubs is provided, including reading, mathematics and sporting activities, increasing opportunities for pupils to make progress.
- Opportunities for pupils to benefit from working and playing co-operatively are very strong.
- The provision for pupils with hearing impairment is very good.
- Excellent use is made of national and local schemes, including the Education Action Zone, resulting in strong links with local businesses and other institutions, thereby enhancing training and resources.
- Good leadership and management result in very effective uses and targeting of financial resources.

What could be improved

- Standards in English, mathematics, science, information technology and subjects that rely on literacy are below average, which is reflected by the well below average 1999 National Curriculum test results.
- Schemes of work do not contain guidance about the order in which skills should be taught, resulting in work that does not always match the needs of pupils of different ages and prior attainments.
- Monitoring of what is taught and how it is taught is not rigorous enough to ensure that pupils' individual needs are met consistently.
- Attendance and late arrivals in the morning are unsatisfactory and undermine progress for some pupils.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

During the past year, several difficulties that were beyond the school's control absorbed considerable time and resources. However, the school has recovered well from this and has made good overall improvement since its inspection of July 1996. It took part in trials of the National Numeracy Project, which resulted in an earlier introduction of the strategy than in most schools. This has been particularly beneficial in raising standards in mathematics. The National Literacy Project has also been introduced successfully and is beginning to have an impact on standards. An Education Action Zone, in which Stephenson Lower is fully participating, has been established. It is helping to provide both links with local businesses and the money to find new ways of working. For example, a local company has already "adopted" the school and is helping with equipment to improve information technology. Whereas the previous inspection reported attainment at the ages of seven and nine years old as in line with expectations, in English, mathematics and science, the present inspection judges standards in these subjects as below average. However, in all three subjects, the results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 1 show that more pupils achieved the expected Level 2 than in either 1995 or 1996. By this measure, the results of the 2000 tests are better still and especially so in mathematics. The school responded well to its previous key issues. It now has a sex education policy that complies with national requirements and has introduced a wide range of procedures to assess better how pupils are getting on. The role of co-ordinators has also been redefined to give them greater responsibility for their subject, although they still have little opportunity to work alongside other teachers to monitor effectiveness in the classrooms.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by seven-year-olds based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
reading	E*	E*	E	E	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
writing	E	E	E	E	
mathematics	E	E*	E	D	

The table shows that in reading and mathematics in 1998, and in reading in 1997, the school's results were in the bottom five per cent nationally. In 1999, results improved, although they remained well below average. In comparison with similar schools, results were well below average in reading and writing, but simply 'below average' in mathematics. Owing to the number of pupils with hearing impairment, the proportion of pupils at the school who have a statement of special educational needs is well above average. The proportion that joins the school with English as an additional language is also high. Furthermore, several pupils who make good progress leave the school before taking the national tests. These factors are not taken into account in the table, although they make it much harder for the school to achieve higher statistical comparisons. The results of the 2000 tests indicate that standards have continued to improve, with a particular jump in the percentage attaining the expected Level 2 in mathematics. National figures are not yet available for these results and so firm comparisons cannot be made. In the inspection, attainment at the ages of seven and nine years old was below average in English, mathematics and science, rather than well below, reflecting the improvements in the 2000 tests of seven-year-olds. Assessments in science also support this finding. In information technology, standards are below average. In history, geography and religious education, where there is a dependency on literacy skills, standards are below national expectations. However, in other subjects, notably physical education, art, music and design and technology, standards are in line with expectations. The school has set challenging, but realistic, targets and is beginning to meet them. Pupils with English as

an additional language and all types of special educational needs make progress at rates similar to others. Owing to the low starting point of pupils entering the school, these findings represent good overall achievement.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good – nearly all pupils enjoy school and work hard for their teachers.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good – pupils usually stick to the school's rules well. Those with behavioural difficulties respond to sensitive coaxing and good classroom management.
Personal development and relationships	Good – pupils generally get on well with each other and show respect for others' feelings. They listen well to their teachers, showing politeness and obedience.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory – attendance is below average and several parents bring pupils to school after the morning start-time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-9 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good

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

The overall quality of teaching is good, which includes the nursery. In the inspection, around 64 per cent of lessons were good, including 12 per cent that were very good. The remainder were satisfactory, apart from one unsatisfactory physical education lesson. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well. Those pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are dealt with sensitively and effectively. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with hearing impairment and those with English as an additional language are also taught well, which helps them to acquire basic skills and knowledge. As a result, they make progress at rates similar to other pupils. The teaching of the sounds of letters begins well in the nursery and continues into Year 1. Literacy and numeracy hours are taught well, contributing to all pupils' acquisition of basic skills. However, opportunities to emphasise the use of standard forms of grammar and to extend the richness of pupils' expressive language are sometimes missed in other subjects. In teachers' daily planning, targets to show what pupils are expected to learn by the end of lessons are sometimes imprecise. However, resources are used particularly well and help pupils to understand key points in lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory – what is taught meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and the areas of learning for children under five are well planned.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with hearing impairment and for others with a statement of special needs is very good. Targets for pupils whose special needs are less severe are not always sufficiently precise.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good – pupils with English as an additional language are well accepted by other pupils in their games and as learning partners, which helps them to acquire English quickly. Specialist staff teach those at early stages of acquiring English very effectively.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good, overall – arrangements to encourage pupils' social maturity are very good and provision for moral and cultural development is good. However, opportunities for pupils to wonder at the created world, or to be amazed at human achievement are often missed.

How well the school cares for its pupils	Good – procedures for child protection are good and systems for keeping a check on attendance, pupils' progress and personal development are also good. The school has an excellent range of rewards, agreements and ways of checking and promoting good behaviour and attitudes amongst its pupils.
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As a response to a key issue in the last inspection, a wide range of methods is now used to check how pupils are getting on and what is effective in helping them to make progress. However, teachers with responsibility for a subject do not have sufficient time to follow up the information in others' classrooms. It is, therefore, still not used enough to plan or adapt what is taught to match the needs of different ages and groups of pupils.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good – the headteacher, deputy head and Chair of Governors share a vision for the future of the school. It is based on raising standards by finding out what works for the school's pupils and applying it more rigorously.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good – governors are very knowledgeable about the school and support it generously with their time, seeking information, offering objective advice and asking realistic questions.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory – senior staff and governors know the school well and their School Improvement Plan is a very clear document for setting out future developments. However, monitoring of what is taught and how is not sharp enough to ensure that changes are applied rigorously. Not all subject co-ordinators have opportunities to evaluate teaching and the curriculum in classrooms.
The strategic use of resources	Very good – resources are used efficiently and directed towards areas for development. Excellent use is made of money that comes into the school from specific grants or initiatives, such as the action zone: for example, by targeting extra help for a particular group of pupils to help them catch up, or to enable teachers to undertake training for particular purposes.

Members of staff are well qualified as primary or nursery practitioners and are employed in good numbers. Accommodation is generally good, apart from a lack of facilities for two classes that are based in demountable rooms. Learning resources are generally sound. Care is taken to check different suppliers' prices when ordering goods and different quotations and the advice of experts are sought for large items of expenditure to seek best value.

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 the school. • Their children make good progress and behave well. • The headteacher and staff are approachable and inform them well about how their children get on. • Teaching is good and children are expected to do their best. • The school works closely with them and helps their children to become mature and 	<p>Although only very few parents made criticisms, a few believe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their children do not get the right amount of work to do at home.

responsible.	
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- The school is led and managed well.

Inspectors agree with what pleases parents. Although overall standards in English, mathematics and science are below average, the staff of the school work very hard to ensure that progress is good. Bearing in mind that pupils leave the school at the relatively young age of nine years old, inspectors agree with the majority of parents, who believe that amounts of homework are not unreasonable.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Most children are about four years old when they enter the nursery, and in several important areas of learning many have skills, levels of knowledge and understanding that are well below what is usually found. For example, in language, communication and literacy, many pupils have a limited vocabulary and often express themselves in short, colloquial sentences. The school has a unit with specialist provision for pupils with hearing impairment and a high proportion, therefore, have associated special educational needs. Another significant group speak English as an additional language and several of these are at an early stage of English acquisition. However, teaching in the nursery is good and includes some very good teaching. As a result, pupils' learning is secure and basic skills are acquired well. Nevertheless, when children begin the National Curriculum, the overall standard remains well below what is usually found. The inspection found two contributory reasons. First, although progress is good, the nursery years are not enough time for children to catch up. Secondly, a few higher attaining children leave the school at the beginning of Year 1 to attend other lower schools that do not have a nursery, but which are nearer to their homes. Children's vocabulary, although improved, remains restricted and reduces children's overall attainment compared with the nationally recommended early learning goals for five-year-olds. Mathematical understanding is also well below what is usually found. The proportion of five-year-olds that matches the goals in personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development, although larger, now remains below what is usually found. The results of baseline assessments generally support these findings, showing that attainment on entry is generally well below what is normal in the local authority, especially in the areas of general vocabulary, and mathematical vocabulary.
2. Based on average points score (a system of comparing test results, which takes into account the numbers of pupils who achieve at different levels), standards of attainment in the 1999 National Curriculum tests for seven-year-olds in reading, writing and mathematics were well below the relevant national averages. In comparison with similar schools, the same pattern is repeated, except in mathematics, where the comparison is simply "below", rather than "well below" average. An explanation for the better result in mathematics is that the school took part in the pilot scheme for the National Numeracy Strategy and introduced numeracy hours earlier than was the case in most schools.
3. The average points system for comparing schools is based on the number of pupils that are known to be eligible for free school meals and does not take into account other factors. Stephenson School has a specialist unit for pupils with hearing impairment and many of these pupils have other related learning difficulties. The proportion with other special educational needs is also above average. The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is well above average and contains several pupils at an early stage of English acquisition. Furthermore, the number of pupils who benefit from good teaching, but then leave the school before taking the National Curriculum tests is also fairly high. All these factors work together to reduce statistical measures of attainment. Bearing all this in mind and taking into account the low educational starting point of many pupils at the school the results represent good achievement, overall. Trends at the school are generally upward. On the basis of the percentage that attain the expected Level 2, the results of the 2000 National Curriculum tests are better than those at the time of the 1996 inspection in reading, writing and mathematics. A similar pattern emerges from the Statutory Teachers' Assessments of seven-year-olds in science. In mathematics, at 79 per cent at Level 2 or above, the improvement from 56 per cent is very strong. Over the four years 1996 to 1999 inclusive, girls did not achieve as well as boys in comparison with the relevant averages, which is unusual. However, looking at the results separately, in two of the four years the position was reversed in reading and writing and, in one year, in mathematics, it is, therefore, unlikely that the pattern is of any great significance.

4. Evidence from the inspection shows that standards amongst seven and nine-year-olds in English, mathematics and science are below average, rather than well below. This finding represents an improvement and supports the raised levels of attainment in the 2000 National Curriculum tests.
5. By seven, pupils' listening skills are often good, but speaking is below average. The range of vocabulary used is limited and speech, for many pupils, is often characterised by colloquial terms such as 'stuff' and 'that thingy' in answers to questions and when making descriptions. Higher attaining pupils sometimes explain and give extended answers, but average and lower attaining pupils regularly offer a one-word response. Reading standards are improving steadily, although, currently, they remain below average. Many pupils in Year 2 mention their reading-scheme book as being their favourite book and agree that they enjoy reading. However, many of those asked were unable to identify other books that they read at home. Nevertheless, most pupils are beginning to read text of suitable difficulty for their age with reasonable fluency. Writing standards are also improving, although not as quickly as in reading. Handwriting is developing well and amongst higher attainers especially is usually of a consistent size and shape and letters are joined neatly. In creative and factual writing, however, most pupils display a noticeable lack of description in their work. By the time they leave the school, higher attaining pupils in the enrichment class are beginning to use expressive language when they speak and it is having an impact on their writing. In poetry, for example, phrases such as "...exotic apples of red and green" occur. However, the majority, who are of middle and lower attainment, still produce very short sentences and have difficulty in producing writing of any real length. Vocabulary, although better than amongst younger pupils, still remains restricted for the age group. These judgements are reflected in literacy across the curriculum. Worksheets are often used to support pupils' writing. Although this helps them to get answers on paper, it limits opportunities for them to practise the very skills that they find the hardest. Pupils with hearing impairment, other special needs and those with English as an additional language are supported well. They make progress at rates similar to other pupils, although their difficulties generally mean that they are more heavily represented amongst the lower attaining groups.
6. In mathematics, most pupils in Year 2 have a thorough understanding of place value up to 100. A few higher attainers go beyond this. They can add two numbers of two or three digits and recognise simple number patterns, based on two, five and 10. A few higher attaining pupils are secure in their understanding of multiplication. Pupils are beginning to be aware that addition can be done in any order and that subtraction is the opposite or "inverse" of addition. This level of understanding suggests that improvements in standards are being maintained and that, in some respects, further improvement is occurring. By Year 4, pupils have a sound understanding of the place value of three and four digit numbers. They use up to £5 to buy two or three items and can check the change. Pupils' records and a scrutiny of past work show that they can choose appropriate operations to solve simple word problems; recognise regular two- and three-dimensional shapes; and construct simple column graphs to display information. However, they have limited knowledge and understanding of fractions and of interpreting numerical data in simple lists, tables and graphs. This is mainly due to a lack of sufficient opportunities for using and applying mathematics in practical or real situations. Good support from communicators, who sign, when necessary, ensures that inclusion for pupils with hearing impairment is of a high quality. As a result, they make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs or with English as an additional language are also supported well and make progress at rates similar to other pupils.
7. Realistic targets are set for pupils in English and mathematics and overall targets are agreed with the local authority. The reported improvements in standards mean that the school is beginning to achieve these targets.
8. In science, most seven-year-olds know key facts about electricity and light; the way that objects move; and of conditions that enable plants to grow. They identify the properties of common materials and experiment to find the effect of heating and cooling on food. However, very few pupils go beyond these expected levels of attainment. This reduces the overall standard, such that it remains below average. Most nine-year-olds learn successfully about solids and liquids, hot and cold, insulators and temperature, as well as building on knowledge and skills learnt in topics undertaken when they were younger. Again, standards reach the expected level (Level 3), but rarely exceed it. For this reason, overall attainment is a little below what is normally expected.

