

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARY'S VC LOWER SCHOOL

Stotfold, Hitchin

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109606

Headteacher: Mr C Phelps

Reporting inspector: Miss C Thompson
22822

Dates of inspection: 16th – 19th October 2000

Inspection number: 224937

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 - 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Rook Tree Lane Stoffold Hitchin Bedfordshire
Postcode:	SG5 4DL
Telephone number:	(01462) 730 343
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs L Hayes
Date of previous inspection:	February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Miss C Thompson 22822	Registered inspector	English Physical education Equal opportunities	How high are standards? How well is the school led and managed?
Mrs M Hackney 15181	Lay inspector		How well does the school work in partnerships with parents? Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
Mrs J Pinney 22790	Team inspector	Science Design and technology The Foundation Stage	How well does the school care for its pupils?
Mrs M Marriott 10144	Team inspector	Mathematics History Geography Special educational needs	How well are pupils taught?
Miss W Thomas 12764	Team Inspector	Religious education Information technology Music Art	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	4 - 7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	8 - 10
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	10 - 11
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	12 - 13
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	13 - 14
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	14 - 15
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	15 - 17
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	17 - 18
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	19 - 22
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	23 - 36

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mary's is a lower school; there are 235 boys and girls aged four to nine on roll, including some attending part-time in the Reception class. The school serves an area of mixed housing in the small town of Stotfold, a residential area five miles north of Hitchin. It is a popular and over-subscribed school, with many parents choosing to send their children; currently, about half the pupils are from outside the school's catchment area. Nearly all pupils are from families with origins within the United Kingdom with only a small number of pupils from minority ethnic families; no pupils are learning English as an additional language. Ten per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals which is below the national average of 20 per cent. Twenty two per cent of the pupils, including one statemented pupil, are on the school's register of special educational needs which is just above the national average of 21 per cent. When pupils start their full-time schooling, attainment is generally below the levels expected, especially in mathematical understanding.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Mary's is a good school. It serves its pupils, their families and the community well. Good teaching helps pupils to make good progress in their learning as they move through the school. At age seven and nine, pupils achieve well and most attain standards expected for their age. Pupils have good attitudes to their work and behave well. The headteacher provides good leadership. He has a clear sense of purpose for the school in preparing pupils for the next stage of their education and becoming a responsible member of their community. Given the pupils' starting point and their achievements at the end of their time at St Mary's, the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Nearly all pupils achieve the standards expected for seven and nine year olds in all subjects; pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Teaching is good, well organised and often imaginative, enabling pupils to make good progress.
- Links with parents and the community are very good.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The school provides good care and support for its pupils.
- Pupils have good attitudes to their work and behave well.
- There is a very good range of extra curricular activities.

What could be improved

- Raise standards further, especially at Key Stage 1; rigid planning, according to year groups, restricts opportunities for higher attaining pupils to make the best possible progress.
- Children attending the Reception class part-time do not have enough opportunities to take part in activities other than literacy and numeracy. In the Reception class, the method of teaching initial letter sounds is not promoting the best possible progress.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory.
- Assessment procedures are good, but further development is required to make sure that all teachers make the best use of the results when planning lessons.
- The methods for checking on the standards achieved in the school, though sound, need to be more thorough so as to raise standards further.
- School development planning is too short-term.
- There are not enough reading books for Key Stage 2 pupils.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February, 1997. Since then the school has made good improvement. Teaching has improved considerably; there is no unsatisfactory teaching. Nearly all the key issues raised by the last inspection have been resolved but the provision for spiritual development remains unsatisfactory. Planning is now good, ensuring that all pupils in the same age group, but in different

classes, have similar lessons. There are established procedures for checking on the work of the school and the standards pupils achieve; target setting procedures are beginning to be used very well. The standards the school achieves have not improved since 1997, but this is attributable to the changed and broader intake of pupils. The school's popularity has led to a high proportion of pupils attending the school who do not live in the catchment area. The building work is complete; the accommodation is excellent and used to advantage. Governors now have more time to allocate to checking on the work of the school. They have made a good start on looking at the outcomes of testing and setting targets for the school. The school has a strong commitment to improvement and has the procedures in place to do this.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
reading	B	C	C	D
writing	A	A	C	C
mathematics	B	D	D	D

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

Standards appear to be declining, but the table above does not give the whole picture. The results shown in this table are based on average point scores where specific points are allocated for grades achieved within the expected Level 2 and extra points for the higher Level 3. Few pupils achieve the higher Level 3, therefore, the average points score is not so high. Baseline assessment shows that a high proportion of the children start school below the expected levels in literacy and mathematics; very few higher attaining children are identified. Given this starting point, the school is successful in that nearly all seven year old pupils achieve the expected Level 2 in reading, mathematics and science although few achieve Level 3. Results of this year's (2000) tests show a similar picture. Compared to similar schools, the school's results are below average and again, this is because of the small number of pupils achieving the higher Level 3. Inspection evidence shows that most pupils in Year 2 are in line to achieve the expected standards in all subjects. The new computer suite is having a very positive effect on pupils' progress in information technology; pupils aged seven and nine are achieving the standards expected. In religious education, pupils' attainment at age seven and nine, is in line with that expected by the locally Agreed Syllabus, but there is a need to develop pupils' understanding of the impact of personal faith on the lives of believing communities. In all subject areas, there are higher attaining pupils who could do better and this is an area for improvement. Pupils show enthusiasm for their work and present it well. The ethos of this lower school is that the impetus for moving pupils on at a faster rate happens most noticeably in Year 4. In this year group, particularly, pupils make very good progress and some higher attaining pupils achieve standards well above those expected for their age in mathematics. The school sets realistic targets for achievement in National Curriculum tests and the optional tests for Years 3 and 4. However, there is a need to set more challenging targets for more pupils in Key Stage 1 to achieve the higher Level 3.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are enthusiastic and interested in their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils have a good understanding of what is expected of them. They are polite and helpful. There have been no exclusions for twelve years.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Relationships are good. Pupils thrive on the opportunities presented to take responsibility and show initiative.
Attendance	Very good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and arrive punctually.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Teaching is good overall. All teaching was satisfactory or better; half was good and 13 per cent was very good or excellent; there was no unsatisfactory teaching. The orderly and productive atmosphere established in classes enables pupils to concentrate on their work. All teachers have a sound or better understanding of how to teach literacy and numeracy skills and provide interesting and very relevant tasks to develop pupils' skills; lessons are well organised, pupils work hard and, generally, make good progress in their learning. The whole school approach to planning has many strengths, but a main weakness. The strengths are that teachers work hard together as a team to provide interesting work for pupils and ensure that the same year group have similar lessons. The planning allows for different levels of work to suit the different attainment levels within the year groups. The weakness, most especially at Key Stage 1, is that the planning does not allow higher attaining pupils to move on at a better pace and work with the year group ahead of them. This rigid planning is slowing the learning of the higher attaining pupils and is the main reason that fewer than average pupils achieve the higher Level 3 at Key Stage 1. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is always satisfactory and sometimes very good. Proficient learning support assistants have a significant impact on the good progress these pupils make. Teachers give generously of their time to provide a very wide range of extra-curricular activities.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good, except for the part-time pupils in the Reception class. These children attend in the mornings when only literacy and numeracy activities are planned and so there are too few opportunities to experience structured activities in other areas of learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Support for these pupils is carefully targeted and parents are always encouraged to be involved in helping their child.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. The school's provision for pupils' moral and social development is good. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory overall but more needs to be done to develop pupils' understanding of the cultures in our modern society. Provision for pupils' spiritual development remains unsatisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school has good procedures in place for checking on pupils' progress and personal development. All staff are aware of Child

	Protection procedures.
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Links with parents and the community are very strong. Parents are very supportive of the school and hold it in high esteem. Teachers give generously of their time to provide a very good range of extra-curricular activities; these clubs are frequently over-subscribed. The strong links with the community provide pupils with opportunities to develop a good understanding of citizenship.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher has a clear sense of direction for the school in terms of pupils' achievements and a clear sense of purpose for the school to be part of its community.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are becoming more involved in checking on the standards achieved in the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. There is a need for more rigour in setting the criteria for monitoring teaching and pupils' work. More focus must be given to raising the standards achieved by higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 1.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school manages its limited finances well. All monies allocated for specific purposes are used appropriately. Governors are not yet checking to see the effect of their spending decisions on the standards achieved.

The accommodation is excellent and used very well. Staffing levels are good; proficient support staff make a strong impact on pupils' progress and achievement. In the main, resources for learning are satisfactory but there are not enough reading books for Key Stage 2 pupils. The principles of best value are beginning to be applied, but more needs to be done to compare the school's standards with those achieved in similar schools.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children love school and they make very good progress. • The strong links with the community and the SMASH club. • The headteacher is a good leader. • The very good range of clubs. • The school helps their child to become mature and responsible. • They feel very well informed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No one issue was raised that a significant number of parents agreed with.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive comments.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. In reading, mathematics and science, 1999 National Curriculum test results and teacher assessment show that the percentage of pupils achieving the expected Level 2 at the end of Key Stage 1 is, generally, well above the national average. In writing, the percentage was below average. However, there are fewer than expected pupils achieving the higher Level 3, especially in mathematics. Therefore, when points are allocated for the different grades within Level 2 and for Level 3, the school's average point score shows that standards in reading are around the national average, but below the average for similar schools. Standards in writing are in line with the national and similar schools' average, whilst standards in mathematics are below the national and similar schools' average. In science, the percentage of pupils gaining the expected Level 2 was well above the national average, but around the average for similar schools.
2. The results of this year's (2000) National Curriculum tests and tasks show a similar picture in mathematics and reading, but results in writing have improved dramatically. The percentage of pupils achieving Level 2 and above in writing is now well above the national average, with the percentage of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 around average. Currently, there are no national average point scores or comparisons with similar schools available.
3. National performance data for the years 1996 to 1999, which use pupils' average point scores, shows that there was a drop in standards in reading and mathematics in 1998, but standards have improved steadily since. Standards in writing dropped in 1999, but have risen again this year. The fluctuation in standards can be attributed to the different cohorts of pupils and, in 1999, in line with the National Literacy Strategy, the school made changes to the way writing was taught. The school found that these changes were not profitable and has subsequently re-organised the way writing is taught, with much better results this year.
4. Further analysis of the 1996 to 1999 national data shows that boys do better than girls in reading and writing; this is against the national trend. The school has tried to analyse why this is so but has no definitive answer. In writing and mathematics this year (2000), boys performed better than girls, especially in achieving the higher Level 3; in reading, boys and girls did about the same.
5. The school is using all available data to set realistic targets for future Key Stage 1 National Curriculum tests and the optional Year 3 and 4 National Curriculum tests. Generally, these targets are met, but more challenging targets need to be set for achievement at Level 3 at the end of Key Stage 1.
6. By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4, they are achieving well in relation to their starting point, especially in mathematics. Results of the optional Year 4 tests this year show that just over one third of the pupils achieved the Level 4 expected of 11 year olds. In reading, around a quarter of the pupils achieved the standards expected of 11 year olds and in writing it was one fifth.
7. Results of the school's baseline assessment of pupils, as they start school at age four, show that attainment is generally below the level expected, especially in the area of mathematical development. At the end of the foundation stage at age six, pupils are generally achieving the levels expected for their age, but with a weakness remaining in early literacy and numeracy skills. When the school's results at age seven and nine are compared with pupils' starting point at around four, it indicates that pupils make good progress as they move through the school and the majority achieve well. Inspection evidence supports this premise.
8. Inspection evidence shows that the majority of pupils are achieving well in all subjects of the National Curriculum, but in Key Stage 1 and, to a lesser extent, Key Stage 2, the higher attaining

