

FEATHERSTONE WOOD SCHOOL

Stevenage

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 131505

Headteacher: Patricia Brown

Reporting inspector: Jill Head
2430

Dates of inspection: 29 January - 2 February 2001

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Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Featherstone Road Stevenage Hertfordshire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Linda Townsend
Date of previous inspection:	No previous inspection

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2430	Jill Head	Registered inspector	Music Physical education Religious education Foundation Stage	How high are standards? How well is the school led and managed? How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
1333	Elizabeth Forster	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
2414	David Westall	Team inspector	Science Art and design Design and technology Equal opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to the school?
3680	Sandy Wellsted	Team inspector	English History English as an additional language	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
2420	Brian McCutcheon	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Geography Special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Featherstone Wood Primary School was opened in September 1998, following the amalgamation of Bandle Hill Infant School and Bandle Hill Junior School. The following year, the school was identified by the local education authority for closure, due to falling rolls in the area. This decision was overturned in May last year after concerted pressure from parents.

There are 216 pupils on roll, aged from four to 11 years. The school is organised into nine classes, including the Early Years Base, a unit which has the nursery and reception children. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The percentage of pupils who come from ethnic minority backgrounds is 5.5, the ethnic heritage of most is Bangladeshi and a smaller number have an African or Caribbean heritage. The percentage of pupils who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL) is higher than most schools. The main first languages spoken are Bengali, Cantonese and Hindi. The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs is above the national average. At the time of the inspection there were no pupils with statements of special educational need. Children's standards on entry to the nursery are well below average and, although they make mainly good progress in the Foundation Stage, their attainment is mainly below average on entry to Key Stage 1.

The priorities identified by the school are to improve learning and raise standards of attainment by:

- implementing the information and communication technology (ICT) development plan;
- fostering and supporting the role of parents in developing the children's learning;
- encouraging children to be more accurate and precise in their work;
- developing the role of the governors as the school's critical friend;
- supporting effective learning through the creative arts by broadening the provision of resources for physical education, art and design, design and technology and music.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Featherstone Wood is a good school, which benefits from very effective leadership and management by the headteacher and senior staff. Very good provision is made for pupils' personal development. Pupils enjoy school very much. They work hard and their behaviour is very good. Across the school, teaching is mainly good, with some excellent teaching. The standards of pupils were low when the school opened in 1998. The whole school community now shares a common goal and is striving to raise pupils' academic standards in all subjects. There is strong evidence to show a significant improvement in pupils' achievements over the past two years. However, standards in English need raising further, and are too low in ICT, art and design and in aspects of physical education. The school is aware of weaknesses in these areas. Overall, the school's strengths greatly outweigh its weaknesses and it provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have very good leadership and management skills.
- A very purposeful and positive climate for learning has been established by the headteacher and staff.
- The quality of teaching is good, overall, in both key stages and this contributes significantly to the good progress pupils make.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good.
- Procedures for checking and evaluating the school's performance are rigorous.
- The school makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Very good provision is made for pupils' social and moral development.
- Strong links have been established with parents and they have high regard for the school.

What could be improved

- Standards in ICT in both key stages.
- Standards in art in Key Stage 2.
- Standards in grammar, punctuation, spelling, handwriting and presentation in Key Stage 2.
- The provision for the physical development of children in the nursery and provision for the gymnastic skills of pupils in Key Stage 2.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

This is the first inspection of this new school following the amalgamation of Bandley Hill Infant and Junior Schools. As a result, no direct comparisons can be made with the previous schools. However, evidence from the national test results of those schools, and from their inspection reports in 1997, shows that pupils in Featherstone Wood Primary School are making better progress and achieving higher standards than pupils did prior to the amalgamation. The quality of teaching is better and the leadership and management are significantly better than that of the previous junior school.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			Key
	all schools		similar schools	
	1999	2000	2000	
English	E	E	E	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	E	E	D	
Science	E	C	C	

In Key Stage 1, the results of the national tests in 2000, were well below the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Nevertheless, there has been a rising trend in attainment since the school opened two years ago, with a particularly marked improvement in the results for writing. In science, in the statutory teacher assessments, all pupils reached the level expected. In comparison with similar schools, the 2000 results were well below average in reading and mathematics, just below average in writing and average in science. Inspection findings show that standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science are broadly average at the end of Key Stage 1.

The table above shows that the school's 2000 results at the end of Key Stage 2 for English and mathematics were well below the national average. However, statistical evidence shows that these results represent an upward trend in pupils' performance over the past two years. In science, the overall results of the statutory tests in Year 6 were close to the national average and the average for similar schools in 2000. The results were a very significant improvement on those achieved in 1999. The school has set demanding targets, aiming to achieve the national average in English and mathematics by the year 2002. Inspection findings indicate the school is on course to achieve these targets. The standards of work seen in English show pupils achieve well in reading and are becoming more confident writers. However the writing in English and other subjects, particularly of the older pupils, is often spoiled by long-standing weaknesses in grammar, punctuation, spelling, handwriting and presentation. Pupils listen well, but many experience difficulties in expressing themselves in clearly spoken Standard English. Inspection findings in science in Key Stage 2 show that the vast majority of pupils demonstrate average standards, and the percentage achieving higher standards has increased since last year. In mathematics, the majority of Year 6 pupils demonstrate broadly average standards. Standards in other subjects are mainly in line with those expected nationally, except in ICT, across the school, and art and design and gymnastics, in Key Stage 2, where they are below average.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils enjoy school very much. They have very positive attitudes to learning and to all other aspects of school life.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of most pupils, in lessons and at other times of the school day, is very good. The very few pupils whose behaviour is occasionally unpredictable try hard to live within the sensible rules.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils show caring attitudes towards one another; respect and value other people's beliefs and values, for example in relation to religious faiths; and are warm in their recognition of other pupils' efforts and achievements.
Attendance	Attendance over the last two years has been below national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Throughout the school the quality of teaching is mainly good. In 63.4 per cent of the lessons seen, teaching was good or better, and was excellent in 11.11 per cent and very good in 12.3 per cent. Only 1.58 per cent of teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory. The teaching in English is good overall, and is mainly excellent in Key Stage 2. The teaching of mathematics in Key Stage 2 is mainly good, with very good teaching in Years 5 and 6. In Key Stage 1, mathematics teaching is sound overall, with some examples of good teaching. Pupils with special educational needs, those with EAL, and talented and gifted pupils have their needs met well, through good teaching. Particular strengths in teaching include: teachers' good use of their knowledge of individual pupils to plan for their needs; clear learning objectives which are shared with pupils; lessons that are very well managed; and purposeful activities. As a consequence, pupils feel they are engaged in a joint venture of learning with their teachers and they achieve well in most lessons. Although there is very little unsatisfactory teaching, weaknesses include slow pace, and a lack of clarity in planning and teaching.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Overall, the curriculum in the Foundation Stage provides a secure basis for children's learning in Key Stage 1. However, there is scope to improve the provision for children's physical development. In Key Stages 1 and 2, the curriculum meets statutory requirements. It has sufficient breadth and is reasonably balanced. Across the school not all the ICT requirements are fully covered and, at Key Stage 2, art and physical education need more attention.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and make generally good progress in all aspects of their learning.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science in both key stages, achieving standards which broadly reflect their capabilities by the end of Key Stage 2.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good provision is made for pupils' moral and social development and satisfactory provision is made for their spiritual and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has effective procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress and makes very good provision for their personal development. The school is a very caring community where each child is known and valued as an individual.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher sets very high professional standards, which permeate through all aspects of the school's work. There is a strong partnership between the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, who very ably supports her in the management of the school. Together they provide the school with very strong leadership and very good management, and are held in high regard by pupils, staff, parents and governors. Subject leaders are developing their roles well and generally have a good overview of their subjects.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors take a keen interest in the work of the school and fulfil their monitoring role and their statutory responsibilities. They are rightly pleased with the significant progress that has been made. However, the governing body needs to develop better long-term strategic planning and to sharpen understanding of the workings of the school, in order to become a critical friend.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school makes a thorough analysis of performance data, which is used effectively to improve standards.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are sound overall, although there are gaps in some subjects. Good use is made of the learning resources available to support the school's development. The governing body and senior staff apply the principles of best value, and seek to get good value for money from expenditure.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are making good progress. • There are high standards of teaching. • Children enjoy school. • The school works closely with parents. • The school is a significant improvement on the two schools it has replaced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A greater range of extra-curricular activities.

Inspection findings fully support parents' positive views and agree that the range of extra-curricular activities is more limited than in many primary schools.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The language and literacy skills of the majority of children are well below average for their age when they join the nursery class, and their speech and vocabulary are significantly underdeveloped for their ages. When account is taken of their starting points, most children make good progress, although their development is heavily dependent on interaction with adults. Children in the reception class respond well to activities involving language and literacy, making good and sometimes very good progress in these aspects of their work when directly supported by interaction with an adult. As in the nursery class, the vocabulary and speech of most children are below average, and sometimes well below average for their age. On entry to the nursery, the mathematical knowledge and understanding of most children are well below that expected for this age group. While the majority of children make good progress in the nursery and reception classes, their mathematical attainment at the end of the reception year is mainly below the standard expected.
2. In Key Stage 1, the results of the national tests in the year 2000, were well below the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Nevertheless, there has been a rising trend in attainment since the school opened two years ago, with a particularly marked improvement in the results for writing. In science, in the statutory teacher assessments, all pupils reached the level expected. In comparison with similar schools, the 2000 results were well below average in reading and mathematics, although just below average in writing and matched the standards in science.
3. The school's 2000 Key Stage 2 results for English and mathematics were well below the national average. However, statistical evidence shows that these results represent a very significant upward trend in pupils' performance over the past two years. In science, the overall results of the statutory 2000 tests in Year 6 were close to the national average and the average for similar schools. The results in Key Stage 2 were a very significant improvement on those achieved in 1999.
4. This is the first inspection of this new school, which was formed in 1998 following the amalgamation of Bandley Hill Infant School and Bandley Hill Junior School. It is important to acknowledge that, in 1998, only 43 per cent of Year 6 pupils from Bandley Hill Junior School achieved the nationally expected level in English and 36 per cent per cent in science. Against this background, the results of the cohort of pupils in the year 2000 demonstrate a significant achievement.
5. Inspection findings show that, as a result of effective teaching, standards are continuing to rise in all aspects **English** in both key stages. Pupils of all abilities make mainly good, and sometimes very good progress in lessons, and mainly good progress over time in relation to their starting points. At the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils can use appropriate strategies to help them read. Bright pupils can predict what might happen next and can often work out hidden meanings in the text. By the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils have developed preferences in their personal reading and can talk convincingly about their favourite books and authors. They have developed satisfactory study skills and can locate specific information from a range of different texts and record their findings according to the purposes of the writing. Some of the weaker readers in Key Stage 2 have not developed the basic reading skills they should have acquired in their earlier years of schooling.

