

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **SHEFFORD LOWER SCHOOL**

Shefford,

Bedfordshire

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109479

Headteacher: Mrs C. Good-Dixon

Reporting inspector: Mrs J. Edwards  
13205

Dates of inspection: 2 – 5 October 2000

Inspection number: 225185

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:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Bloomfield Drive Shefford Bedfordshire
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Appropriate authority:	Shefford Lower School Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Glyn Lyman
Date of previous inspection:	October 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs J. Edwards - 13205	Registered inspector	Information Technology	What sort of school is it?
		Religious Education	The school's results and achievements
		Physical education	How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
Mr E. Tipper – 31758	Lay Inspector		Support for pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mrs M. Powell - 19327	Team inspector	English	
		music	
		Areas of learning for pupils under five	
Mr J. Iles - 23566	Team inspector	mathematics	How good are the curricular and other opportunities?
		art	
		design and technology	
		Special Educational Needs	
Mr. J. Johnson - 30841	Team Inspector	science	Support for how well does the school care for its pupils?
		geography	
		history	
		Equal Opportunities	

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Inspection Quality Division  
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## REPORT CONTENTS

### Paragraph

#### **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

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**

<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>1 - 15</b>
The school's results and achievements Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>16 - 25</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>	<b>26 - 35</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>36 - 40</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS</b>	<b>41 - 44</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>45 - 54</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>55</b>

#### **PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS**

<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>56 - 136</b>
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Shefford Lower School is situated in the town of Shefford, Bedfordshire. It is a large first school for three to nine year olds with 262 girls and boys on roll. Of these, 75 pupils attend the nursery part-time. The pupils' ethnic background is mainly white, and their attainment on entry to school is above average. The school register of special needs lists 26 pupils, but none have statements of special educational need. This is below the national average. Thirteen per cent of the pupils have an entitlement to free school meals, which is well below the national average of twenty per cent.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is an improving school. Standards are rising and are higher than those described at the time of the last inspection. The quality of the teaching is good, and the children enjoy their lessons and work hard. There is an excellent nursery. Despite the difficulties caused by the lengthy absence of the headteacher, the leadership and management of the school are sound. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Nursery provision is a considerable strength of the school. Excellent teaching enables the pupils to make consistently very good progress in all aspects of their development and learning.
- Standards in mathematics at Key Stage 2 are above average.
- The art curriculum is a strength of the school and as a result standards in art at both key stages are above national expectation.
- The governing body is effective and has a positive influence upon the direction of the school's development. They have good financial oversight of the school, and the day to day financial management is good.
- The Headteacher has a strong commitment to developing good relationships with the children and to their personal development. She also has a similar commitment to the professional development of all staff.
- The teaching is good, and as a result most pupils are making clear gains in their learning. The additional support assistants make a very effective contribution in lessons.
- The provision for the pupils with special educational needs is good.

#### **What could be improved**

- All teachers should share a common purpose so that those with particular responsibilities can contribute effectively to the management of the school.
- The arrangements for the summer born reception pupils who enter Year 1 in the term after their fifth birthday.
- The quality of the accommodation.
- The attainment of higher achieving pupils in mathematics by the age of seven and in writing throughout the school.
- The consistency with which homework is given throughout the school.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The headteacher and staff have made significant improvements since the last inspection in October 1996.

The teachers' expectations are higher and their lesson planning sharper because there is a coherent structure to the school's curriculum that helps them to identify more clearly what they expect the children to learn. As a result, the quality of the teaching is much better than before. The national strategies for numeracy and literacy have been successfully introduced. Consequently, standards have risen in reading and mathematics, but improvement in writing has not been as fast. There has been significant improvement in procedures for assessment, and the use of the information gained in matching subsequent work to the needs of the children.

With the exception of English, the subject co-ordinators' role has developed significantly. Most subject co-ordinators are now very effective in developing and managing their subjects through monitoring of the planning, the teaching and the children's work. However, the development of the roles and responsibilities of the senior management team has yet to be fully addressed. The arrangements for office administration have been reviewed successfully.

## 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	D	A	A
writing	A	C	A	A
mathematics	C	C	B	B

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

The table shows that in the national tests for 1999, the standards in reading and writing were well above the national average, and exceeded the results achieved by pupils in similar schools. The pupils' results in mathematics and science were also above average in comparison with both the national picture and similar schools. The results of tests taken in 2000 show similar standards in writing, but in reading there has been a slight dip. In mathematics and science there is significant improvement in the number of pupils exceeding the expected levels. The inspection findings confirm that the school is identifying suitable targets. The current Year 2 contains fewer higher attaining pupils and consequently the targets, though challenging, are slightly lower than those for last year to take account of this.

Most pupils make steady progress throughout Years 3 and 4. By the age of nine, the pupils' attainment is above average in reading and mathematics. In writing and science, it is well in line with the expected levels. There is a need to further raise the attainment of the higher attaining pupils in mathematics by the age of seven, and in writing throughout the school. The pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. Throughout the school, the pupils' achievements in art exceed the expected levels.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils have a good attitude towards their learning and are keen and eager to come to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The school is orderly and behaviour is satisfactory overall. A small, but significant, minority of pupils in Year 2 finds it difficult to behave sensibly on the playground.
Personal development and relationships	Good. The pupils relate well to their teachers, each other and visitors to the school.
Attendance	Good. There is very little unauthorised absence.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The teaching is good across most of the school, although there is variation at the end of Key Stage 1. During the course of the inspection, 27% of lessons seen were satisfactory, 42% were good and 27% either very good or excellent. Just 4% of the lessons were unsatisfactory. In the nursery 100% of the teaching seen was either very good or excellent. The majority of literacy and numeracy lessons are well structured and purposeful; the use of setting is a positive feature that contributes to the pupils' good learning and steady progress. The teaching of art is a strength and pupils achieve well.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school's curriculum is reasonably broad and balanced and reflects the current national priorities for literacy and numeracy.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. These pupils are effectively supported and make good progress in their work.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Sound overall. A newly established school council is enabling the pupils to develop a sense of responsibility for their school environment.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school offers a caring environment that supports effectively the pupils' personal and academic development. The procedures for monitoring and improving attendance and for assessing the pupils' attainment and progress are good.

Several parents and volunteer helpers work in the school, providing good support for the teachers in lessons. The Parent Teacher Association raises funds to support the school's purchase of amenities and resources. These are positive aspects of the school's life and work. However, the school's relationship with a small minority of parents is not as good as it should be, and it has not yet found a way to resolve the difficulties caused by this situation.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Sound. There are significant strengths, but these are off-set by a number of weaknesses. Although the subject co-ordinators do a good job, the senior management team is too small and lacks cohesion.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors show great commitment to the school. They work hard to ensure its ongoing development and fulfil their responsibilities efficiently.

The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher, governors and teachers evaluate most aspects of their work with rigour. The priorities of the school development plan are appropriate and implemented effectively. The school has adopted a monitoring and evaluation policy, which is beginning to improve the strategic management of the school.
The strategic use of resources	The governors and headteacher make full use of their delegated budget. They ensure that the principles of best value for money are achieved in all their decisions. The use and extent of the learning resources are satisfactory.

The absence of key senior staff over the last year has had an adverse effect on communications within the school. As a result, the small senior management team has not always been successful in communicating a vision for the school that is shared by all staff. This is further compounded by the difficulties associated with managing a school that is housed in three separate buildings, one of which costs a great deal to keep in a decent state of repair.

The school has an appropriate number of teachers and learning support assistants who are deployed successfully to meet the demands of the National Curriculum.

The pupils frequently have to move between buildings for lessons, to use the library and for worship and this wastes valuable time. The school hall lacks adequate space for physical education lessons with the current Year 3 and 4 classes.

#### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school</li> <li>• The school expects the children to work hard and achieve their best so that they make good progress.</li> <li>• The teaching is mostly good</li> <li>• The school is helping their children to become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistency in provision and amount of homework.</li> <li>• Quality of information given to parents</li> <li>• The school working more closely with parents.</li> <li>• Effectiveness of the management of the school</li> <li>• Opportunities for extra-curricular activities.</li> <li>• The level of achievement of the higher attaining pupils.</li> <li>• A reduction in the size of mixed age classes with large numbers of pupils in them.</li> </ul>

Twenty six per cent of the questionnaires were returned and 12 parents attended the meeting held prior to the inspection.

The inspectors agree with all the positive comments made by the parents. A few expressed concerns over the large classes with two age groups in them and the negative effect this might have on the pupils' progress and attainment. The inspectors judged that although these factors placed an extra pressure on the teachers, the arrangements are satisfactory. However, the parents' views about homework are confirmed by the inspectors who found the setting of homework to be inconsistent. Information about the curriculum is now given in the parents' booklet and the school provides regular opportunities for them to discuss their child's progress. The annual written reports to parents are informative and of good quality. However the overall quality of information provided to parents is inconsistent and needs to be improved. The range and quantity of extra-curricular activities are adequate.

