

INSPECTION REPORT

MARY BASSETT LOWER SCHOOL

Leighton Buzzard

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109508

Headteacher: Mrs Mary McKeon

Reporting inspector: Mrs Patricia Davies

22460

Dates of inspection: 11–14 February 2002

Inspection number: 243085

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Lower
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Bassett Road Leighton Buzzard Bedfordshire
Postcode:	LU7 1AR
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Susan Turner
Date of previous inspection:	April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
22460	Mrs Patricia Davies	<i>Registered inspector</i>	English Art and design Design and technology Information and communication technology Physical education Provision for pupils with special educational needs Provision for pupils with English as an additional language Equality of opportunity.	The school's results and achievements. How well pupils are taught. How well the school is led and managed.
1311	Dr Barry Wood	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Attitudes, values and personal development. How well the school cares for its pupils. How the school works in partnership with parents.
11901	Dr Pat Lowe	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics Science Geography History Music Religious education Areas of learning for the Foundation Stage.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils.

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	1
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	6
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	9
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	10
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	13
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	15
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	16
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	19
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	21
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	25

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is smaller than average, with 141 pupils. This is smaller than at the time of the last inspection. Although, at almost 20 per cent, the proportion of pupils recorded as eligible for free school meals is broadly average, the school serves a wide local area which includes many challenging social factors. When children first enter the school, their attainment is well below what might be expected of children of a similar age. This would appear to be lower than was found at the time of the last inspection. Currently, there are 19 children who attend part time in a Nursery group attached to the Reception Class and 11 children who attend full time in this class. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs is still broadly average, but there is now a greater proportion with statements of special educational need. This proportion is above the national average at over three per cent. About a third of pupils on the special educational needs register are placed at the higher stage of need and include pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are a few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and with English as an additional language (EAL). A very small proportion is at the early stages of learning English. Pupils from traveller backgrounds also attend. The school has recently experienced a time of significant disruption. There have been many staffing changes over recent years, including senior staff, and this has had a considerable impact on some year groups, particularly the current Year 4.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Mary Bassett Lower School is giving its pupils a sound education within a difficult context. Standards for the present Year 4 pupils are below national expectations in reading, speaking and listening skills, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology (ICT). Standards are well below expectations in writing. From a low attainment on entry to the school, pupils make satisfactory progress overall. The quality of teaching and of the school's leadership and management are satisfactory. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- The governing body and staff are managing the school well through a difficult time.
- The Reception Class is an attractive and interesting learning environment where children are well taught and make good progress.
- Good procedures for managing behaviour, and the positive role models given by staff, support an orderly community in which relationships are good.
- Strong links have been established with parents.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Standards in English, mathematics, science and ICT for all pupils.
- Systems for monitoring teaching and learning, including the full implementation of the school's performance management policy, in order to develop existing strengths of teaching and learning in all subjects.
- The analysis and use of test and assessment information to more effectively track progress, set targets and plan work in lessons to meet the needs of all pupils.

The school has already identified these areas for improvement. The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Taking into account the recent period of disruption and uncertainty, the school has made satisfactory improvement since it was last inspected in April 1997. During this time, the school has successfully tried to maintain as much normality as possible for its pupils and remains a caring and supportive community. As a result, pupils' attitudes to their work, their behaviour, the overall quality of the curriculum and of teaching and learning are satisfactory. Standards in design and technology have improved for pupils in Year 2. Most significantly, the school is now well led and managed by an experienced headteacher who has a good understanding of what must be done to raise standards and increase pupils' achievement. The school's development plan has been considerably improved. However, the monitoring of the school's work and the analysis and use of assessment information have been inhibited during this period. These were key issues in the last inspection report. Because staffing difficulties are not yet wholly resolved, the capacity for future improvement is currently no better than satisfactory.