- pupils are not achieving as well as they could because the school's rigid planning for year groups does not provide ways of extending them by allowing them to work with the year group ahead.
9. At the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time pupils leave the school, attainment in speaking and listening, reading and writing is in line with national expectations. The majority of pupils are achieving well, but some higher attaining pupils could do even better if they were allowed access to work that would extend them further. The majority of pupils make good progress in acquiring reading, writing and speaking and listening skills. The main reasons for the good progress are good teaching and pupils' positive attitudes and obvious enjoyment when undertaking their interesting writing tasks.
 10. In mathematics, baseline assessment at age four shows that attainment in this area is well below the level expected. Inspection evidence shows that pupils are achieving well and attainment is in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1, although there are fewer than expected pupils working at a higher level. In Key Stage 2, pupils are, again, achieving well, with higher attaining pupils doing particularly well because of the setting according to prior attainment in the subject. By the time they leave the school at age nine, the majority of pupils are attaining standards expected for their age with a high proportion attaining standards expected of 11 year olds.
 11. In science, inspection evidence shows that nearly all pupils in Year 2 and Year 4 are attaining standards expected for their age, although few are attaining higher standards. The majority of pupils are achieving satisfactorily, but some higher attaining pupils could do even better if they were allowed access to work that would extend them further; for example, more challenge in their investigative work.
 12. In information technology, pupils aged seven and nine are attaining the standards expected for their age. The new computer suite and well qualified learning support assistant, who works alongside pupils in the suite, are having a significant impact on the pace and quality of learning in the subject; if this pace is continued, standards are likely to be higher than expected by the end of the year.
 13. In religious education, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the age of nine is broadly in line with the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. However, the curriculum still centres on imparting facts about religion with insufficient emphasis on the impact of personal faith on the lives of believing communities with the result that pupils do not make enough progress in this area.
 14. In other subjects of the curriculum, art, design technology, history, geography, music and physical education, pupils are attaining the expected levels for their age and, given their starting point are, generally, achieving well. In history and geography, good use is made of the local and school environment to develop pupils' skills of enquiry and understanding of the impact of such things as traffic on the local environment.
 15. The school makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs; they make good progress in their learning, achieve well and develop good self-confidence. Higher attaining pupils are achieving satisfactorily, but, in some subjects, particularly in Key Stage 1, they could do even better. At Key Stage 2, there is one mathematics session where pupils are grouped according to prior attainment. In these groups, higher attaining pupils benefit from excellent and challenging teaching; they make very good progress.
 16. The school has maintained the standards it was seen to be achieving in the last inspection.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. From the time children join the Reception class they quickly settle into school routines, and show a good attitude towards learning; they soon learn to take responsibility for clearing up and tidying away. Most children make sensible choices of activity and persevere until it is complete. In

class activities, children show an awareness of the needs of others when they wait patiently until it is their turn to speak.

18. Most pupils are enthusiastic and interested and enjoy school. They know the school rules well and in each class pupils have helped to write a set of rules for their own classroom. The school is an orderly environment where pupils care for each other. Pupils participate willingly in lessons and are keen to contribute ideas and answer questions. In all classes, most pupils listen well to their teachers and to each other. This is particularly good in Circle Time and an example was seen in a Year 1/2 personal, social and health education (PSHE) lesson when pupils confidently shared their feelings about bullying, working very closely as a group. Pupils in all classes concentrate well on tasks, even when the teacher is busy with another group and most speak enthusiastically about what they are learning. Pupils enjoy being involved in the wide range of activities provided by the school and this makes a strong contribution to their learning and the progress they make.
19. Behaviour is good in most lessons, in the playground and whilst pupils are moving around the school. In a few lessons where pupils are insufficiently challenged or where they are expected to sit for too long on the carpet, behaviour begins to deteriorate, resulting in unsatisfactory behaviour of just a few pupils. Some pupils become restless during assemblies when they are not being fully involved. Pupils have a clear sense of the difference between right and wrong and are polite, friendly and helpful to visitors. The respect they show towards other people and property results in a very well maintained, pleasant and clean environment. At the time of the inspection no evidence was seen of bullying or harassment and parents are confident that this is rare and that any incident would be dealt with quickly by the school. There have been no exclusions over the last twelve years.
20. Relationships among pupils and between pupils and all other adults in the school are good. During lessons, pupils in all classes share resources willingly and sensibly. The majority work well independently and are co-operative and constructive when working in small groups or with partners. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are involved well in the daily routines of school life and support one another well in classrooms and in the playground.
21. Personal development is good and most pupils enjoy the opportunity to take responsibility and to help their teachers with tasks around the school. For example, pupils were seen helping with the overhead projector in assembly and returning their class register to the office. When given the opportunity, pupils are able to organise themselves well as a group and a good example of this was seen during a music lesson. There are regular opportunities for pupils to take part in visits to places of educational and cultural interest. Pupils' involvement through the school's very strong link with the local community makes a very good contribution to their personal development.
22. Attendance is very good and is well above the national average; this shows considerable improvement since the last inspection. There is no unauthorised absence. The school works hard to monitor and promote good attendance. Most pupils are punctual. Lessons start on time and there is an efficient and well-ordered start to the day. This has a very positive effect on pupils' progress and their personal and social development.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

23. Overall, teaching is good and promotes good learning as pupils move through the school. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection. During the inspection, in half of the lessons, teaching was good, in one tenth it was very good and one excellent lesson was observed in Key Stage 2. The remaining 37 per cent of teaching was satisfactory. Teaching is equally good in both key stages, with very good teaching seen in both. The orderly and productive atmosphere established in classes enables pupils to concentrate on their work. Teachers' clear expectations and explanations mean that pupils know what is expected of them and what they have to do to achieve the tasks set them.
24. Teaching for children in the Foundation Stage in the Reception and Reception/Year 1 classes is satisfactory overall with some good and very good lessons seen. A key feature in the Reception

and Reception/ Year 1 classes is the proficient support given by the learning support assistants and nursery nurses. This support, given to small groups, facilitates the good progress children make, particularly in their personal development. Planning is good and ensures good coverage of the nationally determined areas of learning. However in the Reception class, short-term planning does not always detail the specific skills to be developed and the intended learning for each activity. Relationships with parents are very good; they are helped and encouraged to be involved in their child's learning as much as possible. Homework, in the form of sharing books, plays an important part in the good progress the children make.

25. Literacy and numeracy are given high priority in all age groups. They are taught appropriately in both key stages, although the teaching of initial letter sounds is not undertaken in the most efficient manner in the Reception class. The school has implemented the national strategies for literacy and numeracy effectively. It has also evaluated its practice in these areas and modified it sensibly, for example by deciding that more time is needed for extended writing sessions; as a result, standards in writing have improved this year. Literacy lessons are always well planned and organised. Links with other subjects are sound; for example, Year 1 pupils are encouraged to use initial sound clues to distinguish between 'ten' and 'two' in a numeracy session. Older pupils practise locating key words when reading and learning about the space shuttle.
26. In mathematics, teachers use a wide range of strategies to develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding of number. At Key Stage 2, teachers' very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject is evident in pupils' obvious enjoyment and enthusiasm. All pupils thrive on the challenging activities. In an excellent mathematics lesson observed when pupils were grouped according to prior attainment, the higher attaining Year 4 pupils demonstrated very good skills in extending number sequences by extending beyond zero when counting back.
27. Throughout, teachers manage their pupils effectively and lessons proceed at a reasonable pace; in the best lessons, there is a brisk pace and pupils are reminded of the time allowed to complete their tasks. An area for improvement is for teachers to consider how they can minimise the time the two year groups spend listening to the instructions or plenary related to only one of the year groups. It is in these situations that the pace of learning slows and some pupils become restless.
28. Relationships are good; teachers use praise appropriately and encourage pupils to be independent and show initiative. For example, pupils at Key Stage 2 are encouraged to try their own spellings before asking for help or using a dictionary.
29. At both key stages, planning is good in terms of ensuring that pupils in the same year group, but in different classes, learn the same things. Teachers plan together in year group teams; this is very effective. In the main, the difficult task of planning for different year groups within one class is managed very well. For most lessons, teachers plan work to match pupils' different levels of attainment within each year group; this is very effective. The weakness in the planning is that there is no provision made for higher attaining pupils to cross the 'boundaries' of year group. Consequently, higher attaining pupils do not always make the progress they could.
30. In some classes, day-to-day assessment procedures are used most effectively to improve progress. For example, in the Year 1/Reception class, the teacher continuously assesses pupils' performance during the week, so that at the end of each week, extra support is given to those pupils who require it. However, this good practice is not applied consistently throughout the school and, apart from literacy and numeracy, not all teachers make ongoing assessments in science and the foundation subjects. Overall, the use of the day-to-day assessment procedures does not contribute sufficiently to teachers' daily planning for the differing needs of pupils in all subjects. This is most noticeable in the provision for higher attaining pupils.
31. Resources are used efficiently and are always well prepared and organised.
32. The school employs a high proportion of learning support assistants who have a strong impact on the standards achieved. The learning support assistant with particular responsibility for information technology in the computer suite is very efficient and gives very good support to pupils and

teachers. Learning support assistants working, under the class teacher's direction, with mathematics groups and spelling groups, provide good or very good teaching.