6. As is to be expected, pupils' knowledge about language and their competence in reading remain in advance of their own skills as writers. This is particularly the case in Key Stage 2, where a high proportion of the teaching is excellent. They have developed a sound grasp of the use of language for effect and of the techniques used by writers. Nevertheless, the written work of many pupils is often spoiled by weaknesses in grammar, punctuation, spelling, handwriting and presentation. In many cases, these weaknesses are of a long-standing nature and, in spite of most teachers' best efforts over the last two years, remain embedded as 'bad habits', especially in the work of older pupils. Pupils' skills as listeners develop well throughout both key stages. They can select relevant information from what they hear, and they are able to follow quite complex sequences of instructions and lines of reasoning. Overall, however, pupils' speech develops less quickly than their listening skills. Many pupils acquire a sound general vocabulary and an extensive repertoire of technical terms related to the study of specific curriculum subjects. They experience greater difficulties organising and expressing their thoughts clearly in spoken Standard English, and in these respects their speech remains below average by the end of Key Stage 2.
7. In **mathematics**, inspection findings are more favourable than the most recent Standard Assessment Test (SATs) results. Most pupils make mainly good progress in acquiring key numeracy skills and in developing their understanding of measures, shape and space. At the end of Key Stage 1, the majority of pupils achieve the expected level although the proportion achieving a higher standard is a little lower than in most schools. There are no marked differences in the performance of girls and boys. At the end of Key Stage 2, the majority of pupils achieve standards that are in line with those expected nationally, and a significant minority does better. Most pupils have a sound understanding of the number system and of measures, shape and space and can handle data competently. Progress in learning to apply the mathematical skills they have acquired is broadly satisfactory, but slower, across the key stage and pupils need more opportunities to solve real-life problems.
8. On entry to Key Stage 1, the **scientific** knowledge and understanding of most pupils are below average. Inspection findings show that pupils, including those with special educational needs, generally achieve well in relation to their starting points at the beginning of Key Stage 1. The vast majority of pupils demonstrate average standards at the end of both key stages, and the percentage of pupils achieving higher standards has increased since last year in both Year 2 and Year 6.
9. Across the school pupils make uneven, and mainly unsatisfactory, progress in using **ICT** to communicate and handle information and to support their problem-solving, recording and expressive work. Throughout both key stages, they gain insufficient experience of using ICT particularly for control, monitoring, modelling and for handling data. As a consequence, the attainment of the vast majority of pupils is below average at the end of both key stages.
10. Pupils make satisfactory progress, overall, in **art and design** in Key Stage 1, and attain average standards at the end of the key stage. Pupils' progress is more spasmodic in Key Stage 2, and is unsatisfactory, overall. Although there are some examples of sound work in this key stage, standards in drawing and painting are below average throughout the key stage. In Year 6, standards remain a little below those expected for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2. In **design and technology** pupils make satisfactory progress and their standards are in line with those expected nationally at the end of both key stages. In **geography** pupils in both key stages make satisfactory progress in extending their knowledge and understanding of places, patterns and processes, and of environmental change. Overall, their

standards are broadly average, although the progress they make in geographical enquiry and skills is more spasmodic and, overall, is just satisfactory. Pupils achieve broadly average standards for their ages in **history** at the end of both key stages. Pupils make good progress in most of the lessons observed, and very good progress in Year 6. In **music**, pupils in both key stages make sound progress and achieve average standards in performing using untuned instruments. They achieve well in singing and attain high standards for their ages. Pupils in Key Stage 1 attain sound standards for their age in appraising music and, at the end of Key Stage 2 pupils' appraisal skills are above average. However, due to the shortage of tuned instruments, pupils across the school make unsatisfactory progress in composing. Due to time-tabling arrangements there was insufficient evidence to make a secure judgement about standards of **physical education** in Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2, pupils attain high standards in ball and games skills and most pupils attain the expected standards in swimming by the end of Key Stage 2. Across the school, pupils' progress in gymnastics is hampered by insufficient equipment and, as a consequence, they achieve standards that are below average. In **religious education**, there was insufficient evidence to make a secure judgement about standards attained by the end of Key Stage 1. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education, achieving standards that are broadly average for their age.

11. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and make generally good progress in all aspects of their learning. They build steadily and surely on their prior attainment and achieve standards that, although sometimes below average for their age, are accurate reflections of their capabilities. More able pupils also do well, overall, and some achieve high standards.
12. Careful monitoring of the standards achieved by particular groups shows that there is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls, or in the attainment of pupils from ethnic minorities.
13. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science in both key stages, achieving standards which broadly reflect their capabilities by the end of Key Stage 2.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. With extremely rare exceptions, pupils enjoy school very much. They have very positive attitudes to learning and to all other aspects of school life. Indeed, when asked what they liked least about school, most pupils reflect seriously, then suggest 'play-time' or 'lunch-time'. They would much rather be in lessons than not, and this is a measure of their commitment to learning and their appreciation of their teachers' efforts. Attitudes to work are very good in both key stages and in most lessons. The pupils are fortunate in having some very good and excellent teachers who value them and believe in their ability to learn. In return, the pupils feel valued and mature. They are willing to do their best to meet their teachers' expectations, and they demonstrate their respect for their teachers by trying hard to apply what they have been taught. They work responsibly whether directly supervised by staff or when engaged on independent tasks; and they do the best they can with their homework. Whatever their ability, pupils in most lessons strive to use their individual talents wisely and well, and to produce their best efforts.
15. Most pupils are consistently polite, helpful and friendly at all times. They develop confidence in the nursery and reception classes and quickly establish trusting relationships with one another, with their teachers and with other adults in the school.

They observe the social conventions of turn-taking well, for example during discussions or when queuing for lunch. With very few exceptions, pupils behave very well in lessons and in the playground. The very few pupils whose behaviour is occasionally unpredictable are developing a good level of awareness of the impact of their behaviour on others and try hard to live within the very sensible 'golden rules' which they have agreed to obey and respect. Fixed-term exclusions are used very rarely and judiciously, but all pupils are aware of the rules that apply, and it is most unusual for this sanction to be used. Pupils are generally happy in school, willingly abide by the 'golden rules' and have a very good understanding of what constitutes right and wrong behaviour both within, and beyond, the school environment. Incidents involving bullying, bad language or racist behaviour are very rare indeed.

16. The adults in the school set good examples and this is the key to the good relationships pupils have with their peers and with adults. They show caring attitudes towards one another, respect and value other people's beliefs and values, for example in relation to religious faiths, and are warm in their recognition of other pupils' efforts and achievements, for example during awards assemblies.
17. Pupils of all ages undertake routine duties and responsibilities willingly and reliably within their classes. Older pupils assume responsibilities within the wider school, for example as door, hall, and library monitors or lunch-time helpers in the dining-room. They undertake their duties cheerfully and conscientiously, and it is not at all unusual for even the youngest children to try to persuade their teachers to find them even more jobs to do!
18. The staff work hard to develop pupils' independence as learners, and, within their capabilities, pupils respond very well. They try very hard to 'share their teacher's time' (a 'golden rule') and to work on their own when this is necessary, for example during some parts of the literacy hour. They use the resources provided as well as they can, and they concentrate hard to draw on, and apply, what they have previously learned. Lunch and play-times are social and harmonious occasions. Racist incidents are very rare.
19. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are very well integrated into every aspect of school life. They relate well to their peers and to all adults who work with them. They receive warm support, the encouragement they need to succeed, and genuine praise for their efforts and achievements from their classmates as well as from staff.
20. Attendance over the last two years has been below national average and is unsatisfactory. This is mainly attributable to higher than average levels of sickness amongst pupils. Initiatives to improve levels of attendance are beginning to have an impact and because every absence is followed up the school has a very low level of unauthorised absence. Registration procedures fully meet statutory requirements. Nearly all pupils arrive in good time and sessions start promptly throughout the school day.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

21. Throughout the school the quality of teaching is mainly good. In 63.4 per cent of the lessons seen, teaching was good or better, and was excellent in 11.11 per cent and very good in 12.3 per cent. Only 1.58 per cent of teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory. This is the first inspection of this new school, which was formed in 1998 following the amalgamation of Bandle Hill Infant School and Bandle Hill

Junior School. It is important to acknowledge that, when both schools were inspected in 1997, teaching in the infant school was satisfactory or better in the vast majority of lessons, but 43 per cent of teaching in the junior school was unsatisfactory. Although no direct comparisons can be made with Featherstone Wood, these figures demonstrate the impressive achievement of the new school over a very short period.

22. All teaching staff share a vision and commitment to raise standards and it is this that underpins the overall good quality of teaching. Teachers know their pupils well, their interests and concerns and learning needs. In the best lessons, teachers use this knowledge very effectively, to build up individual children's confidence and self-esteem. They are particularly skilled at spontaneous assessment during question and answer sessions and at using pupils' responses to develop the learning for all. Planning takes account of individual pupils' learning needs and builds on what they already know and can do. Within this context, teachers pay careful attention to making activities interesting and purposeful. They talk about the purpose of the lessons and, as a consequence pupils feel they are engaged in a joint venture of learning and achievement with their teachers. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on the quality of their work. This results in pupils having a good understanding of their achievement and future targets for improvement. Homework is purposeful and pertinent to learning in school. Teachers mark pupils' written work focusing particularly on the main teaching points and individual pupils' targets. Where there is room for improvement in teaching, the lack of appropriate resources in some subjects limits the breadth of work planned. Occasionally, the slow pace of lessons adversely affects pupils' progress. Lack of sufficient subject knowledge in art and design, and in the physical development of children under five also affects the quality of teaching in these areas and thus the children's potential achievements.
23. The overall good quality of teaching in the Early Years Base is due to a range of features. The teacher, nursery nurses and learning support assistant form an effective team who plan and work well together. This teamwork helps ensure that the children are well supported in their learning through the provision of a good range of activities. In a safe and secure environment, the children enjoy good and trusting relationships with all adults and with their peers. The children's personal and social development has an appropriately high priority, and opportunities to promote independence, sharing resources and good behaviour, underpin much of the teaching in the unit. Good attention is paid to developing the children's literacy skills. However, there is scope for paying more attention to using and extending children's own speech in all aspects of their learning. The planning and provision for the physical development of the four-year-olds needs further attention. At present, good opportunities are given for the development of children's fine physical skills, such as cutting, drawing and playing with small construction toys. However, their gross physical skills are not catered for appropriately in the planned physical activity lessons and, as a consequence, they are not making enough progress in developing these skills.
24. In Key Stages 1 and 2, the teaching of English is of a generally high standard overall, with excellent teaching in the majority of lessons seen in Key Stage 2 and in one lesson in Key Stage 1. Elsewhere, teaching is sound or better, although the scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that progress is less marked in Year 3 than in other year groups. Most teachers' expertise in English is such that they know precisely what needs to be done, and what pupils need to know, in order to raise standards. Teachers' very good relationships with pupils have provided an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect and this encourages pupils to take risks and to use language adventurously. Teachers generally provide good role models for pupils as readers

and writers. They make sure that pupils learn, through their reading and through the study of texts, many of the strategies they need to become successful writers. All teachers also give suitable emphasis to the development of vocabulary and to language use throughout the curriculum.

25. In mathematics, there are examples of good teaching in both key stages. In Key Stage 1, teaching is sound overall and in Key Stage 2 it is mainly good, with very good teaching in Years 5 and 6. Teaching has benefited from training in the National Numeracy Strategy. All teachers have established mathematical areas and displays in their classrooms to interest pupils and help reinforce mathematical vocabulary. Overall, oral and mental activities have been successfully introduced, but occasionally the pace of these sessions is slow and the questions lack appropriate challenge. Key ideas and vocabulary are revised at the end of lessons to help reinforce pupils' learning. In both key stages, pupils need more opportunities to extend their mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding through the use of ICT.
26. The quality of teaching in science is mainly good in both key stages; and very good teaching is evident for the oldest pupils in Key Stage 2. As a consequence, pupils' overall progress in the subject is good. The organisation of lessons is a particular strength, teachers' subject knowledge is secure and they are able to capture pupils' interest. As a consequence, pupils listen attentively and concentrate well on their tasks.
27. Due to time-tabling arrangements, insufficient lessons were seen in Key Stage 1 to make secure judgements about the quality of teaching in geography, art and design, design and technology, physical education and religious education. However, evidence from an analysis of pupils' work in art and design suggests that insufficient attention is given to the progressive development of pupils' key skills in the subject. Evidence also suggests that some teachers would benefit from in-service training to increase their knowledge and to raise their expectations of pupils' potential achievements in the subject. In both key stages, insufficient teaching of ICT took place during the inspection to make a secure judgement about the quality of teaching.
28. In geography, the quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory in Year 3 and good in Years 4 and 6. The teaching of history is mainly good, and occasionally very good across the school. However, pupils need more encouragement to raise historical questions of their own. Overall the teaching of music is mainly good, with some excellent teaching in Year 5. The teaching of singing is a particular strength. In Key Stage 2, the quality of teaching in physical education is variable, but is good overall, with excellent teaching in Year 6. In the best lessons, sufficient time is allowed for pupils to evaluate their work and refine their skills. The teaching of religious education in Key Stage 2 varies between good and unsatisfactory, but is sound overall. The teaching of religious education in the one lesson seen in Key Stage 1 was good. In the best lessons, pupils are encouraged to explore the underlying meanings of stories and draw parallels between religious teachings and their own lives. This was not evident in the unsatisfactory lesson observed.
29. The strong focus on language development in the school as a whole also benefits those pupils for whom English is an additional language. Although no Cantonese speaking support staff could be found to help a child who is in the early stages of English language acquisition, the quality of intervention and support he receives is having a marked impact on his very good progress. The Year 1 teacher qualified in EAL work has responsibility for the oversight of provision for all EAL pupils in the

school. She keeps a profile of each pupil's developing language competence and uses this to help teachers to plan suitable work and to use appropriate teaching approaches. All teachers give high priority to the development of pupils' general and subject-specific vocabulary, and all create enhanced opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in listening and speaking during lessons in most subjects. Further opportunities for pupils to prepare and deliver short talks to large audiences are created in assemblies, while drama and role-play provide occasional opportunities for the creative use of spoken language. Staff provide good role models in their own use of spoken and written language, although they do not always intervene sufficiently to help pupils to recognise significant differences between informal language use and standard forms.