Provision for pupils with hearing impairment, other special needs and for those with English as an additional language are similar to that in English and mathematics. As a result, they are fully included in all learning opportunities and their progress matches that of other pupils.

9. In information technology, standards are below national expectations by the age of seven, which is similar to what was reported in the last inspection. Younger pupils have limited opportunities to work on suitable machines and there are insufficient software programs available to support the present curriculum. However, good teaching ameliorates this weakness, so that overall progress is satisfactory. Findings are similar for pupils in older classes. By Year 4, although word processing skills and standards in graphic work are better than in other aspects of the subject, opportunities to use appropriate software are limited in the data handling and control technology aspects of the National Curriculum. In subjects such as history, geography and religious education, which are dependent on literacy skills to access knowledge independently and to record it effectively, standards are generally below what is normally expected at seven and nine years old. However, when pupils respond to questioning orally, or record in other ways, using art or models, their attainment is better. In subjects such as art, design and technology, music and physical education, standards are usually in line with expectations in the new National Curriculum for 2000.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour, personal development and relationships with each other and adults are strengths of the school and make a good contribution towards promoting their attainment and progress. This conclusion matches the findings at the time of the previous inspection and reflects the widespread views of parents that good standards have been maintained. However, attendance is below average, which is unsatisfactory and several parents bring their children to school late. This lateness limits the progress of those pupils to whom it applies.
11. Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes towards learning are good. This finding includes even the youngest children in the nursery, those with special educational needs, those with hearing impairment and those with English as an additional language. Pupils concentrate well and are eager to contribute, as was seen particularly in a literacy lesson in Year 3, when they compared two poems. Pupils are keen to become involved in different activities both within the classroom and with various clubs. Their ability to listen well is often apparent in information technology lessons, which include sessions of instruction. They are prepared to contribute their ideas as shown during a brainstorming session on Harvest Festival in a Year 4 religious education lesson. Nevertheless, in some lessons, a few pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulty fidgeted or displayed poor concentration. Teachers and support assistants are skilled at dealing with this so that it does not disturb the rest of the pupils.
12. Pupils usually behave well in the classroom at play and lunchtimes. They are well mannered, polite to adults and to each other, courteous and welcoming to visitors. They move around the school in an orderly way, even when not supervised. They show respect for property, for example, when using the computers and take care putting away materials at the end of lessons. Some pupils with emotional difficulty become upset easily, but their behaviour does not affect others as the teaching and support staff take quick and appropriate action. No bullying occurred during the inspection and the school has appropriate procedures to deal with the rare aggressive behaviour that takes place. One pupil was permanently excluded in the last school year.
13. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are good and contribute to the quality of work in lessons. Pupils get on well with each other when playing games at break and lunchtimes. In the classroom, the youngest respect each other's spaces well when sitting close together on the carpet. Good co-operation was seen when Year 4 pupils shared out tasks during a science lesson, testing materials for absorbency. Older pupils in the nursery show they can play co-operatively and share toys. Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils take on many tasks both within the classroom and outside, with, for example, the older pupils helping the younger with their reading at lunchtime. The pupils also benefit from collecting for charities during the year and meeting people in the community, such as when they go to see older people in a retirement home at Christmas. They are starting to use their initiative and, for example, move around the classroom to find materials they may need. Overall, however, there is little evidence of the pupils learning to

develop independence in their learning, with even the older ones still being dependent on the teachers' guidance.

14. Attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory. The level of attendance has improved slowly in the past four years but is still below the national average. High levels of absence not only affect the attainment of individual pupils; other pupils are affected as well, because teachers have to repeat work to help the absentees catch up. Absences are mainly due to childhood illnesses, although a number of parents insist on taking their children on holiday in term time. Some of these holidays are longer than two weeks and include some that can last six weeks or longer. The level of authorised absence is below the national average reflecting the efforts of the school to obtain explanations from parents. The great majority of pupils are waiting in the playground to go into class when the bell rings. However, in the following ten minutes some 30 pupils, nearly always brought by their parents, were seen to arrive late. Several more, again with parents, came up to 30 minutes after the start of the day. Registration does not always take place immediately, resulting in some pupils who are late not being recorded. During the inspection, these late arrivals sometimes disrupted the first lesson of the day, resulting in a loss of teaching time for all pupils.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

15. The quality of teaching observed is good, which agrees with the views of parents, of whom 98 per cent of those returning questionnaires feel that this is the case. This quality of teaching has a positive impact on pupils' learning, which is nearly always good. In the inspection, around 64 per cent of lessons were good, including 12 per cent that were very good. The remainder were satisfactory, apart from one unsatisfactory physical education lesson. These percentages indicate a significant improvement since the previous inspection, when the quality of teaching was satisfactory. Around 87 per cent of lessons at that time were judged satisfactory or better, with 13 per cent judged as unsatisfactory. A relatively high proportion of pupils at the school have special educational needs, including a well above average percentage with a statement of need. A significant number of these have emotional and behavioural difficulties, and teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well. These pupils are dealt with sensitively and effectively and this strength contributes to the good teaching. Co-operation and getting on well with others are emphasised to a considerable extent in the nursery. As pupils move through the school, teachers build on this well, using effective systems to reward good attitudes towards others and towards work. As a result, pupils make a good effort and acquire basic skills well.
16. Teaching of children under five years old is good. The areas of learning for the age group are being adapted well to meet the requirements of the new curriculum for the Foundation Stage. However, the school's previous inspection report does not provide much detail about what was provided at that time. It is, therefore, difficult to say specifically where teaching in the nursery has improved. Nevertheless, it is clear that the teaching of physical development has moved forward, because of the provision and good use of increased resources. All other areas of learning are planned well and adult support is used particularly effectively to ensure that pupils of different needs and backgrounds are included well. Pupils with hearing impairment, for example, are supported strongly and shown what is required of them for progress to occur. During the inspection, a student from a local high school and another from a higher education college were used very well to support groups, ensuring that children kept working hard. These students practise skills that are required for their respective courses, whilst enhancing children's learning well.
17. Teachers' knowledge of the National Curriculum and the age groups that they teach is good. This results in effective overall planning, although some weaknesses occur in matching pupils' previous levels of knowledge and understanding to current tasks. Throughout the school, including the nursery, the range of appropriate teaching methods that are employed is good. For example, direct instruction, question and answer sessions, suitable exercises and activities to consolidate understanding, drama and the use of information technology were all seen in use in different subjects. This variety helps pupils to acquire planned learning more successfully, by keeping their interest. As a result, time and resources are used well, although pupils' uses of written work to record and consolidate what they know are often limited by their lack of language skills. This aspect is not always addressed strongly enough across the curriculum, outside literacy hours. Sometimes, teachers do not sufficiently explain correct grammatical usage, permitting too many

colloquial expressions. In the nursery, the use of daily assessment by the teacher, nursery nurse and other adults is a strong feature that results in good adaptations of the areas of learning to match individuals' needs.

18. The marking of pupils' work is invariably accurate and up to date. Teachers are particularly conscientious about this aspect of their work. As a result, pupils put in good efforts for them, usually tackling tasks to the best of their ability. Written comments are fairly brief, usually offering encouragement or a word or two about the standard, but this reflects the age group of the pupils well.
19. Most teachers show good understanding of how to teach literacy and numeracy hours. The school took part in the national pilot scheme to introduce the National Numeracy Project. Consequently, numeracy hours have been taking place for longer than in most schools and are, therefore, strongly established, contributing to considerable recent improvement in results in mathematics.
20. The teaching of literacy is generally good through the school with very good teaching in the Year 4 enrichment class and some lessons in Year 3. Lessons are well organised, following the strategies recommended in the national project well. Teachers explain to pupils what they should know by the end of lessons clearly. Whole class sessions at the end of each lesson are nearly always used well to summarise learning and to explain what comes next. In the nursery, a scheme to teach the sounds of letters is used well to introduce the early skills of reading. These skills are built on as pupils enter Year 1, with plenty of reinforcement in small groups that is carried out well by a support assistant. In the very good lessons, pupils are beginning to consider and extend vocabulary. Evidence of this occurred in the enrichment class for Year 4, with the teacher emphasising careful choices of words. However, this aspect is not universally strong and opportunities are sometimes missed to extend pupils' uses of language and vocabulary.
21. The teaching of mathematics is good throughout the school. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject, which is reflected in the confident use of numeracy hours. Teachers' explanations and demonstrations are clear and precise. Pupils are well involved through questioning and teachers ask appropriate questions to assess levels of understanding and adapt questioning accordingly. Teachers praise pupils appropriately, especially the less confident. Teachers make good use of time, resources and learning support assistants to support pupils' learning. The quality of mental and oral work is good at the start of the lesson and often in the whole class sessions at the end of lessons. Teachers often use more than one task within their class, but the level of difficulty of work for groups of different prior attainment is not consistently strong, especially bearing in mind the high levels of support that are available within most classrooms.
22. Science teaching across the whole school is usually satisfactory and includes some examples of good teaching. Strengths are the management of the pupils that is found generally across the subjects and the use of the support staff and resources. Support staff and communicators for the hearing impaired know exactly what they have to do and are very effective in ensuring that pupils learn basic skills effectively. Planning and assessment are the responsibility of teachers working alongside other teachers in the same age group. In the best teaching, what pupils know at the end of lessons is evaluated to find out how effective the lesson has been and includes a variety of methods that raise levels of interest and curiosity. In such lessons, teachers have good subject knowledge and deliver their work at a brisk pace. However, in several lessons, teachers direct pupils too much, providing few opportunities for them to express their own scientific ideas. In these lessons, teachers choose resources and materials and provide worksheets, which restrict such opportunities.
23. The teaching of information and communication technology skills is at least satisfactory throughout the school and, sometimes, it is good. In good lessons, teachers organise the class well and offer good demonstrations, using pupils to model the activity. Processes are explained clearly. Where organisation is given less attention, pupils are sometimes unable to see and they become restless, causing concentration levels to fall a little.

24. In other subjects, including religious education, art and physical education, the overall quality of teaching is good throughout the school, although there was one unsatisfactory lesson in physical education. In religious education, teaching was consistently good. Teachers base their lessons closely on the locally agreed syllabus for the subject. They use links with the community well and support pupils' understanding of the religions of the world, including Christianity. In history, a similar strong emphasis on the use of visits and visitors to enhance learning was found and, during the inspection, visitors staged an *Anglo-Saxon Day* for older pupils. In all other subjects, including design and technology, geography and music, teaching is satisfactory, often with good features.
25. Teachers set realistic individual targets for their pupils, especially in literacy and numeracy. This process is well supported by the deputy headteacher, who uses several effective methods to gather information and to monitor rates of learning and progress.
26. There is an excellent whole school commitment to the inclusion and integration of pupils with special educational needs into all aspects of school life. A very good team of teachers, communicators for the hearing impaired and support assistants consider pupils' needs and work effectively together to provide the appropriate level of support. The special need's register for the school is updated annually. Equality of access and opportunity is always given a high priority. Planning is consistent, although for pupils with less severe needs, targets are not always sufficiently precise in individual education plans. Pupils are taught both in the classroom and in special groups that are taken out for particular purposes. All support is linked to what is agreed in pupils' individual education plans and teachers understand the principles of the Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs. The teaching of basic skills and subject content is well planned, clear and accurate, especially for pupils with hearing impairment. It is based on recent and relevant assessment of pupils' knowledge and achievements, related to their particular requirements. For example, the teacher of the deaf and communicators for the hearing impaired are knowledgeable, optimistic about the future progress of pupils and skilled in their jobs. All teachers are aware of the need to develop pupils' independent learning skills and to plan strategies to promote them.
27. Similar strengths are found in the specialist teaching of pupils with English as an additional language. Adaptations of the curriculum meet requirements well and result in good opportunities for pupils to be included in all aspects of the curriculum.