33. Homework is used effectively in both key stages and has a suitable impact on the standards achieved. Pupils read at home and from Year 2 onwards, learn set spellings. Pupils who read at home on a regular basis are making more progress than those who do not.

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

34. The school provides a curriculum which is broad, balanced and appropriate to the needs and ages of the pupils in Key Stage 1 and 2. This is a similar judgement to that made in the last inspection. All subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are taught. The school plans carefully to ensure that statutory requirements of the programmes of study are met. The school is currently reviewing all curriculum policies to ensure that they meet the requirements of Curriculum 2000. In the light of recent staff changes, curriculum responsibilities have been reallocated to take account of the skills and experience of staff members. There are schemes of work for all subjects except religious education. The schemes of work include materials from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been introduced successfully. The governors have appropriate policies for sex education and drugs awareness and are developing a policy for personal, social and health education.
35. All pupils in Key Stage 1 and 2, including those with special educational needs, have full and equal access to the curriculum. Provision for pupils with special educational needs, including those with behavioural difficulties, is good.
36. The curriculum is enriched by a range of visits to places of interest in the locality such as St Albans Abbey, the Shuttleworth transport Museum and the Hazard Alley safety centre at Milton Keynes. The school makes good use of the local community to support pupils' learning. There are good links with local churches whose ministers visit the school and lead assemblies.
37. Currently, the curriculum provided for children attending part-time in the Reception class is unsatisfactory. The reason is that numeracy and literacy sessions are timetabled for the mornings. The part-time children attend mornings only, therefore, there are too few opportunities for them to undertake anything other than numeracy or literacy based activities. The school is aware of this and is considering ways to improve the situation.
38. The school's strong links with the local community and the contribution this makes to pupils' learning is good. In recognition of the high quality local and wider community links, the school has recently been awarded the Schools Curriculum Award 2000. Pupils benefit from a range of activities which support the curriculum well and a variety of members of the community regularly visit to talk to pupils and enrich the curriculum. Pupils go out on a variety of visits to such places as St Albans Abbey, the Planetarium, Bedfordshire Festival of Voices, activities organised with local churches, perform at local concerts and visit the home for the elderly. The Little Saints community pre-school group meets in the school hall each week and most of these children are inducted into the Reception class. SMASH (St Mary's after school hours club), an independent group, provides daily pre- and after school care for children from the whole community.
39. The school works very closely with the Ivel Schools Association which is a confederation of the lower, middle and upper schools in the area. This provides a very good working relationship with other schools and benefits pupils' learning and the progress they make. The strong liaison at an academic and pastoral level provides valuable opportunities for headteachers to meet every month. Meetings are arranged regularly between subject and special needs co-ordinators, with good arrangements made for sharing information and expertise. Regular activities days are organised between the schools, including sports fixtures and pupils in Year 4 visit the middle school regularly for such activities as music, science and art. The whole pyramid of schools is involved in an

accelerated learning course as part of their programme of school improvement. The good practice of teachers visiting other schools is well established.

40. Overall, the school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development. This is a similar finding to that in the previous inspection. However, the provision for spiritual development remains unsatisfactory. Assemblies, although Christian in nature, often miss the opportunity to provide pupils with genuine spiritual awareness. Although the daily collective worship meets the statutory requirements, this does not always involve all pupils, as a significant number are often withdrawn for other activities. As at the time of the last inspection, pupils' development through spiritual awareness is inadequate and is not planned for as part of the curriculum. Insufficient provision and opportunity are made by teachers during lessons, assemblies and within the school environment for pupils to reflect on their deeper feelings and to experience wonder and appreciation of the world in which they live.
41. In both key stages, pupils have a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Their moral development is promoted well through the high expectation of good behaviour and the school's well planned programme for personal and social education. Throughout the school, pupils are given good opportunities to think about how their actions affect others. Pupils show a growing awareness of the needs of others and examples were seen of them helping each other in classrooms and whilst outside in the playground. The school supports a number of local and national charities, such as the Poppy Appeal, Children in Need and Comic Relief. Through the good role models provided by their teachers and all other adults in the school, pupils develop a strong sense of fairness and justice. Pupils in Year 4 have the opportunity to take part in a residential visit promoting their social and personal development well. The grouping of pupils during lessons, as they take part in extra-curricular activities and eat lunch together in the hall, engenders a sense of community and provides good opportunities for pupils' social development.
42. Pupils develop a good understanding of their own culture during lessons, through visitors into school and a range of visits, such as to museums, dramatic productions and a music and art day. Although pupils' cultural development within their own culture is satisfactory, the provision for multicultural education is unsatisfactory and is weak in art and music. Through religious education and geography, some opportunities are provided for pupils to learn some facts about different faiths and cultures, but very little evidence is visible around the school of a range of books and artefacts to develop and broaden pupils' understanding of living in a multicultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

43. The school provides a good level of pastoral care and support for all pupils and this has continued since the last inspection. Parents speak highly of the care and support which their children receive, particularly those with special educational needs. All staff know pupils very well and they are committed to their welfare and safety. Teachers and support staff respond very positively to the individual, physical and emotional needs of all pupils. Through the provision for personal and social education, pupils are made well aware of taking care of themselves.
44. The school's procedures for monitoring Child Protection issues are good. The headteacher is the designated person with responsibility. Although he has not attended a specific training course, he is well supported through headteacher liaison meetings and close working relationships with the education welfare officer. All staff, including lunchtime supervisors, are aware of the need to take any concerns immediately to the headteacher. Regular updating meetings are held between staff when issues of particular concern are shared and discussed.
45. Good and up-to-date personal records are kept for all pupils and these are regularly monitored and amended. The Health and Safety policy is followed closely, with the deputy headteacher taking responsibility for its implementation. A formal risk assessment of the site is completed regularly. In addition, the caretaker and staff are vigilant in their informal monitoring of potential safety hazards which are well recorded. Pupils are constantly alerted to safe practices in classrooms and during activities outside in the playground. There is a need to ensure that chairs are safely

stacked away before physical education lessons start. Good procedures are in place for First Aid, with a number of qualified First Aiders on site, and the school organises regular fire drills.

46. Good procedures are followed for monitoring and recording attendance. Most pupils are brought into school by parents, but the school follows up any unexplained absence quickly. Pupils are encouraged and rewarded with certificates for good attendance and are set targets for improvement. Satisfactory procedures are followed for monitoring and promoting good behaviour, but these are not always consistently implemented by staff, resulting in some unsatisfactory behaviour by a small number of pupils in a few lessons. Pupils are rewarded for good work and behaviour with praise, star of the week award, stickers and letters to parents. The school has good procedures and pays close attention to the elimination of bullying or oppressive behaviour between pupils. Parents and pupils feel confident that any incident of bullying will be well handled by staff. All pupils, including those who are under five, are well supervised in the playground and good procedures are followed to ensure their safety and welfare. Induction arrangements are good through the close links with pre-school playgroup. Through the school's strong liaison with the middle school, pupils in Year 4 receive good educational and personal support and guidance prior to their move into Year 5.
47. Since the previous inspection, the school has placed a high priority on improving assessment procedures and good procedures are now in place for assessing and monitoring the pupils' academic attainment as they move through the school. Arrangements for initial testing of children on entry to the school and for the assessments of standards in English, mathematics and science at the age of seven meet statutory requirements. The national test results are analysed by the headteacher for areas of strengths or weaknesses. In addition, formal testing is carried out in Years 3 and 4 to track pupils' progress and the school is in the process of investigating tests for tracking progress in Year 1. As a result of the analysis and informal tracking, the school has begun to set whole-class targets for improvement. The school has also begun to establish individual targets for improvement, which are shared with the pupils and their parents. Significant achievement in work is clearly dated and kept in individual pupil records of achievement, although there are no examples of pupils' work assessed against National Curriculum levels in order to assist teachers in their own assessments of pupils' work. Currently, these good procedures for assessment and tracking pupils' progress are being used effectively to raise standards in Key Stage 2. The need, now, is to use these procedures to raise standards further at the end of Key Stage 1.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

48. A very good partnership has been established with parents, who support of the work of the school very well. This strong partnership has been sustained since the last inspection and remains a strength of the school. Parents feel very welcome and most speak of a real partnership in which the school involves them in all aspects of their children's learning. The Home/School Partnership Agreement is valued by parents and it was drawn up by staff, governors and parents, with an input from pupils. During the inspection, many parents were seen bringing children into classrooms and speaking with teachers, creating a very positive and happy start to the day. Many parents help in a variety of ways with extra-curricular activities and a few help teachers regularly in classrooms, listening to pupils read, sorting resources and helping with practical activities.
49. Most parents agree that their children make good progress and they are very satisfied with the quality of education provided by the school. Parents make a good contribution to pupils' learning at school and at home by listening to them read and assisting with homework and special topics. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept fully informed and involved with their children's progress and they are invited to attend all review and assessment meetings. The impact of parental partnership and the school's open door policy make a very strong contribution to pupils' progress and attainment.
50. The quality of information for parents provided through the regular helpful newsletters is very good, and encourages parents to be involved. Noticeboards for parents, at both entrances to the school,

provide copies of current newsletters, good information about school activities and items of interest within the local community. All pupils have a home/school diary which is well used as communication between home and school, particularly in Key Stage 1. The curriculum overview sheet for the term provides parents with good information about what their children will be learning and ways in which they can assist. Parents of children in the Reception class receive a weekly overview of activities. Parents help the school by completing an annual questionnaire about their views of the school's provision, the results of which are taken into account for the school's development plan. Two consultation evenings are held for parents during the Autumn and Spring terms, when pupils' targets for learning are agreed and recorded to be discussed again at the next open evening. In addition there is constant opportunity for parents to see their children's work and to talk to teachers informally. Overall, the information provided in the annual reports is good and personalised to the individual pupil. There are some inconsistencies in the clarity of information about progress, with only some reports containing targets for improvement. The prospectus provides clear and attractive details about the school's organisation and the curriculum.