30. Overall, the quality of support provided for pupils with special educational needs is good. In their lesson plans, teachers appropriately include the provision of suitably differentiated work for these pupils, including the more able pupils for whom extension activities are often planned. All teachers know their pupils well, and they take particular care to involve pupils with special educational needs in discussions and in all other activities. Individual education plans for these pupils identify well-defined, achievable targets. Where appropriate, for example in literacy and numeracy, common weaknesses in pupils' performance are addressed through differentiated work in lessons. At other times, pupils with special educational needs benefit from good teaching in small groups or individually from learning support assistants or the special educational needs co-ordinator. Teachers and classroom assistants work closely together. They discuss the aims of lessons, the targets for individual pupils and their progress. As a result of this good partnership, learning support assistants make a valuable contribution to the progress and achievement of pupils with special educational needs.

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

31. In the Foundation Stage, the curriculum is generally well matched to children's needs. A rich and diverse range of learning opportunities is provided for nursery and reception children to develop their basic and personal skills. However, there is scope to improve the provision for their physical development. Overall, the curriculum in the Foundation Stage provides a secure basis for children's learning in Key Stage 1.
32. In Key Stages 1 and 2, the curriculum meets statutory requirements. It has sufficient breadth and is reasonably balanced. Sufficient time is allocated for literacy and numeracy, and this is used well in English and mathematics lessons, across the school. More time is allocated for science than in most schools, and this has contributed to the recent improvement in pupils' standards in the subject. However, there are some weaknesses in the curriculum: pupils require more opportunities to develop their skills in ICT, across the school, and in art and design in Key Stage 2; and aspects of provision in physical education and music are unsatisfactory due to a lack of equipment in Key Stage 2. These weaknesses are recognised by the school, and it is now in a good position to rectify them. Since the school's strong emphasis on English, mathematics and science has improved pupils' standards in these subjects, it is now able to focus, more rigorously, on weaknesses in other subjects.
33. The school makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs. All pupils enjoy their full entitlement to the whole curriculum. Work planned for these pupils draws on the combined skills and knowledge of the special educational needs co-ordinator, class teachers, support staff and, where necessary or relevant, outside

agencies and specialists. Good account is taken of pupils' individual strengths, as well as their needs. Those pupils with learning needs associated with emotional and behavioural factors receive good support from all staff and, in particular, from the special educational needs co-ordinator.

34. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum and support is available to ensure that financial hardship is no barrier to participating in music tuition, visits and residential trips. Planning across the curriculum to include an awareness of the multicultural nature of British society is sound, and pupils have occasional opportunities to see more of other cultures when music or dance groups visit. The headteacher monitors the needs of the more able and gifted and talented pupils to ensure they are being appropriately challenged.
35. All pupils for whom English is an additional language, have full access to the curriculum. Resources and topics studied broadly reflect the multicultural and linguistic diversity of society, and pupils are encouraged to share their own cultural and linguistic experiences with others, in lessons and assemblies, where relevant.
36. Staff have a very good understanding of the differing needs of those pupils for whom English is an additional language, and those pupils who have special educational needs, and pupils are grouped and supported accordingly. A few pupils with EAL also have special educational needs, but teachers have a good understanding of their individual profiles, and assessments are used well to ensure that provision is appropriate.
37. The school makes mainly very good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education. It is making mainly effective use of the government's 'Healthy Schools' initiative, including for the provision of sex education. Healthy eating is also promoted, through the science curriculum, and when pupils discuss food in design and technology lessons. There is sometimes reference to the dangers of smoking, through the science curriculum, but the school has yet to implement a structured approach to develop pupils' awareness of the dangers of drugs. At present, Year 6 pupils are able to attend an after-school 'booster' club, which helps them consolidate key skills and knowledge, particularly in English and mathematics, but there are no other clubs. However, there are after-school football matches with other schools, the football club will start again after the spring half-term and the netball club will meet during the summer term.
38. The school has developed sound links with local playgroups, welcoming the staff to visit and offering them space in the school for their activities. There are also worthwhile links with secondary schools where continuity for pastoral care and the needs of pupils with special educational needs are well planned. The school also participates in a scheme to support those pupils who might find the transition to senior school challenging. Pupils have more limited opportunities to mix with others of their own age; there are regular football matches and last year pupils from the top two years joined in the Stevenage-wide millennium tree planting ceremony.
39. The local area is soundly used as a resource in several curriculum subjects, including a recent litter survey to help the development of mapping skills in geography. The school welcomes a variety of visitors to broaden pupils' horizons and contribute to their awareness of the multicultural nature of society. Pupils are encouraged to make their own contribution to the community through charitable fundraising and plans are being prepared to make sure that all aspects of citizenship will be covered by next year.

40. The headteacher has forged some valuable business links through local initiatives and networks. These are having an impact, not only in additional funding and sponsorship, but also on the curriculum. Supermarkets have helped to make projects in numeracy and design and technology come alive for pupils and also widened their knowledge of business and industry.
41. The school makes very good provision for pupils' moral and social development, and sound provision for their spiritual and cultural development.
42. Pupils' spiritual development is soundly promoted through religious education and through acts of collective worship, which fully comply with statutory requirements. In assemblies and sometimes through work in English and science, pupils are encouraged to reflect upon aspects of their lives and the wonder of the world. During the inspection, children in the Foundation Stage were learning about the beauty of leaves and bark found in the local environment. Year 2 pupils talked with wonder about the great age of the local church, their experiences in learning about the Christening ceremony and playing the ancient church bells during a recent visit.
43. The school has a very strong moral and social ethos. Honesty and fairness are strongly promoted, and pupils are taught the principles which distinguish right from wrong. A concern for others is encouraged in the daily routines, and is reflected in pupils' positive attitudes and behaviour. Teachers are very effective in promoting pupils' self-esteem and their sense of belonging to a school community which cares for them. They provide very good role models by valuing pupils' achievements and fostering good relationships. Very good use is made of assemblies to celebrate pupils' good work, and to help others to recognise and appreciate it. Pupils are encouraged to work co-operatively, to take responsibility for a range of school duties and to use their initiatives, for example when organising fundraising activities.
44. Pupils' cultural development is fostered, soundly, through work in religious education, geography, history, art and music. The school makes good use of visits to enhance pupils' understanding of the wider society beyond the school. Visitors to the school make a valuable contribution to pupils' cultural development and include theatre groups and musicians as well as termly visits by a local author. Pupils' awareness of the richness and diversity of cultures is promoted through work in religious education where a range of different religions are studied, and through recent work on the Chinese New Year.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

45. The school is a community where the importance of care and the fostering of high self-esteem underpins the good support which it provides for all its pupils. Adults know the pupils well and relationships throughout the school are based on respect, care, encouragement and high expectations of behaviour and attitudes to learning.
46. The staff are very successful in promoting pupils' good behaviour, pride in belonging to the school community and a sense of personal responsibility. As a consequence, pupils approach all aspects of school life with a sense of purpose and confidence. The school's ethos of commitment to learning, coupled with care and respect for all pupils is consistently promoted by the staff who provide very good role models for the pupils. This leads to very positive attitudes to learning and a clear understanding of the high standards of behaviour expected.

47. All pupils are familiar with the school's golden rules and follow them equally well in lessons and at play. Support staff are well briefed to provide a sensitive watching brief on the few pupils who have individual behaviour plans; this helps them focus on their targets for improvement and, wherever possible, ensures that they participate fully in all lessons. The level of exclusions, although higher than in most schools, is now starting to decrease. There are very few incidents of bullying and pupils are confident that any concerns will be listened to sympathetically and appropriate action will be taken. Detailed records are kept of the rare incidents of racist behaviour and appropriately reported to the governing body.
48. Great attention is given to the importance of good attendance. As soon as children start in the nursery, the school encourages good attendance habits by the award of certificates and by following up all absences with parents. Pupils whose attendance gives particular cause for concern are carefully monitored and, where possible, their parents are contacted on the first day of pupils' absence. The school also positively promotes the importance of a healthy lifestyle and diet to parents and children to try to reduce the amount of absence caused by pupils' illness. Although the levels of attendance are still below the national average these initiatives are now resulting in a significant year-on-year improvement.
49. Child protection issues are well handled in the school. All staff have had training in awareness and they have helpful guidelines on the correct procedures to follow. The school is participating in the National Healthy School Standard which ensures that aspects of personal, social and health education are appropriately included in the curriculum. Pupils have planned opportunities to learn about aspects of personal safety but there is scope to increase the education on drugs awareness. Teachers are expected to assess pupils' personal and social development so that additional support and encouragement can be given to help pupils develop positive attitudes to their learning. Opportunities are taken to acknowledge and celebrate the progress and confidence of those pupils who work hard to improve.
50. The school has well-established procedures for medicines, accidents and emergencies and maintains detailed supporting documentation. The health and safety policy is implemented through regular site inspections and pupils are reminded about the importance of safe practice in lessons such as physical education. The school buildings and grounds are very clean, tidy and well maintained. They provide a safe and secure environment for the pupils.
51. The school strongly promotes the valuing of each child in all aspects of school life. Sensitive support is provided for those pupils who find it harder to concentrate or conform to the high standards of behaviour expected and this helps them focus better on their tasks. A designated teacher supports the needs of the small number of pupils who are fostered.
52. Good procedures for assessing pupils' standards and the progress they are making in their learning are in place, and are generally implemented well. In the Foundation Stage, effective use is made of baseline assessments for children at the beginning of their periods in nursery and reception. The results are carefully analysed and inform the planning for children's personal, social and cultural development as well as for the more academic aspects of their work. Across the school, there are rigorous procedures for judging pupils' standards in English, mathematics and science; and work is generally well matched to their needs in these subjects, as a result. Assessment tasks are given at the end of units of study, and the results of statutory tests are analysed well and are used to target areas for improvement. In English and mathematics, the school is also making good use of the non-statutory tests to assess

pupils' work; and the school sets realistic but challenging targets for pupils' attainment in Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. In other subjects of the National Curriculum and in religious education, assessment procedures are sound, overall. However, there is scope for improvement in ICT and in art and design, where pupils are making insufficient progress in their learning, and standards are often too low. The co-ordinators for English, mathematics and science have established effective procedures for monitoring standards in their subjects by analysing samples of pupils' work from across the school; and some other co-ordinators are beginning to adopt this good practice.

53. Teachers' planning nearly always identifies clear learning objectives, and these are shared with pupils at the beginning of lessons and form the basis of useful evaluations at the end of lessons. This helps pupils to develop their awareness of their own performance, and they are also encouraged to set themselves targets for improvement, particularly in English. In most lessons, teachers use good questioning skills to probe pupils' understanding, and to assess their learning needs. Teachers mark pupils' work carefully and keep pertinent notes about the significant achievements of individual pupils. Portfolios of pupils' work include examples which are assessed against National Curriculum levels in English, mathematics and science, and show pupils' progress over time. At three points in the year, all pupils are assessed in their personal, social and emotional development, which is good practice.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

54. Featherstone Wood is a school that benefits from strong parental support and a shared commitment to improve. With the school providing encouragement and backing for their campaign, a parents' action group successfully challenged proposals to close the school shortly after it had been reorganised as a primary school. This undertaking has left parents with a sense of empowerment and a feeling of ownership of the school. The headteacher and staff have skilfully built on this community spirit, to maintain the parental commitment to improving standards.
55. The headteacher and staff have an open and welcoming relationship with parents where concerns are shared and expectations are clear. Parents know that they will be quickly involved if there is any pastoral or educational concern about their children. They also have the opportunity to seek further information, make suggestions or talk about any worries at an after-school surgery held each week - this is good practice. More formal consultations, including brief reports, are planned each term where individual progress and personal targets are shared with parents. Annual written reports give very clear indications of strengths and weaknesses and targets for improvement in the core subjects as well as an assessment of pupils' personal and social development.
56. The school prospectus and annual report to parents are informative and well written and regular newsletters keep parents informed about school events and activities. Where necessary, the school now uses the local authority to translate important communications from the school into the parents' own language. The home/school agreement and homework policy were particularly mentioned at the parents' meeting as clear examples of partnership being established by the school and the value put on their support for learning. Parents are kept informed about what is being taught through occasional workshops and by running courses to help them support their children in English and mathematics. The school also strongly promotes the

importance of a healthy lifestyle to parents when addressing the high levels of absence through sickness.