## PART B: COMMENTARY

### HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

#### The school's results and achievements

1. The results of the 1999 national tests and assessments for seven-year-olds, in reading and writing, indicate that their attainment was well above the national average. Attainment was also well above average when compared to similar schools. In mathematics, attainment was above the national average and above that for similar schools. In science, pupils' attainment was broadly average when compared to both the national results and those of similar schools.
2. The proportion of pupils attaining at the higher levels was above the national average in reading and close to this in writing, mathematics and science. This was also the case when results were compared with those of similar schools.
3. The results of the 2000 national tests and assessments show similar levels of attainment in reading and writing at both the expected and higher levels. The results in mathematics and science show significant improvement in the number of pupils attaining at the higher levels.
4. Since the last inspection, the rate of improvement in reading, writing, and mathematics has varied, results having dipped in 1998. However, the results for 1999 and those indicated for 2000 show a distinct upward trend in the percentage of pupils attaining the expected levels. Standards have improved since the last inspection in October 1996. The school has undertaken an increasingly effective analysis of the results and has focused on implementing the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in order to raise standards. It has set appropriate targets for most pupils. There is now a need to set more challenging targets for the higher attaining pupils to raise standards further in writing throughout the school and mathematics by the age of seven. There is no significant difference in the performance of girls and boys.
5. Initial (Baseline) assessments show that the pupils enter school with above average levels of ability. The pupils are eager learners, with very positive attitudes toward school and work. They make significant progress in all the areas of learning and by the time they begin the statutory curriculum for Key Stage 1, most pupils are very secure in their achievement of the early learning goals.
6. The inspection findings show that overall attainment in speaking and listening and reading is above average both at the age of seven and when the pupils leave the school at the age of nine. The effective implementation of the National Literacy Strategy has resulted in improved standards. Attainment in writing is well in line with the expected levels. The school and inspection team agreed that there is a need to raise further the standards of pupils' writing and in particular to increase the attainment of very able pupils. **This is a key issue.**
7. In mathematics, the inspection findings do not confirm the improvement identified in last year's test results at the end of Key Stage 1. Although standards in the Year 1 classes exceed the national expectations, in Year 2 they are currently average. They should be higher. **This is a key issue.** By the age of nine, standards are above average because many pupils are working at levels beyond those expected for this age group. The implementation of the national Numeracy Strategy is successfully raising standards especially in mental mathematics. The setting arrangements in Year 4 are also contributing to improved standards. Good progress is made in years 1, 3 and 4 because the teaching is of good quality. Good links are made with literacy when the teachers challenge their pupils to spell mathematical terms, such as tessellate and quadrilateral. The pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs also make good progress.
8. In science, attainment at both Key Stages is broadly in line with the national standard. At Key Stage 1, the pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding. By the age of seven, pupils can carry out an investigation, for instance sorting materials into magnetic and non-magnetic groups, and can record their results on a simple table. At Key Stage 2, the pupils continue to make gains in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding and in some cases they make good progress. The way that the pupils learn and remember the correct technical vocabulary of science is a

strength and a reflection of the consistent application of school policy in lessons. Older pupils know how to conduct a simple experiment to test their predictions, for example, finding out how many chews different foods, such as apple, bread, crisps and carrot, require to be broken down sufficiently with their saliva. They draw tables to record their findings and pictograms to illustrate their results. They are able to interpret their findings in order to draw conclusions about the functions and care of teeth.

9. The pupils with special educational needs make good progress against the targets set out in their individual education plans. Their parents co-operate to make valuable contributions in maintaining pupils' progress. The school uses a range of methods to plan work, which is appropriate to the pupils' needs. The structure of the activities in literacy and mathematics presents pupils with challenging work. Early identification of pupils with special educational needs is a school priority. The school is justifiably proud of the number of pupils whose good progress enables them to be removed from the special needs register.
10. In both key stages, the standards of work in information technology, design and technology, history and geography, physical education, music and religious education are in line with that expected of pupils of this age. Standards of work in art, at both key stages are higher than the national expectation. This is because the quality of the teaching in art is good and supports the pupils' learning well.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

11. The pupils demonstrate good attitudes to the school. Their satisfactory behaviour, personal development and relationships all help to create a climate within the school that promotes their education. The parents acknowledge their children's high levels of enthusiasm for school.
12. The pupils are polite and friendly, keen to talk about their subjects and activities. In the classroom they are eager to answer questions and are able to concentrate on their tasks, working well in a group. Most listen politely to their peers and are kind and helpful, only too willing to assist each other with their work. Very positive attitudes are reflected by those pupils with special educational needs.
13. Relationships in the school between the pupils and teachers are good. The teachers use warmth and humour to cement this firm level of trust and mutual respect.
14. The behaviour of the children in the nursery is very good, and in the rest of the school it is satisfactory. The pupils in both key stages are generally well behaved when moving about the school and between the buildings on the site. In the dining hall, they sit in an orderly fashion and demonstrate good table manners. However, several instances of inappropriate behaviour were witnessed in the playground; each incident was dealt with promptly by the teacher on duty who questioned the pupils involved, obtained an apology and resolved the situation amicably. The pupils are often noisy and ill-disciplined when they line up to go into school after a break. In certain classes, especially in the upper stage of Key Stage 1, small groups of pupils have a disruptive influence that adversely affects the quality of learning. While most pupils are courteous towards each other and adults, there is a tendency for some to be over familiar towards visitors. There have been no exclusions in the past year.
15. Attendance is good and above the national average. The registers are completed promptly, in accordance with the latest guidance, at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

16. The quality of the teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. The key issue associated with teaching in the 1996 report related to raising teacher's expectations, particularly at Key Stage 2 and this has been appropriately addressed. Since then, the teaching has been strengthened and is raising attainment in the core subjects. The quality of the teaching is now good across much of the school, although there is variation at the upper end of Key Stage 1 and still some variation across the Key Stage 2 classes. During the course of the inspection, the school had a significant number of supply teachers working in both of the Year 2 classes and in one class containing Years 3 and 4 pupils.

17. The quality of the teaching observed during the inspection was good. Of the lessons seen, 27% were satisfactory, 42% were good and 27% either very good or excellent. The majority of literacy and numeracy lessons are well structured and purposeful; they result in good learning and steady progress. It was a feature of many of the good lessons seen that the teachers questioned the pupils to ensure that they had understood what they had been taught.
18. The teaching in the nursery is consistently either very good or excellent. The teaching and the leadership of the team are of a consistently high quality and accelerate the rate at which the children progress in all areas of their learning. The teacher and nursery nurses work effectively and enthusiastically together, building on their good understanding of how young children learn best. This ensures that the children receive a carefully planned learning programme, which matches and develops their individual needs in an interesting and exciting way. Across the entire Foundation Curriculum the teacher and the nursery nurses draw the children in and ensure that they make a good start in their learning. The pupils who are rising five are well taught in lessons that are specifically designed to prepare them for entry into the reception class in the term after their fifth birthday. The quality of teaching here is good.
19. The teaching of literacy skills is mostly effective throughout the school. The lessons observed were generally satisfactory, and frequently good in both key stages. This is a result of the teachers working hard to improve their performance. The teaching of basic skills is improving as a consequence of the careful, collaborative planning of the school's literacy strategy. Consequently, most of the pupils are provided with activities that build on their previous learning. For example, the pupils in a Year 3 set were asked to act 'doing words' to establish their understanding of verbs. The pupils are well supported, particularly those with special educational needs, but there is inadequate emphasis on the needs of higher attaining pupils within the area of writing. For example, in their work on the text of "The Stove Haunting", the pupils needed to work at a greater depth when brainstorming in order to identify words which would have further enlivened their writing.
20. Similarly, the quality of the teaching is good in mathematics. The teachers have good knowledge of the National Numeracy Strategy and use the three-part structure well so that the lessons have a good pace. Consequently, the pupils are well motivated and make good progress. The teachers' planning is thorough, the lessons are stimulating and the pupils enjoy learning and stick to their tasks. The teaching of mental mathematics is good; the teachers use simple props to help the pupils develop speed in calculations and the recall of number facts. For example, in Year 1 a counting stick is used to help lower achieving pupils make good progress in their counting. However, some of the higher attaining pupils at the end of KS1 are less consistently challenged. There is quite a high percentage of boys with challenging behaviour and the teachers spend excessive time in settling some pupils. This adversely affects the quality of learning and teaching.
21. The teaching of art is a strength of the school because the curriculum is well planned and sets out clearly the knowledge and skills that pupils need to acquire and the order in which these should be taught. The teachers introduce the lessons in a challenging way, capturing the attention of their pupils. Very good classroom management ensures that the pupils remain on task.
22. In other areas of the curriculum, the teachers have secure subject knowledge. They plan their lessons well to meet the needs of all the pupils, identifying how tasks will be modified for the various groups. They set out clearly what they want pupils to learn. In both key stages, most lessons are well managed. In numeracy, the teachers explain new processes effectively. Group work is well organised and tasks are carefully matched to the needs of the pupils. This often leads to good learning taking place. Most lessons seen were carefully prepared and purposeful.
23. The teaching of the pupils with special educational needs is good. They are well supported by their teachers, and as a result are progressing well by small incremental steps. The effective deployment of additional support assistants aids both the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy skills. They are highly valued members of staff and provide excellent support to pupils with special educational needs. They are well briefed by the teachers, and work effectively with the pupils, enhancing their

learning. These assistants also contribute well to the teachers' assessments of the pupils they work with.