STANDARDS

The table below shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
Reading	C	E	E	E
Writing	E	D	C	C
Mathematics	C	E	D	E

Key	
<i>Well above average</i>	A
<i>Above average</i>	B
<i>Average</i>	C
<i>Below average</i>	D
<i>Well below average</i>	E

There has been an overall improvement in national test results since 1997. Improvement is most marked in writing, where there is a steady upward trend. The comparison with similar schools should be treated with some caution as the school is very close to comparison with the next group of schools. When matched with this next group, comparisons are more favourable. Although boys have performed better than girls in earlier years, the gap was narrowed in 2001 in reading and writing, and reversed in mathematics. The local educational authority's (LEA) analysis of pupils' progress from tests taken in Year 4 in 2001, shows that their progress exceeded the authority's average in reading and spelling and particularly so in mathematics. Progress was below the authority average for writing. From a now well below attainment on entry to the Reception Class, all pupils make satisfactory

progress. Children make good progress in the Reception Class, but attainment is still well below those expected of pupils of a similar age when they enter Year 1. Inspection evidence shows that pupils in the current Years 2 and 4 attain standards below national expectations in speaking and listening skills, reading, mathematics, science and ICT. Although writing standards in Year 2 are also below national expectations for writing, they are well below them for pupils in the current Year 4. Pupils in this group have been most affected by staffing changes in the last few years. Standards are broadly in line with national expectations in all other subjects, with the exception of design and technology in Year 4, where standards are below national expectations. There was not enough evidence to make a judgement about physical education in Years 2 or 4, or about art and design in Year 4. Pupils in both these year groups are meeting the objectives of the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Most pupils are interested in their work but there is an undercurrent of restlessness in some lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Behaviour is generally calm and orderly inside the school and in lessons, but less so in the playground.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are good. Pupils take responsibility, but have less chance to show initiative in lessons.
Attendance	Despite previous good levels, attendance has fallen to below the national average during this school year. Many pupils are late to school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

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.

Despite the many recent changes to staff, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. During this inspection, many lessons throughout the school were well or very well taught. This is having a positive impact on the current progress made by year groups most affected by change, for example in Year 4. However, the good quality of teaching is not yet consistent across the school. The highest proportion of good and very good teaching was seen in the Reception Class, where activities are vital and engaging. Teaching was also strong in Year 2. However, pupils' earlier work in particular shows that activities have not always been well modified to meet the needs of different ability groups or demand enough of them. This was most significant in English for pupils in the present Year 4. English and mathematics are satisfactorily taught, as are basic literacy and numeracy skills. The most conspicuous and consistent strengths of teaching seen were good management of behaviour and the use of learning support staff. The first ensured that most pupils were attentive during lessons and helped them to apply themselves at least satisfactorily, and often well, to their tasks. Learning support staff gave pupils close and effective help, including those with special educational needs. Relative weaknesses occurred when behaviour was not as effectively managed as in other lessons, discussion did not prepare pupils well enough for subsequent tasks, or work was not challenging enough. Where this

happened, pupils were sometimes restless and did not apply themselves closely to their work. These factors inhibited learning in these lessons to no greater than satisfactory. Little use of computers was seen in the computer suite or during lessons. Other subjects are satisfactorily taught, although there was not enough evidence to make overall judgements about art and design, design and technology or physical education.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. There is a stimulating curriculum in the Reception Class. There are not enough planned opportunities for investigation and the application of skills in mathematics and science, or links with other subjects for ICT.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall. There is good provision, through a local project, for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. A review of provision is planned with the introduction of the new Code of Practice.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory provision for this very small proportion of pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory in all aspects.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory for the welfare of pupils and good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. The analysis and use of assessment information and the monitoring of attendance and personal development need further improvement.

The school works well with parents and gives good quality information.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The new headteacher is giving thoughtful leadership and is firmly focused on raising standards and achievement. A full senior management team has yet to be re-established.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Well. Governors have worked together closely and successfully over the past year.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Governors have good links with the school and are re-establishing monitoring visits. Monitoring systems within the school, including arrangements for the performance management of staff, have been curtailed by recent difficulties.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory overall, but there is not enough use of ICT resources. The school is beginning to seek best value for the standards it achieves.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are all satisfactory overall.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or concerns. • Children are expected to work hard and achieve their best. • Children like coming to school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities outside of lessons.