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

28. The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. It offers a sound range of learning opportunities for pupils, including all National Curriculum subjects, as well as the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. What is taught has benefited from the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and the quality of education has improved as a result. Reading is emphasised strongly. A reading club enhances opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge of the sounds that different letters make and to practise skills. Uses of number are planned well across the curriculum. The governors' policy for sex education (an issue in the previous report) now meets statutory requirements. Pupils' questions are given straightforward answers that match their ages and stages of development. Ideas about growth and maturity are taught to match what is included in science in the National Curriculum. Similarly, information about healthy bodies and the dangers of misusing drugs and medicines are provided. In many subjects, for example in history and geography, the school's present schemes focus on factual knowledge, offering guidance about topics to be taught, but do not give sufficient guidance about the order in which skills should be taught. As a result, progress is sometimes uneven through the school, as it is not clear which skills pupils have already acquired or experienced. The areas of learning for children under five years old in the nursery (the new Foundation Stage of education) are well planned. This planning provides children with many opportunities to acquire skills in language, communication and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development. The planning of work for this age group also offers children many opportunities to work and play together, ensuring that they progress well in the development of personal and social skills.

29. The curriculum is adapted well to the needs of pupils with special educational needs. Both teachers and classroom assistants understand how to support individuals well. Pupils with hearing impairment and others with statements of special need have precise programmes that are followed closely. These programmes ensure that each step that pupils make is followed up appropriately, so that progress is made at good rates. However, individual education plans for pupils with less severe special needs are not as consistently precise in all classes.
30. Literacy and numeracy hours are planned well in all age groups. They follow the structure of the national strategies closely. However, opportunities to extend pupils' writing skills are not consistently planned across the curriculum. The way that worksheets are used in subjects such as science, history and geography sometimes restricts planned opportunities for writing factually at length. Similar restrictions occur in religious education, which affects available chances for pupils to write expressively about feelings or stories. The planning of information technology is improving rapidly and direct teaching of skills is provided in a good computer area. However, at the moment, opportunities to practise these skills to support work in the classrooms are restricted by a lack of relevant hard and software.
31. The availability and range of after school and lunchtime clubs is very good. These activities include sports, music and others. Opportunities for broadening pupils' reading and enriching their mathematical experiences also exist. These opportunities make a strong impact on learning in areas of the curriculum that are particularly relevant to the needs of pupils attending the school.
32. Access to the school's compulsory curriculum is equal to all pupils. A lot of time and effort is put into ensuring that pupils receive equal opportunities for progress to occur. The headteacher explains this, using the strong image of nets that catch anyone who falls through, meaning that if a pupil finds something difficult to learn, then another way of teaching it must always be sought. This type of provision is found in a lot of the school's work. For example, if pupils do not learn the sounds of letters that were taught in the nursery, then ways of teaching them in Year 1 are put into place. As a result, all pupils, regardless of age or prior attainment, have continued to receive equal opportunities to acquire these essential skills. Very good links with the community and excellent relationships with other institutions support this process well. For example, grants from the Harpur Trust, the Education Action Zone or the John Bunyan Pyramid are used to establish resources or extra teaching in a range of contexts. The way in which students and high school pupils on work-experience are used to support children at work in the nursery is another practical example.
33. The provision for pupils' social development is very good and for moral and cultural development is good. These areas are successfully promoted in the school's climate for learning and code of conduct. They are strengths of the school and build on the findings of the previous inspection. However, the provision for spiritual development is a much weaker element.
34. Spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Although teachers value the contributions that pupils make in lessons and individual achievements are recognised, insufficient opportunities are planned for pupils to wonder at the created world in lessons. Assemblies take place every day, but do not meet statutory requirements, containing only very limited opportunities for pupils to reflect on their experiences or to acknowledge a supreme being through prayer.
35. The school's approach to pupils' moral development is good, because it provides clear values about the correctness of respect and care for others. Expectations include high standards of behaviour and acceptable conduct, to which the pupils respond positively, enjoying their work and showing care for the school. These standards further contribute to the arrangements for acquiring an awareness of right from wrong. Both teaching and non-teaching staff provide good role models.
36. The provision for the development of social behaviour is very good. The school, as a caring community, values its members and encourages different groups of pupils to integrate well together at work and play. Sometimes, hearing pupils learn how to sign to communicate with pupils with hearing impairment and, at lunchtimes, older pupils are given opportunities to help younger ones with reading. The quality of relationships between adults and pupils is very good and provides a role model for pupils to relate well and to act courteously to each other. Pupils are encouraged to undertake various responsibilities in the classroom. Outside the classroom pupils have

opportunities to carry out important administrative duties such as collecting or distributing registers for teachers.

37. The provision for cultural development is good. In lessons, pupils gain an appreciation of art, music and literature from different times and other cultures. Appreciation of western culture includes nursery rhymes, studies at the local museum and art gallery and the use of classical music in assemblies. An introduction to peoples around the world is provided in geography, art and music. Asian parents have helped with Diwali celebrations and a support assistant runs an Asian dance club. Visitors to lessons have included a poet, a Caribbean storyteller and several theatre companies.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

38. As at the time of the previous inspection, teachers are very caring and work hard to support pupils appropriately. Parents are pleased with the level of support in the school, seeing it as a caring community where their children are safe.
39. Overall, the school has good procedures for child protection and for ensuring the welfare of its pupils. The headteacher is the designated officer for child protection and the school follows local procedures closely. Teachers generally have sound understanding of what to do if they have any concerns and to whom they should report. The provision for first aid is satisfactory with several staff having been trained. Records are kept of any treatment and letters go home to parents as appropriate. A health and safety policy is in place and risk assessments are carried out every two years, following guidance from the local education authority. Training related to specific areas of the school's work has taken place, although not all staff have had recent guidance on their particular responsibilities. Teachers ensure that pupils are made aware of health and safety issues during lessons such as science, physical education and design and technology. Good support is provided for pupils with food allergies or medical problems.
40. The procedures for monitoring pupils' personal development make a good contribution to raising pupils' achievement. Both teaching and support staff have a good understanding of the needs and abilities of pupils. Each year, a formal record is completed to show pupils' attitudes to their fellow pupils, adults and work, as well as their behaviour in the playground. This record is supplemented by opportunities in half termly reviews to note the attitudes of particular pupils. The school methodically assesses pupils with special education needs to gain a good picture of the support they require.
41. The procedures for monitoring and improving behaviour are excellent, with excellent guidance from the special educational needs co-ordinator. Over recent years, the school has introduced a variety of initiatives to help pupils. These have included improving the playground environment, involving pupils in deciding on rewards and sanctions and playground agreements and providing training for staff at a local special school. In the early part of the year, teachers in the classroom and the headteacher in assemblies discuss with pupils how they should behave. The school has identified not only pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulty, but also those who may cause minor disruption that could nonetheless affect the learning of pupils around them. These and other pupils benefit from the *Dolphins Nurture Group*; the setting of pastoral support plans; and from opportunities to discuss academic and behavioural targets. Both teaching and non-teaching staff follow consistent approaches. Excellent examples of pupils starting to be upset, but being noticed by their teacher or learning assistant were found. On such occasions, adults react immediately to help pupils back on task to ensure that learning is not affected. The result is that not only do those pupils with behavioural difficulties have their self-esteem raised so that their attitudes and behaviour demonstrably improve, but all pupils are learning how to behave well and tolerantly towards others. Many pupils let off steam and play quite boisterously in the play areas, but no cases of actual bullying were witnessed during the inspection. Furthermore, those pupils who were asked agreed that the school takes any incident of oppressive behaviour seriously and investigates it fully. They also stated that they feel cared for and safe at the school.
42. Procedures for the assessment of pupils' progress are good. The deputy head teacher keeps extensive records and has good detailed understanding of what these records mean. A particularly powerful means of gathering information includes a system for tracking individuals' progress and is used to help set targets, especially in literacy and numeracy. This record also carries checks about methods of teaching and of what has been effective in ensuring progress for individuals. It is used to pass on information to teachers about what has helped pupils to make progress in the past and, therefore, what might continue to be effective. However, current monitoring is insufficient to ascertain fully whether such information is acted on and how effective it is. The school carries out its responsibilities with regard to National Curriculum tests and Statutory Teachers' Assessments very well. A range of commercial and standardised tests is also used appropriately to gather useful information.

43. The procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance and punctuality are generally good. The keenness of the majority of pupils to come to school and the good relationships with parents result in little absence for many pupils. The school reminds parents of the need for regular attendance and the importance of arriving on time. Unexplained or unexpected absence results in secretarial staff telephoning pupils' homes during the morning of the first day. The school also produces regular statistics to monitor the performance of each class. The education welfare officer provides very good support, visiting the school frequently and going to see parents at home if necessary. She has also started being in the playground in the morning to talk to parents who fail to bring their children on time. Nevertheless, the school does not discourage holiday absences enough and some parents do not fully appreciate the need to avoid taking their children out of school in term time. During the inspection, registration in some classes took place up to 15 minutes after the start of the day. This is too late and results in lateness not always being recorded, preventing a proper monitoring of the extent of poor punctuality.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

44. In their responses to the questionnaire and at the meeting with the inspectors, parents showed that they are exceptionally pleased with what the school does for their children. They are satisfied with the level of support that children receive and consider that the school promotes positive attitudes. They feel they are well informed about their children's progress and are comfortable approaching its staff with questions. These reactions are similar to the comments made at the time of the previous inspection. A few parents were concerned about the range of activities provided outside lessons. However, inspectors considered that the number of available clubs at lunchtime and after school is very good with a wide range of activities that are well attended. Some doubts were expressed about the amount of homework, but inspectors concluded that homework is set appropriately more often than not.
45. The school has established good links with parents and these contacts are effective. Arrangements for parents and their children to join the nursery are very good, resulting in a usually smooth start for nearly all. Regular letters are sent home, outlining the various activities that the pupils are involved in, as well as providing general administrative information. The information includes guidance on how to help at home with literacy and number work. The prospectus provides ideas on how parents can help their children before they come to school. Most of the parents come to the formal meetings with teachers in all three terms to find out what their children will be doing and to discuss their progress. The annual report on progress is provided in the summer term. This report generally provides a reasonable summary for English and mathematics, together with targets to help the pupils to improve. Nevertheless, it is not consistently good in some classes and subjects. When this is the case, comments are very brief and concentrate on attitudes and the work covered rather than the skills and understanding acquired. In some instances, reference to particular subjects is very brief, with just a passing comment about what is taught during topic work. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are appropriately involved in the setting and review of their individual education plans.
46. Parents' involvement with the school makes a satisfactory contribution to its work and to the attainment of the pupils. Many of the classes have parents helping with reading, cooking and sewing and other parents actively support sports matches with other schools. Some ethnically Asian parents help to celebrate Diwali and provide examples of favourite foods. The guidance given on homework activities enables parents to help their children. The parents' and friends' association is very supportive, arranging both fund raising and social events.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

47. At the time of the last inspection, the headteacher provided good leadership of the school and was well supported by governors. Good overall leadership and management are still found at the school. The headteacher, deputy head and chair of governors work well together and have good complementary skills that ensure good educational direction. It is based on a thorough understanding of pupils and their needs. For example, several pupils lack confidence when they first come to school, but a strong commitment to settling them quickly and making them feel comfortable and at home overcomes this. The headteacher and senior staff have ensured a good

climate for learning that is based on knowing pupils well and caring about their needs and the needs of their families. As a result, parents are supportive of the school. Even after a year, which contained several difficult circumstances, their answers to the questionnaires issued before the inspection, show that they are very satisfied with what the school offers. The management of what is provided for pupils with special educational needs is also strong. The special needs co-ordinator organises helpers and resources well and has correctly identified that some individual education plans need review to ensure that targets for pupils are sufficiently precise. Arrangements for pupils with hearing impairment and other needs that are established through the provision of statements are similarly well managed. The school's nursery is also well established, with good working relationships and organisation of resources to meet the requirements of young children in the Foundation Stage.