24. The teachers mark the pupils' work conscientiously. However, much of the marking done is not sufficiently effective in developing and extending the pupils in their learning.
25. The school has a formal homework policy, but a number of parents are not happy with the current arrangements. This is because there is an inconsistent approach to the giving of homework across the school. **This is an area where improvement is needed.**

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

26. The school provides a curriculum that is broad, balanced and relevant to the ages, needs and interests of the pupils. It includes all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education and complies with all statutory requirements. There are no formal sex education lessons. The school has a drugs awareness policy which heightens the pupils' awareness of the dangers of the misuse of medicines and drugs.
27. Since the last inspection, the school has developed a far more coherent structure for its curriculum. The emphasis on implementing the national literacy strategy and dedicated daily mathematics lessons is effectively raising standards for all pupils. Literacy and numeracy skills are linked to other subjects.
28. There is excellent provision for the children under the age of five. The teachers are making extremely effective use of the new Foundation Curriculum so that all six areas of learning are covered thoroughly. Lessons are planned in great detail to meet the different needs and abilities of the children. There is a good range of balanced learning experiences, with an appropriate emphasis upon developing the children's literacy and numeracy skills in a wide range of different settings. The opportunities for physical activity are good. The general liveliness of the lessons and the interesting range of activities promote the children's early development extremely successfully.
29. However, there is an equal opportunities issue with regard to the lack of access to the reception class experienced by those children who are five in the summer term. These children enter the main school in the term after their fifth birthday and go straight into a Year 1 class. **This is an equal opportunities issue and is an area identified for improvement.**
30. The policy for special education needs is of good quality and fully meets the requirements of the Code of Practice. A register of pupils with special education needs is in place. It is reviewed regularly to ensure that all pupils in need of additional support are identified. This includes gifted and talented pupils whose needs are met and fully discussed with their parents. A measure of the success of the special educational needs provision is reflected in the number of pupils who are removed from the register following the effective work of teachers and learning support assistants in meeting their needs.
31. The school has developed some good links with the community. The pupils visit residential homes for the elderly, the local library and attend services at local churches. In return, the school receives visits from local services, such as the police, fire and library, and other members of the community which assist pupils' learning. For example, a grandparent talked about his experiences during history lessons and an archaeologist has been involved in a science project. Links to the wider community through the Internet are still at an early stage, but the school has established contact by email with schools in Rome and Australia.
32. The school has effective links with other schools. The headteacher has formal meetings at least once a term with the adjacent Middle School and both have good transfer arrangements for pupils. The school is a member of the IVEL School Association, which includes 12 local primary schools. As a result, it has been involved in many joint initiatives, such as Special Education Needs, Bullying Policy and Governor Training. The school benefits from the provision of continuing professional development of staff and governors, which, in turn, has a positive effect on the learning of the pupils. The joint nature of the project ensures that this is achieved in a very cost-effective way. The school is also a member of the

Shire Foundation, a School Centred Initial Teacher Training initiative, which provides for the training of teachers on an in-school basis. The teachers in the school have been trained to mentor these trainees, who are all post-graduates, and the whole process assists in their own professional development.

33. There is a satisfactory range of extra curricular events. Sports, music and library clubs enhance the pupils' learning. Field trips to places of interest include the Houses of Parliament, the Millennium Dome and the Bank of England.
34. The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Spiritual development is fostered through planned weekly assembly themes where time is given for the pupils to reflect on the wonder and the beauty of the world around them
35. The pupils know the difference between right and wrong. Plans are in place for a School Council to enable pupils to contribute to the making of decisions that affect them. In each class, the pupils have an opportunity to write codes of behaviour, and these result in most pupils beginning to take responsibility for their own conduct. Moral principles are reinforced in assemblies. The school is aware of the limitations of providing its pupils with multi-cultural experiences and is seeking to make links with a Bedford school. There are also strong links with schools in Australia and Rome. The pupils' knowledge of their own culture is secure with strong visual impact through art and other areas of the curriculum making a substantial contribution.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

36. The school has in place good procedures and curriculum policies to ensure the health and safety of pupils. There are detailed policies for all aspects such as fire, hazardous substance control and safety within the classroom, and the school carries out regular risk assessments. The headteacher takes personal responsibility working in close contact with the site agent. All members of staff are aware of the requirements of the various policies and highlight any problems as they arise. A major potential hazard is caused by the split nature of the site; the pupils often have to move unsupervised between buildings across a road used by delivery and visitors' vehicles. Appropriate procedures are in place to ensure that a pupil never does this alone. All members of staff, including the learning assistants and mid-day supervisors, are trained in first-aid and appropriate facilities are provided in each building. Accidents are recorded and parents are sent notes of incidents involving their children.
37. The class teachers know their children well and the headteacher endeavours to get to know everyone in the school, taking a personal interest in each pupil's well being and progress. She is also the designated senior member of staff for Child Protection and presides over a policy that is in line with local procedures. An understanding of the procedures is part of the induction process for all members of staff. The headteacher meets with mid-day supervisors on a monthly basis to discuss any concerns arising. There is an effective relationship with the responsible officer from the local education authority.
38. The headteacher and assessment co-ordinator make good use of the results of national and other tests to monitor the performance of both individual pupils and the school as a whole. The school has successfully addressed the identified weakness from the previous inspection in the use of information gained from assessment data, and there are now very effective procedures in place to ensure that assessment information is used in the planning of subsequent provision.
39. Very good care is taken of pupils with special educational needs enabling them to be fully integrated in all aspects of school life, and this has a positive impact on their attainment and personal development.
40. Attendance is a key priority of the school and reviewed by the headteacher on a weekly basis. She promptly follows up any unexplained absence with the parents concerned. If the school is unable to resolve the problem, the education welfare officer is brought in to assist. The importance of good attendance and the procedures to be followed are explained clearly to the parents in the school prospectus and reinforced in newsletters. The school also has a behaviour policy that covers the aspects of harassment and bullying which, from talking to parents, pupils and staff, do not appear to be major problems. The headteacher keeps a behaviour book and operates a system of behaviour contracts

for the small number of pupils with behavioural problems. Despite the overall effectiveness of this policy, problems of inappropriate behaviour still exist in some classrooms.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

41. In general, the parents are supportive of the school and, from the questionnaires returned, state that their children are happy in the school and make good progress. However, there are some areas where parents feel improvement could be made.
42. The information provided for parents is adequate, but overall it is inconsistent in quality and could be improved. The school prospectus is informative and meets statutory requirements, but is limited in the information it provides. The monthly newsletters are good, but the notice board in the main school foyer is not easily accessible to the majority of parents. **This is an area for improvement.** Some twenty-three parents assist in the life of the school. The headteacher recruits them through newsletters and then provides them with basic training in aspects such as the hearing of readers. Workshops have also been run for parents on literacy, numeracy and information technology, but these have been poorly supported. A home-school-child agreement has been signed by 95% of parents. The staff, governors and members of the Parent Staff Association were involved in its creation and a draft was shown to parents for comment before it was implemented. The Parent Staff Association is an example of an effective co-operation between the school and parents, and has raised over £4000 in the last year through numerous activities. Despite this, 33% of parents who returned the questionnaire felt that the school does not work closely with them.
43. The school runs open evenings in the autumn and spring terms and holds an open afternoon in the summer at which parents are able to discuss the progress of their children. However, the survey of parents concluded that 27% of them feel they are not being kept well informed about their children's progress. Similar concerns were expressed over the correct amount of homework (22%) and the range of activities outside lessons (39%). The school is aware of these concerns as a result of its own survey conducted in the summer term, which produced similar results. The results of the survey were published in a newsletter, which also included a detailed response to the concerns. In addition, the school produced an Information Booklet which highlights, among other things, details of the homework policy and a chart of all the subject topics for each year group throughout the coming year. The school plans to increase the parents' understanding of their children's achievement and progress by sending a workbook home each term which will contain work which has been completed without any teacher assistance, but will have a National Curriculum Level assessment. This is an important development that is a good indication of the seriousness with which the school is responding to the concerns of parents.
44. Overall, the school's links with parents have a positive effect on pupils' learning and personal development. However, there exists a minority of parents with whom it needs to establish a more mutually beneficial relationship.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

45. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. There are significant strengths, but these are off set by some important weaknesses.
46. Quite understandably, the extended absences of both the headteacher and deputy headteacher have had a negative impact on some aspects of the school management and staff morale. The current rapid pace of change in education across the country has demanded tight schedules and time scales that have been difficult to meet. The fact that there are only two members of the senior management team means that when one is absent the workload is too much for the one left in charge. **This is a key issue for action.** This shortcoming should be easy to remedy because the role of other senior staff with responsibilities, such as the subject co-ordinators, has significantly improved since the last inspection. Now most subject co-ordinators are very effective in managing their subjects. The school has adopted a monitoring and evaluation policy, which is benefiting their work. They are able to monitor the teaching and



planning, scrutinise the pupils' work and identify areas for improvement. The exception is the co-ordination of English, which is unsatisfactory.