57. For their part, parents are willing to give time and commitment to the school. Some help in classes and help run the after-school sporting activities. Parent helpers are encouraged by the school to consider becoming classroom assistants and to extend their expertise through further training. The previously formed action group has now become a parents' association, which organises social and fundraising activities to benefit the school. The vast majority of parents are fulfilling their side of the home-school agreement by taking an interest in their children's education, progress and homework; only a tiny minority of parents are failing to ensure their children attend regularly.
58. There is very effective communication between the school and the parents of pupils with special educational needs. Parents are kept informed of their children's progress and are involved appropriately and regularly in reviews. They are made fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses in their children's performance and, where relevant, are involved in setting new targets. Parents are very supportive of their children, and are also appreciative of the school's efforts to help them. As a result, there is a genuine partnership, which serves the children well.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

59. There is a strong sense that all the people who work in this new school are committed to the headteacher's vision and purposeful direction to raise the achievement of the pupils. She sets very high professional standards, which permeate through all aspects of the school's work, and are most evident in the pupils' very positive attitudes to learning and the improved standards of their work over the two years of the school's life. There is a strong partnership between the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, who very ably supports her in the management of the school and also offers an excellent role model in her own teaching. Together they provide the school with very strong leadership and very good management and are held in high regard by pupils, staff, parents and governors. They are developing a strong team of good teachers and support staff, all of whom have a firm stake in the educational direction of the school and its continuing improvement. Parents, too, share in this vision. For nearly a year, the future of the school hung in the balance and was reprieved from closure following the parents' campaign. In the light of this set back, the progress the headteacher and staff have made in developing and implementing policies, is all the more impressive.
60. The curriculum leadership provided by the headteacher and deputy headteacher is well focused, and subject leaders are well supported. English, mathematics, science and ICT are priorities, and the teaching of these subjects has been monitored by subject leaders. Useful feedback has been given to teachers and subject leaders have also led staff meetings to consider the outcomes of monitoring and assessment, and this has improved practice. The headteacher and subject leaders of the core subjects do thorough analyses of test results and trends in subjects, year groups and by gender, which they discuss with staff. As a consequence, all teachers are well informed about the strengths and weaknesses in the core subjects across the school. Subject leaders have made important contributions to the development of policies and the introduction of schemes of work, which are now in place for all subjects. Monitoring in the foundation subjects mainly consists of looking at teachers' plans and sometimes at pupils' work and there is some variation in the extent to which subject leaders have an overview of their subjects. All have appropriately identified

monitoring as a priority in their action plans, which form the main part of the Curriculum School Improvement Plan.

61. The progress of pupils for whom English is an additional language is closely monitored by the EAL co-ordinator and by the headteacher. Test results and the results of other assessments are analysed, and the resulting information is used to make sure that weaknesses in any individual's performance are addressed, for example through the setting of individual targets, through differentiated work or through adult support. The EAL co-ordinator has a very good level of understanding of pupils' needs and provides effective support, training and guidance for staff.
62. The school admirably lives up to its aim of giving all pupils the chance to succeed whatever their needs or barriers to learning. The comprehensive policy for equal opportunities was drawn up by the staff and they have been trained in how to implement it through their teaching. The headteacher maintains detailed records to monitor the progress of all pupils and also evaluates how different groups of pupils are achieving and what measures might be taken to improve their performance. These rigorous procedures are a good example of best practice to ensure that the aim of educational inclusion is fully met.
63. The special educational needs co-ordinator provides good leadership and management of special educational needs provision, and is very effective in her role as special educational needs co-ordinator. She is very well qualified and has regularly attended courses to keep abreast of developments in special educational needs work. She has been instrumental in ensuring that support staff also receive relevant training. The special educational needs co-ordinator works closely with class teachers and classroom assistants to monitor the progress of all pupils with special educational needs; and there is a strong sense of teamwork across the school. The special educational needs co-ordinator ensures that there is a good balance between in-class and withdrawal support, and that pupils do not miss the same activities on a regular basis, when they are withdrawn. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place, and professional contacts with external agencies are constructive and helpful.
64. In the two years of its existence, the governing body has experienced a relatively high turn-over of governors, including three chairs of governors, and this has inevitably slowed down the progress they have made in developing their roles and responsibilities. At present, there are four vacancies on the governing body. In the circumstances, the governors have made a sound start. They have undertaken training and established appropriate committees. Most governors attend meetings regularly. The literacy governor has visited classes and has a good understanding of the school's progress in establishing the literacy strategy. He also gives good support in planning the budget, as chair of the finance committee. The Special Educational Needs Committee on which staff and parents are represented, benefits from a chair who is an educational psychologist. The committee meets termly, and has established a cycle of regular visits with an agreed focus for each visit. Visiting governors report back to the full governing body, thereby increasing the awareness of all to the workings of the school. They take a keen interest in the school and are rightly pleased with the significant progress that has been made. However, they need to sharpen their monitoring and observations, so that they can develop their role as a critical friend to the school. The recently appointed chair visits regularly and has established a good rapport with the headteacher and staff. The school improvement plan, based on a thorough needs analysis of the curriculum taken from data and monitoring, has been written by the headteacher and staff and outlines curriculum development.

65. The administration of the school budget is carried out satisfactorily by the headteacher and the school administrative officer, and additional support is provided by the Local Education Authority bursar. Financial planning is appropriately linked to initiatives in the school improvement plan. Spending is carefully monitored by the headteacher, and governors plan the budget carefully for each year. Funds carried forward from previous years are ear marked for the planned computer suite. The headteacher and chair of finance have carried out a careful analysis of the likely reduced income over the next few years resulting from the falling roll as the school changes from a two to a one-form entry. However, governors do not have a sufficiently clear long-term strategic plan for personnel, finance or premises, to take account of the anticipated reduction in income.
66. The school is generously staffed, so the ratio of teachers to pupils is lower than most primary schools. Staff have the expertise and experience to cover the age range and ability of pupils. Classroom assistants are well briefed and develop positive relationships with pupils. They have good skills and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. Induction procedures for staff are good and the school has a good policy in use for the performance management of teachers. Staff training has been a high priority, and structures are in place to ensure proper feedback from training at staff meetings.
67. Resources for English and science are good. English resources have been carefully chosen to match the range of pupils' learning needs. Resources for mathematics, art and design, design and technology and religious education are satisfactory. Resources for ICT are adequate and are soon to be improved once the computer suite is established. In the remaining subjects, there are some significant gaps in resources that are having a detrimental impact on pupils' learning. Resources for geography are well organised but are barely adequate. The school needs to improve the quality and range of maps, atlases, globes, aerial photographs and other reference materials. The range of secondary resources to support history is satisfactory, but the school has few artefacts of its own. The teaching of music is restricted by the shortage of tuned instruments and this hampers pupils' progress in composing, performing and using notation. Resources for physical education are satisfactory for games skills, but provision for gymnastics is very poor, particularly for Key Stage 2 pupils. The Early Years Base is adequately resourced for indoor work, but needs to develop the outdoor learning environment.
68. The school is aware of the gaps in resources, most of which are the result of having inherited some resources of poor quality or in poor condition from the previous junior school. Resources are being replenished according to the school's subject priorities and as the budget allows.
69. The accommodation in the school is generous and is in good decorative order. Teachers take care to create stimulating displays of pupils' work and the school environment enhances pupils' learning. Classrooms are spacious and the school benefits from two halls and separate dining rooms. All plans to make changes to the accommodation were shelved when closure was proposed and so there remain some inconvenient features of the two previous schools. For example, the building is joined only by the kitchen, and internal access is limited to certain times of day. Overall, effective use is made of the accommodation, which is very well cleaned and maintained by the hard-working caretaker and cleaning staff. There is sufficient playground space, grassed area and a good-sized playing field. However, the two-storey building and steps to the playground make this school difficult for wheelchair users to have full access.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

70. **In order to raise standards and improve provision and attendance at the school, the governors should include the following issues in their post-inspection action plans:**

(1) Raise standards in ICT by:

- providing pupils in both key stages with greater opportunities to develop their skills in control, monitoring, modelling and handling data;
- establishing the new computer suite;
- putting into practice the action plan drawn up by the subject leaders;
- identifying any weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge and rectifying these with appropriate training.

(The school already has most of the above identified in the school improvement plan.)

See paragraphs: 9, 32, 129, 131.

(2) Raise standards in art and design in Key Stage 2 by:

- giving greater attention to planning for the progressive development of pupils' key skills in the subject;
- provide teachers with training to increase their subject knowledge and raise their expectations of pupils' potential achievements in the subject.

(The school has already identified art and design as an area for further development).

See paragraphs: 27, 32, 110.

(3) Raise standards in grammar, punctuation, spelling, handwriting and presentation in Key Stage 2 by:

- intervening more directly to help pupils to develop their awareness of the differences between speech and writing and to use standard English forms accurately, when relevant, in both speech and writing;
- teaching pupils to use complex sentences in their writing, where relevant, from a younger age than is currently the case;
- developing pupils as 'editors' of their own and others' work by paying attention to technical and 'secretarial' features;
- using ICT more widely to support teaching and learning in English.

(The need for improvements in these areas of writing have been identified in the school improvement plan)

See paragraphs: 6, 87.

(4) Improve the provision for the physical development of children in the nursery and the provision to develop the gymnastic skills of pupils in Key Stage 2 by:

- developing the outdoor play area to include an appropriate range of equipment for the development of the children's gross motor skills;
- ensuring that planning for children's physical development more closely reflects the requirements of the Foundation Stage Curriculum;
- ensuring children have more regular daily access to the outdoor play area;
- purchasing appropriate equipment to develop Key Stage 2 pupils' gymnastic skills.

See paragraphs: 10, 22, 23, 31, 37, 82, 142, 147.

71. In addition to the above key issues, the following issues should also be considered in the action plan:

(1) Develop the school improvement planning process by:

- addressing long-term strategic planning issues for the premises, personnel and finance;
- involving governors in the planning process.

See paragraphs: 64, 65.

(2) Improve the attendance of pupils by:

- continuing to use the present effective procedures for encouraging good attendance by pupils.

See paragraphs 56, 48, 20.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	63
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	26

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
11.11	12.69	39.68	34.92	1.58	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR - Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	12	204
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	43

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR - Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	69

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	12

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	28

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.1
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

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

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	8	9	13
	Girls	10	13	11
	Total	18	22	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	62 (71)	76 (41)	83 (71)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	8	11	15
	Girls	10	10	14
	Total	18	21	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	62 (68)	72 (71)	100 (91)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	19	14	33

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	13	12	18
	Girls	8	8	12
	Total	21	20	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	64 (61)	61 (52)	91 (61)
	National	75 (70)	72 (68)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	13	12	18
	Girls	8	8	12
	Total	21	20	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	64 (50)	61 (50)	91 (50)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	8
Chinese	0
White	181
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	4	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Average class size	24

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	141.5

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	12

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	90

Number of pupils per FTE adult	3
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	564,867
Total expenditure	532,876
Expenditure per pupil	2,317
Balance brought forward from previous year	45,262
Balance carried forward to next year	77,253

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	216
Number of questionnaires returned	37

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	73	24	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	51	0	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	41	3	0	35
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	41	43	3	0	14
The teaching is good.	46	51	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	46	8	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	32	5	0	5
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	30	62	0	3	5
The school works closely with parents.	51	43	3	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	19	59	3	0	19
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	30	62	0	3	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	54	8	3	5

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

72. Children are admitted to the nursery the term of their fourth birthday. The nursery and reception classes share the same space, known as the Early Years Base which is staffed by one teacher and two full-time nursery nurses and a learning support assistant. Nursery children attend in the mornings and reception children stay the full day. During the inspection, there were 24 three and four year olds in the nursery and 28 four and five year old reception children in the base. The children's attainment on entry to the nursery, as measured by the baseline assessment, is well below average in most areas of learning. These include the personal and social, language and literacy and mathematical areas of development. The children's physical development is a little above average when they enter the nursery. The overall quality of teaching is good, characterised by enthusiastic and positive presentation.