48. The governing body is effective in carrying out its statutory responsibilities, although legal requirements for a daily act of worship are not fully met. Responses to issues raised in the last report are good. Better uses of subject co-ordinators have brought about more useful information on which to make plans. However, monitoring, while it is better than at the time of the last inspection, is not yet rigorous enough to ensure that individuals' needs are consistently met. Governors also strongly support the school's place in an Education Action Zone, enabling the headteacher's leadership of a group that is seeking new approaches to discipline and the management and promotion of good behaviour. The work of the action zone spreads widely and involves supportive links with other institutions and businesses in Bedford. Such links have a good impact on the school as they open channels through which it can access resources that have a direct impact on raising standards. Improvements in information technology are an example of this.
49. Opportunities for staff at the school to develop professionally, undertaking further training, are good. The school has begun a process to link with *Investors in People*. A very strong commitment to use opportunities to train for success in providing what is best for pupils is evident throughout all its personnel. For example, lunchtime supervisory assistants are frequently found surrounded with children, offering ideas for collaborative play and even, on occasions, joining in with them.
50. The use of strategic resources, such as the funds provided to run the school, is planned very well. Appropriate priorities are established and funds are provided to support them as identified in the school's improvement plan. The headteacher and governors have excellent procedures to identify how effectively specific grants are spent. Ways of raising standards are carefully assessed and funds are sought from, for example, the Education Action Zone. Results are then monitored to ensure effectiveness before further funding is sought. Similarly, money that is provided for pupils with special educational needs, or through the national standards grant, is spent accordingly.
51. The deputy head and headteacher are well aware of the need to seek best value for public funds. They compare prices and seek quotations for capital spending. The governors have effective guidelines about how this should be applied.
52. There is a sufficient number of suitably qualified and experienced teachers and support staff to teach the subjects of the basic curriculum, including religious education. The staff is deployed appropriately and the match of staff to co-ordination roles maximises their experience and expertise. The special needs co-ordinator and non-teaching assistants provide very good support for those pupils with special educational needs. The specialist staff for pupils with English as an additional language and those with hearing impairment provide very good support. Staff more recently appointed, both teaching and support, have benefited from appropriate induction arrangements. Staff development is linked to the school improvement plan and also takes account of the individuals' needs. It is effective in improving both teaching and learning. Training for the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has been successful in providing a structured and effective programme of learning which has a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning.
53. Overall, the accommodation is good and enhances the teaching and learning of the pupils. Classrooms are spacious and have attractive displays of pupils' work and information. Various smaller rooms are very well used for withdrawal of small groups of pupils, storage and providing facilities for staff. However, the temporary classrooms are unpleasant in wet weather when pupils

regularly need to move between them and the main building. Office facilities are inadequate, with the headteacher having to share a cramped room, limiting opportunities for discussions with pupils and parents. Playgrounds for both the main school and the nursery are in excellent condition. Very good support from the site agent and his staff results in a very attractive and well-maintained environment.

54. Overall, the provision of resources is satisfactory. Those for mathematics, art, music, religious education for early years pupils and for pupils with special educational needs are good. For information and communication technology resources are unsatisfactory with regards to numbers and quality of computers, software and control technology, although the school has already arranged for these to be improved.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The headteacher, staff and governors are strongly committed to improving standards and results, including attainment in the National Curriculum tests of seven-year-olds. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are seen as key elements in achieving this, bearing in mind the needs of pupils at the school. The Education Action Zone is also seen as a vital part of a drive to find new ways of working, rather than of just working harder. Inspectors agree fully with this vision, as senior managers and staff are already working very hard on behalf of pupils at the school.

The headteacher, staff and governors should:

- (a) Raise standards in English, mathematics, science, information technology and subjects that are dependent on literacy, by:
- i. Insisting that pupils use standard forms of English at all appropriate times, both in speech and writing in English lessons and across the curriculum (see paragraphs 5, 17, 90, 91, 92 and 152).
 - ii. Encouraging pupils, in all subjects and situations, to elaborate answers with richer choices of vocabulary and to use more descriptive phrases and clauses in their speech and written work (see paragraphs 5, 20, 92, 96 and 111).
 - iii. Increasing opportunities for pupils to practise extended writing of their own in literacy hours and in lessons across the curriculum (see paragraphs 5, 17, 30, 92, 96 and 124).
 - iv. Offering more opportunities for pupils to use and apply mathematical data that they collect themselves (paragraphs 6 and 105).
 - v. In mathematics, ensuring that previously high attaining pupils are consistently challenged with work of sufficient difficulty to match their needs (see paragraphs 21 and 107).
 - vi. In science, using the new scheme of work to ensure that tasks and skills build progressively, so that pupils of different ages and prior attainments make faster and more even progress (see paragraphs 112 and 118).
 - vii. Providing more frequent opportunities for pupils to draw up plans for scientific experiments independently and to write up the results of experiments (see paragraphs 22, 115 and 117).
 - viii. Ensuring that sufficient computers and software are available for pupils to practise more effectively the skills of information technology that are taught (see paragraphs 30, 54, 108 and 150).
- (b) Ensure that work consistently meets the needs of individuals and groups of pupils of different ages and prior attainments, by:
- i. Introducing schemes of work that contain guidance about the order in which skills should be taught (see paragraphs 28, 112 and 125).

- ii. Using these schemes to plan more effectively for pupils of different ages and prior attainments, wherever appropriate (see paragraphs 112, 118 and 125).
 - iii. Carrying out more rigorous monitoring of teaching to ensure that what has previously been shown to be effective is used, whenever appropriate, in present and future work (see paragraphs 42, 131, 161 and 166).
 - iv. Using the findings of such monitoring and information from assessment to ensure that the needs of both individual pupils and teachers are consistently met (see paragraphs 20, 48, 97, 161 and 166).
- (c) So that pupils' progress is not needlessly undermined, further emphasise the importance of both good attendance and punctuality to pupils and parents alike, by:
- i. Setting specific and measurable goals with deadlines for improvement (see paragraphs 14 and 42).
 - ii. Re-emphasising the initiatives, rewards and agreements already in use (see paragraphs 14, 42 and 96).

Other minor weaknesses that governors should consider for inclusion in an action plan

- i. Ensure that targets for pupils with special educational needs are always precise and measurable, so that individual education plans are more useful for planning and adapting work (see paragraphs 29 and 47).
- ii. Improve arrangements for pupils' spiritual development and ensure that collective worship always meets statutory requirements (see paragraphs 33, 34 and 48).
- iii. Ensure that all staff are more aware of responsibilities with regard to health and safety (see paragraph 39).

THE PROVISION FOR PUPILS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT

55. The school's provision for pupils with impaired hearing is very good. At present, the base supports 12 pupils aged between three and nine years old. Although most live in Bedfordshire, in some circumstances, pupils are admitted from adjoining local education authorities. The majority of pupils are profoundly deaf, although some have useful hearing and this enables them to hear and understand a little speech when wearing hearing aids. A number of pupils have significant physical and intellectual difficulties in addition to their lack of hearing. On occasions, pupils have to be absent from school because of necessary clinical treatments, hospital visits and hearing assessments. Pupils attend mainstream classes with qualified communicators for much of the school day, as well as receiving teaching and assessment from the teacher of the deaf.
56. The majority of pupils attain standards well below those of most hearing pupils of the same age, but they make good progress in the subjects of the curriculum. Their deafness, additional problems and, in some cases, late admission to a suitable educational system, make it very difficult for them to undertake work at a level similar to other pupils. Pupils' ability to understand spoken English is often very limited, although it improves well with good teaching and the use of British Sign Language and signed English. A few pupils make good progress towards acquiring their first language, either English or British Sign Language. Profoundly deaf pupils with English as an additional language or British Sign Language have particular difficulties because they need to learn two second languages at school. However, they usually make good progress in achieving this and satisfactory progress in the subjects of the National Curriculum.
57. Pupils' attitudes to school are good. They are keen to come to school; eager to explain their work to visitors; and very willing to communicate. Bearing in mind their difficulties and the effects of their deafness, they persist with their work well. They relate very well with their teacher and their communicators and work happily alongside hearing pupils. Relationships are very good. Several

pupils with hearing impairment are highly dependent upon their communicators for conversation with teachers and other pupils. However, hearing pupils are tolerant about this and try to involve them in their playground activities and in work-groups in the classroom. However, the degree of challenge in this area is necessarily limited because of the need for adult intervention to ensure that opportunities for language acquisition are taken.

58. Teaching is good. The teaching of basic skills and subject content is well planned, clear and accurate and based on recent and relevant assessment of pupils' knowledge and achievements. It is related to their particular special needs. Pupils are challenged and their knowledge is checked and consolidated well by both the teacher of the deaf and communicators. The teacher of the deaf works effectively with the educational communicators and classroom teachers to ensure that targets set for pupils are relevant and detailed. All teachers are aware of the need to develop pupils' independent learning skills and to plan strategies to promote them. However, information technology is not yet used sufficiently to enable pupils to work independently, for example, by checking their own work, or finding out information for themselves. Plans have been made to upgrade computers and increase the range of software to make this possible. Classroom teachers take considerable responsibility for hearing impaired pupils in their classes and work well with the pupils' communicators. They are closely involved in writing and reviewing individual education plans. These are detailed, regularly reviewed and indicate academic levels clearly. All the pupils' communicators are highly skilled, flexible in their approach and very effective. Pupils' progress is individually assessed and recorded, but they do not receive formal homework from the teacher of the deaf. Good team work and enthusiasm amongst the staff make a valuable contribution to pupils' confidence and attitude to learning. The school has a good relationship with the designated middle and upper school for the hearing impaired, although this is not in the same district.
59. The school looks after and cares for its hearing impaired pupils very well. The teacher of the deaf is very well informed and ensures that there are clear communication channels so that relevant information about pupils' complex needs is conveyed effectively and appropriately. Good monitoring is used to check that support is effective and assessment is well used to plan what should be taught next. The high adult/pupil ratio and the school's positive attitude towards hearing impairment promotes the health safety and protection of these pupils. Additional support agencies from outside school, such as the service for sensory impairment and communication difficulties, the speech therapist and the cochlear implant team give valuable support. Suitable hearing aids are provided and are well maintained, although the school does not yet have its own facilities to make detailed assessments of the functions of hearing aids.
60. The school has good arrangements for conveying information to parents. There is a home/school notebook for each pupil and the teacher of the deaf communicates regularly with parents, supported by the service for hearing impairment and communication difficulties. There are some difficulties in providing parents with opportunities to learn to sign in their own homes and to help pupils consolidate their learning of new signs in connection with the curriculum. The school has recognised teaching and learning subject specific signs as an area to be addressed.
61. Provision for hearing impaired pupils is very well led and managed. The headteacher and governors are committed to the success of the provision for hearing impaired pupils and see it as an integral part of the school. In the last financial year, provision for hearing impaired pupils was returned by the school to central control as the school found it was unable to provide adequate funding. This has proved effective both financially and in improving liaison with the specialist team. The teacher of the deaf manages the team of communicators well and her relationships with the main school, very well. Staffing levels are very good, although at present the teacher of the deaf is part-time. There are arrangements to employ an additional half-time teacher of the deaf and the school has made more space available for individual teaching areas. There are clear plans to improve facilities for hearing impaired pupils at school and resources are used very efficiently.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	64
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	41

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	12	52	34	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	43	283
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	10	133

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	6	18
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		98

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	88

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	24
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	21

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	7.1
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.4
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
	1999	44	39	83

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	24	31	31
	Girls	23	24	29
	Total	47	55	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	57 (50)	66 (52)	72 (54)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	26	31	41
	Girls	24	29	35
	Total	50	60	76
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	60 (50)	72 (54)	92 (76)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	7
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	5
Indian	18
Pakistani	7
Bangladeshi	22
Chinese	1
White	208
Any other minority ethnic group	30

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	7	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	14.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25
Average class size	27.7

Education support staff: YR – Y4

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	254

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	46

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	118

Number of pupils per FTE adult	12.8
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	752,169
Total expenditure	752,332
Expenditure per pupil	2113
Balance brought forward from previous year	13,736
Balance carried forward to next year	1,093

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	336
Number of questionnaires returned	112

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	75	20	3	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	60	39	0	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	44	2	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	42	11	3	9
The teaching is good.	64	34	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	59	35	2	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	77	23	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	36	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	57	37	2	0	4
The school is well led and managed.	70	27	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	62	35	1	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	45	9	1	9

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Inspectors agree with what pleases parents. Although overall standards in English, mathematics and science are below average, the staff of the school work very hard to ensure that progress is good. Bearing in mind that pupils leave the school at the relatively young age of nine years old, inspectors agree with the majority of parents who believe that amounts of homework are not unreasonable.