Parents continue to be steadfastly supportive of the school and have positive views about its work. Inspection findings generally agree with parents' views. For example, the strongest area of satisfaction reflects the strong links between home and school. The other areas of parental satisfaction were found to be satisfactory. So, too, was provision for extra-curricular activities. Some have not taken place as a result of staff changes.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

1. The results of the most recent national tests in 2001 show that pupils in Year 2 attained standards close to the national average in writing when compared with all schools and with similar schools. Results in the mathematics test were below the national average for all schools and results were well below average in reading. When compared with the performance of similar schools, these results were well below the national average for both subjects. However, there has been an overall improvement in national test results since 1997. This is most marked in writing, where there is a steady upward trend at a rate faster than the national trend. This success reflects the school's emphasis on improving writing standards. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher than expected level (Level 3) in writing was also close to the national average, while in reading and mathematics the proportion attaining this higher level was well below the national average. It should also be noted that the comparison with similar schools is based upon the proportion of pupils at the school who are eligible for free school meals. The school's proportion is very close to the next benchmark group. Background information given by the school suggests this to be a more relevant comparison. If these test results are therefore compared with the next similar school grouping, the comparison is more favourable. Although standards are still below average for reading, they are well above the national average for writing and close to the average for mathematics. In response to lower test results for reading than for writing, the school is now focusing its attention more closely on reading whilst still maintaining its drive on improving writing skills. Although boys have tended to perform better than girls in earlier years, the gap was narrowed in reading and writing and reversed in mathematics in the 2001 tests. Teacher assessments for science in 2001 showed standards to be well below the national average for all schools nationally, and similar schools.

2. The LEA analysis of the results of optional test taken in 2001 by pupils then in Year 4 indicate that these pupils made more than the expected rate of progress in mathematics during Years 3 and 4. Progress was close to the LEA's expected level for reading, but fell short in writing.

3. Bearing in mind the now low levels of attainment when children first enter the Reception Class, and the recent troubled period, pupils are making satisfactory progress overall. This is also the case for those pupils with special educational needs and the few with EAL. Most significantly, children join the school with poor speaking and listening skills. This factor continues to affect their learning throughout the school. These factors contribute to the apparent lower attainment in many subjects in comparison with the findings of the previous inspection. Inspection evidence shows that pupils in Year 2 reach standards below national expectations in English, mathematics and science. The current Year 4 pupils attain standards below national expectations in speaking, listening and reading skills, and in mathematics and science. However, writing standards are well below national expectations. The school has worked hard to maintain teaching standards and to focus on raising achievement during this difficult period. However, progress has been adversely affected for pupils in the present Year 4. This is because staff changes have had the greatest impact on this group of pupils, particularly during their time in Year 2 and during the current school year. The school's competent curriculum planning effectively informed new and temporary staff about the work to be taught. However, assessment systems did not always give these teachers enough information about what pupils could and couldn't do and so enable them to modify lesson planning to meet the needs of

different ability groups. Additionally, older pupils have not benefited to the same degree from the school's focus on writing, and the present Year 4 has a wide range of attainment. However, this group was well taught during the inspection and made good progress overall in lessons.

4. Throughout the school, many pupils have a limited vocabulary and few explain their ideas in detail or at length. Many pupils listen satisfactorily but in some lessons there is an undercurrent of restlessness and inattention. Attitudes to reading are generally good, although pupils tend not have a wider knowledge of books beyond those they meet at school. More able pupils in Year 2 read demanding texts with accuracy. Middle attainers read simple text correctly, only sometimes needing adult help. However, pupils are less confident when talking about what they read. Higher attainers tell the story in broad terms, but with limited detail. Middle and lower attainers largely use the illustrations. The few more able pupils in Year 4 read fluently. Although they name books they have enjoyed and are aware of different types of stories, there is little evidence of them beginning to deduce or infer information from what they have read. Pupils have limited opportunities to develop research skills, although their knowledge of how to use a library and where to look for information in a book is increasing as a result of weekly sessions in the school library.

5. Formal writing skills, such as handwriting, spelling and punctuation are better promoted than the content of pupils' writing, which often lacks interest or imagination. Only the writing of more able pupils in Years 2 and 4 has some enlivening vocabulary or turn of phrase. Pupils in Year 2 have made good progress in extending the length of their written work. Full stops are used by most pupils, although less confidently by middle and lower attainers. Handwriting is legible, but not always correctly formed and there is little evidence of joined handwriting. More able and middle attaining Year 4 pupils write in a joined style of handwriting. The large proportion of lower attainers complete only short pieces of independent writing, and full stops are not used consistently.