Personal, social and emotional development

73. The provision for the personal and social development of children in the Foundation Stage is good. All the staff know the children well and respond to their needs with a good balance of support and challenge. The children learn the difference between right and wrong in the context of their work and play. They are provided with a good range of learning experiences; and as a result they are very responsive to the activities offered and eager to explore new learning. Those who have only recently started nursery have settled well into the unit's routines and they have good and trusting relationships with adults and with other children. They follow instructions and settle well; most manage to work and play independently when given the opportunities to choose their activities, and they generally remain on task. Children usually share resources amicably and are good at co-operating and taking turns.

Communication, language and literacy

74. The communication skills of the majority of children are well below average for their age when they join the nursery class, and their speech and vocabulary are significantly underdeveloped. Most children quickly learn to follow instructions and to listen to stories, poems and rhymes. They enjoy these occasions, responding, for example, by joining in with their teachers as they read aloud, sing songs or recite familiar rhymes. When account is taken of their starting points, most children make good progress during short literacy activities, although their development is heavily dependent on interaction with adults, for example, to build up their vocabulary, to learn about books and how they are organised, and to begin to match sounds to letters and words. Few children answer questions by speaking in complete sentences, but the more confident members of the group are pleased to talk about the story of 'The Bear and the Picnic Lunch' and about the characters' feelings in their own ways, usually using brief phrases, and occasionally raising comments of their own without any prompting. In these very early days of schooling, a few children choose to remain silent during shared activities, although they follow proceedings with obvious interest and are clearly developing their understanding and knowledge even when they are reluctant to demonstrate their skills.
75. Children in the reception class respond well to activities involving language and literacy, making good, and sometimes very good, progress in these aspects of their work when directly supported by interaction with an adult. They respond with

laughter to the comical descriptions of animals in poems, read aloud by their teachers, recognise that meaning is conveyed both by the print and by the illustrations in books. They respond well to the rhythmic pattern in songs, for example by clapping in time to accompany a musical version of the story of 'The Three Bears.' Most children have learned the words of the song by heart and accompany the words with precisely-timed actions that match events in the bears' adventures. Most children can recognise a few initial letter sounds, and a few higher attaining children are able to draw on their very early knowledge of phonics to build a few simple words when they 'read' and 'write'. Most know that print is read from left to right, and the more able children demonstrate some understanding of the use of an index. As in the nursery class, the vocabulary and speech of most children are below average, and sometimes well below average for their age, although they are gradually developing confidence to participate in shared activities. The children are also beginning to develop some confidence in themselves as writers. They enjoy the opportunities they are given to 'write', and most produce some recognisable letters in their emergent script and make recognisable attempts at copying their own names.

Mathematical development

76. On entry to the nursery class, the mathematical knowledge and understanding of most children are well below that expected nationally for this age group. In the nursery and reception classes, the majority of children make mainly sound, but sometimes good, progress through the 'stepping stones' of development as outlined in recent national guidance for the Foundation Stage. As a consequence, their attainment at the end of the reception year is only a little below the standard expected.
77. Children are beginning to understand capacity and measures through exploring materials, such as sand and water; and make sound progress in using mathematical language such as 'greater', 'smaller,' 'heavier' or 'lighter' when comparing quantities. They make satisfactory progress in understanding numbers through sorting, matching, ordering, sequencing and counting using either everyday objects or mathematical resources such as 'compare bears'. By the end of the reception year, most children recognise the numerals one to nine, can count reliably up to ten everyday objects and say and use number names, in order, in familiar contexts. They effectively consolidate this knowledge through learning number rhymes and songs, when playing counting games, and through their involvement in a range of carefully planned mathematical activities. The classroom assistant provides sound support for children's learning and, in the two lessons taught by the class teacher, the quality of teaching was good. For example, the reception children responded very positively to a well taught session which focused on naming two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes and exploring the language associated with size and position. This lesson was carefully structured to meet the needs of these young children while at the same time familiarising them with the structure of mathematics teaching they will encounter in Key Stage 1, as part of the National Numeracy Strategy. The staff have given careful consideration to the organisation of classrooms and have provided colourful and interesting displays designed to promote children's interest in mathematics and to consolidate their learning.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

78. Children make sound progress, overall, in developing their knowledge and understanding of the world. A scrutiny of planning, and of children's work, shows that most attain the Early Learning Goals by the end of the reception year. They make satisfactory progress in developing an understanding of the wider world in which they

live. For example, when following the theme of 'People in our Community' children discuss their own homes and families and ways of getting to school; and then investigate the school site. They learn to use simple geographical terms and consolidate their learning through appropriate practical activities. During the inspection, children then looked at photographs of the area surrounding the school and, in particular, of the local shopping precinct. With help from staff, they were able to plot the photographs and then construct a large three-dimensional map using models they had made. In addition to developing simple mapping skills, this work provides opportunities for children to consider people who work in the community, safety on the roads and the need to maintain a clean environment. The sound progress which they make is also supported by well organised opportunities for role-play, for example, in their own 'fast food' restaurant. Other regular observations children are encouraged to make enable them to develop a satisfactory understanding of changes in the weather and the seasons, and these soundly promote their knowledge and understanding of the world.

79. Children in the nursery and reception classes develop a sound understanding of 'past' and 'present' in relation to their own lives and to the wider world through a topic on toys. They learn about 'Old Bear' when they listen to the popular children's story by Jane Hissey, and they assemble a 'time-line' of teddy bears, ranked in order according to their origins, for example 'in granny's time', 'when mummy was a little girl', or 'when I was a baby.' They compare the toys and games they play with today with the toys their parents and grandparents played with, observing and discussing their similarities and differences. In more routine ways, they learn about the passage of time in relation to their own lives. For example, they learn the sequence of the days of the week, the months of the year and the changing seasons, and they learn to define periods of time using appropriate terms such as 'yesterday', 'today' and 'tomorrow'.
80. Children in the nursery and reception classes have access to a 'mini-suite' of three computers and, during the inspection, these were in regular use. When they are selecting which activities they want to undertake, children are encouraged to use the computers and they receive sound support from the class teacher or learning support assistants. Whether 'dressing Teddy', or completing an on-screen jigsaw puzzle, children demonstrate mainly satisfactory control of the computer mouse, although for those with little experience progress is slow. Children use computers with growing confidence and, overall, make sound progress in developing ICT skills.
81. Nursery and reception age children make satisfactory progress when examining a range of natural materials gathered from the local environment, and some are aware that seeds develop into plants. Overall, however, their scientific knowledge and understanding are below average. They achieve well when creating model shops, using recycled materials, after talking about the shops which are close to the school. They use construction kits to make simple models, and achieve standards which are satisfactory for their ages when making model vehicles from card and paper.

Physical development

82. In the nursery and reception, the children make sound progress in developing their physical skills in handling and using tools and other small equipment. Reception children enjoy using the wheeled apparatus and other large equipment provided in the enclosed outdoor space at lunch-times and, overall, they achieve the standards expected for five year olds. However, the nursery children who are only in school for the mornings, are not given sufficient opportunity on a regular basis, to play with large equipment, to explore and climb and test and extend their physical skills. The

physical education 'lessons' they have in the school hall are too regimented and formal to give the children appropriate physical challenges. In the lesson observed, the nursery children demonstrated they could form a circle, wait their turn and roll a ball across the circle. The reception children enjoy playing games using a parachute. They demonstrate good co-ordination and collaborative skills when they collectively roll a ball to and fro across the parachute. They are beginning to reflect on their performance, suggesting, for example 'we need to lift it (parachute) higher'.

Creative development

83. Nursery and reception age children make satisfactory progress when making simple prints and when painting self-portraits. They enjoy experimenting with print, although their skills in brush control are often rather weak. They make sound progress when making three-dimensional images using play-dough, and develop their creativity well when using small-world play or role-play. The children enjoy the good opportunities they have to sing nursery rhymes and number songs and have a good repertoire of these. They join in well when they take part in the Key Stage 1 singing assembly.

ENGLISH

84. In spite of the good progress made in the nursery and reception classes, the communication skills and early literacy skills of most pupils are still well below average when they enter the school at the beginning of Key Stage 1. In the national tests for pupils aged seven in the year 2000, the school's results were well below the national averages in both reading and writing. Nevertheless, there has been a rising trend in attainment over the past two years, with a particularly marked improvement in the results for writing. Similarly, although the school's results for English at the end of Key Stage 2 were still well below the national average in the year 2000, statistical evidence shows that these results represent a very significant improvement in pupils' performance over the past two years. In comparison with 'similar' schools, the 2000 results were well below average in reading at Key Stage 1 and in English at Key Stage 2, although just below average in writing at Key Stage 1.
85. Inspection findings show that, as a result of effective teaching, standards are continuing to rise in all aspects English in both key stages. Pupils of all abilities make mainly good, and sometimes very good progress in lessons, and mainly good progress over time in relation to their starting points. Some pupils for whom English is an additional language do particularly well and are amongst the higher achievers by the end of Key Stage 2. About a third of the pupils in the school are on the special educational needs register. Overall, these pupils make good progress throughout their time in the school and their achievements broadly reflect their capabilities.
86. By the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils respond well to stories and are beginning to understand some of the differences between narrative and information texts. They can retell stories they have heard, identify with the feelings of the characters, and can join in with their teachers as they read aloud, using expression and observing the cues presented by the punctuation, for example to pause or to indicate the use of a question mark. Most pupils at this stage can use a suitably wide range of strategies to make meaning and to decode unfamiliar words, although some lower attaining pupils still rely heavily on their developing knowledge of phonics and of sight words when reading aloud. Higher attaining pupils can predict what might happen next and can use inference to work out hidden meanings in the text. By the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils have developed preferences in their personal reading and can talk convincingly about their favourite books and authors. They use reference and study

skills satisfactorily, skimming and scanning to locate specific information in different kinds of texts in their work in different subjects, and they record their findings appropriately in expository writing, as bullet points and in note form, according to the purposes of the writing. Some of the weaker readers in Key Stage 2 have not developed as secure a base of phonological awareness as they should have in their earlier years of schooling.

87. As is to be expected, pupils' knowledge about language and their competence in reading and understanding different kinds of texts remain in advance of their own skills as writers. This is particularly the case in Key Stage 2, where a high proportion of the teaching is excellent. In discussion and in their writing, most pupils demonstrate a sound level of understanding of the characteristics, features and styles of different kinds of fiction and information texts. They have developed a sound grasp of the use of language for effect and of the techniques used by writers to engage their readers. For example, they use short sentences and imagery successfully to generate suspense, and they choose words carefully for their impact. Nevertheless, the written work of many pupils is often spoiled by technical and secretarial weaknesses, for example in grammar, punctuation, spelling, handwriting and presentation. In many cases, these weaknesses are of a long-standing nature and, in spite of most teachers' best efforts over the last two years, remain embedded as 'bad habits', especially in the work of older pupils. Poor spelling is a weakness in the work of many pupils, while grammatical errors often reflect the pupils' speech patterns rather than those of written standard English. In both key stages, lower attaining pupils clearly find it difficult to focus simultaneously on the whole range of skills required to produce writing of a high standard. As a result, whilst concentrating on the ideas and content in their writing, they do not always organise their work well. Sometimes their pieces of writing lack coherence: ideas are listed rather than flowing in a logical sequence, and pupils have not applied what they have been taught about 'connectives' or joining words. Sometimes, too, in their eagerness to communicate, pupils forget to produce their best handwriting, and the presentation of their work is not always as neat as it might be.
88. Pupils' skills as listeners develop well throughout both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 2 most pupils sustain concentration very well throughout lengthy discussions, for example in the literacy hour. They can select relevant information from what they hear, and they are able to follow quite complex sequences of instructions and lines of reasoning. Overall, however, pupils' speech develops less quickly than their listening skills. Many pupils acquire a sound general vocabulary and an extensive repertoire of technical terms related to the study of specific curriculum subjects. They experience greater difficulties organising and expressing their thoughts clearly in spoken Standard English, and in these respects their speech remains below average by the end of Key Stage 2.
89. In both key stages and in most year groups, direct interaction with teachers and other adults very evidently raises pupils' attainment during lessons: most pupils achieve higher standards when supported by the precise and focused questioning and the guidance of their teachers than when they face written or reading tasks alone and have to draw entirely on their own reserves to apply what they have previously learned.
90. The teaching of English is of a generally high standard overall, with excellent teaching in the majority of lessons seen in Key Stage 2 and in one lesson in Key Stage 1. Elsewhere, teaching is sound or better. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen in either key stage, although the scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that progress is less marked in Year 3 than in other year groups. Overall, teachers have

established very good relationships with their pupils, creating an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in lessons which encourages pupils to take risks and to use language adventurously. Expectations of what pupils can and should achieve are usually high, and most teachers' expertise in English is such that they know precisely what needs to be done, and what pupils need to know, in order to raise standards. In the best lessons, teachers' certainty and drive serve to inspire pupils and engage their whole-hearted commitment to learning, while the methods used empower pupils by developing their awareness of their own learning. These excellent teachers are skilled at spontaneous assessment and quickly turn pupils' responses, as they arise, into additional opportunities for learning, so that no time is wasted. Teachers generally provide good role models for pupils as readers and writers. They make sure that pupils learn, through their reading and through the study of texts, many of the strategies they need to become successful writers. Lessons are planned well, so that it is clear what pupils are intended to learn, and the aims of lessons are pursued rigorously. Group tasks are suitably differentiated to make sure that independent work is matched to the learning needs of particular groups and individuals, including pupils with special educational needs, the more able pupils, and those for whom English is an additional language. Most lessons are very well organised and proceed at a brisk pace. All teachers successfully integrate activities which involve speaking and listening, reading and writing, so that pupils are able to build on their strengths in one language mode to develop their skills in another. All teachers also give suitable emphasis to the development of vocabulary and to language use throughout the curriculum. Overall, pupils' experience of English is very broad, drawing on the full range of skills and opportunities in the National Literacy Strategy and the statutory Programmes of Study. A significant strength of the overall teaching lies in teachers' shared commitment to raise standards.