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

62. Children are admitted to the nursery three times in the year and twice to the reception class. It was not possible, therefore, to make a full set of judgements about the work of children in the reception year, as the reception class was not open at the time of the inspection. Children under five enter the nursery on a part time basis during the term in which they become four. They remain in the nursery until the end of the term when they reach their fifth birthday. Most children have full time places for two terms, prior to joining a reception class at the age of five. During the inspection period, there were four five-year-olds. Currently, 57 children are attending the nursery, including 28 who are full time. Six children are bilingual and at an early stage of English acquisition, for whom there is sufficient support of good quality from a bilingual language assistant. Six children have been identified as having special educational needs, with a full statement. These children have a hearing impairment. They too are supported well by specialist staff.
63. Children are assessed as soon as they enter the nursery and again when they join the reception class. Baseline assessments show attainment to be well below what is normally found at the relevant ages, especially in relation to language and literacy and in mathematical development. Children's personal and social skills are also assessed and there is additional assessment to identify any special educational needs that children might have. Children make good progress throughout their time in the nursery. This is evident from the children's records of progress, which are regularly updated. The majority are on course to reach the early learning goals in personal, social and emotional development, physical development and creative development, by the end of the reception year. This good progress is due to the quality of teaching and planning in these areas. In communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and, to a lesser extent, knowledge and understanding of the world, a lot fewer children are likely to reach the goals, despite the good progress that they make. Bilingual children make good progress towards learning English and show good levels of confidence. Children with special needs work towards their individual education plans and achieve well, bearing in mind prior attainment that is often very low.
64. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage (the nationally recommended course for children under five) benefits from the implementation of literacy and numeracy strategies for the age group. Currently, the areas of learning for the older children in the nursery are still being planned to align them with the new curriculum. An action plan to develop the Foundation Stage within the school's improvement plan shows clear priorities for the nursery, and a strong commitment to improve it further.
65. Systems of induction to ease transition from home to nursery are good and also from nursery to the reception class. No home visits are taking place at present, but parents are able to stay with their children at the time of formal entry to help settle them, or at the start of the day, if necessary. Parents are also encouraged to stay longer and to help, especially when they show interest or a particular skill in being involved. Recently, the nursery has welcomed a Bengali-speaking parent to share in a bilingual story session.
66. The school's previous inspection report provides little detail about what the school did for its under fives at that time. However, what evidence there is suggests that considerable improvement has occurred. The outdoor curriculum, for example, now includes all areas of learning.

Personal, social and emotional development

67. Many children enter the nursery with immature personal and social skills. By the time they begin the National Curriculum, in Year 1, they are approaching the early learning goals. Children settle well into the nursery and show increasing confidence in selecting activities. Five-year-olds remain on task for a fair amount of time, without asking for adult support. They show caring attitudes towards the nursery pets and like to stroke them gently. The nursery staff plan times when children sit in a circle to talk together about events in their lives and to develop good social skills. Through

these *circle times*, adults encourage children to get to know each other and to develop friendship. A lot of work goes into teaching children to learn when it is their turn to speak and to share the occasion properly by listening to others well when it is their turn.

68. Children's behaviour is generally good. They are taught about the nursery's rules and that rules can be important in helping us to live socially. Children have positive attitudes towards learning and they respond well to the teachers' guidance. They form good relationships with adults and ask for help if needed. The older children attend the whole school assembly and learn about Christian values. Through celebrating festivals, such as Eid, Chinese New Year and Diwali, they become aware of different cultures.
69. The teaching of this area is good. It is well planned and adults in the nursery show a consistent approach to the rules and routines that have been established, helping children to understand their importance.

Communication, language and literacy

70. Attainment is generally low in this area, but children make good progress in relation to their often low starting points, which are characterised by restricted speaking skills. Adults use talk to good effect and listen attentively to the children during activities. However, children's speaking skills remain well below what is usually found, largely because their general vocabulary is very weak. Children are developing confidence in talking to each other and to adults. Visitors are invited to talk about chosen topics, and story books are used well to raise interest in characters and what will happen next. During inspection, an opportunity was used well to look at an owl that was brought by a visitor. Children stroked it and were given the opportunity to describe its appearance.
71. Children enjoy sharing a story in a group in reading and writing sessions. They enjoy reading the text that they have learnt in picture books. Nearly all the older children understand that print conveys meaning and that, in English, it goes from left to right, and top to bottom. There are well-organised literacy areas in the nursery. Children willingly select books and make up their own stories from the pictures. Higher attaining children remember stories that they hear and re-tell them in the correct sequence. The older children, known as *school starters* are being introduced to the school's preferred reading scheme. They are becoming familiar with the main characters found in these books.
72. Older children are aware of the alphabet and the uses of letters and sounds within words, and of rhyming patterns in songs and poems. However, many write down only one or two simple words to convey what they want to say, rather than a sentence, unless adults offer strong support.
73. Teaching is good. It is based on good knowledge of what children of this age group need to learn. The sounds of letters are introduced systematically. A strong emphasis is placed on attempts to broaden the children's knowledge and use of different words. Good opportunities are provided to dress up and to talk about imaginary situations. As a result, by the time that they begin the National Curriculum, many children know the letters of the alphabet and their related sounds. Adults use displays well, putting up and using lists of alternative words on walls to encourage children to become familiar with them. Children with English as an additional language are taught well. Adults in the nursery know their particular needs. For example, they made a shopping list, with the help of a language assistant and read some of the words from the list.

Mathematical development

74. At five years old, children's attainment in mathematics is below what is normally found. Although nearly all children count backwards and forwards up to five, fewer than usually found can do so to ten or beyond, or say which number comes before or after a given number. They are able to recognise and order numbers from one to five well and use picture cards and a number line to show this. Children learn to form numerals correctly, and they record them on a sheet of paper.
75. During the inspection, an interesting display of a *washing line* was strung across the nursery. It drew attention to months of the year, by showing children's birthdays. It is also used well to count

across. The mathematics co-ordinator supports the nursery teacher well. Plans exist to raise attainment in numeracy to the levels of the new early learning goals. At present, children's mathematical language is limited. For example, they find it very hard to compare two numbers or to explain addition and subtraction in every day situations.

76. Overall, the teaching of mathematical development is good. Adults in the nursery use every day situations to help with counting, adding and taking away. Cross-curricular opportunities to learn about numbers in songs, such as *Baa-baa Black Sheep* and in daily activities, are well planned. A weakness is that insufficient opportunities are planned to name and learn about geometrical shapes and their properties. The teachers' management and organisation of children are particularly good.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

77. Children enter the nursery with a low general knowledge in comparison with what is usually found and, by the time they begin work on the National Curriculum, their knowledge and understanding of the world remains restricted. However, progress is good, because interesting activities are offered and children have good opportunities to find out about their surroundings. Children observe objects that are displayed on tables, such as shells, stones and rocks, using magnifying glasses. They explore the properties of dry and wet sand and use water play for pouring, measuring and making bubbles.
78. To develop an understanding of the past and present, children are taught to compare the old ways of washing clothes, with how washing is done today. They also learn about other cultures and beliefs, tasting foods and different national costumes. Good opportunities to test subtle differences in taste are provided, for example, comparing a potato with a sweet potato.
79. Cross-curricular links are good. Children learn well from good opportunities for direct observation. For example, the visit of the African eagle owl caused much excitement, but despite this, children learnt to remain very quiet as the owl was very nervous. Children also read a selection of stories about owls and used a globe to find Africa to see where the owl was from. They operate a computer confidently.
80. Teaching is good. Adults provide good levels of support and encourage children to find things out for themselves. Resources are used well to encourage conversation about observations and to ask appropriate questions. Opportunities to investigate natural and made objects and to discuss the properties of materials are well planned.

Physical development

81. Children's physical development is sound. They find different ways of moving and using the climbing frame. They jump, climb and balance, with increasing confidence and control. Children make good use of space, using their wheeled toys and showing awareness of the needs and safety of other children.
82. Children build, construct and join materials, using kits and also materials provided at a woodwork bench. As a result, they develop the skills of controlling and moving their hands and fingers. Children use small and large equipment well in the playground, using small balls, beanbags and hoops to learn to throw and catch.
83. Teaching is good. Experiences that entail the careful manipulation of cutting tools, felt pens and crayons are planned well. Children are managed very well, so that vigorous outdoor activity remains disciplined and focused on what is needed for progress to occur.

Creative development

84. The overall standard of children's creative development is close to what is described in the early learning goals, by the time they begin the National Curriculum. They start from a fairly low level of skills and make very good progress throughout the nursery. A scrutiny of past work suggests that

this is also the case in reception. In the nursery, a wide range of resources, such as feathers, shells, paper, fabric, wool and a sponge was evident, to create two and three-dimensional pictures. Opportunities to explore colour and shape and space through drawing, painting, printing and collage are good. Children learn to mix colours and discover new ones, while creating their pictures. Through their pictures, drawings and models, they show an increasing control of tools and materials. Displays of children's work are well mounted by adults and this helps to create an attractive learning environment within the nursery. Children explore different textures, using paints, glue, corn flour and soapy sand, which they use well to express their ideas and feelings.

85. Children also enjoy music sessions and have opportunities to use percussion instruments. Most keep to a steady beat. They enjoy listening to the music created by a guitar and like to sing their favourite songs. Good opportunities for dramatic role-play help them to explore ideas imaginatively in a shop area, dressing up area, and by using police and fire-fighter outfits. Other role-play areas, include 'the petrol station' and 'the roundabout', which children use well during outdoor play. These areas provide good opportunities for learning new vocabulary and for extending knowledge and understanding of the world.

The overall quality of teaching

86. The overall quality of teaching in the nursery is consistently good All sessions that were observed were of this quality, including one that was very good. Very good teamwork between all the adults who work in the nursery is evident. They plan together well and meet children's needs effectively. Management of children is also a very strong feature. The nursery teacher knows the children's needs well and this, coupled to the good planning, results in each child being offered the types of activity that support a good acquisition of early skills.

ENGLISH

87. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests of seven-year-olds, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 2 was well below the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher Level 3 was also well below average. The school has a unit for hearing impaired pupils and a high proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Taking account of the National Curriculum test results over the last four years, the overall standard in English has improved from very low in 1997, although it is still well below average in 1999, when compared to similar schools. The 2000 results indicate a continuing improvement. Analysis of results over the last four years show a slow increase in the number of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 and a steady increase at the expected Level 2. Despite being categorised well below average, pupils' attainment in reading and writing has risen each year. The results in the 2000 tests have continued the upward trend. Improvement in spelling is also noticeable over the last four years. The percentage attaining Level 2 in writing has also risen, although the number that reaches the higher levels is still small.
88. Inspection evidence suggests that attainment in English is continuing to rise. By the age of seven and when pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4, standards are now below average, rather than well below. The school has introduced several initiatives in connection with the Education Action Zone and local trusts to raise standards and these are beginning to have an impact on learning. The lunchtime reading club is a good example of this. Standards are below average, but considering the low starting points of many pupils and the significant special educational needs of several others, pupils are making good progress as they move through the school.
89. Since the last inspection, standards have improved. The school has implemented the National Literacy Strategy satisfactorily, which is having an impact on standards in English lessons. The school has been successful in introducing strategies to improve pupils' reading and has also introduced an extension and enrichment class for higher attainers in Years 3 and 4. These projects are closely evaluated. The library is well organised, regularly reviewed and the content up-dated.
90. Listening skills are good throughout the school, but speaking is below average. The range of vocabulary used by pupils in their speaking and writing is limited. Pupils often use colloquial terms such as 'stuff' and 'that thingy' in their answers to questions and when making descriptions. Teachers use literacy hours well, but the focus on literacy skills in other subjects is often

insufficient to have a significant impact on acquisition and uses of vocabulary and standard forms of English. Higher attaining pupils will sometimes explain and give elaborate reasons in answers, but average and lower attaining pupils regularly offer a one-word response.

91. During the inspection, standards in reading at both seven and nine years old were below average, rather than well below – an improvement in relation to the 1999 tests. A scheme that teaches the sounds of letters is started in the nursery and continues in Year 1. It is effectively helping pupils to read new words. Sessions for this scheme are well organised and pupils are given much encouragement and help from learning support assistants. The level of reinforcement is producing secure learning and pupils know the sounds of letters well. Year 1 pupils are achieving well at this early stage in the term, indicating that improvements are set to continue. Pupils take books home daily and reading diaries are well used to record what they read. The opportunity for pupils, parents and teachers to add comments in these diaries represents good practice. Pupils have sound attitudes towards reading. However, pupils' ability to talk about books, authors and characters in any detail is limited. Many pupils in Year 2 mention their reading scheme book as being their favourite book, but are unable to identify other books that they read outside school. This finding continues into Years 3 and 4, when a higher attaining pupil identified *Great Expectations* as a favourite story, but average and lower attaining pupils as in the younger age group indicated the reading scheme book that they were currently using. Pupils in Year 2 show limited vocabulary to describe events in the story. The school has introduced initiatives, which are helping to raise standards. The lunchtime reading club, for example, is very successful. Pupils enjoy listening to stories, selecting books and reading. They eagerly enter the club and listen with great attention to the story. Communicators use British Sign Language at these sessions to ensure the inclusion of pupils with hearing impairment. Pupils in Year 1 were observed listening to *Percy's bumpy rides*. Pupils are encouraged to comment on the sequence of events and ask questions. After selecting a book, pupils are encouraged to sit comfortably on the cushions and to read. Pupils gain rewards for progress in reading. The club is having a beneficial impact on pupils' attitudes to reading and their knowledge of books. Another successful initiative is The 'Catch up' club which identifies pupils who are falling behind and provides additional support. The school is monitoring the significant improvement for these pupils. Pupils gain confidence, competence and enjoyment of reading in these sessions.
92. The improvement in writing across the school has been less significant than in reading. The way in which worksheets are used contributes to this. Although these sheets help pupils to get information down on paper, they often restrict opportunities to practise writing at length. The school has identified individual targets for pupils, although some inconsistencies in the precision of these targets occurs. Some are specific but others are too broad to identify small steps for improvement clearly. Good teaching enables high attaining pupils in Year 1 to know that a sentence has a capital letter, full stops and a proper order of words. By the age of seven, a few higher attaining pupils write stories for their *Special Storybook*. Their handwriting is developing well and is usually of a consistent size and shape with letters that are joined neatly. Simple words are spelt correctly and full stops and capital letters are mostly used appropriately. Towards the end of the year, pupils begin to use speech marks and exclamation marks. Stories about *Red Riding Hood* and *The day the animals escaped* are used to show pupils the need for a logical sequence of events. There is, however, a noticeable lack of descriptive adjectives in some writing and poetry is limited in this respect. Amongst average and lower attaining pupils, handwriting is less well developed and sometimes lacks consistency in style or shape. Spellings are frequently phonetic, which means that words that do not closely follow the sounds of letters tend to be spelt incorrectly. This tendency is continued into Years 3 and 4, albeit at a higher level of work. Pupils practise handwriting regularly, but opportunities to develop it in other work are sometimes limited by the use of worksheets. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, pupils were asked to write three sentences and the worksheet allowed one line per sentence, limiting the expected work that could be achieved.
93. Although fairly low, these overall standards in English represent good overall achievement. A high proportion of pupils have statements of special educational needs. Some of these pupils experience identified learning difficulty and another group has impaired hearing. Another significant group begins at the school with English as an additional language at an early stage of acquisition. All these groups are included in the teaching well and make good progress, which contributes strongly to this judgement on achievement.