51. The St Mary's School Association (SMSA) is a thriving organisation of parents and teachers who organise fund raising social events for the school and community. The school benefits from the efforts of the Association who have provided them with a variety of additional learning resources such as the very attractive, large adventure play equipment in the small enclosed play area.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

52. The leadership and management provided by the headteacher and key staff are good. This is an improvement since the last inspection when leadership and management were found to be satisfactory. The headteacher has a clear vision and strong sense of purpose for the school which is shared by all staff and the governing body. He sees the future as an opportunity to build on the school's good reputation for high achievement and strong community links and, through this, prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education. All staff are consulted on important management issues and kept well informed of decisions made; therefore, all feel valued and work very well together as a team.
53. In the response to the 'Parents' Questionnaire', very nearly all parents agreed that the school is well led and managed. In meetings with inspectors before and during the inspection, parents enthused about the ethos and good management of the school and how it benefits the community. The headteacher and all staff have worked very hard to gain the prestigious School's Curriculum Award this year. Notable features in gaining this award are the pre-school group, 'Little Saints', which meets in the school on one afternoon per week and enables parents and children to get to know the school. The St Mary's After School Hours Club (SMASH) provides child care facilities within the school before school starts and after school until 6.00 pm. These ventures have won county awards and are very much appreciated by pupils, parents and the community as a whole.
54. The headteacher takes a lead role in the 'pyramid' of ten local lower, middle and upper schools. This involvement and the school's good appraisal system is beneficial to all staff in terms of professional development and sharing good practice; teachers have opportunities to visit other schools and observe lessons; subject co-ordinators from the different schools meet regularly. It is also beneficial for pupils because all teachers are aware of what is expected in each of the lower, middle and upper schools. Teachers can then provide for an easy transition from one stage of education to the next. Schools liaise closely about what is taught at each stage of education, ensuring that there are no gaps in pupils' subject knowledge.
55. The school has sound procedures in place for checking on standards achieved. The headteacher monitors teaching regularly and takes samples of pupils' work. Currently, this monitoring, though useful, lacks rigour and clearly defined criteria to judge the quality of teaching. Similarly, the sampling of pupils' work lacks a clear focus. Therefore, the results of this monitoring are not as helpful as they could be in improving standards. Results of baseline assessment, National Curriculum tests and other standardised tests are carefully analysed and used to set targets. However, the outcomes of these tests have not yet been used to change what is taught and how. For example, baseline assessment identifies that children's attainment is quite low in

mathematical development, but no alterations have been made to the Reception curriculum. Similarly, the school has identified that few pupils at the end of Year 2 achieve the higher Level 3 in reading, science and mathematics, but has not changed the way the subjects are planned and taught. However, the school has been successful in raising standards achieved by Year 3 and 4 pupils. The results of the optional standardised tests for these pupils are used well to set targets for improvement. However, these target are not reassessed often enough to see if pupils could do even better. The school has also organised one mathematics session where pupils in Year 4 are set according to prior attainment. This initiative has raised standards considerably. There is a need, now, to give more focus to raising standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science in Key Stage 1, especially those achieved by higher attaining pupils.

56. The ethos within this lower school is that pupils will achieve the highest standards by the time they leave the school. In the main, the school is successful in achieving this. However, there is a lack of focus and high expectation to ensure that the pupils at the end of Year 2 achieve the highest standards; this is the main reason that there are fewer than expected pupils achieving the higher Level 3.
57. Overall, subject co-ordinators provide sound leadership for their subjects. Some co-ordinators have only just taken on responsibilities for their subjects but already have a good idea of the strengths and weaknesses and what needs to be done to improve. In English and mathematics the co-ordinators provide very good leadership for their subject areas and provide good role models in their teaching. There have been very limited opportunities for co-ordinators to monitor the teaching in their subjects. There is a need to provide opportunities for co-ordinators to gain an understanding of what is taught the Reception class.
58. School development planning is comprehensive and has a good focus on improvement and raising standards. However, it is too short-term and does not provide a long term view of where the school is heading. This fact was also noted in the last report. The school has long term plans for some areas of its work, but these are not recorded.
59. A key issue raised by the last report was 'To strengthen the Governing Body's procedures for overseeing the school's curriculum, developmental planning and financial management'. Good improvement has been made in this area, although the Governing Body acknowledge that they need to do more. The school building programme has been completed which now allows more of their time to be given to monitoring the work of the school. A programme of classroom visits has been started, key governors are linked to evaluating the success, or not, in meeting targets in specific areas of the school development plan. A finance and administration policy is now in place. The school has had a shortfall in its budget; the headteacher and governors have faced and managed their way out of this period of crisis well. All monies allocated to the school for specific purposes such as staff training and special needs, are used appropriately.
60. Governors are kept well informed by the headteacher and some work in the school. Therefore, they have a sound understanding of what goes on. They are committed to improving the standards achieved in the school and its involvement with the community. There is a need now to give more consideration to comparing the standards achieved in the school with other similar schools. They have made a sound start on setting targets for the headteacher to achieve. All statutory requirements are met although there are times when many pupils do not attend the daily collective worship and no alternative act of worship is provided.
61. The management of special educational needs is good. The special needs co-ordinator uses her non-contact time efficiently. Individual education plans are appropriate and the progress pupils make is suitably recorded. Proficient learning support assistants are well organised and support pupils well, both individually and in groups. All statutory requirements are met. There are clear, efficient systems to ensure that pupils' needs are systematically reviewed and parents are kept well informed. The special educational needs co-ordinator has no experience of basic assessment procedures and the school has no up-to-date tests to use; this is an area for improvement and will allow the co-ordinator to make more profitable use of her teaching time by grouping pupils together for the teaching of specific skills.

62. The level of staffing is good. All staff are suitably qualified and sufficiently experienced to teach the National Curriculum. There is a good spread of more recently qualified teachers and those who have longer experience. Co-ordinators have been appointed for all subject areas and special educational needs. The newly qualified teacher receives very good support through the school's mentoring system. Teachers are well supported by proficient support staff who are very well deployed and make a strong impact on pupils' progress and attainment. The school office is a welcoming place and gives a very good first impression of the school. The secretary makes a very good and efficient contribution to the work of the school; parents are very appreciative of the warm welcome and help provided by her. All staff work very well together as a team.
63. The accommodation is excellent. The new building, opened only two years ago, is very attractive and pleasantly situated. All areas of the building are used efficiently and standards of cleanliness are high. Colourful and attractive displays of pupils' work, artefacts and pictures throughout the school create an interesting and stimulating learning environment. The provision for outdoor play space is very good and the resurfacing of the hard play area is imminent. The grassed areas, swimming pool and environmental area provide the school with excellent teaching resources. The contained soft play area provides an excellent location for small groups to play on the large adventure equipment. Very good provision is made for a secure outdoor play area for the youngest children.
64. Resources for learning are satisfactory, but for the teaching of English they are unsatisfactory as there are insufficient reading books to give pupils at Key Stage 2 a reasonable choice of reading material. Many dictionaries are in need of replacement because of their poor condition. The number of non-fiction large text books (big books) is insufficient to support literacy through other subjects. There is good provision of resources for physical education, library, science and for the under fives. For the new information and communication technology (ICT) suite there is very good provision of computers but some of the software to support the use of ICT across the curriculum is in need of development. Pupils have satisfactory access to all learning resources.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

To improve standards the headteacher, staff and governing body should:

- (1) Raise standards further, especially in Key Stage 1, by –
- providing more opportunities for extension work for higher attaining pupils;
 - being more flexible with year group planning, so that higher attaining pupils can work with the year group ahead of them if appropriate;

Paragraphs: 5, 8, 11, 15, 29, 30, 47, 55, 56, 93, 117, 119

- (2) Provide opportunities for children attending part-time in the Reception class to experience the full curriculum to meet the Early Learning Goals.

Paragraphs: 37, 66

- (3) Provide opportunities for children in the Reception class to make more rapid progress in learning and using initial letter sounds by:

- putting in place a more efficient method of teaching initial letter sounds to enable children to make better progress in using these to spell and read.

Paragraphs: 25, 73

- (4) Provide better opportunities for pupils' spiritual development by –

- providing staff training in this area;
- taking into account pupils' spiritual development when planning lessons.

Paragraphs: 40

(5) Make the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work more effective by –

- implementing more rigorous and focused criteria for monitoring teaching and pupils' work;
- reviewing the targets set for pupils more than once per year.

Paragraphs: 55

- (6) In subjects other than literacy and numeracy, ensure that the good day-to-day assessment procedures are used consistently by all staff in planning their future lessons.

Paragraphs: 30, 47, 69, 151

- (7) Improve school development planning to include longer term plans.

Paragraphs: 58

- (8) Provide more reading books for Key Stage 2 pupils.

Paragraphs: 101

Other issues which should be considered by the school:

- providing the special educational needs co-ordinator with training and materials in order that she can undertake basic assessments of pupils' specific difficulties;

Paragraphs: 61

- providing curriculum co-ordinators with opportunities to observe more teaching, especially in the Reception classes.

Paragraphs: 101, 112, 120

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	38
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	18

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	10	50	37	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	223
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	20

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	46

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	15

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	1.0
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	1999	21	17	38

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	14	20
	Girls	16	16	16
	Total	35	30	36
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (80)	79 (81)	95 (84)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	20	21
	Girls	16	16	16
	Total	33	36	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	87 (81)	95 (85)	97 (86)
	National	82 (80)	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	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	183
Any other minority ethnic group	10

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Average class size	28

Education support staff: YR – Y4

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	153.75

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-00
	£
Total income	429,537
Total expenditure	445,496
Expenditure per pupil	2,044
Balance brought forward from previous year	19,236
Balance carried forward to next year	3,257

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	197
Number of questionnaires returned	96

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	58	40	2	0	
My child is making good progress in school.	45	47	4	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	65	2	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	54	7	0	2
The teaching is good.	45	49	2	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41	47	9	2	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	36	4	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	43	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	51	41	7	1	0
The school is well led and managed.	54	42	2	2	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	60	1	1	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	61	32	1	3	1

Other issues raised by parents

Parents are very appreciative of the SMASH club (St Mary's after school club).
 Parents appreciate the help and information given by the school secretary.