91. The literacy co-ordinator is an excellent teacher who serves as an outstanding model for the best practice. With the headteacher, she has worked exceedingly hard over the last two years, monitoring teaching and learning to identify weaknesses in performance. Rigorous assessment procedures have been introduced so that weaknesses in pupils' performance can be identified quickly and addressed. Every pupil in the school has individual targets for writing and, as a result, is developing his or her own awareness of the criteria of success. Teachers and support staff have received appropriate training for their respective roles in implementing the National Literacy Strategy and the additional literacy support programme. An after-school club providing extra tuition in literacy is popular with pupils and is well attended. Resources to support the various literacy initiatives are of good quality and have been carefully chosen to match the range of pupils and their learning needs. The school welcomes the support some parents are able to give their children, for example by hearing them read, and has planned a number of initiatives designed to give a further boost to parents' confidence.

MATHEMATICS

92. On entry to Key Stage 1, the majority of pupils demonstrate below average standards in their knowledge and understanding of mathematics. The results of the 2000 Key Stage 1 SATs indicate that the percentage of pupils achieving Level 2, and above, was well below the national average and a very small number of pupils reached Level 3. Overall, the school's results were well below the national average and those achieved by similar schools. While standards have been low in the last two years, the 2000 test results show an improvement on those for 1999; and evidence suggests that this rising trend in pupils' attainment is set to continue.

93. Inspection findings are more favourable than the most recent SATs results. Evidence from a scrutiny of pupils' work, and observations of lessons in Key Stage 1, indicates that most pupils, including those with special educational needs and with EAL, make mainly good progress in acquiring key numeracy skills. They are developing a sound knowledge of place value to 100, can describe and extend number sequences and employ the correct number operations when making calculations. Progress in using and applying these skills to solve problems is slower, across the key stage, but is broadly satisfactory. Pupils also make mainly good progress in developing their understanding of measures, shape and space. At the end of Key Stage 1, the majority of pupils achieve the expected level although the proportion achieving a higher standard is a little lower than in most schools. There are no marked differences in the performance of girls and boys.
94. In the 2000 Key Stage 2 statutory tests, the percentage of pupils achieving Level 4, and above, was well below the national average; and the percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 was below average. Overall, these results were well below the national average and below those achieved by similar schools. However, the 2000 results were better than those for 1999 and evidence suggests that this upward trend is being sustained, and will be reflected in the Key Stage 2 test results in 2001.
95. Inspection findings indicate that Year 3 pupils make broadly satisfactory progress, in relation to their starting points at the beginning of the year; and that pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 make good progress. Those with special educational needs make good progress throughout Key Stage 2, and more able pupils do particularly well in the upper part of this key stage. The use of the national 'Springboard 5' programme, in particular, has improved the progress made by some older, less able, mathematicians. Most pupils have a sound understanding of the number system and of measures, shape and space and can handle data competently. In Year 4, for example, pupils can partition numbers confidently and use their knowledge of place value to tackle subtraction, involving three-figure numbers. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 use their skills with a protractor to draw acute and obtuse angles accurately; while higher attaining pupils in these year groups confidently calculate the highest common factor for a pair of two-digit numbers and can identify prime factors. Progress in learning to apply the mathematical skills they have acquired is broadly satisfactory, but slower, across the key stage and pupils need more opportunities to solve real-life problems. At the end of Key Stage 2, the majority of pupils achieve standards that are in line with those expected nationally, and a significant minority do better.
96. Throughout the school, most pupils show an interest in the subject and behaviour in mathematics lessons is good. Pupils respond particularly well when they are involved interactively in the lesson; for example, in a good Year 1 lesson when learning to identify 'near doubles' in order to consolidate and then extend their addition strategies. The introduction of target setting for pupils, and a Booster Club for Year 6, have provided additional motivation; and many pupils demonstrate a strong commitment to improving their mathematical skills.
97. In the lessons observed in Key Stage 1, the quality of teaching was good in Year 1, and otherwise sound. In Key Stage 2, teaching is satisfactory in Year 3 and mainly good, or very good, in Years 4, 5 and 6. The co-ordinator provides a good example through her teaching of Year 4, and older pupils benefit from very good teaching by the deputy headteacher. Teachers have improved their practice through attendance at appropriate local authority training and through in-school support for the development of the National Numeracy Strategy.

98. Throughout the school, teachers plan conscientiously using common formats based on the requirements of the National Numeracy Strategy. Learning objectives are clearly defined and are appropriately shared with pupils, usually at the beginning of each lesson. Teachers make effective use of assessment to inform their planning and tasks are usually well matched to pupils' capabilities. Resources are well prepared and appropriate, and instructions and teaching points are clearly explained. Classroom assistants are carefully briefed and provide good support, particularly for pupils with special educational needs.
99. All teachers have established interesting numeracy areas in their classrooms, which promote pupils' interest in the subject and remind them of the correct mathematical vocabulary to use in their studies. The recommended three-stage numeracy lesson, which includes an introduction consisting of a variety of short oral and mental activities, has been successfully introduced. In the more effective lessons, when teachers have high expectations and manage pupils well, this is well paced; and teachers use skilful, differentiated, questioning to probe pupils' understanding and to extend their thinking. In a few lessons, the introductory activities lack pace and pupils are not interactively involved through questioning which is well targeted in order to challenge them. All teachers ensure that sufficient time is left at the end of numeracy lessons to summarise key ideas and vocabulary, and these plenary sessions generally provide a satisfactory conclusion to lessons. In both key stages, pupils have insufficient opportunities to use ICT to extend their mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding.
100. The subject is well co-ordinated by the Year 4 teacher who has attended relevant training accompanied, on some occasions, by other members of staff. She maintains an effective overview of mathematics through her organisation of teachers' planning, the scrutiny of pupils' work and through careful analysis of test results. The co-ordinator has also observed mathematics lessons, across the school, and has provided helpful feedback for individual teachers. In addition, staff meetings have been organised to consider the outcomes of this monitoring and to inform teaching in both key stages. The co-ordinator has also attended training in preparation for the introduction of a series of workshops for parents, which are aimed at enabling them to provide support for mathematical activities at home.
101. Resources for mathematics are very well organised and are satisfactory. An audit of equipment has been carried out and additional funding has appropriately been allocated to facilitate the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy.

SCIENCE

102. In the teacher assessments in 2000, all pupils reached the level expected at the end of Key Stage 1 but few exceeded this level. In Key Stage 2, the overall results of the statutory tests in Year 6 were close to the national average and the average for similar schools in 2000. The results in Key Stage 2 were a very significant improvement on those achieved in 1999.
103. On entry to Key Stage 1, the scientific knowledge and understanding of most pupils are below average. Inspection findings show that pupils, including those with special educational needs, generally achieve well in relation to their starting points at the beginning of Key Stage 1. The vast majority of pupils demonstrate average standards at the end of both key stages, and the percentage of pupils achieving higher standards has increased since last year in both Year 2 and Year 6.

104. In Year 1, pupils achieve well when identifying similarities and differences between themselves and their peers; and can recognise and name the main external parts of the human body. They also make good progress when describing the appearance and texture of common materials, although their attainment is often restricted by limitations in their speaking and writing skills. In Year 2, pupils can conduct simple experiments effectively to discover the best materials to use to make a waterproof lunchbox for the lighthouse keeper in one of their favourite stories; and are developing their understanding that some materials are particularly suitable for specific purposes. They are aware of changes in their appearance and needs since their very early years, and can anticipate how these might change in future years.
105. Pupils' achievements in Year 3 are satisfactory in relation to their starting points at the beginning of the year. They make sound progress when testing different papers to find out how well they absorb water, but could make more effective use of simple charts to show their results. Pupils understand that different living things are often found in different habitats; and are beginning to learn about food chains. In Years 4, 5 and 6, pupils achieve well in relation to their current capabilities. In Year 4, pupils demonstrate a satisfactory grasp of the principle of fair-testing, and make good progress when conducting systematic investigations to discover which tights will stretch the most. They also build well on their previous knowledge about the relationships between animals and their habitats. Year 5 pupils demonstrate a sound understanding of the differences between solids and liquids and make good progress when conducting safe experiments to learn how some gases are created. They also achieve well when naming major organs and identifying their position in the human body. Year 6 pupils are aware that materials can change when mixed with others, and that some changes are reversible while others are not. They make good progress when learning about the human circulatory system and can identify major organs, such as the petal, stamen and stigma, on flowering plants.
106. This is the first inspection of this new school, which was formed in 1998 following the amalgamation of Bandle Hill Infant School and Bandle Hill Junior School. It is important to acknowledge that, in 1998, only 36 per cent of Year 6 pupils achieved the nationally expected level in science in Bandle Hill Junior School. In the statutory tests in 2000, 91 per cent of pupils achieved the expected standard, demonstrating the impressive achievement of the new school over a very short period.
107. The quality of teaching in science is mainly good; and very good teaching is evident for the oldest pupils in Key Stage 2. As a consequence, pupils' overall progress in the subject is good. Teachers plan their lessons carefully, ensuring that learning intentions are clear and are shared with the pupils. They introduce and reinforce scientific vocabulary well, and this has a beneficial effect on pupils' language development. Teachers make effective use of assessment to judge pupils' progress and standards, and to guide their planning for future work. They use skilful questions to probe pupils' understanding, and keep careful records of the significant achievements of their pupils. All teachers have secure subject knowledge, and lessons usually proceed at a good pace. The organisation of lessons is a particular strength, and all teachers are able to capture pupils' interest. As a consequence, pupils listen attentively to their teachers and concentrate well on their tasks.
108. The science co-ordinator and the Year 6 teacher work together on two sessions each week to teach all Year 6 pupils as one class. The teachers work together very well, and their combined skills have a highly beneficial effect on pupils' progress and standards. The school allocates more time for science than most schools, and this has helped, with the effective teaching, to raise pupils' standards in science.

109. The co-ordinator is very conscientious and is enthusiastic about science. She has good subject knowledge, and monitors teachers' planning carefully. She has observed lessons, analysed samples of pupils' work and provided a training session for the staff. Overall, she has a good overview of the subject, and is making a valuable contribution to its development in the school. Resources for science are good, and are well organised.