94. Progress is good for pupils with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language. Good support from teachers and assistants often results in these pupils' completion of the same amount of work as the rest of the class, albeit at a slightly lower standard.
95. Attitudes and behaviour are usually good. Pupils put in a good effort during the opening sessions to lessons, trying hard to offer answers to their teachers' questions. They co-operate well and collaborate with each other sensibly, whenever the opportunity arises.
96. The overall quality of teaching is good in classes for pupils from five to seven years old and in the older ages. Very good teaching occurs in the Year 4 enrichment class and in some Year 3 classes. Lessons are well organised and the purposes of lessons are shared with pupils, which helps them to acquire understanding of key skills. Learning is further reinforced at the end of sessions. Good progress occurs because teachers identify clearly what pupils need to do next and reinforcement is strong during lessons. In the very good lessons, pupils are beginning to consider and extend their vocabulary, addressing a particular weakness. In the enrichment class in Year 4, pupils were asked to write poems about Autumn, using adjectives from the samples of professional authors and adding to them to make the work their own. Pupils in this class are beginning to extend vocabulary, using phrases such as "Exotic green and red apples" and "The brown squirrel climbing up the golden tree." Teachers often have two different tasks within the class, but could provide even more appropriate work for groups of different prior attainment, considering the high levels of support within many classrooms. Detailed marking in the extension class effectively enables pupils to identify areas for improvement. The use of lesson time is usually sound, but the pace of one lesson, at the beginning of the day, was adversely affected by the late arrival of pupils. The introductory session was interrupted to settle them. Although the teacher asked questions about their lateness, no overt action was taken to point out its effects.
97. The co-ordinator has worked hard to ensure that literacy hours are implemented effectively. Lessons have been observed and information used to help class teachers to improve teaching and learning. Assessment and test results are analysed, but the use of assessment to inform planning is too inconsistent across the school.

English as an additional language

98. A high proportion of pupils at the school have English as an additional language (about one in ten). Many of these are at early stages of English acquisition. Good additional classroom support for these pupils consists of two Language Assistants, funded by the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant for a total of 60 hours a week between them. They speak the most highly represented home languages, which are mainly Bengali, Punjabi, Urdu and Hindi. While not essential, this ability enhances support for pupils in their day-to-day work and in interpreting from their mother tongue as appropriate. This additional support is available for pupils at all stages, including the Foundation Stage, mostly within their classrooms and under the direction of the class teacher. Occasionally, pupils are withdrawn from their class for special help, particularly when more focused support is required, either in relation to language or other learning needs.
99. Good systems exist for the initial assessment of pupils' needs, relating to linguistic development, reading and writing. Tracking of pupils' progress is also good. Individual records are well maintained in which pupils' progress is written up on an ongoing basis. Targets for improvement are explicit within the system and the records are linked to the National Curriculum. However, scope exists for developing the use of target setting for pupils at initial stages of acquiring English, along the lines of what is done for pupils identified as having special educational needs.
100. The quality of in-class support is effective in meeting pupils' day-to-day needs and in helping to include them in the acquisition of what is required in the National Curriculum at their own appropriate levels. Good levels of collaboration between class teachers and the Language Assistants are evident, which is reflected in the planning of the work, especially for literacy hours. Teachers are aware of the extent of the pupils' linguistic needs and are beginning to have regular meetings with the Language Assistants. Consequently, pupils' are acquiring basic English well and their needs are being met effectively.

101. As might be expected, attainment in English in the National Curriculum does not generally match that of other pupils. However, it gets closer as they move on through the school and reach the later stages of English acquisition. At first, pupils lack confidence in speaking and in taking part in discussions, but good support encourages them to use their English and they make good progress through the school.
102. Pupils mix well into the school community and they like coming to the school. They are well motivated and their attitudes towards work are positive. They listen attentively and try hard in lessons. They often demonstrate enjoyment and are eager to show what they learn. For example, in a numeracy lesson in a Year 4 class, in the plenary session a pupil repeatedly raised his hand to show what he knew. Relationships are good throughout the school and behaviour is good. Pupils' relationships with all adults in the school are good.
103. The school's Language Assistants make useful practical contributions to pupils' personal development in the school as a whole, helping to enhance multicultural awareness. For example, they play an active role in organising the celebration of religious festivals, such as Eid and Diwali.

MATHEMATICS

104. Overall attainment in mathematics at seven years old and also by the end of Year 4 is below average. However, achievement is nonetheless good, as pupils make good progress over the long term, from a generally low starting attainment. This judgement is supported in baseline tests at the time when pupils begin the National Curriculum. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests for seven-year-olds, overall attainment was well below the national average. The last four years' results also show attainment as very low in comparison with the national average. When a comparison is made with similar schools, pupils' performance in the tests is below average. The school's test results for this year (2000) show a considerable improvement in the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 2 and above. The trend in attainment has been rising since 1996 and these results confirm that it is continuing. Work seen in the inspection also confirms it. Good leadership and management of the subject have ensured the successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy since the previous inspection. This has contributed in turn to improved teaching. As a result, the quality and depth of pupils' learning have also got better.
105. Nine-year-olds have a sound understanding of the place value of three and four digit numbers. They can use up to £5 to buy two or three items and can check the change that is given. Pupils' records and their work show that they choose appropriate operations to solve simple word problems and can explain their methods well. However, pupils have limited knowledge and understanding of fractions and of organising and interpreting numerical data in simple lists, tables and graphs. This weakness is mainly due to limited opportunities being offered for using and applying mathematics in real-life, practical situations. At seven years old, pupils have good understanding of place value, generally to 100 and sometimes above. They add two and three digit numbers together and recognise odd and even numbers as far as 100. They know how to count in two, five and 10, and several pupils already know how to carry out simple multiplication, after just two full weeks of the new school year. Pupils are beginning to be aware that addition can be done in any order, and that subtraction is the inverse.
106. Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes to mathematics are positive and they enjoy the activities that teachers provide, particularly when it involves any practical work. They are well stimulated by mental and oral activities at the start of lessons, which provide them with good opportunities for developing the skills of numeracy, understanding the size and order of numbers and of number patterns. During the concluding part of lessons, pupils are keen to show what they have learnt and understood, through a show of hands. Nearly all of them behave well and concentrate on their work.
107. Teaching of mathematics is good throughout the school. As a result, pupils acquire the basic skills well and their progress through the school is good. Pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs are also taught well and make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. Teachers use the good quality support assistants well, including that of language assistants, which helps pupils to absorb mathematical terminology. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject, which is reflected in confident direct teaching. Their

explanations and demonstrations are clear and precise. Pupils are well involved in tasks through good questioning and teachers gauge pupils' answers well to assess levels of understanding. The numeracy strategy has helped to develop teachers' confidence and consequently there is less reliance on worksheets and on published schemes of work than in the last inspection. On occasions, the plenary session of a few lessons was of restricted value, mainly due to the short time that was spent on it. That said, these shortcomings were rare. However, more frequently, insufficient challenge was found in the written task intended for higher attaining pupils. It occurred when worksheets lacked differentiation to suit the wide range of prior attainments within the class.

108. Much improvement in the quality of teaching and learning has taken place since the last inspection. School displays of work show good examples of mathematics being integrated with other subjects, such as science and art. The use of information and communication technology to support work in mathematics is also developing satisfactorily, although it is not yet of sufficient variety to support a wide enough range of mathematical activities.
109. The co-ordinator is very knowledgeable and provides an effective lead in developing mathematics, with a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses in the subject. An appropriate action plan forms an integral part of the school's improvement plan. The co-ordinator also has a rolling programme for monitoring teaching and is confident in giving demonstration lessons to the staff. She also provides good support in developing numeracy in the Foundation Stage. Test results are analysed to track pupils' progress and to establish realistic targets. The setting of pupils according to their prior attainment is proving useful in raising standards by focusing on particular levels. These initiatives are having a good impact on standards. Good resources are easily accessible and used well by staff and pupils alike. Homework is encouraged for consolidating work in school, but in some classes is underused as a means of extending skills in independent investigations. The after school mathematics club, however, is very good provision and boosts pupils' confidence, knowledge and understanding.

SCIENCE

110. According to the 1999 Statutory Teacher Assessments, the percentage of seven-year-olds attaining the expected Level 2 is in line with national averages across all aspects of the subject. However, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 is below that found nationally. In teacher assessments for the year 2000, standards have remained broadly similar. As national averages for this year group are not yet published, a comparison with similar schools and other schools nationally is not yet possible. Inspection evidence indicates that overall attainment is currently below national averages. The main reason is that a relatively low number of pupils work at higher than expected levels, which reduces the overall standard. This is below the standard reported at the last inspection. However, it is in line with the school's assessments at that time, which were different from the inspection findings of 1996. Overall standards are, therefore, about the same as then.
111. For pupils in Years 3 and 4, attainment remains below that expected nationally. Although pupils make satisfactory progress in these year groups, difficulties with the richness and use of English in pupils' written work are having an adverse effect on what they record.
112. The school analyses results carefully and teachers are starting a process of analysing their teaching of science. At present, pupils are taught the subject in a rolling programme that runs for two-years, matching topic themes. Classes across two year groups follow essentially the same theme simultaneously, with insufficient regard for pupils' age and prior experiences. However, a recently developed scheme of work puts the acquisition of basic skills into a more coherent order. This new scheme is beginning to have a positive impact, raising standards by ensuring that sufficient attention is given to teaching age-related knowledge, skills and understanding in a coherent order.
113. By the age of seven, most pupils reach expected levels for their age. They know key facts about electricity and light, the way that objects move and of conditions that enable plants to grow. They identify the properties of common materials and experiment to find the effect of heating and cooling on food. They learn and practise the use of new vocabulary through experiments in the classroom

and school grounds and by regular trips off the premises to, for example, the local park or nearby woods. They observe, name and classify trees and leaves and identify mini-beasts. A few pupils ask questions of their own and try to answer them through their own logical reasoning.

114. In Years 3 and 4, pupils begin to learn effectively about solids and liquids, hot and cold, taking temperatures and determining insulators, as well as building on knowledge and skills learnt in some of the topics undertaken lower down the school. During the week of the inspection, older pupils were starting work on a new topic about materials. After a revision of what they had already learnt, they experimented on some papers to test their absorbency. Care was taken to establish a fair test and to compare findings among members of the class to agree and confirm results. However, as in the younger age groups, the same lesson was planned and taught in both Years 3 and 4.
115. The pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are well supported and make satisfactory progress relative to their prior attainment. However, potentially higher attaining pupils are not given enough opportunity to plan and develop experiments by asking their own questions about the fairness of tests that they carry out. Nor are they given enough responsibility to write up their own results, owing to the way in which worksheets are used to record findings.
116. Pupils' attitudes are good. They concentrate well and show interest in their work, especially in practical lessons. Pupils enjoy working in groups and older pupils are beginning to share tasks equitably amongst themselves. A particular strength is the overall good behaviour observed in lessons which is promoted very effectively through teachers' very good management strategies.
117. The quality of teaching across the whole school is sound and includes a relatively high proportion of good teaching. In addition to teachers' control of pupils, the use of the support staff and resources is also strong. Support staff and communicators for the hearing impaired pupils know exactly what they have to do in lessons and are very effective in carrying it out. Planning and assessment are the responsibility of class teachers working together in their age groups. In the best teaching, planning provides sharply focused lesson objectives, which are evaluated at the end of lessons to determine effectiveness. In good lessons, teachers use a variety of methods to provide a range of exciting challenges, which raise levels of interest and curiosity. Generally, teachers have good subject knowledge and teach at a brisk pace. However, in many lessons, teachers prepare all materials and resources, direct pupils' experiments and provide worksheets. As a result, opportunities for pupils' own exploration and decision taking are restricted, so that pupils do not make enough discoveries of their own.
118. The subject has a policy and a new scheme of work, which addresses issues about how skills should be taught in a progressive order. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and is keen to ensure that science is taught in line with the new national guidelines for the year 2000. An action plan has been prepared by the co-ordinator to prioritise amendments to procedures so that the effects of new initiatives are maximised. A regular audit of resources ensures that deficiencies in resources are revealed and that replacements are ordered. A good range of appropriate reference books is available in the library.