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

65. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. This is a similar picture to the previous inspection. In 1999, assessments of children on entry indicated that attainment in language, mathematics and personal development was below average in comparison with other children in the same education authority. Inspection findings indicate that, for children who have just started school in the Reception class, attainment is below expectations in language, mathematics and personal development. Attainment in knowledge and understanding, creative and physical development is in line with expectations for children of this age.
66. Currently, the provision for children attending mornings only in the Reception class is unsatisfactory. The morning sessions are planned to cover literacy and numeracy and, as such, do not provide a suitable breadth of activities for these young children
67. Children enter the Reception class in the term after they are four and attend part-time for the first term. Children transfer to the mixed age Reception/Year 1 class in the term in which they are five. Currently, most children have attended pre-school play groups, but none has attended nursery school. At the time of the inspection, 21 children were in the Reception class, of whom 10 were part-time. There are seven children in the mixed Reception/Year 1 class; all attend full time in this class.
68. Children make good progress in their personal and social development, in communication, language and literacy and in mathematical development. Progress in knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development is satisfactory. By the time they are ready to start in Year 1, most of the children have achieved the expected levels in all the areas of learning that are deemed suitable for children of this age. However, literacy and numeracy skills remain the weaker areas.
69. In both classes where Reception children are taught, the quality of teaching is satisfactory, overall; sometimes it is good and, occasionally, very good. Proficient nursery nurses and learning support assistants play a vital role in the progress children make. Teachers have a sound knowledge and understanding of the foundation curriculum. Activities are planned to include learning objectives that promote all six recommended areas of learning. However, in the Reception class, short term planning does not always detail the specific skills to be developed and the intended learning for each activity. In practice, this sometimes leads to a lack of purposeful learning for some children. In both classes, teachers carry out detailed assessments of individual children's progress, but these are insufficiently used to inform future curriculum planning. However, in the Reception/Year 1 class, the teacher has a very good system for noting, during the week, any areas where the children need more help and plans time on a Friday to give extra help to children as required. Such a system has a very good effect on learning.

Personal, social and emotional development

70. A significant number of children have lower than expected social skills when they enter the Reception class. However, progress is good and, within a short time, the children have become used to the class routines and are establishing good relationships with each other and with adults. They begin to tidy up after themselves and are able to dress and undress themselves for physical education or outdoor play. Most children make their own choice of activity and persevere until it is completed. In class activities, such as snack times or story sessions, children show that they are becoming aware of the needs of others as they mostly take turns and wait quietly until it is their turn to speak. By the time children are ready to start in Year 1, their personal, social and emotional development is in line with that expected for their age.

71. The staff provide for the children's development well by giving useful opportunities for them to develop their independence. For example, children show they have taken their morning drink by selecting their name and placing it on the board. Children's opinions are listened to and valued. Effective measures have been established to support children on entry to the Reception class and useful links are established between home and school. Teachers and support staff work together very effectively as a team to create a secure yet stimulating environment that children are happy to come to.

Communication, language and literacy

72. At the end of the Foundation Stage, communication, language and literacy is broadly in line with national expectations, although writing skills remain below those expected for children of this age and they are not confident in using letter sounds to help them read and spell. In both classes, children enjoy listening to stories and sharing books with adults. The majority of children talk freely to adults, expressing their needs clearly. In the Reception class, children are aware that print conveys meaning and is read from left to right. Most children know some letter names and initial letter sounds. They are beginning to copy under the teacher's writing and higher attaining children can write their own names unaided. Older children who are in the Reception/ Year 1 class have begun the school's reading scheme. Most of these older children can read a simple text independently and talk about the story and characters in it. They understand that written texts can be used to gain information. For example, children who were making models of bees were referring to a book to ascertain how many legs they have. Older children copy under an adult's writing, but none can write simple words independently.
73. Relevant elements of the literacy framework are used effectively in both Reception classes. In both classes, teachers talk constantly with the children, effectively developing their powers of self expression. Understanding of initial sounds and familiar words is reinforced through rhymes and stories. Children are encouraged in their reading development by taking books home to share with their parents. However, the teaching of initial sounds is not undertaken in the most efficient manner. The practice of teaching the sound of one letter per week and in the order dictated by the handwriting scheme, does not promote the best possible progress. Scrutiny of children's past work indicates too few opportunities for the development of independent writing, which limits progress in the development of writing skills.

Mathematical development

74. By the end of the Foundation Stage, attainment in mathematics is in line with that expected nationally. In the Reception class, younger children identify and match numbers to ten as they play a number lotto game. They familiarise themselves with the appearance of numbers as they make them from plasticine. In practical tasks, children use simple addition as they calculate one more and one less. Most children can identify and name the common shapes. Scrutiny of work indicates that, by the end of the year, most children record simple addition and higher attaining children have begun simple subtraction. Most children have begun to use a mathematical vocabulary, as, for example, they make comparisons between the "longest" and "shortest" when measuring.
75. Teaching of mathematics is satisfactory, overall, and, in some lessons, very good. In these lessons, activities are very appropriate to individual needs, so that children of all abilities are suitably challenged. Resources are used very effectively to motivate children. For example, children were totally enthralled as their teacher used a glove puppet to help them with their counting. However, scrutiny of work indicates that too often children work on worksheets or workbooks, limiting the opportunity for the practical experiences that are essential for children of this age.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

76. Children are beginning to gain understanding and knowledge of the world about them through a wide range of activities and attractive resources. Children investigate objects and materials by

using their senses and begin to use scientific equipment, as when they use magnifying glasses to examine leaf mould. As the children examine and discuss the features of the spiders and woodlice that they find they demonstrate a growing respect and care for living creatures. Children are beginning to question why and how, as, for example, they test egg shells to establish how strong they are. When using the computer the majority of children use the mouse competently to move objects around the screen. Children are developing the skills of cutting and joining and can use a construction kit with confidence, as when adding axles and wheels to make their cars move. By the time they are ready to start in Year 1, children are achieving standards suitable for their age

77. The quality of teaching is mostly satisfactory, but is sometimes very good. This was the case when children were observing leaf mould in the Reception class. In this lesson, adults supported children very well in their investigation and made very good use of searching questions to enhance learning. Resources were very well prepared, so that all the children were engrossed in the task and concentrated for a long period of time. In some lessons, however, progress is limited because the given task is insufficiently challenging for higher attaining children.

Physical development

78. The secure play area affords children good opportunity to develop their physical skills. Children develop their co-ordination effectively as they use sit and ride toys, including tricycles and bicycles and practise throwing and catching balls. In a physical education lesson in the hall, pupils demonstrate a growing awareness of space as they move their bodies in time to music. By the time pupils reach the end of the Foundation Stage, they are achieving the expected standards.
79. Good adult support sensitively encourages all children to participate in physical activity and ensures that in lessons children spend the majority of their time actively involved in physical activity. Praise is used well to encourage good performance. However, in the Reception class, the teacher's planning is brief and fails to identify which specific early learning goals are the intended focus of the lesson. This results in missed opportunities for the development of skills.

Creative development

80. By the time they reach Year one, children demonstrate increasing competence with a range of media and materials. They use paint, glue, crayon and collage materials to create lively pictures, showing a developing awareness of colour and pattern. Children enjoy singing a variety of well known songs and rhymes and enthusiastically join in the actions. They act out home and imaginative scenes in their role play.
81. The provision of good resources allows children the opportunity for a wide range of experiences. Children are well managed and respond well to adults' instructions. The quality of teaching is successfully raising the standards of the children's skills and widening their knowledge of art, craft and music.

ENGLISH

82. At the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time pupils leave the school, attainment is generally in line with the national expectations although fewer than expected pupils achieve the higher Level 3 at the end of Key Stage 1. The school has maintained these standards since the last inspection in 1997.
83. In reading, 1999 National Curriculum test results show that the percentage of pupils achieving the expected Level 2 is well above the national average. In writing, the percentage was below average. However, there are fewer than expected pupils achieving the higher Level 3. Therefore, when points are allocated for the different grades within Level 2 and for Level 3, the school's average point score results show that standards in reading are around the national average, but below the average for similar schools. Standards in writing are in line with the national and similar school average.

84. Results of this year's (2000) National Curriculum tests and tasks show a similar picture in reading, but results in writing have improved dramatically. The percentage of pupils achieving Level 2 and above in writing is well above the national average, with the percentage of pupils achieving, the higher Level 3 around average. Currently, there are no national average point scores or comparisons with similar schools available.
85. Results of 1999 optional standardised tests in reading and writing for Year 4 show that pupils are achieving in line with other pupils of the same age within the county. Results of this year's testing shows that standards have remained the same in reading and slightly improved in writing. In reading, this year, just over a quarter of the pupils achieved the level expected for 11 year olds and in writing it was one fifth.
86. In speaking and listening, pupils in Year 2 and Year 4 are achieving the standards expected of them for their age. Year 2 pupils listen attentively to their teachers and each other and show that they have understood by answering questions correctly or making an appropriate contribution. The good relationships within classes provide an atmosphere where pupils know that their contributions will be listened to and respected. Year 4 pupils are confident and express themselves clearly with a good sense of audience when they talk about their recent visit to the Planetarium.
87. Pupils have good attitudes towards reading and are achieving the expected standards for their age in Year 2 and Year 4. However, fewer than expected pupils achieve higher standards especially in Year 2. In Year 1, pupils use picture clues to help them guess unknown words, but they are not as secure as they should be in using initial sounds to help them tackle the unknown words they meet in their reading material. The main reason for this is the lack of emphasis, in the Reception class, on teaching letter sounds in the most efficient manner and encouraging pupils to use their knowledge of letter sounds to help them spell and read. The English co-ordinator has had no opportunities to evaluate the work in Reception classes and this is an area for improvement. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2; by the end of Year 2, pupils are reading confidently and making good use of initial sounds and letter blends they know to help them tackle unknown words. Most can demonstrate a reasonable understanding of the text and some express their opinions about what they have read. Pupils who read regularly at home make better progress than those who do not.
88. Teachers work very hard to ensure that they hear each of their pupils read at least once per week, supplemented by the opportunity for pupils to participate in group reading once per week. At Key Stage 1 and in Reception, encouraging comments are made in reading record books and some comments on the strategies pupils use. There is no system for recording the skills pupils bring to their reading so that teachers know what they need to teach next. This is an area for improvement. Learning support staff supervise group reading well and ensure that all pupils make at least sound progress and enjoy the reading. Teachers make it clear to learning support assistants what they expect pupils to learn in the session and good records are kept of the progress made. In a good session observed, Year 2 pupils were thoroughly enjoying taking part in play reading of 'The boy who cried wolf'. They kept up with the text so that they could join in on cue and read with great expression, making good use of the punctuation. At Key Stage 2, many pupils keep their own reading 'diary' and the majority do this well. Teachers are trialling a new record keeping system; this is working well and gives teachers a good basis from which to plan.
89. In both key stages, pupils enjoy writing and approach their tasks with confidence and enthusiasm. In Years 2 and 4, pupils are achieving the standards expected for their age, with around the same proportion as expected nationally achieving the higher levels. In Year 1, pupils are not yet making good use of any letter sounds they know to help them spell. They have an over-reliance on copying the word from their 'word bank' or asking for help. However, they make good progress as they move through Year 1 and 2. Currently, pupils do not have a spelling book or a 'try out' spelling sheet as they do in Key Stage 2. This type of book would facilitate a better rate of progress by encouraging pupils to spell by analogy and use letter sounds. By the end of the key stage, pupils are making good attempts at spelling words they wish to use and use the 'key words' they learn for their homework spellings. Some pupils know how to use a dictionary to help them check their spellings. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils write suitably ordered stories or

accounts and have a good sense of audience; in Year 2, pupils wrote imaginative stories about using a special magic word. Higher attaining pupils are beginning to have a good idea of a story having a beginning, middle and end and try hard to remember this when doing their work. Pupils have an appropriate understanding of basic punctuation, such as full stops and capital letters, and an awareness of the use of question marks and exclamation marks. Pupils make good use of word processing programs to record their work and/or present their work for display.