6. By Year 2, most pupils recall addition and subtraction facts to ten and recognise number sequences, such as odd and even. They know the mathematical names for 2 and 3 dimensional shapes and are beginning to use both standard and non-standard units for measuring length. In the current Year 4, the majority of pupils have a good understanding of the four rules of number and work with numbers to 1000. They also competently complete simple money problems. However, pupils in Years 2 and 4 find it hard to apply their mathematical knowledge. In science, Year 2 pupils gain an understanding of electrical circuits through practical activities. During the inspection, they conducted investigations, recorded their measurements in table form and used their results to make comparisons and to evaluate whether their tests were fair. Year 4 pupils give simple explanations for changes in living things, such as lack of water in plants. During experiments, they describe change, increasingly using scientific terms to explain what they see. They recognise where changes are reversible or irreversible. However, pupils do not confidently apply their skills to investigative work. In both mathematics and science, pupils in Years 2 and 4 find it difficult to work at speed.

7. Standards are broadly in line with national expectations in history, geography and music. This is an improvement on the findings of the last inspection for design and technology in Year 2. Standards are below national expectations in design and technology in Year 4 and in ICT in Year 2. There was not enough evidence to make overall judgements about other subjects or for ICT in Year 4. Pupils at Years 2 and 4 are meeting the objectives of the locally Agreed Syllabus.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Bearing in mind the school's recent challenging circumstances and many staff changes, pupils' attitudes to their work and school life, their behaviour and the quality of relations have been well maintained. This has enabled the school to operate smoothly and keep a stable and happy environment for its pupils. Parents confirmed in their questionnaire the school's success, as 98 per cent agreed that their children enjoyed coming to school. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour were never less than satisfactory in lessons during this inspection and they were good in 59 per cent of lessons. Relationships between pupils and with adults continue to be good. This reflects the school's commitment to creating a caring, friendly and encouraging learning environment. However, the impact of this difficult time has had some influence on pupils' attitudes and behaviour, because these aspects are currently satisfactory, which is less favourable than was found during the last inspection. Attendance has recently fallen to below the national average.

9. Despite joining the school with limited speaking, personal and social skills, children in the Reception Class often show good attitudes and behaviour, and start to build confident relationships with each other. Although many are initially quiet and approach some activities with caution, they soon start to trust adults, become absorbed in group play and learning, and participate more confidently in the daily routines. They respond well to formal teaching and learning, listen well, and are keen to participate in tasks.

10. Overall, pupils have satisfactory attitudes to school life. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and the few with EAL, listen well to teachers, concentrate, and are interested in their lessons. Many want to participate in discussions, although in several lessons during the inspection, there was an undercurrent of restlessness and inattention. However, pupils respond well when teaching is particularly strong. In these lessons, they are interested, keen to answer questions and work well at their tasks.

11. The behaviour of the pupils is satisfactory overall. Behaviour inside school buildings is orderly and calm, particularly in assemblies. Behaviour was well managed in most lessons seen and ensured that pupils were enabled to make at least sound, and often good, levels of progress. Where pupils sometimes exhibit challenging behaviour, other pupils take little notice and learning is not adversely affected. Pupils support the school's code of conduct and take part in the development of school rules. Although pupils have a sense of right and wrong, not all have yet realised the need for self-discipline. This is most apparent outside of lessons. For example, the school's records of incidents of poorer behaviour indicates many such occurrences in the playground, where the environment is not interesting enough to tempt some pupils away from boisterous play or argument. However, these incidents have been resolved without exclusions, which are at a low level. Despite the physical challenges of the school's many steps and different levels, pupils move around the grounds sensibly. There have been two exclusions during the school year prior to this inspection.

12. The quality of relationships is good and, in this area, the school fulfils its aims well. The relationships between the staff and pupils are often very good and support pupils well. Staff are very good role models, and pupils value the trust, empathy and care that they are given. Pupils are inquisitive and welcoming to visitors, and are often well mannered with adults. From an early age, pupils are encouraged to value each other's opinions and qualities, as when children applaud the efforts of others in the Reception Class, for example. Boys and girls eat and play amicably together at lunchtimes. Most pupils work well together in the classroom, although there is some occasional friction amongst the very oldest pupils.