ART

119. Standards reached by seven-year-olds and when pupils leave the school at nine are broadly in line with national expectations. Several pupils at the school exceed what is expected, especially in the quality of their sketching and drawing. Pupils with special educational needs are well represented amongst those who attain the expected level or above. These standards are similar to those found at the previous inspection.
120. Many pupils start at the school with limited skills in art and design, but make good progress over time in drawing, painting and modelling. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language also achieve well.

121. Pupils in Year 4 have good observational skills and can represent their chosen themes and ideas with increasing accuracy and attention to detail. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Pupils use a range of materials and media, including pencil, chalk, paint, fabric and modelling materials. Displays of pupils' work show good uses of collage, pastels and paints, and weaving. Pupils are inspired by the work of famous artists, such as Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* and Miro's *Line Pictures*. They create their own pictures in the styles of such artists, which are well displayed throughout the school.
122. Pupils in Year 2 explore the uses of a print roller to create block prints for their own storybook covers. They draw objects from memory and then from direct observation to discover and appreciate differences between the two techniques. Younger pupils in school learn to mix colours and, by the age of seven, pupils mix colours skilfully for painting and printing. Pupils confidently explore software on the computer to draw and paint pictures and to amend them as they choose.
123. As a result of good teaching and support, pupils enjoy art and design and handle their materials and tools with interest and care, including the computer. They sustain concentration so that work is finished to their own satisfaction. Pupils respond appropriately to their teachers' expectations and often imaginatively to the stimulus that is provided. They make good use of their sketchbooks to record observations and ideas.
124. The quality of teaching is generally good throughout the school. A good balance between direct teaching of skills and pupils' own exploration of techniques occurs. Teachers encourage pupils to try their own ideas and to develop knowledge and understanding of the work of artists from different periods. However, little attention is given to the development of literacy skills by writing evaluations or appreciations of artwork.
125. The school's art policy is due for review as part of the school improvement plan. Currently art is planned within the school's framework of topics, so that work matches themes in, for example, history or science. A weakness in this approach is that it does not necessarily result in skills being taught in a logical sequence. However, the school has also adopted a nationally recognised scheme of work and teachers use it to fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum. Planning in light of the National Curriculum for 2000 is, as might be expected at this stage, in the process of adaptation to the school's particular needs. Uses of sketchbooks throughout the school are good and are helping pupils to experiment with the visual skills, such as recognition and interpretation of line, form, shape and design. Sketchbooks are also proving useful in providing a record of pupils' progress from the previous class, as well as visits that were undertaken in connection with work in history.
126. Pupils' work is valued and displayed attractively throughout the school. Art contributes well to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and is successful in enhancing the visual environment of the school. Currently, art from different cultures and traditions is under-represented in school. Art is used well to illustrate work in a number of subjects, particularly in history, mathematics, science and design and technology. The previous year's Saturday Morning Art Class was successful in increasing pupils' interest and developing their knowledge, skills and understanding in art. There is a plan to revive the Art Class in the future.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

127. By the age of seven and by the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4, attainment in design and technology is broadly in line with expected levels. Due to the time of the inspection, early in the autumn term, there was very little available evidence of pupils' evaluations of models or artefacts. All pupils including those with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, make good progress in the design and making elements of the subject. A scrutiny of a small sample of work and discussions with pupils and staff enabled judgements to be made. Planning indicates that the school provides pupils with a range of appropriate tasks and assignments. At the time of the last inspection, standards were similar.
128. Pupils in Year 1 design and make moving, jointed animals, using butterfly clips. They show good levels of skill in cutting out small dragon's teeth. A good range of ideas was evident, including a

giraffe, whale and people with moveable arms and legs. Pupils finish their designs with attractive colours and patterns. Pupils in Year 2 design patterns for Mendhi hand paintings and produce working drawings in preparation for producing hand puppets.

129. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 used sketches for the school's Millennium tapestry after a visit to the Dome. They completed the tapestry, using skills such as sewing, making pom-poms, weaving, knitting, embroidery, French knitting, crochet and collage. They wrote about their involvement with this work, although most of the writing lacks actual evaluation of the product itself. This tapestry has subsequently been sent to the national organisers and so was not available for direct inspection. However, photographic evidence indicates that it is a successful and attractive product that has been worked very well. In their first design and technology lesson of the term, Year 4 pupils demonstrated accuracy of skills, cutting paper and weaving carefully to make simple patterns and designs.
130. It was possible to observe only one lesson in design and technology. However, the quality of planning and a scrutiny of work suggest that teaching is generally sound. It ensures the learning of basic skills in the subject. In the lesson seen, in Year 4, pupils received clear guidelines about how to carry out tasks. Management of pupils and organisation and use of resources were good. As a result, pupils showed interest in the subject. It was clear that the teacher's methods and encouragement helped perseverance and willingness to put in a good effort to strengthen as the lesson proceeded. Pupils with special educational needs and pupils for whom English is an additional language are well supported and make good progress. Pupils talk naturally about their work, explaining, for example, that weaving makes cloth stronger.
131. The school is in the process of adapting the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's recommended scheme of work, integrating it into their own (the authority is a government agency that makes recommendations to schools and educational institutions). Co-ordination of the subject is good. Members of staff are supported well with practical guidelines on aspects such as the use of card and different boards. However, direct monitoring of teaching and the curriculum in classrooms is restricted. This knowledge is used well to display work. Resources are adequate and stored accessibly. Good links are maintained with the local middle school and Year 4 pupils visit it to attend *Technology Day* in the summer term.

GEOGRAPHY

132. It was possible to observe only a combined history and geography lesson in Year 1 and one lesson in Year 3. However, evidence from these lessons, a scrutiny of planning and pupils' work, together with conversations with teachers and pupils suggest that by the ages of seven and nine, attainment in geography is below that expected nationally. Considering the low attainment on entry to the school and the significant number of pupils with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, pupils make sound progress and are achieving well. Planning indicates a thorough coverage of the curriculum. Since the last inspection, teaching has recently improved due to better methods, but this is not yet having a full impact on standards, which have remained about the same.
133. Seven-year-olds possess basic mapwork skills and identify classrooms and features of their school on simple maps. They identify places where water can be obtained on a plan of the school. Both verbal and written explanations about different places are limited by pupils' restricted knowledge and use of standard forms of English. High attaining pupils in Year 1 know that Jamaica is a hot country and that people can pick fresh coconuts from trees and eat them on the same day. Pupils have a basic understanding of the comparative conditions in a very hot and a very cold country. They identify appropriate clothes for these countries. Pupils are introduced to Barnaby (a toy bear who is travelling around the world) and are shown the different countries that he visits on a large world map. Pupils are aware of differences between how land and sea are indicated on a map or globe and the implications for the next leg of Barnaby's journey. Pupils with special educational needs are included well in this work. Communicators for those with impaired hearing sign to them to ensure that they understand.

134. Pupils in Year 3 make good progress in their mapwork skills and can identify features by using simple co-ordinates. The work is well linked to history when they identify features of an Anglo-Saxon settlement. Attitudes to learning are good because the teacher makes the lesson interesting and is enthusiastic. Orientation work is reinforced in physical education in outdoor activities when pupils follow recorded routes around the school to locate clues and information. Special educational needs pupils and pupils with hearing impairment are well supported in lessons and make good progress. Pupils in Year 4 produce a booklet entitled *Our Country and other Lands*. They identify the location of Bedford and higher attainers write about the differences between a village and a town. Places in the locality, such as Elstow village and Bedford are well used to support pupils' understanding of this work. High attaining pupils record and draw the sun at different times of the day. However, pupils' opportunities to improve their own uses of factual English are limited by the extensive use of work sheets.
135. In the lessons seen, pupils' attitudes to the subject were good. They listened well and enthusiastically carried out the tasks that were set. When asked, they co-operated well with others, sharing ideas and resources.
136. Based on planning and scrutiny of work, the overall quality of teaching is at least sound and it was good in one of the lessons seen and satisfactory in the other. Planning in these lessons was good and appropriate links were made with history. Explanations were clear and the difficulty of the work was appropriate for pupils' needs. The good lesson was characterised by a brisk pace that enthused pupils more and produced more secure learning.
137. The school has an adequate supply of resources and these are stored centrally so that they are easily accessible to all teachers. The school is in the process of adapting the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's recommendations for geography to its own use.

HISTORY

138. It was possible to inspect only a combined geography and history session in Year 1 and an Anglo-Saxon day for Year 4, taken by visiting specialists. These lessons, added to a scrutiny of planning, pupils' work and various discussions, enabled judgements to be made. Seven and nine-year-olds attain at levels below those expected nationally for their ages. However, taking into account the low starting attainments of many pupils and the significant numbers with special educational needs or English as an additional language, pupils' achievements are good. They acquire historical skills and make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the order of past eras, events, people and historical change. However, the use of specific dates and terminology relating to the passage of time is limited. What prevents pupils from reaching the expected levels is the difficulty they experience with linking together and then recording findings from different sources of evidence. For example, when they use books, pictures and a range of artefacts, which tell them different aspects about a particular event or era.
139. Overall standards are similar to those found in the last inspection. However, improvements to what is available for teaching the subject have been introduced fairly recently. These changes are just beginning to have an impact. For example, the school has adopted national recommendations of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority into its planning. More history books have been added to the collection in the library and new resources have been purchased. The use of museums in the locality, such as the Cecil Higgins Museum, is under constant review and specialist visitors are also employed to help pupils to understand social conditions and attitudes in past societies. These developments represent good preparation for the reintroduction of the full National Curriculum for 2000. A review of how the progression of historical skills and systematic assessment should be tackled is planned. The strategy looks good.
140. Seven-year-olds develop an awareness of the passage of time and a basic understanding of past and present. Higher attaining pupils in Year 1 can separate an old teddy bear from a modern version, because they know that plastic eyes were not invented at the time that the older one was made. They also know that modern safety procedures are a lot more rigorous and that small parts such as eyes cannot be pulled off the modern toy, in case a baby swallowed them, whereas the older one is more fragile in this respect. Pupils cut out and stick pictures of different irons on to a

time line, according to when they were made. They use a reasonable, subject-specific vocabulary to describe and compare a Victorian scullery with a modern kitchen. However, several pupils use rather colloquial expressions in their description. They know that tumble dryers could not appear in a Victorian kitchen, as they had not been invented. Scrutiny of pupils' work indicates sound teaching about the lives of famous people. Grace Darling, Neil Armstrong, George Stephenson, Samuel Pepys and Robin Hood are all included.

141. A similar picture is found in the work of eight and nine-year-olds. Pupils build on their understanding of the passage of time, studying particular historical ages, such as the period of early invaders and settlers. Language and written work, however, are below average and pupils' ability to use information sources and explain and suggest the consequences of events limits their attainment. Pupils know many facts about conditions and life in an Anglo-Saxon settlement because of the good experience provided by an Anglo-Saxon day of learning spent interacting with visitors who played Anglo Saxon roles. Sessions of this kind are a regular occurrence and provide an excellent introduction to learning. Good opportunities are given to reflect on the differences between past and present. Planning shows that pupils with special educational needs or with English as an additional language are supported very well. Classroom assistants ensure that they understand what is required of them, so that they are enabled to acquire skills and understanding at a good rate of progress.
142. Although no teaching of older pupils was observed, other than the visitors' session, a scrutiny was made of teachers' planning and of work and a judgement that the overall quality of teaching is at least sound can be made. Planning is good and is well linked to geography. However, the analysis of pupils' work suggests that pupils' uses of historical writing of their own are restricted by worksheets. As a result of the interesting work that is planned, pupils' enthusiasm for history is good. Year 4 listened with enjoyment and interest to the visitor in his Anglo-Saxon clothes. This helps pupils to learn skills securely and to make sound progress over time.
143. Resources for history are adequate. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and is developing a range of resources to enrich teaching further.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

144. Pupils achieve standards below expected levels by the age of seven. Standards are similar to those reported in the last inspection, as younger pupils have limited opportunities to work on suitable machines and there are insufficient software programs available to support the present curriculum. However, good teaching ameliorates this weakness, so that overall progress is satisfactory.
145. In Years 3 and 4 standards are below those expected, although in word processing skills and graphic work standards are better than in other aspects of the subject. As in Years 1 and 2, access to the computers and opportunities to use appropriate software are limited, but the quality of teaching reduces the negative impact and overall progress for all groups of different prior attainment is satisfactory. It is better in word processing than in data handling and control technology aspects of the National Curriculum, in which progress is only just about satisfactory.
146. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language have similar difficulties in gaining sufficient access to machines. They are supported well in lessons and careful explanation helps them to secure learning well. However, available software is limited, which reduces the good effects of this support by limiting opportunities for practice. As a result, overall progress in information and communication technology is just satisfactory, rather than good.
147. In Year 1, pupils learn how to use the mouse to generate pictures, for example, by creating a picture of a teddy bear dressed to visit a hot or cold climate on his holidays. The more able pupils can also create a repetitive pattern of their own, whilst other less skilled pupils make a design, but are not yet able to reproduce their design in a repetitive pattern. In Year 2, pupils learn how to make a picture to fill the screen; change the size of brush strokes; add a caption; and then print a finished picture. In this year group some pupils write sentences of their own and higher attainers use the space bar accurately and also use the shift key for capital letters. Other pupils find this

difficult because their language skills are such that they are not yet able to create a completely correct version on their own. Pupils begin to use technology to control a robot, entering instructions of forwards, backwards, left and right to move the screen character around.