90. At Key Stage 2, pupils attempt spelling confidently on their 'try out' sheet and some make good use of dictionaries to check if they are right. However, there is a need to develop dictionary skills further, so that pupils can locate sections more quickly. Carefully organised year grouping ensures that pupils learn the 'key words' expected for their age. However, because of the rigid nature of this grouping, some higher attaining pupils do not have the opportunity to learn spelling that are not assigned to their year group and, therefore, do not make as much progress as they could. Year 4 pupils can easily identify verbs in quite complex sentences and in some instances substitute a more active or exciting verb. Higher attaining pupils are developing higher order reading skills such as skimming and scanning; in a complex piece of text about the space shuttle, pupils quickly identified key words. Year 3 pupils write well sequenced accounts of their trip to the Planetarium. Higher attaining pupils include details and use connecting words well to help their writing flow. In the main, pupils in Years 3 and 4 use basic punctuation such as full stops and capital letters correctly and in Year 3 are beginning to use commas, question marks and speech marks competently; Year 4 pupils are more secure in the use of this punctuation and use it to good effect in their written work.
91. Handwriting is taught well throughout the school and pupils make sound progress in developing a fluent and legible style. Pupils take care with the presentation of their work. An area for improvement is to provide lined books or line guides for Key Stage 1 pupils, so that they develop a quicker and more consistent understanding of the proportions of letters and where the descenders and ascenders fit in relation to the line. The provision of such guides will also prevent most pupils from writing at a 45 degree angle across their page and 'losing' their words in the line above or below.
92. Given that baseline assessment on entry shows that children start school with a below average level of attainment in language and literacy skills, the results pupils achieve when they leave the school indicate that they make good progress as they move through the school.
93. Inspection findings generally support this premise, but evidence gathered suggests that some pupils could do even better at Key Stage 1. The main reason that they are not is the rigid planning for year groups within classes.
94. A key issue raised by the last inspection was *'..systematically monitor what is planned and taught, to develop greater consistency in the curriculum provided for pupils of the same age group in the different classes, and to promote greater progression throughout the school'*. The school has addressed this key issue very well. Planning is good and in line with the National Literacy Strategy. All pupils in the same year group have similar lessons and access to similar support from proficient learning support assistants. Within the planning for each year group, learning objectives and activities are planned appropriately to meet the requirements of pupils of different levels of attainment. The weakness is that higher attaining pupils are not having the opportunities to move on at a faster pace by working with the year group ahead of them. The expectation is that pupils stay within their year group. For example, a higher attaining pupil in Year 1 is quite capable and very keen to learn spellings, but it is only Year 2 pupils who have spellings for homework. There are good readers in each year group who could easily undertake group reading with the year group ahead of them. Whilst most higher attaining pupils make sound progress, there are some in all classes who are capable of making faster progress and could possibly attain higher levels in National Curriculum tests.
95. Overall, teaching is good in both key stages with many strengths outweighing the weaknesses. The strengths are:

- good relationships and class management;
 - teachers' secure understanding of how to teach literacy skills;
 - teachers' good understanding of how to organise and teach a literacy hour;
 - good planning with clear learning objectives for each Year group and the groups within it;
 - good organisation of learning support assistants to ensure that they make a positive impact on the standards pupils achieve;
 - good use of questioning to help pupils recall what they have learned.
96. In the very good lessons, teachers set a brisk pace and have high expectations for pupils to achieve a certain amount of work in a given time. Challenging work is set for higher attaining pupils. In a very good lesson observed in the Reception/Year 1 class, very good use was made of assessment during the lesson to note which pupils needed extra help.
97. The weaknesses are:
- the whole school system of rigid planning for year groups restricts the opportunities for higher attaining pupils to make even better progress;
 - on occasions, teachers expect pupils to sit for too long on the carpet to listen to the tasks set for both the year groups and, in these situations, understandably, pupils become restless.
98. There is also the need for teachers, especially of the younger pupils, to consider that in lessons following assembly, pupils have already been sitting on the floor for half an hour.
99. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good in class sessions. Learning support assistants provide good support for pupils and encourage them to be as independent as possible. In the spelling support sessions, teaching by the proficient learning support assistant is very good and ensures that pupils make good progress in their learning.
100. Homework in the form of reading at home and learning spellings is used well and contributes significantly to the standards achieved in the school.
101. The co-ordinator provides very good leadership and has a good understanding of the subject and the National Literacy Strategy. She provides a good role model for teaching and good support for her colleagues. She has had the opportunity to observe a few literacy lessons and checks teachers' planning. However, she has had no opportunity to observe teaching in the Reception classes, so does not have a clear overview of the curriculum and teaching in the school. The results of National Curriculum tests and optional Year 3 and 4 tests are analysed by the headteacher and suitable targets set for future achievement. Resources for Key Stage 1 pupils are adequate, but there are insufficient reading resources for Year 3 and 4 pupils. The school is keen to develop literacy through other subjects and to do this will need more large text books.

MATHEMATICS

102. In 1999, at the end of Key Stage 1, the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 2 and above was above the national average. However, the percentage of pupils attaining the higher level 3 was well below the national average. When pupils' average points scores are used to compare the school's results with all and similar schools, the small number of pupils attaining Level 3 brings the average points score down. Compared to all schools, standards are below average and compared to similar schools, they are well below.
103. Results of this year's (2000) National Curriculum tests show a similar picture.
104. Further analysis of the data for 1996 – 1999 shows that boys generally do better in mathematics than girls. The school is well aware of this fact and has tried to analyse why, but has no definitive answer. Over time, results, based on points scores, dropped dramatically in 1998 but are moving steadily upwards again.

105. The results pupils attain by the time they leave the school at age nine are above the level expected. Indeed, this year, just over a quarter of the pupils achieved the level expected for eleven year olds. This reflects the priority placed on this subject and age group by the school. Inspection findings are that results are improving rapidly for those pupils with higher attainment, because of the school's policy of setting according to prior attainment in Year 4. Pupil performance during the inspection indicates that the targets set by the school will be achieved and that the majority of pupils have a very secure understanding of the skills required to attain at this level.
106. Inspection evidence generally confirms the standards achieved in National tests. By the end of Key Stage 1, almost all pupils can recall simple addition and subtraction sums without using practical materials to help them. Those with average and higher prior attainment order use numbers to a hundred and are beginning to develop an understanding of multiplication. They name and describe simple two and three dimensional shapes and use non-standards measures. Those with low prior attainment have a good grasp of simple number skills and recognise different shapes. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are targeted for support through teachers' assessment of their learning and their individual education plans. This support is of a very high quality and given by learning support assistants who plan with teachers the tasks that pupils are to learn. This support takes place in small groups on a withdrawal basis during the numeracy hour at an appropriate time. All pupils tackle practical tasks with confidence and record their work appropriately.
107. By the time pupils leave the school at the age of nine, higher attaining pupils have a thorough grasp of most of the key skills required at Level 4 of the National Curriculum. They answer oral questions on any aspect with confidence. For example, pupils recognise and extend number sequences formed by counting on and back in steps of any size, extending beyond zero when counting back. Pupils recognise multiples and know and use some tests of divisibility. Pupils with average and lower prior attainment have sound mental and written calculation skills and a breadth of knowledge of shape and space. In both key stages, pupils with special educational needs make good progress through the effective system of support, which through setting to pupils ability, provides an appropriate level of learning.
108. Teachers place a good emphasis on the development of numeracy skills in mathematics lessons. Where numeracy skills are used, they are sufficient to support the activities undertaken; for example, in science when pupils record their calculations. Since the previous inspection there has been a deliberate and appropriate policy to raise standards, particularly in Year 4 and improve the quality of teaching. However, there remains an over use of worksheets to support teaching which restricts opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in using and applying their mathematics. For example, in a Year 1/2 lesson, the task given to support teaching was either to complete a worksheet colouring in squares counting in two's, or to complete a worksheet by colouring in, counting in twos, and fives. Teachers, constrained by the policy and rigid planning, in teaching mathematics in year groups, are aware that the next stage of development, is to plan and teach numeracy skills appropriate to pupils' prior attainment and not to their age, as this restricts opportunities for higher attaining pupils to make the best possible progress. For example in a Year 3/4 numeracy lesson, Year 4 pupils sat through a Year 3 introductory session and then continued on their own worksheets, which were pitched at Level 3 of the National Curriculum. Higher attaining pupils who were secure in their understanding of place value, were consolidating the learning and not extending it. Teachers identify key vocabulary and, in some lessons, use it consistently, but this is not always applied across the school. Information and communication technology is used appropriately across the mathematics curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 4 used a turtle to draw their prediction of different commands. Using degrees of angles, pupils worked out the command line to draw a two dimensional shape of a triangle, square, rectangle, pentagon and a hexagon.
109. Attitudes and behaviour are good. Pupils listen to their teachers and are keen to answer questions. In one lesson, behaviour was excellent. When lessons are well organised and pupils sufficiently challenged, they respond well. This was particularly noticeable in a Year 4 lesson when pupils understood the routines of the lesson and moved quickly and carefully from one activity to another without the teachers having to remind them to remain on task. They were all able to

explain what they were doing and why. On the occasions when behaviour is less good, teachers do not make sure that all pupils are sufficiently involved in whole-class activities by asking questions that suit different levels of attainment. Often the introductory session on the carpet is too long and pupils in different year groups have to sit and listen to an overlong explanation of both year groups' tasks. Occasionally, worksheets and tasks, to support teaching, do not sufficiently challenge the more able pupils' which leads to some inappropriate behaviour. Presentation of work is satisfactory, although, in Key Stage 1, there is an over-reliance on worksheets. Pupils are given insufficient opportunities to develop their writing and presentation skills when recording in a mathematics book. This lets them develop bad habits.

110. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages. It is good or better in about two thirds of lessons, teaching is never less than satisfactory. Teachers have a sound and developing understanding of how to use the National Numeracy Strategy. The development of teaching skills and subject knowledge is having an impact on standards of attainment particularly at Key Stage 2, where pupils of prior high attainment are grouped for a once weekly lesson which effectively enhances their skills knowledge and understanding. In other lessons throughout the week, pupils are part of their class group. Teachers have a sound understanding of how to make the best use of mental activity. The best practice was seen in Year 3 and 4 mixed age group where pupils' counted in ones, tens and hundreds from three and four digit numbers and counted on and back in tens and hundreds and thousands and recognised more and less. Pupils responded well to enthusiastic teaching and the challenge to do something even more difficult. The main activity is well planned in Key Stage 2, but lacks detail in the day to day planning in Key Stage 1.
111. Teachers expect pupils to be on time for their lessons, start promptly and not waste time moving from one activity to another. Behaviour management is good and, although the school has a policy of inclusion, those pupils who may have behavioural problems seldom disrupt the learning of others. Resources are well prepared, easily accessible and chosen to help pupils to develop an understanding of concepts. For example, the use of 100 grid to support learning in counting in 10's from, for example, 642 to 1042. Teachers are beginning to use the plenary to assess understanding and to extend understanding further.
112. The subject is very well co-ordinated. External advice is sought and used and teachers have undertaken suitable in service training. Teaching is monitored well by the co-ordinator and support given where necessary, although this does not yet involve the monitoring of written work in books. Priority is placed on National Test data and other tests to measure pupils' progress from year to year and to identify specific needs. This information is used particularly well to track individual progress and to identify pupils who underachieve in any year and to inform grouping and planning. Homework is used well to support pupils' learning and offers parents the opportunity to support their children. Very good provision is made for higher attaining pupils when there is setting according to prior attainment. Very good links have been established with the feeder school and pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

SCIENCE

113. In 1999 National Curriculum teacher assessments for pupils at the end of Key Stage 1, the percentage of pupils reaching the expected Level 2 was well above the national average; however, the percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 was below average. In comparison with similar schools, the percentage of pupils achieving Level 2 was average, but well below average for achieving Level 3. This year's results (2000) show that all the Year 2 pupils achieved the expected Level 2. This is an overall improvement on last year's results, but fewer pupils achieved the higher Level 3.
114. Although it is early in the school year, inspection evidence indicates that most pupils in Year 2 are achieving the standards expected for their age. In Key Stage 2, inspection evidence indicates that, at the age of nine, almost all pupils are achieving the expected standards, although few are achieving higher than these. Since the time of the last inspection, standards have improved, due mainly to the improved quality of teaching which is now consistently good.

115. Pupils in Year 2 identify and name the parts of a plant and understand that plants need light and water to grow. They learn to recognise and compare the main parts of the bodies of human beings and animals as they sort into sets those that move on two or four legs and those that fly. Pupils use their senses to smell and taste unusual food and understand that fruit and vegetables are important for maintaining good health. Pupils classify materials according to some of their properties, such as whether they are flexible or not. Pupils begin to understand the effect of the forces of pushing and pulling as they conduct tests using small cars. Year 1 and 2 pupils work together in small groups as they investigate how different surfaces affect the distances travelled by the cars after being pushed. Although the notion of fair testing is not yet developed, they begin to use scientific language, such as surface, distance, rough and smooth.
116. Within Key Stage 2, pupils know that magnets exert forces that pull and push. Pupils test a range of materials to investigate their different qualities, such as whether they are waterproof. Standards of investigative work are sound. Pupils investigate changing materials, such as melting chocolate and begin to understand that some changes are reversible and some are not. They describe how electrical circuits work and relate how they have inserted switches and buzzers into their circuits. By the time they leave the school, pupils are beginning to make predictions based on their earlier scientific experiences. In their investigations, they have begun to use scientific equipment, such as thermometers, and to record the outcomes of their investigations in tables and charts. They have a sound understanding of factors to make a fair test.
117. Pupils enter Key Stage 1 with their attainment in knowledge and understanding of the world in line with that expected nationally. By the time they leave the school, nearly all pupils are achieving standards expected for their age, demonstrating the good progress made by pupils with special educational needs and the sound progress that is made generally in science. However, scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that in Key Stage 2 there are insufficient opportunities to study life processes and living things, limiting progress in this area of learning. Throughout the school, pupils are systematically developing their skills of scientific enquiry through frequent opportunities for practical investigation, although pupils frequently complete the same activity in the lesson, regardless of capability. This limits progress for higher attaining pupils, for whom tasks could be more challenging. In both key stages, pupils demonstrate a growing scientific vocabulary. The school has recently begun to use the Qualification and Curriculum Authority scheme of work which, through providing guidance in the progressive development of skills, is beginning to improve learning throughout the school further. Frequent visits to areas of scientific interest, such as the London Planetarium, are used effectively to enhance learning.
118. Pupils' attitudes are good; they enjoy science and are well motivated when practical tasks are presented. They readily ask and answer questions that are sensible and relate to the focus of the lesson. Pupils work well together in groups, taking turns and discussing their work sensibly. This was evident in Key Stage 1 when both Year 1 and Year 2 pupils sensibly organised who was going to conduct the given investigation and who was going to record the results.
119. The teaching of science is consistently good. This is an improvement on the quality of teaching observed at the previous inspection. Planned activities build systematically on what pupils have previously undertaken. During most lessons pupils are given ample opportunity for practical activity. This is also an improvement on the previous inspection. Teachers have a good understanding of what they teach. They give clear directions, offer effective explanations and make good use of questioning to extend pupils' knowledge. They continually reinforce scientific vocabulary. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and manage pupils well. Resources are efficiently organised and used well to motivate pupils. Teachers generally plan appropriate activities to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding effectively, but, in some lessons, there is insufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils to develop the investigative skills of planning, obtaining and evaluating evidence.
120. The subject is managed satisfactorily by a well qualified co-ordinator, who offers useful support to colleagues. There has been an improvement in the way pupils' attainment and progress are assessed since the previous inspection and, in some classes, regular assessments are made of individual strengths and weaknesses in the subject. However, these procedures are not

consistently followed throughout the school and scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that assessments are not being sufficiently used to inform the next stage of planning. Links are being made with other curriculum areas, especially literacy, where, for example, pupils' speaking and listening skills are improved through the consistent use of scientific vocabulary. Mathematical links are seen in the use of measurement and graphs. However, links with information technology are only just being developed and have not made an impact, as yet. Resources for science are good and are easily accessible.

ART

121. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 and when pupils leave the school at the age nine are in line with national expectations. In Key Stage 1, pupils begin to record what they see from direct observation of both natural and man made objects. In connection with their topic on "Ourselves", pupils paint portraits. They explore colour mixing to produce different flesh tones for painting faces. In both key stages, pupils study the work of famous artists such as Monet and Van Gogh and use the computer programme "Dazzle" to produce their own work in the style of these artists. The school's curriculum for art shows that the current emphasis is on painting. Work on display and photographic evidence show that pupils experience a suitable range of media over the year.
122. As only one lesson in art was observed during the inspection it is not possible to make an overall judgement on teaching. However, scrutiny of work on display, pupils' sketch books and teachers' planning suggest that it is at least satisfactory.
123. In the previous inspection, standards in art were judged to be at least satisfactory, though the evidence base was similar to that in the current inspection. The school has maintained these standards.
124. In both key stages, pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons. They show enjoyment in the activities provided for them and work with sustained concentration taking pride in their results.
125. The curriculum is planned satisfactorily to ensure continuity and progression across the school and has been reviewed to ensure that it meets the requirements of the new National Curriculum orders. Art work, in classrooms and common areas of the school, is attractively displayed and helps to provide an interesting and stimulating environment. There are, as yet, no agreed systems for recording pupils' progress in art.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

126. Only one design and technology lesson was observed during the inspection. Evidence from the displays around the school, photographic evidence, scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning indicates that standards are at the expected level at the end of Key Stage 1 and Year 4. This reflects the findings of the previous inspection.
127. In Key Stage 1, pupils learn basic cutting and joining techniques to produce models of cars that move on wheeled axles. By the end of the key stage, the majority can cut out accurately and use a variety of techniques to join materials. Pupils create designs of their models before they attempt to make them, giving careful consideration to the materials to be used.
128. In Key Stage 2, Year 3 and 4 pupils extend their skills to design monsters which use a pneumatic system to open their mouths. Pupils carefully consider the design elements of their project as they produce booklets detailing the design process fully. They effectively describe how the design system works, produce a labelled design sheet for their monster and list the method and materials they will use. The finished products demonstrate increasing skill in measuring, assembling and joining materials. Pupils evaluate their finished models for efficiency and can suggest ways for improving their designs. However, there is little consideration of whether the design and materials used are suitable for their intended purpose.

129. Progress is satisfactory. Pupils systematically develop their knowledge and understanding as they go through the school. Younger pupils begin to follow simple plans and older pupils use plans more accurately to clarify their ideas. Practical skills are soundly developed as pupils acquire increasing competency in measuring, cutting and joining a variety of materials, whilst working with care and accuracy.
130. Pupils have a positive attitude to learning. They co-operate well, concentrate on tasks and take obvious enjoyment in explaining and recounting what they have been making. They demonstrate great pride in their finished product. In the lesson observed, behaviour was good and this had a positive impact on the progress that was made.
131. Although it is not possible to make an overall judgement on the quality of teaching, in the Key Stage 2 lesson observed teaching was good. In this lesson, the teacher demonstrated a good subject knowledge that ensured that pupils developed the appropriate skills. The project had been carefully planned, ensuring that a wide range of materials and tools were made available. Pupils were provided with positive encouragement and managed well. Purposeful discussion and questioning successfully assisted them in the evaluation of their work.