47. It is evident that with the many recent disruptions to day-to-day school management some of the values central to the school's aims and mission have become obscured. It is important that the headteacher, staff, governors, pupils and parents allocate some time to reconsider their core aims and purpose so that everyone within the school community has a secure understanding of their role, responsibility and worth. **This is a key issue for action.**
48. The school development plan provides a clear framework for the improvement of the school. The headteacher and governors are well informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses, particularly in regard to the quality of the teaching and the standards achieved by the pupils. The governors are well briefed by the headteacher and co-ordinators, and they are increasingly involved in evaluating the school's performance. Through the very effective leadership of the chair of governors, they have focused on their own development and now have a strategic overview of the school. The governors have organised a sensible programme of regular visits to check the quality of education being provided. The teachers report to the governing body on curriculum matters and the special needs co-ordinator reports fully on provision for children with special educational needs.
49. The school has successfully addressed the need to review the arrangements for office administration. The day to day financial management and administration are good. The governing body efficiently manages the school budget. Good systems have been established to ensure that finances are carefully controlled. The Governing Body has adopted the principles of best value. The school is a member of the IVEL schools association and, as a result, benefits considerably from the arrangements for group purchasing and the sharing of expertise. This has a positive effect on the school's financial control of its budget.
50. The very good use of the support staff is a strong feature of the school. The additional support assistants are given every encouragement in their aspirations to gain qualifications. Their commitment is having a very positive effect on the raising of standards, particularly with pupils who have special educational needs.
51. The management of education for the under fives is excellent in the nursery. The work has clear objectives and is well planned and organised. The assessment of the children's achievements and progress is detailed and used very effectively in the planning of subsequent activities. However, there is a weakness in the provision for the summer born reception pupils. These pupils do not get access to the reception class and on entry to the main school in the term after their fifth birthday they are taught in a Year 1 class. **This is a key issue.**
52. The newly qualified teacher is appropriately supported by both her colleagues and the headteacher, and is enjoying her teaching. The in-service training is based on her record of professional development, and she is attending appropriate courses. Her non-contact time is used effectively for planning, consultation and review.
53. The accommodation is well maintained and used effectively. However, the site comprises three buildings, one of which is old and costly to maintain, restricting the ability of the school to raise standards further. The contingency funds for the repair of three buildings is three times larger than it would be for one building. The children have to move between buildings in all types of weather, for example, to use the hall for physical education and assemblies. This takes a significant amount of time away from actual teaching time. Internal communications are also made more difficult. Currently, the Governing Body has devised an action plan, which identifies the three buildings as having a negative impact on the further raising of standards in the school. They have a strategic vision for the development of the school, but this centres on the need to relocate into one building. **The inspectors agree that this is an area for improvement.**

54. In order to ensure that the school makes the most of the funds available, the governors have adopted the principles of best value in terms of both competition and quality of service. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

#### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

55. The governors, head teacher and staff should build upon the good procedures and standards already established to improve the quality of education by: -
- (1) Raising the level of attainment for higher attaining pupils in writing at both key stages, and in mathematics by the age of seven; **(paragraphs 6, 7, 79 and 88)**
  - (2) Reviewing the school aims and mission so that all members of the school community have a secure knowledge of their roles, responsibilities and worth; **(paragraph 47)**
  - (3) Developing and increasing the membership of the senior management team so that it becomes more effective in supporting the headteacher in her leadership and management of the school; **(paragraph 46)**
  - (4) Improving the arrangements for the summer born reception pupils so that they are appropriately prepared for the next stage in their learning; **(paragraph 29, 51 and 56)**

#### **In addition the school should:**

- (a) Improve the consistency of homework arrangements throughout the school **(paragraph 25)**
- (b) Improve the quality of internal communication and some aspects of its communication with parents **(paragraph 42)**
- (c) Continue in its endeavours to improve the appropriateness of accommodation **(paragraph 53)**

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	48
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	40

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6	21	42	27	4	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	Y1– Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	37	201
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	27

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	Y1– Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	3	23

#### 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	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

%
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#### Unauthorised absence

%
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School data	5.3
National comparative data	5.4

School data	0.6
National comparative data	0.5

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

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	20	32	52

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	18	19	18
	Girls	30	30	31
	Total	48	49	49
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (80)	94 (89)	94 (89)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	18	19	18
	Girls	30	31	31
	Total	48	50	49
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (92)	96 (100)	94 (100)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

**Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	212
Any other minority ethnic group	0

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

**Teachers and classes****Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y4**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.66
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	201
Average class size	20.8

**Education support staff: YR– Y1**

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	99

**Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	75

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	66

Number of pupils per FTE adult	25
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**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.*

**Financial information**

Financial year	1999 - 2000
	£
Total income	458920
Total expenditure	463663
Expenditure per pupil	1901
Balance brought forward from previous year	33872
Balance carried forward to next year	29129

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Results of the survey of parents and carers**

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

262

Number of questionnaires returned

68

**26% return**

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	63	34	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	47	40	7	0	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	26	63	4	3	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	53	24	0	7
The teaching is good.	41	47	3	0	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	46	25	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	40	7	4	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	44	49	3	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	19	44	29	6	1
The school is well led and managed.	37	46	9	4	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	57	3	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	16	25	29	7	22

**Other issues raised by parents**

A significant proportion of parents who returned the questionnaire are concerned about the negative impact on their children's learning and achievement in the large combined Year 3 and 4 classes.



## **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**

56. Much of the foundation curriculum is offered in the nursery, which children enter at the age of three. There are also arrangements for this curriculum to extend into the reception stage. However, access to this stage is unequal as the summer born children do not have access to the reception class, but enter Year 1 in the term after their fifth birthday. The nursery staff, Headteacher and governors are very aware of the difficulties this presents in ensuring that children benefit from a comprehensive foundation education before embarking on the statutory curriculum in Year 1. They make considerable efforts to provide some aspects of the reception stage while the children are still in the nursery. Thereafter, there are variable arrangements to provide a reception curriculum taught by an additional teacher. **This is an aspect of the school's provision that requires improvement.**

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

57. By the time they leave the foundation stage, the majority of children have above average social skills. This is because of the sensitivity of adults towards the individual needs of the children and the recognition that a confident start depends upon the quality of attention the children receive when they engage in their different activities. The children are both curious and excited about the various stimulating activities and resources available in the classroom. They are invited, either individually or with a new found friend, to move around sampling the range of activities on offer. Three children, for instance, were seen going purposefully to the water tray where they confidently exchanged and shared equipment to make bubbles from soapy water. A small group co-operated productively to create an intricate railway together with embellishing details such as signals, lights, bordering trees and buildings. The role play corner is changed to provide a range of social experiences such as shopping, going to the dentist's or the optician's, home play and a vegetarian restaurant. The effective interaction with adults in such situations enables the pupils to acquire a wide vocabulary.
58. The children make very good progress because the adults provide good role models for how people should respect and help each other. They listen carefully when children want to say something about their personal feelings. They engage in play with the children and show how important it is for members of a group at play to listen to each other. The outside play area is well planned and equipped, and well supervised. It provides valuable opportunities for the children to co-operate in the use of wheeled vehicles and to be aware of the need to share and take turns.
59. The children settle very quickly in the nursery. They develop a sense of security because the adults are consistent in their approach and the children quickly learn to trust and respect them. They develop confidence in the calm but stimulating environment within which they work and play.

### **COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

60. The majority of the children have well developed language skills when they join the nursery. They engage in a range of opportunities to use language in different ways. Good examples of this were seen when a group was acting out situations involving "Winnie the Witch" and when an adult was engaged in a "writing" activity with some older children. The children showed great enjoyment when saying and singing rhymes and also during a registration activity, which included some number talk. By the time they leave the nursery, some children can read individual words and short sentences with confidence and can point to letters they recognise in unfamiliar words. During a shared book session, some of the more able readers were very eager to help others, leaning over their book, pointing to words and letters and saying them aloud. They take pride in their emergent writing skills. Several of those children currently receiving literacy support in a reception group are copy writing sentences and showing good early letter formation and spacing. The majority of the children can write their own name and recognise the letters of their names when they appear in labels or notices in the classroom.