ART AND DESIGN

110. Pupils make satisfactory progress, overall, in art and design in Key Stage 1, and their standards are mainly in line with those expected nationally at the end of the key stage. Pupils' progress is more spasmodic in Key Stage 2, and is unsatisfactory, overall. Although there are some examples of sound work in this key stage, standards are a little below average in Year 6.
111. In Year 1, pupils make sound progress when using pastels and paint to create pictures of vegetables; and their clay pots demonstrate good achievement. In Year 2, pupils achieve sound standards when using simple printing techniques, and make sound progress when drawing fruits from direct observation. Year 3 pupils demonstrate satisfactory standards when creating geometric patterns, using paint and pastel. They develop their awareness of the work of artists by discussing the work of Andy Goldsworthy, and make sound progress when creating their own sculptures using straws and wood. In Year 4, pupils' drawings of the local environment demonstrate rather limited skills; and the collage interpretations of hats, created by Year 5 pupils after discussing the range of blues used in a Renoir painting, are typical of work usually achieved by younger pupils. In Year 6, pupils' progress in drawing and painting continues to be unsatisfactory, and standards are a little below those expected for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2.
112. Due to time-tabling arrangements, insufficient lessons were observed to make a secure judgement about the quality of teaching in art and design. However, evidence from an analysis of pupils' work suggests that insufficient attention is given to the progressive development of pupils' key skills in the subject. While pupils are given opportunities to experience a range of mediums, the teaching of drawing and painting skills, in particular, needs to be more systematic, rigorous and effective in Key Stage 2. Evidence also suggests that some teachers would benefit from in-service training to increase their knowledge and to raise their expectations of pupils' potential achievements in the subject. The school has already identified art and design as an area for further development, which is appropriate. The co-ordinator for the subject has only very recently taken on the role, but has started to analyse teachers' planning for the subject. Resources for art and design are satisfactory.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

113. Only one lesson was observed in design and technology. However, evidence from pupils' completed work, across the school, shows that pupils make satisfactory progress in the subject. As a consequence, pupils' standards are in line with those expected nationally at the end of both key stages.
114. In Year 1, pupils demonstrate satisfactory standards when cutting and sticking paper, and make sound progress when creating simple stick puppets. They also achieve standards that are satisfactory for their ages when making model houses, using recycled materials. In Year 2, pupils' achievements are sound when they discuss the

taste and appearance of a range of fruits and vegetables and talk about how they might be served as meals. They also achieve satisfactory standards when creating simple paper models of the human figure, with paper fasteners to facilitate the movement of limbs.

115. In Years 3 and 4, pupils' picture frames, made from card and embellished with painted decoration, demonstrate sound achievement. These pupils evaluate the qualities of a range of money containers and create sound specifications for the ones they are to make later in the term. Year 3 pupils have also made gas masks, from card and fabric, as part of their history topic, and these are carefully made. In Year 6, pupils have made sound progress when making a range of different biscuits, after planning their ingredients carefully. They make well-considered evaluations of their biscuits, and some are able to identify ways to improve their products.
116. Due to time-tabling arrangements, insufficient design and technology lessons were observed to make a secure judgement about the quality of teaching in the subject. The single lesson which was seen, in Year 4, was well organised and motivated pupils strongly. The teacher demonstrated satisfactory subject knowledge and enabled pupils to make sound progress in the lesson.
117. The design and technology co-ordinator has produced a useful action plan which includes strategies for monitoring and developing the subject. She has made a sound start by checking teachers' planning and now needs to analyse examples of pupils' work to develop her awareness of standards, across the school. All teachers are making sound use of guidance provided by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority to plan their lessons. Resources for design and technology are satisfactory.

GEOGRAPHY

118. As a result of time-tabling arrangements, only one geography lesson was observed in Key Stage 1 but three were seen in Key Stage 2. Judgements are made on the evidence of the lessons that were seen, a scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work, and discussions with staff and pupils. In both key stages, pupils make satisfactory progress in extending their knowledge and understanding of places, patterns and processes, and of environmental change. The progress they make in geographical enquiry skills is more spasmodic, however, and is only just satisfactory. Overall, standards are broadly average.
119. Year 1 pupils make sound progress when studying the immediate area around their homes and the school. They can draw simple representations of the route from home to school and consolidate their understanding by making three-dimensional models of buildings they know, and locating these on a large classroom 'map'. They also discuss holidays and begin to understand that other places may be different from their own locality. This theme is extended in Year 2 when pupils follow the travels of 'Barnaby Bear'. They deepen their understanding of the notion of travel and make satisfactory progress in developing an awareness of the similarities and differences between other countries and their own. During the inspection 'Barnaby' had travelled to India and in previous terms to parts of Europe. In Key Stage 1, pupils' knowledge and understanding of the United Kingdom are commensurate with their age and older pupils can locate and identify the countries that constitute the United Kingdom. However, their geographical enquiry skills are less well developed since pupils have insufficient opportunities to explore the locality of the school.

120. In Key Stage 2, pupils in Year 3 visit Shephall Green and record their views of how to improve the environment there. Their progress is broadly satisfactory but would benefit from more carefully focused geographical enquiry which is designed to enhance their skills of collecting and interpreting information, and presenting their findings. Year 4 pupils undertake well-organised fieldwork in the school grounds for their investigation of environmental issues and improvements. They make good progress in developing their skills, acquire new geographical vocabulary and are able to express a view on an environmental issue, and to justify it. Pupils in this year group also satisfactorily extend their knowledge of other countries, climates and physical features when undertaking valuable atlas work. During the inspection, pupils in Years 5 and 6 made good progress in their studies of mountain environments. They are able to identify some important characteristics of places that share a similar physical environment; and improve their knowledge of the global distribution of major mountain areas. Older pupils undertake some visits, for example, to a local river as part of a unit on 'Water' but, overall, opportunities to develop geographical skills through fieldwork are limited.
121. It is not possible to make a secure judgement about the quality of teaching in Key Stage 1. In the lessons seen in Key Stage 2, the quality of teaching was satisfactory in Year 3 and good in Years 4 and 6. Helpful guidance, published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, has been used to inform the school's planning and this has had a positive impact on classroom practice which evidence suggests is sound, overall. However, the school's 'curriculum map' does not yet secure the progressive development of key skills in the subject or clearly indicate where fieldwork activity will enhance pupils' learning.
122. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic about the subject and has formulated a sound action plan which clearly identifies appropriate areas for development, in the current school year. This acknowledges the need to collect samples of pupils' work in order to track pupils' progress across the school; and to monitor planning in order to check that opportunities for fieldwork are being considered.
123. Resources are well organised but are barely adequate. The school needs to improve the quality and range of maps, atlases, globes, aerial photographs and other reference materials.

HISTORY

124. Inspection evidence from the observation of lessons, the scrutiny of pupils' work and of classroom displays, discussions with staff and informal discussions with pupils shows that pupils achieve broadly average standards for their ages in history at the end of both key stages. Pupils make good progress in most of the lessons observed, and very good progress in Year 6. In Key Stage 1, most pupils make good progress in their understanding of chronology and their use of enquiry skills during a lesson on old and new toys. They use a number of old and new toys as evidence when they compare the different materials and mechanisms used in the manufacture of toys 'then' and 'now', and examine differences in the general condition of a modern 'Kermit' and a very old teddy bear. For example, they note the differences in the voice mechanisms used, and they observe the complete and unruffled appearance of Kermit compared with the rather battered bear who, somewhere in his long life, has lost an ear. The more able children are able to make generalisations and to develop simple hypotheses. For example, they can explain that 'history is our past', that 'crocodiles today are like dinosaurs from the past', and that 'yesterday is already history.' The majority of the pupils, however, depend heavily on their teachers to

focus their thinking before they realise that the development and application of technology have been significant factors in the changing nature of toys over time.

125. In Key Stage 2, pupils in Year 4 make good progress when they use photographic evidence to find out about Stevenage in the past and to identify differences between past and present features of buildings in the old town. They draw up relevant historical questions to focus their enquiry, identify modern and ancient features in the design of the buildings, note the use of old and new materials, and use appropriate historical terms to describe what they find out. They develop a good level of awareness about change over time and understand that evidence about the past can be drawn from a variety of primary and secondary sources. In their various studies of life in ancient Greece, pupils in Years 5 and 6 make good or better progress in lessons. Pupils in Year 5 and in the mixed Year 5/6 class acquire a very sound level of knowledge and understanding of the nature and purpose of the original Olympic games, while pupils in the Year 6 class make particularly good progress when they learn about school life in ancient Greece. Pupils understand the religious and cultural significance of the original Games and their influence on aspects of the Olympic Games held today. They use enquiry skills to good effect to inform their research, and they record their findings satisfactorily, using relevant historical terms and vocabulary when they produce leaflets and posters to advertise the Games to members of the ancient Greek public. Pupils in Year 6 demonstrate a good level of understanding of the range of sources of evidence that can be used to inform historical enquiry. They can explain the main differences between 'primary' and 'secondary' sources, and they produce an extensive list of relevant questions to inform their own enquiry into school life in ancient Greece. They use reference books to good effect to find answers to their questions, explain significant differences between their own experiences of school and those of pupils in ancient Greece, and use appropriate terms such as 'stylus' and 'chronological' when they discuss their findings.
126. The teaching of history is mainly good, occasionally very good, and never less than sound. All teachers introduce their lessons well, establishing the context by referring back to previous lessons, and making sure that pupils understand what they are intended to learn. Resources are selected with care as to their content, and to match the range of pupils' capabilities as readers. Activities engage pupils' interest, and most teachers communicate their own enthusiasm for the subject to their classes. Teachers' understanding of the subject requirements is generally very sound, and they prepare well to teach particular topics. However, they are not always able to give depth, detail and challenge to their teaching by drawing on an extensive and personal knowledge base, and, in some lessons, they do not encourage pupils to raise historical questions of their own. Evidence from the scrutiny of pupils' work strongly indicates that the amount of time spent on history varies very much from class to class. There are significant differences in the quality and quantity of recorded work by pupils, with a suitably broad range of purposeful work in Years 4, 5 and 6, but little recorded work by pupils in Year 3. However, pupils in Year 3 have derived significant gains in other ways, for example through educational visits to Duxford air base in relation to a study of the Second World War, and to a Celtic roundhouse where they were able to bring history to life by spending a day in role as Celts, grinding corn, baking bread and making fences.
127. More generally, most teachers make effective links between history and English, using historical contexts to good effect to develop pupils' skills as speakers, listeners, readers and writers. The range of secondary sources to support history is satisfactory, but the school has few artefacts of its own, and few classes make use of educational visits to develop pupils' awareness and understanding through first-hand

experience. The history co-ordinator has a personal enthusiasm for the subject but has not yet had the opportunity to undertake rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning, and has limited awareness of the work done by older pupils. Suitable assessment procedures are being trialled but are not yet in place, and the use of ICT to support work in history is underdeveloped.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

128. During the inspection, limited use was made of ICT to support and enhance pupils' work across the curriculum. The school provided a small amount of ICT work, completed in the previous term, and some was displayed in classrooms. This was carefully scrutinised, in addition to teachers' planning, and discussions were held with both staff and pupils.
129. Across the school pupils make uneven, and mainly unsatisfactory, progress in using ICT to communicate and handle information and to support their problem solving, recording and expressive work. Throughout both key stages, they gain insufficient experience of using ICT particularly for control, monitoring, modelling and for handling data. As a consequence, the attainment of the vast majority of pupils is below average at the end of both key stages. The school has appropriately identified ICT as a priority for development, and plans to improve provision and teachers' expertise are well under way.
130. When given the opportunity, pupils make mainly sound progress in their work with texts, data and design. In Key Stage 1, pupils learn how to use the computer to draw pictures, for example, using 'fill and spray' tools to paint an 'old and worn' bear in Year 1; or when drawing 'face' pictures in Year 2. They are introduced to simple databases to support their work in science in Year 1 and use these, with adult help, in Year 2 to analyse and present information, for example, about favourite jelly flavours. Pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their word processing skills when using the computer for writing stories such as 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff' in the Year 1/2 class; or poems for a 'Haunted House' book in Year 2. However, they have limited opportunities to experiment with different types and sizes of font, or to present information in a variety of forms. To support their work in science, pupils are able to print information from CD-ROMs about plants and body parts, with some help from adults. They also gain experience of programming a floor robot, although key skills in control technology are not progressively developed across the key stage.
131. In Key Stage 2, Year 3 pupils demonstrate satisfactory standards when using a mathematics program to create interesting 'shape' pictures. Pupils in this year group also have opportunities to word process some of their work but, during the inspection, this consisted only of making 'best copies' of written work, which provided few opportunities to learn new skills. In Year 4, pupils use the computer during the literacy hour, for example, to identify and underline verbs in a text, to promote the use of good descriptive adjectives, or to write 'newspaper reports'. Pupils in this key stage also extend the knowledge they acquired earlier, in Key Stage 1, of how to use CD-ROMs to find and use information to support their work in other subjects. For example, in Years 5 and 6 pupils searched a number of CD-ROMs for information about mountains, as part of their work in geography. Older pupils can word process accounts of, for example, science experiments they have undertaken and are beginning to incorporate 'clip art' pictures to enhance some of their written work. However, pupils in this key stage have insufficient opportunities to work with data, use simulation software, experiment with control technology, or to develop and refine their ideas through ICT.