GEOGRAPHY

132. Only two lessons were seen during the inspection and a limited amount of evidence was available. Work scrutiny and the lessons observed form the basis of judgement.
133. By the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time pupils leave the school at the age of nine, standards achieved are in line with those expected for pupils of this age and they make satisfactory progress. These findings are similar to those of the previous inspection. Pupils use their holidays appropriately as an on-going theme. Pupils in Key Stage 1 study road safety and can remember how to cross the road safely. They apply their knowledge to design a road safety poster and make good use of their word cards to help them spell unknown words.
134. In Key Stage 2, pupils were discussing how weather affects every day decisions on what to do when you are on holiday. Pupils had to locate, using a world map, a place that they would like to visit. Using this information, they had to identify the country, climate and the weather they would find there. They applied this knowledge and understanding to identify which clothes they would take and the things that they would do. Pupils used information and communication technology well to support this task, using word processing skills.
135. Geography is studied as a topic with cross-curricular links, as part of a two year rolling programme. For example pupils in Year 1/2 study the local environment and how to make the local area safer, while pupils in Year 3/4 study weather around the world. The policy and scheme of work, using the Qualification and Curriculum Authority guidance have been developed within the school well.
136. All teaching was at least satisfactory in the lessons seen. Teachers give pupils appropriate tasks as they progress through the school, although the tasks are not planned to pupils' prior learning. Assessment is carried out at the end of each topic. There are attractive on-going wall displays. For example, in the Year 3/4 cloakroom area a display was being built up, using weather as the focus. Resources are satisfactory and well used. Information and communication technology is well used and pupils use CD ROMs to discover information about the topic they are studying.
137. Pupils respond well in lessons and participate fully in the planned range of activities. In consequence, behaviour is good and pupils maintain their concentration. They are keen to answer questions. The subject knowledge of teachers is secure. Lessons are planned to make effective use of the locality and for pupils to develop skills, using maps, observation, questioning, recording and communicating ideas. Pupils are encouraged to use appropriate geographical vocabulary.

HISTORY

138. Some teaching was seen in Key Stage 1, but not in Key Stage 2 as history was not time-tabled during the week of inspection. From the teaching observed in Key Stage 1 and looking at pupils' work, teachers' planning and observations of displays in Key Stage 2 it is evident that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress in both key stages.
139. By the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time pupils leave the school at the age of nine, they achieve standards expected for their ages. These findings are similar to those of the previous inspection.
140. By Year 2, pupils develop a sense of chronology and the passage of time. Through planned activities, pupils begin to understand some of the differences between their world and the world of the past. For example, when studying transport through the ages, pupils were given many opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding of space travel over time.
141. In Key Stage 2, pupils study the Romans and develop a sound understanding of the effects of the Roman conquest and occupation of Britain, for example the building of Roman towns. Pupils also study the effects of the Saxon and Viking settlers. They also study their own local area.
142. Teaching in Key Stage 1 is good. No teaching was seen in Key Stage 2. Planning is satisfactory in both key stages. Teachers manage pupils well and support the learning of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, by working with these pupils or by using a learning support assistant. Teachers have a satisfactory level of knowledge and understanding of the subject, which they use well to promote interest and to enhance learning. Work is marked regularly. Progress is assessed at the end of each topic and this informs planning. Information and communication technology is used insufficiently to support learning.
143. History is studied on a two year rolling programme. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and manages and organises the subject well. There is a history policy and scheme of work. Resources are adequate. There are limited opportunities for higher attaining pupils to pursue their own investigations.
144. Pupils have a positive attitude to history. They listen attentively, are keen to respond to questions and concentrate well on the set task. Behaviour is very good.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

145. Standards of attainment are in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1 and when pupils leave the school at the age of nine. The school has a new computer suite and this is already having a positive effect on pupils' learning. Given the good progress being made, now that the computer suite is fully utilised, it is likely that standards will be higher by the end of the year.
146. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have a good knowledge of the keyboard. They are able to use the mouse to move objects on the screen as in the "Find Ted" programme where they move objects to locate "Ted's" hiding place. Pupils in Year 1 are confident in using "Dazzle", a painting program. They use the different tools to create a variety of painting effects. There are good links with the art curriculum in that pupils have looked at paintings by Van Gogh and Monet and have used the programme to produce their own examples of sunflower and water lily paintings.
147. When pupils leave the school at the age of nine, they are confident in using the computer for word processing, for painting and for mathematics. They use the "turtle " program to repeat procedures and instructions. Good links are made with mathematics in that pupils use degrees and angles in their programming. The school is currently seeking permission from parents for pupils to use the internet. Once this has been received pupils will be introduced to the email and internet facilities available.

148. The previous inspection judged standards in information technology to be above standards expected nationally. Since that time, the curriculum has undergone significant changes and the current national expectations are much higher. The school has made appropriate progress since that time and standards are currently in line with national expectations.
149. Teaching is good, overall. Teachers have a secure subject knowledge and plan their lessons well. The learning support assistant makes a very good contribution to pupils' learning in lessons and supports teachers very well. Teachers are about to receive further training through the New Opportunities Fund. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and enthusiastic and provides effective support to colleagues in developing the subject. Teachers are enthusiastic about developing their subject expertise and communicate their enthusiasm to pupils. They are concerned to develop pupils' specific skills in the subject, but also to help them make better use of their skills across the curriculum.
150. Pupils are enthusiastic about using computers. They work well together in pairs and support each other in their learning. Some of the pupils have had experience in using computers at home and are very confident. Pupils are good at sharing resources and are well motivated.
151. The curriculum co-ordinator provides good leadership and effective support for colleagues. She has begun to monitor teaching and learning which will help to raise standards. Assessment procedures are currently being developed. At present, in Key Stage 1, assessment is more a record of aspects covered. Further development of assessment will ensure progression of skills and knowledge. Resources for information technology are good and the school is continuing to develop a range of software to support the use information technology across the curriculum. The school plans to increase the range of control and modelling equipment.

MUSIC

152. Only a small number of music lessons took place during the inspection period. At the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time pupils leave the school at the age of nine, pupils attainment is in line with standards expected nationally. Pupils repeat rhythmic patterns with reasonable accuracy and make good choices of instruments when they are asked to develop their own compositions.
153. In the lessons observed, teaching was satisfactory in two out of three lessons and in one lesson out of three it was good. Teachers have reasonable subject knowledge and use this to good effect. They have appropriate expectations of what pupils will do. Planning for music is thorough and builds sequentially on pupils' skills from week to week. The school has introduced a scheme of work for music from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority to ensure that pupils build on the skills they acquire as they move through the school.
154. In lessons and in assemblies pupils do not sing well. They are insecure in pitch and rhythm and need help in developing their aural skills. Pupils need to be taught the correct posture for singing well and to pay attention to breathing techniques which would immediately improve the tone and pitch of their singing.
155. Resources for music are satisfactory, though the range of listening resources do not include music from a range of cultural traditions. The subject's contribution to cultural development is thus unsatisfactory.
156. The school provides a range of instrumental tuition to support pupils' musical development. Pupils enjoy their lessons and this makes a good contribution to their cultural development.
157. In the previous inspection, pupils' attainment in music was judged to be satisfactory, both at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 4. The school has maintained these satisfactory standards in music.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

158. At the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time they leave the school, pupils are achieving the expected standards. These standards have been maintained since the last inspection. The provision for physical education is enhanced by a very good range of extra curricular activities which the majority of pupils take full advantage of. For example, there is a gymnastics club and various sports clubs such as hockey are provided at different times of the year.
159. In the two lessons observed, pupils made good progress in Key Stage 2 and sound progress in Key Stage 1. However, the standards attained by the older pupils in Key Stage 1 suggest that, overall, progress is enhanced by the wide range of activities on offer and is good.
160. In Key Stage 2, pupils understand the need to 'warm up' gradually by stretching and warming up their muscles. Pupils can perform a reasonably complex sequence of movements and show a good understanding of including different levels and changes of direction. At Key Stage 1, pupils have a good understanding of the basic skills needed for throwing and catching a ball and work well together to improve their skills.
161. In the lesson observed at Key Stage 2, teaching was good, with thorough planning supporting a well structured lesson. Very good use was made of pupils' demonstrations to help others improve on their sequences. The teacher provided good, constructive feedback to pupils so that they knew what to do to improve. Teaching in the lesson observed at Key Stage 1 was satisfactory. The planning in this lesson was too directed towards activities for Year 1 and Year 2 and not enough consideration given to the attainment of the pupils. However, the majority of pupils made sound progress in the lesson and improved their throwing and catching skills.
162. All pupils have very positive attitudes toward physical education and apply themselves wholeheartedly to the tasks set them. They share politely and take turns sensibly. Another feature is pupils' commitment to attending the clubs on offer. They attend regularly and take pride in their achievements.
163. The co-ordinator provides good leadership. She has no opportunity to observe teaching in the subject, but has a good overview of the planning at Key Stage 1 and, through informal discussion with colleagues, is aware of strengths and weaknesses. Physical education featured in the previous year's school development plan and, as a result, teachers had opportunities for more training in the subject and now feel more confident in their subject knowledge. Resources for the subject are good and include a small swimming pool where young pupils soon develop confidence in the water and make a good start on learning to swim. The school takes advantage of any local initiatives. Last year, for example, pupils took part in tennis and cricket coaching and this year will be taking advantage of the coaching offered by Luton Town Football Club.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

164. In the lessons observed and from teachers' planning and the analysis of pupils' work, attainment in religious education is in line with the standards expected by the locally Agreed Syllabus at the end of Key Stage 1 and Year 4.
165. In the previous inspection, pupils attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 and by the age of nine was judged to be broadly in line with the expectations of the locally Agreed syllabus. The school has maintained this position, but the curriculum still centres on imparting facts about religion with insufficient emphasis on the impact of personal faith on the lives of believing communities.
166. Only two lessons in religious education took place during the inspection. In one of these, pupils' attainment in relation to the standards expected in the locally Agreed Syllabus, was satisfactory, in the other it was unsatisfactory. In the satisfactory lesson, pupils knew the significance of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah ceremony in the Jewish faith. They talk about the significance of celebrating various significant occasions such as marriage with Christian ceremonies. When pupils' attainment was unsatisfactory, pupils did not really understand the point of the lesson and found difficulties in understanding the concept of rites of passage.

167. Analysis of pupils' work in religious education shows that teachers rely heavily on teaching pupils facts about religion and do not relate these sufficiently to feelings. There is an over emphasis on published worksheets, for example, sequencing pictures to tell stories. These do not elicit a thoughtful response from pupils. Pupils are taught facts about different faiths without being helped to appreciate the significance of faith to groups of believers and how faith can affect people's lives. There is at present no scheme of work for religious education. The introduction of a scheme would support teachers in delivering an appropriate curriculum, particularly in developing pupils' knowledge in the area of learning from human experience.
168. The present religious education curriculum does not support pupils in reflecting on their own experience and that of others. Work in pupils' books does not support pupils' spiritual development.