61. The adults are very committed to promoting the children's speech and their ability to listen. No opportunity is lost to discuss each child's activity. Often they will extend the children's speech by either offering an observation or asking a supplementary question to invite a response. They are careful to foster correct pencil grip and provide constant help to the children during pre-writing activities. The children greatly enjoy "writing" letters in the air, forming play dough letter shapes and tracing letters with their finger in sand. Often, the adults will help a child start and end a letter correctly by placing a coloured mark at the beginning and end, for example, of the letter "e".
62. The children enjoy sharing stories with the adults and make lively and enthusiastic comments about the illustrations in the "big" books. They use the nursery library and show interest in, and are fascinated by, both the print and the illustrations. All confidently turn pages correctly and can follow the direction of print.

#### MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

63. The children make very good progress in using their counting skills in practical situations such as collecting the number of pupils needing either milk or water at snack time. A higher attaining child confidently displayed the numerals representing the number collected in each group and then produced the numerals representing the total. By the end of the foundation stage, the children's recognition of shape and their ability to sort objects into sets of different sizes is above the level expected for this stage. This is particularly the case where the children have benefited from adequate time in the reception group. In many cases, they make good progress in developing the language of shape and can talk about the comparative sizes of different objects. During a construction activity, for example, the children regularly requested bigger or smaller, straight or curved pieces from the child sitting next to the rail track storage box.
64. The fostering of mathematical development is excellent. The use of practical situations such as shopping, counting out equipment, collecting a variety of data, enables the children to develop their numeracy skills very well. At their own level, they begin to see that mathematics is one way of communicating information. They also enjoy their experiences because the adults know how to inject fun into the learning.

#### KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

65. Opportunities to use a variety of tools and equipment enable the children to acquire a range of useful skills related to their knowledge and understanding of the world. Most of the children are deft in using scissors, cutters and containers of various kinds for pouring or measuring. They work successfully with a range of materials. They can join card using adhesives, shape wet sand with a variety of moulds, pour various quantities of liquid from and into containers, and devise ramps and slopes on which cars and other vehicles may travel. During outdoor play, they explore grassy mounds and plastic tunnels, and are agile when jumping on and off a variety of equipment at different heights. By engaging in cooking, by watching large balls of ice melt, while observing seasonal changes, the children gain a very good understanding of how materials change according to heat, cold, the weather and other factors. Some children are adept at programming videos and operating tape recorders. One child, relating an experience using simple circuitry, observed "The best bit is when the light goes out". A few children are confident in using the computer and in printing out their efforts, such as their attempts to write a list of the names of a group of children in the class.
66. The teaching ensures that all areas are covered through the provision of well-structured activities which develop a variety of skills and which can be used during indoor and outdoor activities. Books, too, are well used to raise the pupils' awareness of cultural diversity. Stories feature children from different parts of the world. Non-fiction books are used to talk about clothes which different people wear and raise the children's awareness of different customs and lifestyles. The teaching is of a very high calibre as it takes account of the wide range of opportunities available to broaden the children's understanding of the world around them.

## PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

67. The children display a sense of well-being in the nursery. This is because they are confident in what they are doing and are developing appropriate physical capabilities to engage, with success and enjoyment, in all the activities the nursery has to offer. By the end of the foundation stage, their skills are generally above average. The outdoor environment develops their confidence in pushing and pedalling wheeled vehicles, in navigating, climbing, balancing on stilts and a whole range of other movements. They improve their control and ability to move effectively as they run, crawl through tunnels, swing, slide, hop and skip. The adults are careful to promote safe practice during these activities and are vigilant of the pupils' welfare. The children enjoy opportunities to move creatively to music and learn that movements can be imaginatively devised not only when standing, but also low on the ground
68. The teaching is very well planned and executed in order to develop a wide range of physical skills. This includes the development of fine motor control when children use pencils, spatulas, brushes, when they join together pieces of plastic construction equipment, fit shapes into moulds or engage in "posting" activities. The teachers also use these activities very well to promote the children's awareness of each other, for example, when they form a group during a dance activity or share the space designated for the wheeled vehicles.
69. The children behave very responsibly during these activities. They enjoy the more boisterous, energetic activities without endangering others. The more mature children are patient when using smaller equipment and show that they can enjoy the quieter, lone activities as well as those which are more sociable.

## CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

70. The children develop above average skills in a variety of curriculum areas partly as a result of the creative experiences planned for them. Currently, the "Winnie the Witch" corner inspires a wide range of activities from the numeracy involved in counting spells to designing and making some very threatening-looking outsize spiders which hang in a tangle of intimidating webs. A collage recording "We went to the zoo" provides evidence of the children having chosen to make some striking giraffes from toilet roll holders, suitably decorated with painted spots. It also includes other animals made from cellophane, tissue paper and card and finished with a variety of decorative effects. The children print and paint effectively. During one lesson, a child produced a very striking illustration of "Little Red Riding Hood" and was happy to relate the main points of the story as she worked.
71. The teaching in this area is also excellent. The activities are well devised to foster creativity. The children benefit from being able to make choices and from the vigilance with which ensure that they develop a range of skills. The adults are alert to when they need to prompt the children if they either appear slow to respond to a particular task or are not sustaining it adequately.
72. The children in this nursery have excellent opportunities to develop the necessary skills to engage in the next stage of learning. The adults work closely as a team, planning and evaluating their activities and enabling the volunteer helpers to make a valuable contribution. The accommodation and resources have a very positive impact on the learning.

## ENGLISH

73. In the 1999 tests for seven-year-olds, the pupils achieved results that were well above the national average and well above those for schools of similar type and size. A proportion of the pupils achieved higher level results in reading, but this was not matched by the results for writing.
74. The trend over four years has been variable, results having dipped in 1998. However, the results for 1999 and for 2000 show a distinct upward trend in the percentage of pupils attaining the expected levels.

75. The inspection evidence confirms that a high proportion of the pupils is attaining the levels expected at this stage. Equally, some pupils, for example in Year 4, are confidently approaching the higher levels, particularly in reading. The school has now agreed a sound strategy for improving attainment in writing. This is appropriate, as a considerable proportion of the pupils is capable of higher than average attainment in their writing. This very secure picture is the result of the teachers' very hard work to re-plan the English curriculum.
76. The majority of pupils at all stages has well-developed speaking skills and is capable of listening carefully to their teachers and other pupils. The improving skills of the majority are due to the fact that the teachers provide many opportunities for discussing books. This is strongly supported by the contribution of a visiting librarian who stimulates the pupils' interest in reading and discussing literature. In a class of Year 1 pupils, a carefully structured discussion based on a book about "Shapes" significantly enabled the pupils to begin to acquire a technical vocabulary about books for information. They went on to successfully identify and talk about features such as contents pages, publishers' logos and labelling. The oldest pupils are able to express their views on a range of issues. These opportunities have developed their debating skills and sharpened their listening skills in order to respond to points of view put forward by their peers. A written record of a discussion about the appropriate way to treat animals suggests that the level of the pupils' vocabulary and their ability to sequence ideas logically are above average.
77. Overall, reading attainment is above average by the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time the pupils leave the school at the age of nine. This is because the resources for reading have improved and there is now greater emphasis on shared, as well as group and individual reading, during the literacy hour. By hearing their children read at home on a regular basis, the parents also make a very valuable contribution. There is a minority of pupils in the school who find reading a difficult skill to acquire. That they make good progress is due to the skilful work of classroom assistants and members of the community who help with reading. Many, but by no means all, of these younger, lower achieving children use their knowledge of letter sounds to read words satisfactorily. However, their sight vocabulary is more firmly established. By the end of Year 2, many pupils have a better recognition of full stops and, therefore, inject greater meaning into their reading.
78. Access to a good range of fiction and opportunities to use books for information to support work in history and geography make for good attainment in reading amongst many older pupils. For instance, individual pupils in Year 4 reading Bel Mooney's "The Stove Haunting", accurately read polysyllabic words such as "consisted", "desperate" and "makeshift", at the same time conveying, by their tone, the pathos of the story.
79. The school has recognised the need to raise further the standards of pupils' writing and, in particular, to increase the attainment of potentially very able writers. There are clear indications that progress in this direction is accelerating. From a scrutiny of last year's work and the lessons seen, the attainment of the pupils is well in line with the expected levels. As a result of more comprehensive planning for writing and the identification of increased time for more extended pieces of writing, faster progress towards higher levels of attainment is being made. The school should now ensure that very regular provision is made to allow pupils ample time to plan, draft and re-draft their work, and to produce longer pieces of writing. **This is a key issue for action.**
80. When the pupils, especially those in Key Stage 2, are afforded extended opportunities, the quality of their writing improves markedly. From the evidence of last year's work, the range of writing undertaken in Key Stage 1, especially among the older pupils, does not fully develop their skills. For example, they do not sufficiently use their reading experiences to create different settings for their own stories. The pupils in Key Stage 2 are increasingly developing the ability to enliven their writing by using interesting adjectives such as "devastated" and verbs such as "swooped" in place of "flew". The higher attaining writers, when they have the opportunity, are beginning to organise their work into paragraphs and their writing has a distinct structure. Some, for example, recognise the conventions for writing a play script.
81. By the end of Year 4, most pupils have well formed handwriting that gives a neat appearance to their work. Standards are, however, not consistent through the school. Although handwriting practice is a feature of all classes, a proportion of the younger pupils are not secure in forming level, well-

proportioned letter shapes before moving on to join their writing. This is exacerbated for the summer born pupils in Year 1 who have inadequate time in reception class.