148. In Year 3, most pupils use the mouse to access and exit programs. Pupils know that the backspace and arrow key can be used to correct mistakes. Word processing skills are improving and most pupils write a simple sentence such as "I am called ----- and I go to Stephenson Lower School." They are learning how to use the mouse for other functions, for example, accessing a picture from a picture bank, dragging the image across the screen and then using the diagram as a picture reference for a history lesson. In Year 4, a few pupils are learning to refine their work, choosing to enlarge or decrease the size of their pictures. By this stage, sound use is made of software that reinforces numeracy skills and pupils are able to control the level of difficulty of mental tests generated by the program, in a personal challenge for accuracy.
149. The pupils enjoy using the computers and there is obvious enthusiasm when they are given these opportunities. When sharing computers most pupils take turns and share tasks well.
150. The quality of teaching in information and communication technology lessons is satisfactory. It includes examples of good teaching. In good lessons teachers organise the class well, so that all pupils can see both the teacher and pupil who is demonstrating. Teachers explain processes clearly, demonstrate sound subject knowledge and provide appropriate tasks. In other lessons where classroom organisation is given less attention, pupils' interest falls away somewhat. They become restless and concentration levels are more varied, especially when pupils cannot see the screen well. Good use is made of subject specific vocabulary by all staff. Arrangements to assess pupils' skills in lessons have been introduced this term. Use of computers to support learning in other subjects is developing well, although the range of available software is not yet broad enough. The co-ordinator is well aware of this and further improvements are planned. The use of the Internet and e-mail as reference sources is also developing well.
151. The school is well aware of the shortcomings in this subject and improvements since the last inspection are underway. Plans are in place to address the weaknesses, particularly by rationalising all present facilities, so that pupils have full access to available hardware and software. As a priority area of the school improvement plan, a series of new initiatives and further teacher training are all planned for this school year. These features are well focused on raising standards.

MUSIC

152. Standards of attainment in Year 2 and in Year 4 are broadly in line with national expectations. Seven-year-olds repeat simple rhythms to their teacher, accurately clapping the patterns that teachers show them. They play instruments such as *maracas*, *bells* and *cymbals*, keeping a steady pulse and showing how they can make up rhythm patterns of their own. They sing simple songs, showing an understanding of keeping in tune and together. In Year 1, pupils sang *Teddy and his Friends* accurately, varying the tone of their voices by growling like bears in appropriate sections of the song. In assembly, the singing of *Love is Something if you Give it Away* was tuneful and similar to what is usual for the age ranges, which included Year 4. Older pupils generally pick up tunes and rhythms well. Pupils in Year 3 sang *Nellie the Elephant*, getting louder and softer at appropriate points in the song. Simple uses of notation were evident in what was seen. Standards reported at the time of the last inspection were in line with national expectations and therefore what has now been found is similar to then. Pupils with special educational needs are included in music very well. Those with hearing impairment join the choir and take part fully in lessons. Their communicators sign the words and ensure that they know what to do. Performances are held at appropriate times of the year and parents clearly enjoy the opportunity of seeing their children take part. Good links with the community occur when the choir performs at a local centre for senior citizens.
153. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally good. Teachers have good strategies for helping pupils to concentrate and listen and pupils respond to them well. In a lesson in Year 2, for example, the teacher came into the classroom clapping rhythmically and encouraged pupils to join in immediately. In this way, pupils' attention was gained straight away and learning proceeded at a

good pace. On another occasion, a lesson in Year 3 was disrupted at the start, because pupils with emotional difficulty were unable to focus their thoughts to the high standard expected. However, the teacher persevered well and managed the situation effectively, so that after a few minutes, the lesson proceeded satisfactorily and effective learning occurred for the rest of the class.

154. Three lessons were seen and the overall quality of teaching was satisfactory, including a good lesson in Year 2. Teachers are quick to respond to pupils' needs, seeing immediately when they understand and moving on, or equally when they need more time to be successful, slowing down to ensure that skills are properly acquired. This quality was particularly evident in the good lesson. The teacher asked pupils to sing sequences of notes to the words "How are you?" and "Very well thank you!" and saw immediately that pupils were experiencing more difficulty with the more complex rhythm and variation of pitch required for the second. By appropriate practice and consolidation, pupils began to follow the sequence and the teacher praised and encouraged them enthusiastically until most were successful. Teachers are confident in the subject, largely because they are supported well by the co-ordinator. A useful scheme of work provides clear guidance about what to teach and how to introduce it. As a result, non-specialists are enabled to teach the subject successfully, which means that pupils acquire the necessary basic skills securely.
155. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and is a good organiser. He has succeeded in building the confidence of non-specialist teachers, so that the subject is not dependent on one person's specialist skills. The importance of this approach was evident during a spell when he was absent. The school was able to continue teaching the subject, ensuring that standards were maintained.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

156. By the age of seven and by the time that pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4, standards of attainment are typical for the relevant age group. During the inspection, lessons were observed in gymnastics, games and outdoor adventurous activity. No lessons for eight or nine-year-olds were observed in swimming, dance or gymnastics. However, scrutiny of planning and discussions with pupils and staff indicate that all areas of the subject are taught. Pupils swim at the local middle school during the summer term. It is not appropriate to report whether the national safety standard for swimming is met, as pupils do not reach the age to which this requirement applies (11 years old), until after they have transferred to middle schools. Since the last inspection, standards have been maintained in physical education, and to some extent have improved in the areas of activity observed.
157. By the age of seven, pupils can throw and catch a ball with reasonable control. Strategies for acquiring this basic skill are good and most apply it well. They aim accurately at a target and are developing good control as they perform under arm passing to a partner. Pupils know that they must watch the ball all the way to them to receive a pass successfully. Pupils develop good knowledge because teachers make appropriate teaching points that extend pupils' awareness and guide progress in the development of skills. Teachers reinforce learning well and pupils are given good opportunities to practise and improve. During observations, improvement in pupils' work was evident after good instruction from teachers. Pupils with special educational needs and hearing impairment make good progress and throw and catch accurately along with most others. Pupils demonstrate good levels of activity and practise sensibly during lessons. Most pupils know the effect of exercises on their body. Their co-ordination of hand and eye and general awareness of movement in and out of spaces are well developed and skills such as skipping, jumping and running are typical of what is expected for their age and often better. Opportunities to acquire language skills in physical education, however, are not fully exploited, as only very few examples of pupils' evaluations of their performances were observed during the inspection.
158. Attainment of pupils in Years 3 and 4 meets national expectations. Pupils have a basic understanding of the importance of exercise. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and pupils for whom English is an additional language, throw and catch with control and there is noticeable improvement between Years 2 and 4. Pupils throw and catch a small ball and move their feet well to set themselves to make a catch or a throw. They show sensitivity and good body control for their age when they move. Higher attaining pupils in Year 3 catch with one hand. During an outdoor adventurous session, pupils in Year 4 demonstrated an awareness of others in their group, while learning the basic skills of orienteering. Good links with geography were evident as pupils used maps of the school to locate clues. They showed great enthusiasm for this work, finding clues and then running with a buzz of excitement to their next checkpoint.
159. Teaching throughout the school is good, overall, although an instance of unsatisfactory teaching occurred in a class for younger pupils. Teaching is good in games and adventurous pursuits. Teachers observe pupils well, assess performance and use the information to explain how improvements can occur. Demonstrations are used effectively to identify good performance and teachers skilfully identify why the performance was good. Pupils work well with a partner, because the teacher has emphasised this aspect during the lesson. Teachers are well organised and enthusiastic. This enthusiasm is communicated to pupils who respond with enjoyment. A brisk pace ensures a good level of activity in lessons. Where teaching is less effective, in a gymnastics lesson for younger pupils, for example, planning is tenuously linked to topic work. These tenuous links to science or literacy are not always appropriate for the stage of pupils' development and do not effectively promote learning in skills, knowledge and understanding in gymnastics. For example, pretending to drive a car around the hall encourages pupils to make a noise, and detracts from concentration on the gymnastics, so that basic skills are not acquired as well as they might be.
160. The good range of extra-curricular clubs and activities enriches physical education. Games, gymnastics and dance were observed in this context during the inspection week. The sessions are attended by a high percentage of pupils in the targeted age groups and organisation is good with high levels of enthusiasm. Pupils receive good teaching in these sessions and have opportunities

to extend their levels of skill, knowledge and understanding. Older pupils have opportunities to experience competitive games with other schools. This extra-curricular provision also enhances pupils' personal development, creating opportunities to emphasise their loyalty to team or group.

161. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic about the subject, which has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes. However, no formal monitoring of teaching and learning is taking place at present to help disseminate and promote the best practice.
162. Resources for physical education are beginning to show their age and are unsatisfactory in some important respects. For example, the school's gymnastics mats and benches are old and heavy for young pupils to move and position. Opportunities provided for climbing and swinging are also limited, owing to the lack of suitable equipment.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

163. At the ages of seven and nine years old, pupils' written work in religious education is generally below what is described in the locally agreed syllabus. However, the understanding that pupils show orally in lessons is often close to expectations. For example, in a lesson in Year 4, pupils were able to explain that Christians celebrate Harvest Festival as a way of offering thanks for creation. Nearly all their answers showed a good level of thoughtfulness, such as explaining the festival as a way of showing gratitude for life, whereas the written work of eight-year-olds about Jewish family life contained little more than captions on pictures and drawings. At the time of the last inspection, standards were found to be in line with expectations. However, the report tended to emphasise oral work, referring particularly to pupils' good contributions to discussions and their responses to questions. As these oral aspects are currently better than what pupils put down in writing, these judgements suggest that despite the apparent differences between the judgements of then and now, standards may in fact be similar. The present inspection took place just before the school's Harvest Festival. As a result, all the lessons that were seen featured preparations for this celebration. For example, in a good lesson for a mixed-age class of pupils in Years 1 and 2, the teacher used several appropriate methods to teach about vegetables that we eat, and for which we ought to thank God. Pupils enacted the story of *The Enormous Turnip*. In response to questioning, they offered the names of several other harvested vegetables and listened well to their teachers' explanations of the meaning of harvest services in churches. These different methods worked well, keeping pupils' interest and concentration throughout the lesson. As a result, the quality of learning was good, leading to good understanding. Support for pupils with special educational needs is good and their rate of progress matches that of most other pupils. Learning support assistants and communicators for those with hearing impairment understand pupils' needs well. However, most pupils start work on the agreed syllabus at a low level and, despite good teaching and secure learning of what is taught, standards have not risen enough to match expectations.
164. Pupils' attitudes are generally good and are always at least satisfactory. Nearly all of them listen well. Teachers' good management of pupils is a strong factor in achieving this standard of behaviour. Occasionally, pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties find it hard to live up to teachers' expectations of them. However, good strategies for containing any incident that arises result in little loss of opportunity for other pupils to learn. An example of this occurred in Year 4 when the teacher ensured that the class knew what to do and then coaxed a pupil to settle to work. She reminded him about his successes and praised him for them. It worked well and a quickly rebuilt self-esteem resulted in a renewed effort.
165. In the three observed lessons, the quality of teaching was consistently good. Good planning is based on the locally agreed syllabus and results in the study of the required themes and major religions of the world, including Islam, Judaism and Sikhism, as well as Christianity. Teachers make good use of links with adults in the community and school to enhance their own knowledge. For example, a classroom assistant for pupils with English as an additional language supports pupils' learning about Divali well and the local vicar is a frequent visitor to the school.
166. Co-ordination and leadership are good. The co-ordinator checks what is taught, discussing ideas and plans with colleagues and monitors displays around the school, which ensures that the locally agreed syllabus is followed as required. The direct monitoring of teaching in classrooms, however,

is limited, which restricts knowledge about where teaching is best and in turn, opportunities to disseminate it. Resources, including the range and number of artefacts, have improved recently.