132. When given the opportunity, pupils enjoy using computers and other ICT equipment. They show an enthusiasm for the subject, concentrate well and their behaviour is very good. Work with computers and listening posts is often undertaken by more than one pupil, at the same time, and they collaborate well together, sharing the equipment and helping one another.
133. Insufficient teaching of ICT took place during the inspection to make a secure judgement about the quality of teaching. Good use was made of a short period of time in a Year 5/6 lesson to review, as a class, a number of CD-ROMs related to pupils' work in geography; and in Year 1, to teach pupils how to use a simple data base. Effective management of the literacy hour, by some teachers, enables pupils to use ICT during these lessons to support and enhance their work in English. Plans for a programme of well-focused ICT training for staff were suspended, pending a decision about the creation of a new computer suite, but will now be implemented in the near future. Helpful guidance, published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, has been introduced to provide a useful planning framework but this has yet to have a significant impact on teaching. The staff value the help of the school's site manager who provides some technical support and has efficiently organised the school's collection of CD-ROMs.
134. There are two co-ordinators for ICT, one from each key stage, and they work well together. Both are enthusiastic about the development of ICT in the school, have attended relevant training and are keen to extend their own expertise. They have been allocated time to formulate an action plan for the subject, which is sound, and have undertaken some observations of the use of ICT across the school. Following these classroom observations, a staff meeting was appropriately organised to consider the findings and to inform teaching across the school. The headteacher is aware that the use of ICT is not well established, following the decision to defer the creation of a computer suite because of uncertainties about the school's future. She is determined to rectify this as soon as possible, and new facilities should be in use later this year.
135. Resources are adequate and are soon to be improved once the computer suite is established in a refurbished classroom.

MUSIC

136. During the inspection, singing, performing using tuned and untuned instruments, and appraising music were observed. In both key stages, pupils make sound progress and achieve average standards in performing using untuned instruments. They achieve well in singing and attain high standards for their ages. Pupils in Key Stage 1 attain sound standards for their age in appraising and, towards the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' appraisal skills are above average. However, due to the shortage of tuned instruments, pupils across the school have insufficient opportunities to make appropriate progress in composing.
137. Pupils in Key Stage 1 can produce long and short sounds using untuned instruments and recognise these when they hear them in a song. Year 1 pupils can explain how the duration of the sound of, for example a cymbal, can be deadened when the instrument is placed on the floor. They talk about the sounds they prefer, and are beginning to remember the names of instruments. During a singing assembly, Key Stage 1 pupils sing familiar songs unaccompanied, tunefully and with evident enjoyment.

138. Pupils in Year 3 are able to keep rhythm and can identify that taped marching music gets louder. They put forward original ideas as to why this might be: 'the army are getting closer', 'getting angrier'. Their understanding of duration and rhythm is sound, but progress is sometimes hampered by a lack of confidence in describing what they understand. Pupils in Year 5 quickly learn a new song and manage to sing confidently in a round, keeping tune and pitch. They respond very well to their teacher's signals and vary the duration and volume accordingly. They listen well to the recording of their singing and evaluate their performance well, making improvements after discussion. They can detect the quality of their diction and demonstrate a good understanding of musical vocabulary, using words such as *ostinato*, *rhythm*, *melodic* and *discord*.
139. Throughout the school, pupils have very positive attitudes to music. They concentrate very well and listen carefully to the performance and contributions of others. Pupils enjoy participating in singing and work well together.
140. Overall the teaching of music is mainly good, with some excellent teaching in Year 5. Lessons are well planned, learning objectives clearly defined and activities well matched to achieve the aims. In Year 1, good use made of evaluations of previous lessons to build on pupils' prior experience and responses. Teachers use pupils' contributions effectively to help the class build up their knowledge and understanding; and they give constructive feedback, ensuring the use of musical language helps to extend pupils' vocabulary. In some lessons, teachers provide a good model when they sing to children. As a consequence, by Year 5, pupils are confident to sing unaccompanied and solo to the class. The quality of singing improves as teachers remind pupils of the importance of posture. Pupils also benefit from their teachers' enthusiasm for the subject. Good use is made of the tape recorder in Year 5 to record pupils' singing and then to appraise their performance. Lessons move at brisk pace, teachers' expectations of the pupils' involvement and performance are high, and as a consequence, pupils' behaviour is very good and their participation is 100 per cent.
141. The breadth of the music curriculum is affected by the lack of tuned instruments. This hampers pupils' progress in composing, performing and using notation. Older pupils have the opportunity to have tuition in playing the fife and flute, and there are plans to start a guitar club. A range of recorded music is played at the start and finish of assemblies and pupils are encouraged to listen and comment. However, they do not regularly have the opportunity for shared communal singing in assemblies. This is a pity, particularly given their evident enjoyment. The subject leader is new to the role. She has made a promising start and has a sound overview of the subject. She has rightly identified that the lack of resources is affecting pupils' progress in composing.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

142. Due to time-tabling arrangements, there was insufficient evidence to make a secure judgement about standards of physical education in Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2, gymnastics and games skills were observed. All pupils, including those with special educational needs achieve very well in ball and games skills and attain standards in this aspect of physical education that are above average at the end of the key stage. Discussions with teachers confirm that most pupils attain the expected standards in swimming by the end of Key Stage 2 and benefit from starting lessons in Key Stage 1. Pupils' progress in gymnastics is hampered by insufficient equipment and as a consequence they achieve standards that are below average. Throughout the key

stage, pupils are learning to understand the technical language used in physical education. Pupils are well informed about the effect exercise has on their bodies and general health. Year 6 pupils in particular, demonstrate they can sustain energetic activity over an appropriate time. They recognise that this increases their heart beat, and know that the time it takes to return to normal reflects their level of fitness.

143. Year 3 pupils made broadly satisfactory progress in the floor work observed during a gymnastics lesson, but evidence from the teacher's planning shows that, because of a lack of appropriate equipment, they are unable to undertake the range of activities necessary to improve and develop their skills. As a consequence, pupils throughout the school are unlikely to develop the full range of gymnastic skills outlined in the National Curriculum. Year 3 pupils make sound progress in planning their activities and working in pairs, but their evaluative skills are underdeveloped, in contrast to pupils in other Key Stage 2 lessons, where their skills in evaluating and improving their performance is a strength.
144. Pupils in Year 4 achieve well when developing their skills in using a ball and racquet. Within a lesson, they make tangible progress when hitting the ball into a hoop. The achievement in games skills of pupils in Year 6 is impressive, and their standards particularly of invasive and defending techniques, are high. This is borne out in their successes on the football field this year.
145. At all times, pupils demonstrate they have good awareness of safety, and they take good care of each other during lessons. By Year 6, pupils show control and maturity when playing games, so that even in the excitement of competition, they work as a team. They attend very carefully when their teacher or other pupils demonstrate skills, and strive to improve their performance. They evaluate their own work and that of others, bearing in mind the learning objectives of the lesson. They can describe what they observe using technical language such as 'invasion,' 'keeping possession' and 'body blocking' when describing their work. As a result of their concentration and eagerness to improve, Year 6 pupils make excellent progress in lessons.
146. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement about the quality of teaching in Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2, the quality of teaching in physical education is variable, but is good overall, with excellent teaching in Year 6. Teachers plan carefully and, in the best lessons, provide a structured sequence of activities that challenge pupils physically and intellectually and build well on their previous learning. Care is taken to ensure pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated in lessons. In the most effective lessons, teachers make particularly good use of demonstrating techniques, and they encourage the pupils to give informed evaluations of their own work. Talking about their work in this way reinforces the main aims of the lesson and gives pupils a sense of authority as they describe their work. The pace of lessons varies. In the best lessons, no time is wasted, but sufficient time is allowed for pupils to practise and refine their skills. A greater focus on these teaching qualities is needed in Year 3 to improve pupils' evaluation skills.
147. Resources for physical education are satisfactory for games skills, but provision for gymnastics is very poor, particularly for Key Stage 2 pupils. There is a shortage of suitable mats, very few benches and no climbing equipment. Provision for pupils in Key Stage 1 is a little better, but still falls short of the minimum requirement to allow pupils to make satisfactory progress. There are no resources for athletics. The school is aware of these shortcomings, having inherited unsatisfactory physical education resources from the previous schools. Pupils in Key Stage 2 experience outdoor and adventure challenges during the residential visit, when they take part in

a range of appropriate activities. The teachers ensure no pupils are disadvantaged through lack of proper clothing and extra kit is available. Netball and football teams successfully play in tournaments and friendly matches. The subject is well managed by the conscientious subject leader, who has a good overview of physical education across the school and has identified in her action plan the need to improve equipment.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

148. Only one religious education lesson was seen in Key Stage 1, during the inspection, and there was insufficient written work on which to base a secure judgement about standards attained by the end of this key stage. In the lesson seen, pupils made good progress in their understanding of what it means to belong, when they talked about the special bonds they have with their families and the strong sense of belonging they have with the community and their school. They understand the need for communities to establish rules and in this context, they demonstrate a good understanding of the school's rules. Evidence from samples of work show pupils in Key Stage 1 are able to write simple prayers for the Harvest Festival and can retell the Hindu story of Rama and Sita, which they presented in assembly.
149. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education, achieving standards that are broadly average for their age. Pupils successfully extend their knowledge about religion: they learn about the festivals, rituals and practices of Christianity and other major world faiths including Islam and Judaism, and become familiar with some of the stories told in religious texts. However, evidence from the scrutiny of work strongly indicates that coverage of the subject is more substantial and rigorous in Years 4, 5 and 6.
150. Pupils in Year 3 learn about events in the life of Jesus, such as Jesus in the temple with the money lenders. In the lesson observed, pupils could retell the story of Jesus and Zacchaeus the tax collector, but showed some confusion when asked why Jesus had singled him out, some suggesting he was his friend. There is little evidence to suggest these pupils have grasped the significance of the stories and made links to events in their own lives. This is in contrast to pupils observed in Years 5 and 6 where they discuss the qualities of Moses as a leader. They reflect thoughtfully on what attributes a good leader needs and demonstrate they are not only learning about religions (Attainment Target 1 of the agreed syllabus), but also from religions (Attainment Target 2). In drawing both from their knowledge of Moses, and their own experience, they suggest leadership qualities such as being an optimist, reliable, concerned and experienced. Pupils also identify a leader as someone who makes them feel safe and is trustworthy. Assembly themes underpin religious education lessons, and make a strong contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development and a sound contribution to their spiritual development.
151. Pupils take a keen interest in religious education. They respond positively to the moral values and spiritual ideas addressed in lessons and reflect thoughtfully when discussing the underlying principles and issues raised in the stories and information presented to them. Pupils show sincere interest and sensitivity about the beliefs and customs of different faiths.
152. Overall, teaching of religious education is sound in Key Stage 2. As only one lesson was observed, it is not possible to make a secure overall judgement about the quality of teaching in Key Stage 1. However, the teaching in the lesson seen was good. In Key Stage 2, both good and unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Elements of good

teaching are seen where the learning objectives are written into planning and discussed with pupils. Planning for lessons strikes an appropriate balance between learning about and learning from religion. Frequent opportunities are given for discussion and reflection. Pupils are encouraged to draw on their own experiences, to empathise with the feelings of others and to understand the significance of religion in people's lives. Activities engage pupils' interest and help to reinforce the main teaching points, for example writing a job description for Moses. There is a refreshing absence of worksheets. Teaching is unsatisfactory where the underlying meanings of stories are not explored with sufficient clarity to allow pupils to draw parallels between religious teachings and their own lives. There are weaknesses when the lesson starts as religious education but the focus for the activity is mainly English, ie remembering the sequence of events and writing about them. The learning objectives are then lost and the religious content then becomes of secondary importance.

153. The co-ordinator for religious education makes a significant contribution to the subject. She has introduced the new scheme of work, which is now being used for planning across the school. She is rightly pleased with teachers' enthusiasm for the subject. Inspection evidence indicates that time spent on religious education varies from class to class and that attention given to the two attainment targets is not always balanced. Further monitoring is needed to ensure they are both addressed appropriately. The school is building up a sound range of resources to meet the requirements of the syllabus. Pupils' learning is enhanced by occasional visitors and visits. They would benefit from more such opportunities.