82. The teaching of English is generally satisfactory, and there is a proportion that is good at both key stages. Some variation in the quality of the teaching of writing during the past year is being addressed and is leading to better progress recently. Regular assessment of the pupils' work is beginning to reveal the kind of support the pupils need to improve their attainment. The teachers often make useful verbal observations while the work is in progress, but their written comments vary. Some comments are very well focussed and help the pupils to improve their work, but this is not invariably the case. Potential high achievers would now benefit from more focus on their needs and especially on the provision of sufficient time for them to revise and refine their writing. The planning of work is now more consistent across the school and ensures that all aspects of literacy are covered. The school is reviewing its planning to ensure a still more comprehensive coverage of all types of writing. The teachers and other adults support the development of reading skills well but, at times, the teaching of letter sounds is not consistent across all classes. In oral work, the teachers are skilful in phrasing and re-phrasing questions in a way that increases the pupils' understanding, for example, of points in a story, or a factual text. A good example was seen in a Year 1 class where some pupils did not understand the initial question relating to an aspect of an information text. Spelling practice is regularly provided both during lessons and as a homework activity, but more consistent use by pupils of their own word books would raise standards.
83. The school has undertaken a root and branch revision of its scheme of work for English and standards are improving in comparison with those seen at the last inspection, which were described as "sound". The English co-ordinator was absent from school during this inspection, but it is apparent that the school is not complacent about what has been achieved and recognises areas of literacy which need careful monitoring in order to meet the targets which have been identified.

## **MATHEMATICS**

84. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests for pupils aged seven, the proportion that reached the expected level 2 was above the average when compared with both the national figures and the results achieved by pupils in similar schools. The proportion of pupils who reached the higher levels was close to the national average. In the most recent national tests, the percentage of pupils who reached the expected level 2 was marginally below the 1999 figure. However, the proportion of pupils who reached the higher levels increased significantly. The trend over three years indicates that standards are improving.
85. The inspection evidence indicates that standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are currently much lower. While standards in the reception and Year 1 classes exceed the national expectations, the absence of key teachers has adversely affected the standards of work in Year 2. Scrutiny of the pupils' work and lesson observations indicate that standards are currently satisfactory at the end of Key Stage 1, but they should be higher. Standards of work at Key Stage 2 are above the levels expected for this age group. In the previous inspection, standards were described as in line at Key Stage 1 and at least in line at Key Stage 2. The current situation represents similar standards at Key Stage 1 with an improvement at Key Stage 2. The pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs make good progress.
86. The introduction of the Numeracy Strategy has had a strong influence on standards of work. The benefits of improved mental recall and the systematic development of mathematical knowledge and understanding are evident in the pupils' approaches to investigative work. The quality of the teachers' planning has been improved by the guidance offered in the Numeracy Strategy. This has made a significant contribution to promoting high quality teaching, which has been the most significant factor in determining standards at this school. The school's decision to group the pupils in ability sets for mathematics has also been of benefit in raising standards.
87. The pupils in a Year 1 class count forwards and backwards to and from twenty. The teacher varies the starting points and the pupils respond to the challenge with confidence. The teachers use resources well to support learning. For example, a counting stick helps lower achieving pupils to make good progress. The teacher cleverly extends this work and enables the pupils to recognise the difference between odd and even numbers. The higher achieving pupils confidently use mathematical language to

describe the characteristics of even numbers. The very good relationships in the classroom and very effective classroom management have a strongly beneficial influence; the pupils want to learn and are enthusiastic when challenged. In another Year 1 class, the teacher made very good use of differentiated work to build the pupils' confidence in counting to ten. The activities were very well matched and showed the teacher's thorough knowledge of the pupils' levels of understanding. All pupils made good progress in developing their number skills.

88. The good progress made by the pupils in Year 1 is not currently matched in Year 2. The continuity of teaching and learning in Year 2 are affected by staff absence. Additionally, there is a relatively high percentage of boys with challenging behaviour in the classes. The teachers have to spend excessive time settling some pupils and this adversely affects the quality of the learning and teaching. The standards the pupils achieve are satisfactory when compared with national expectations, but below the expectations set when these pupils were in Year 1. **This is a key issue for action.**
89. The progress of pupils in Key Stage 2 accelerates. The teachers' planning is of very good quality and clearly identifies what is to be taught in the lessons. The teachers assess how successfully the pupils have achieved during lessons and use this information to make any necessary changes to their teaching programmes in order to meet the needs of all pupils. All of the teaching seen in Key Stage 2 was at least good. In Year 3, a group of lower ability pupils can confidently count in twos, fives and tens. They recognise the properties of a range of quadrilaterals and can describe similarities and differences using appropriate mathematical language. The teacher challenges all pupils, through questioning, to establish the level of learning that has taken place. This thoroughness in teaching promotes very good learning, with pupils making significant gains in knowledge and in their own esteem. The pupils want to succeed and the teacher is ready to build on success and to support those who need additional help to ensure progress. The learning support assistants make an excellent contribution to the success of the teaching and learning. They are fully involved in the organisation of classroom activities. They work very closely with the teachers and are involved in planning teaching programmes. They are aware of pupils' needs and provide excellent support to those who need additional help.
90. The higher achieving pupils in Year 4 extend their understanding of numbers. They use standard units in measuring activities and can explain why certain units are more appropriate to use than others in a particular situation. In a Year 4 lesson, the pupils converted centimetres into metres and clearly understood the relationship between a range of units used for measurement. The teacher provided a good range of resources for the pupils to work with and extend their knowledge. A feature of this lesson was the good subject knowledge of the teacher and the very good management of the pace of the lesson.
91. Much of the good progress made in mathematics is due to the very good quality leadership provided by the co-ordinator. The co-ordinator monitors the teaching and learning, and this provides opportunities for the staff to discuss the features of successful practice. An annual report reviews work in mathematics and identifies an action plan to improve the subject further

## SCIENCE

92. In 1999, the teachers' assessments of the pupils' performance in science at the end of Key Stage 1 indicated that standards were above the national average. The pupils' performance was also above that found in similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels was in line with both the national average and similar schools. The results for 2000 were similar to those for 1999. The school has addressed the issue raised in the last inspection by improving the pupils' performance in Experimental and Investigative Science.
93. The inspection judgements show that standards at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Year 4 are broadly average. At Key Stage 1, the pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding. Year 1 pupils, for example, know what the five senses are and can carry out a simple investigation to distinguish substances by their smell. They can talk enthusiastically about the differences and similarities between smells and begin to understand how the senses enable people to be aware of the world around them. Year 2 pupils know what material a magnet can attract. They, too, can

carry out an investigation, by sorting materials into magnetic and non-magnetic groups and recording their results on a simple table.

94. At Key Stage 2, the pupils continue to make satisfactory gains in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding and in some case they make good progress. A strength here lies in the good vocabulary of scientific terms that the pupils learn and remember, a reflection of a planned and consistent policy in the teaching. Older pupils can talk about healthy eating and the use of teeth in terms of molars and incisors, showing a good knowledge of their different purposes. They know how to conduct a simple experiment to test their predictions, for example, finding out how many chews different foods, such as apple, bread, crisps and carrot, require to be broken down sufficiently with their saliva. They are able to draw a table to record their findings and a pictogram to illustrate their results. They are able to interpret their findings to draw conclusions and to understand the functions and care of teeth.
95. The pupils achieve satisfactorily in lessons at both Key Stages, and sometimes well. Achievement reflects the positive attitude the pupils show towards this subject; they generally take a lively interest and behave and work well. However, there is a significant minority of pupils in one Year 2 class whose inappropriate behaviour is disrupting the learning of other pupils. Most pupils concentrate well in individual or group practical work. This in turn reflects the quality of the teaching at Key Stage 1; it ranges from satisfactory to good, but is satisfactory overall. At Key Stage 2 teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good, and is good overall. The teachers' expectations of what their pupils can achieve are generally good. The planning of the work has clear objectives for pupils' learning and devises stimulating and effective tasks with an appropriately strong emphasis on practical investigation. Very good use is made of the support assistants in helping the pupils with special educational needs to make good progress in carrying out their experiments and recording and interpreting their results. Better investigative work represents an improvement on the last inspection. A brisk pace to the introduction of lessons, a clear focus on specific knowledge and technical terms is effectively reinforced by questioning and reviews of learning to reinforce key points. A Year 4 lesson on healthy eating greatly benefited from having a large model of teeth for the pupils to observe. Some effective use of information and communication technology to reinforce the pupils' learning was observed in lessons and also seen in work on display, for example, in graphs showing different animal habitats and the properties of a leaf. At both Key Stages, the pupils appropriately undertook writing in connection with their work. This incorporates some good opportunities for pupils to compose their own sentences.
96. The good quality of the planning reflects the generally good leadership given to the subject by the co-ordinator. This has helped to raise standards in Experimental and Investigational Science. She has provided colleagues with detailed guidance in a good scheme of work from the Local Education Authority Science Working Party, of which she was a member. The recently introduced "Progression of Skills for A.T.1" has aided the staff in their planning for all ability groups in this area, and has resulted in an improvement in the pupils' learning from the last inspection. There has been no opportunity for the co-ordinator to visit classrooms to monitor and evaluate the impact of the teaching on the pupils' learning, but this is planned to commence later this term. This was a recommendation from the last inspection report. It should also help ensure that extension activities are consistently targeted at the more able pupils in each lesson. Assessment within lessons has been well used by the teachers to help in planning the next step in the pupils' learning. The Local Education Authority assessment sheets have been introduced recently to assist with the Year 2 classes. They are used alongside the school's own good examples of assessed work. The co-ordinator has played a leading role in the construction of the school's environmental garden. This is a very good resource to help the pupils learn about life processes and living things from first hand experience and was recognised in the last inspection report as a strength in the quality of science provision.

## **ART**

97. Throughout the school, attainment in art is above the levels expected for pupils of this age and progress is good. Standards have improved since the last inspection when they were described as average. Art is now a strength of the school.
98. By the age of seven, the pupils work confidently with paints, pastels, chalk and fabrics. They use chalks skilfully, creating a range of shades through blending colours; this was evident, for example when a Year 1 class drew self-portraits. The work arose from very good use of Mogliani's picture, 'Girl with Pigtailed'.

Through focused questioning, the teacher encouraged pupils to look carefully at the delicate colours and shapes of features and in this way develop techniques in detailed observational drawing. Other pupils in Year 1 have a good level of awareness of the work of Paul Klee. Their pictures reflect the style of the artist well, and in discussion they refer to the use of colour and composition. The pupils in Year 2 enjoyed making clay pots, which were completed with delicate decoration. The lesson ended with them demonstrating good analytical skills when discussing the quality of the pots. Throughout the school, the pupils have opportunities to print in a variety of ways.

99. The pupils in Year 4 investigate patterns. In the lesson observed, the teacher provided a very good variety of materials showing a range of different patterns. The correct use of technical vocabulary extended the pupils' language. For example, the pupils confidently used words such as 'repeated', 'reflective' and 'translated' to describe pattern. They showed considerable creativity in identifying and combining shapes to make very attractive compositions. Additionally, they considered carefully how colour influences the completed work. This lesson provided the pupils with good opportunities to develop responsibility in decision making and to apply their new knowledge in creative situations.
100. The pupils enjoy art and concentrate well to meet the expectations made of them. They use tools and equipment sensibly and work co-operatively. They support one another and praise the achievement of their friends. They enjoy discussing their work and take pride when their work is displayed. They look forward to expressing themselves through art.
101. The quality of teaching seen was generally good, and a third of the lessons were very good. The subject is well led and this has a significant influence on the quality of the teaching and learning. The pupils make good gains in progress. Progression is an important feature of the art curriculum and the teachers plan their lessons to ensure that their pupils' develop skills and knowledge systematically. For example, the lesson observed in Year 4 was part of a series of lessons about pattern. The teachers introduce lessons in a challenging way with good pace, and this immediately captures the attention of all pupils. Very good classroom management ensures that the pupils remain on task. There is no wasting of time and this also strongly influences the quality of the pupils' learning. The systems for monitoring and evaluating standards are good and help to reinforce and improve the quality of teaching and learning within the subject.
102. The resources are of very good quality and support the teaching of the curriculum very well. Work samples provide a good record of the subject coverage and standards of display are also good.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

103. No lessons were timetabled during the inspection and the following judgements about standards are based on discussions with teachers and pupils, scrutiny of the planning and the pupils' previously completed work. Standards in technology are in line with those expected of pupils of this age and similar to those in the previous inspection.
104. Work with the youngest pupils includes designing, planning, making and evaluating. The pupils from Year 2 were delighted to talk about their experiences when making a range of items. They described how they drew diagrams of windows, used scissors to cut out spaces for the insertion of coloured paper and chose adhesive to secure the windows to their frames. A particularly rewarding part of the discussion was the pupils' enthusiasm to discuss the quality of their work and identify how it could be improved. The pupils also enjoyed working with fabric when they designed puppets. On this occasion much of the planning was completed orally with the pupils working well together to reach decisions on how the puppets might be made.
105. Discussions with pupils in Key Stage 2 were equally enthusiastic. Food technology has contributed effectively to their learning. For example, a topic on sandwiches stimulated a great deal of interest and investigation. Sandwiches with a wide range of fillings were made and evaluated at school. The pupils recorded preferences according to set criteria, for example, appearance, taste and smell. Their results were recorded on bar charts and pie diagrams, providing good links with mathematics. As the pupils progress through the school, photographic evidence indicates they develop their skills with three-



dimensional objects. They use a range of materials, for example, wood, wire and a variety of adhesives. Equally, their skills with saws and other small tools develop with their new experiences.

106. The school has identified a range of commercially produced construction kits to extend pupils' knowledge and skills. The co-ordinator is selective and evaluates the effectiveness of the kits in relation to how well they meet the requirements of the curriculum. The school has adopted the latest guidance in the subject.
107. The co-ordinator is providing good leadership and supporting the staff well. There are plans for her to observe lessons and this will improve further the support she is able to provide. She has already identified accurately that the school requires additional tools of good quality and that there are insufficient books in the school library for pupils to use as reference points for further development.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

108. The inspection judgements are based on lessons seen, on discussions with pupils and on examination of written work. These show standards at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 to be in line with the expected levels.
109. At Key Stage 1, the pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding. In Year 1, they have an understanding of the area where they live, and can draw maps of the school area. They demonstrate a clear knowledge and understanding of the local environment and how they can make it safer. In Year 2, the pupils study Morocco as a contrasting overseas locality. They draw pictures and explain how it compares with their own country. Most pupils are able to use simple geographical language, such as near and far away when comparing different locations.
110. In Key Stage 2, the pupils develop a range of skills. For instance, they can use aerial photographs of the locality to identify their school, the local by-pass and physical features of the landscape such as rivers, woodland and agricultural land. They can describe the local area in geographical terms and explain why the town has developed as it has; for example, the new housing developments on the edge of the town. The pupils have also developed knowledge and understanding of a village called Chembakolli, in a country, India, that is less economically developed than our own. They can confidently talk about the seasons and explain why they would need to take an umbrella if visiting this place and can compare and contrast its physical and economic conditions with those in their own town. For example, the type and range of goods sold at Shefford market compared to that in Chembakolli and the fact that we have electricity and running water and they do not.
111. On the basis of the evidence available, the teaching in Key Stage 2 is good. The scheme of work and planning show that the teachers have a secure knowledge of the areas taught. The teachers ask probing questions and make good use of displays of maps, photographs, pictures and artefacts, such as those of India. They also make good use of graphs for statistics where appropriate. The pupils acquire a good range of skills when using the computer to find out more about a place and to record their findings. Most of them respond well to the teaching and make good progress.

## **HISTORY**

112. The following judgements are based on the lessons seen, on discussions with pupils and on examination of written work. These show standards at Key Stage 1 to be in line with the expected levels and above average at Key Stage 2. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
113. At Key Stage 1, the pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding. Year 2 pupils, for example, can identify differences between ways of life at different times. They can show how forms of transport, such as horse and cart, have been superseded by the motorcar. They can use terms such as a long time ago, and before I was born, to demonstrate their chronological understanding. They have knowledge of some important events and famous people, such as the Great Fire of London and Guy Fawkes, and they understand how they have had an influence on life today.
114. At Key Stage 2, the oldest pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of chronology. They are able to place peoples, such as the Vikings and Romans, and periods in history, for example the Second

World War, on a time line. They are able to talk with some confidence about BC and AD and they understand terms like decade and century. Most pupils understand why, for example, the Vikings invaded Britain. Several groups investigated this topic from non-fiction books and were able to explain their findings to the rest of the class.

115. On the basis of evidence available, the quality of the teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2. It enables most pupils to make good progress in their learning by the time they reach the end of Year 4. The pupils are well managed and motivated by the good teaching observed. The planning at both Key Stages allows for much practical and historical enquiry work to take place. The pupils examine and comment on pictures, artefacts and videos. As a result they are able to explain the past in terms of something they have seen, touched or heard about. The Year 4 pupils are able to talk about the Second World War in some detail and understand how it affected the lives of children. They recognise their grandparents' recollections, and the town's war memorial, as good sources of historical information. In this area, they know and understand the difference between fact and opinion, and how they can use a variety of sources such as non-fiction books and CD ROMs to further their historical enquiry. These sources are supported and extended by visits to the Victorian school at Hitchin where they can dress in period costume. The school's own Victorian building also provides a contrast to the new school building. The pupils are able to use information and communication technology to research information about invaders and transfer this information into their workbooks.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

116. The quality of the pupils' work in information technology is broadly in line with the expected levels for their ages. This is similar to the standards achieved in the previous inspection. The school's provision for information technology has been significantly improved recently.
117. Since the previous inspection, initiatives have been taken to improve the information technology skills of the staff. Whole school in-service training in conjunction with the approved training provider and basic skill training organised by the local education authority have significantly improved the confidence and abilities of the teachers in this subject. Further training is planned. In addition, each classroom now has two computers, both less than two years old. All these additional features for information technology show that the school is well placed to make improvements and to raise the pupils' standards in all classes.
118. The youngest pupils are taught to use simple computer programs. They know how to use a mouse and keyboard accurately. They are beginning to use the associated language when talking about their work. By the end of Key Stage 1, they have been given opportunities to word process, use a programmable vehicle and create pictures using a paint programme. The pupils also use a graphics programme effectively when they create shapes linked to their mathematics work.
119. At Key Stage 2, information technology enriches other curriculum areas. The pupils combine text and graphics, for example, when creating their cards depicting Christian festivals. They are able to select an image and cut and paste it into text. They use information technology to produce graphs of data gathered from surveys in mathematics. For example, they use block graphs to show the range and number of pets in the class, and the colour of children's hair and eyes. In art and religious education they create Rangoli patterns and are able to repeat designs. In geography they create food pyramids and explore land use, using graphs to plot temperatures and other climatic conditions when comparing different countries. The pupils are aware of the capabilities of information and communication technology. They use the Internet to write to their friends. The pupils in the co-ordinator's class communicate regularly with a school in Australia exchanging information about each other. The pupils are beginning to use the CD-ROM effectively to search for information to support their work in other areas. Many pupils benefit from having computers at home and bring the skills learnt there into school. These skills are shared with other members of the class often in informal ways when pupils work in groups.
120. Only two lessons were observed during the inspection. Both provided similar experiences to Year 3 and 4 pupils. Other evidence is taken from informal observations of ongoing activities, the scrutiny of teaching files and planning, from discussions with the pupils and scrutiny of their work. The teachers'

daily planning shows clearly what the pupils will learn in the lesson. Effective direct teaching of skills is a feature of these lessons and the teachers make the best use of the computers in the classroom. They cope with the various restrictions that come, for example, from the use of a small computer screen with 36 pupils endeavouring to see what is being displayed. Good use is made of the support staff and the volunteer helpers to ensure that pupils of differing abilities are effectively supported, and make progress. The teachers' planning takes account of the school's scheme of work. Occasionally, the higher attaining pupils have opportunities to extend their work, but this is not always part of the planned work. Nevertheless, pupils of all abilities make sound progress because of their eagerness and enthusiasm, teachers' positive attitudes, and the good opportunities the new resources provide.

121. While standards in information technology have improved significantly, it is important that the school consolidates its gains. The need to continue to build the teachers' confidence is recognised by the subject leader. The subject leader has completed a profile of the needs of all staff, which will form the basis of future in service staff development.

## **MUSIC**

122. It was not possible to evaluate from first hand evidence either the pupils' attainment in music or the quality of the teaching, as the specialist teacher, who is a key figure in the teaching, was absent from school.
123. The evidence available from scrutinising the scheme of work for music together with more detailed medium term plans suggest that the music curriculum encompasses the main elements suggested in recently produced national guidance. Therefore, the opportunities to reach the expected or higher levels of attainment appear very favourable. During the inspection week, all the pupils were heard singing during a whole school hymn practice and again during school worship. They sang tunefully, could control their voices to sing loudly or quietly, and their diction was exceptionally clear. They showed an awareness of the need to keep time when singing together and could follow the leader. No instrumental work was seen, but from talking to pupils, it is clear that they enjoy opportunities to re-produce simple rhythms and accompany their singing using a range of untuned percussion instruments.
124. Each session of school worship was preceded by a short period of listening to a piece of music. There is a planned range to cover the school year so that the pupils hear music from different cultures and from different times. It was evident that the pupils enjoyed this experience and listened quietly. The planning for music includes regular opportunities for the pupils to hear music in order to appreciate the sounds and effects produced by different instruments and to identify the way sounds are used to vary to texture within compositions.
125. Photographic records show the pupils' enjoyment of opportunities to perform in public, for example, at school concerts. Some pupils benefit from instrumental tuition and from participation at county musical events, such as the "Fiddle Fiesta".

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

126. By the ages of seven and nine, the pupils' attainment in gymnastics is broadly in line with expected levels. Standards in dance in both key stages are above average. By the age of nine most pupils have mastered a good range of techniques for travelling including striding, rolling and jumping. They understand the difference between symmetrical and asymmetrical shapes and are able to incorporate them into separate movements to form a sequence. Since the last inspection, standards in dance have significantly improved and have been maintained in gymnastics.
127. The quality of the teaching in gymnastics is good overall in Key Stage 2. The teaching reinforces the importance of warming up and cooling down before and after exercise. The teachers have clear expectations of what the pupils should achieve and how they should behave. Consequently, in most lessons the pupils rise to the challenge and achieve well. The teachers build on previous learning and match the activities and tasks to the pupils' needs. This ensures that the pupils have confidence and

enjoy their lessons. They stay on task and are fully focused in what they do. The work includes aspects of health and safety. This is particularly important since the hall does not provide adequate space to challenge the large numbers of pupils in the mixed age classes in Key Stage 2.

128. The pupils respond to the effective teaching by being active, eager, well behaved, and enthusiastic in physical education activities. They try hard to extend their physical skills and to improve their accomplishments. They work well individually and as a group, sharing equipment and responsibilities. The pupils help each other, work together well in team activities, and have a strong sense of fair play.
129. Only one lesson was seen in Key Stage 1. Here, there is a group of boys who sometimes exhibit challenging behaviour that adversely affects the quality of the lesson.
130. The school benefits significantly from the expertise of the excellent specialist dance teacher who takes each class. She also provides ongoing training to improve her colleagues understanding and skills in making provision for their classes. This teacher's expectations are particularly high. She challenges the pupils and sets a fast pace to the lesson. There is always a very clear focus, and stimulating and exciting themes to motivate the pupils. This results in the pupils making very good progress and demonstrating a quality of work that is above the national expectation. The pupils use their imaginations well and one could believe that, in their work on the sea and ships, they really were, involved in an adventure on the water. In these lessons, the pupils responded very well. They were motivated, totally absorbed and able to concentrate for long periods of time.
131. The curriculum for physical education is mostly broad and well balanced. The exception is swimming which currently the school is unable to offer. This is because of the inadequate condition of the swimming pool. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and is promoting the subject well. In service training for all the staff is a strong feature of the development of dance.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

132. Only one religious education lesson was observed during the inspection. The following judgements are based on a scrutiny of the teachers' planning, previously completed work and discussions with the pupils. By the ages of seven and nine the pupils' attainment in religious education matches the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Standards are overall similar to those seen at the last inspection
133. Overall, the pupils', acquisition of knowledge and understanding is sound at both key stages, and the pupils make sound progress in their learning. However, the scrutiny of work identifies inconsistency within the teachers' expectations and knowledge about the teaching of religious education at Key Stage 2. In those classes where the teachers are most knowledgeable, the pupils make good progress because there are very effective links between different aspects of the theme being studied. For example, there are very effective links made between water as a requirement of life, the feelings engendered through poetry about water and the importance of water within different major religions. These pupils are secure in their learning.
134. In Key Stage 1, the pupils have appropriate knowledge of the chosen religions of Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism. They know the major celebrations in the Christian calendar, for example Christmas and Easter, and understand what they represent. They have knowledge of many facts about the life of Christ including some of the stories he told and the miracles he performed.
135. By the end of Year 4, when pupils are nine years of age, their knowledge of the Christian church and its calendar is further enriched. Their knowledge and understanding of the Bible is extended, through the stories in the Old Testament. They also have a sound knowledge of other major religions, from exploring Jewish family life and festivals such as Hannukah. The pupils explore the importance of water in our lives developing an understanding of its significance within the other religions that they study. For example, the pupils learn about Chinese water myths.
136. The teachers' planning takes good account of the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The co-ordinator is very knowledgeable about religious education and has effectively agreed with her

colleagues what is to be covered in each year. She has a good understanding of her role as a co-ordinator, advising her colleagues, monitoring the teaching, the pupils' work and their knowledge and understanding. She supports her colleagues well. The school has acquired a satisfactory range of resources. There is a perceived need now to put in place an assessment scheme that is in line with the recommendations in the local syllabus.