13. The development of pupils' self-esteem and the creation of a secure and caring school community are high priorities for the school. Staff consistently try to raise the pupils'

confidence and maturity through a satisfactory personal, health and social education programme, and during well-led assemblies. Pupils make rapid strides in personal development in the Reception Class and satisfactory progress overall throughout their time in school. Pupils quickly settle into class routines and systems. Some lessons have a necessary awareness of health and safety so that pupils know how to react safely in the school and the outside world. Residential trips for pupils in Year 4 are good occasions for developing independence and responsibility. The house system is giving older pupils limited leadership opportunities. In some lessons, pupils willingly stand up in front of the class to talk about their work. However, opportunities for independent learning are not strongly featured in lessons. For example, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to take part in investigative work in science or to apply their knowledge in mathematics. Although pupils use classroom resources well, tidy their classes and cloakrooms under direction, and were seen helping in the classroom and around the school, there are not enough chances for them to show individual initiative or take responsibilities.

14. Attendance has fallen to below the national average during the present school year although, up to that point, attendance was consistently above average. In the previous school year, it had been well above the national average. The school had made good progress in reducing unauthorised absence, but this has now increased considerably in the present school year. Authorised absence is at an average level and in-term holidays are not significant. Many pupils find it difficult to come to school on time, and this affects a prompt start to the school day.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

15. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The school worked hard to maintain the quality of its teaching during a time which saw many staff changes. A testimony to its success was seen in the teaching that took place during the inspection. At this time, teaching and learning was never less than satisfactory. In 66 per cent of lessons it was good or better, of which 33 per cent were very good. The highest percentage of good and very good teaching was seen in the Reception Class, where teaching and learning were good overall. This strength has been maintained since the last inspection. Teaching was also strong in Year 2. Unlike other year groups, the present teacher has remained with Year 2 throughout this period. The present Year 4 group have been most affected over recent years by staff changes and this has adversely affected their achievement over time, particularly in writing. Year 3 has also been affected. The present class is formed from two previous Year 2 classes and is currently taught over the week by three teachers. However, Years 3 and 4 are being well taught this term by the new headteacher and the acting deputy headteacher respectively, and this is reflected in the often good or very good progress made during lessons in these classes at the time of this inspection. Lesson planning is generally well supported by schemes of work in all subjects. This has enabled part time and temporary staff to know what they have to teach and ensure that planned work has been covered. However, pupils' earlier work in many subjects shows that activities have not always been well modified to meet the needs of different ability groups or demand enough of them. This was most significant in English for the present Year 4, where all pupils, including those with special educational needs, had largely completed the same work.

16. English, mathematics and science are satisfactorily taught, as are basic literacy and numeracy skills. Less emphasis, however, is given to developing independent learning skills through allowing pupils to investigate, explore, research and apply their skills in subjects such as mathematics, science and history. Neither are there enough formal opportunities planned for in lessons at Key Stages 1 and 2 for developing pupils' speaking and learning skills. Teaching was satisfactory in other subjects, although there was not enough evidence to make overall judgements for art and design, design and technology and physical education. During the inspection, little use was seen of computers, either in classrooms or in the computer suite.

17. The Reception Class staff are experienced and work closely together. They understand well the needs of these children, and do all they can to make a wide range of activities vital and engaging. Even the most mundane of tasks is presented in an interesting way. For example, children had to 'fish' letters out of the water tray before matching them to the same letters on a waterproof sheet! Language and literacy skills are given a high priority and children are given constant opportunities through structured play and group discussion to answer questions and explain ideas. Behaviour is very well managed. The staff make timely interventions to ensure that children get the most out of their activities and group teaching is lively and entertaining. Ongoing assessment is comprehensive and allows staff to check that all children have fully participated in all activities, and that the needs of all are met.

18. The most conspicuous and consistent strengths of teaching are the good management of behaviour and the use of resources, particularly learning support staff. The good relationships between staff and pupils and, in many cases, their high expectations, keep most pupils attentive during whole class teaching and help them to apply themselves at least satisfactorily to their tasks. Learning support staff give individual pupils for whom they are responsible, and groups of pupils, close and effective support. This includes pupils with special educational needs and those with a statement of special educational need. In some classes they are also well used during whole group sessions to make ongoing assessments of targeted pupils, although they are sometimes left only to listen during these sessions in some other lessons. The strongest features of teaching seen in other very good lessons were exemplified in a religious education lesson in Year 3 about Jesus' life, the parables he told and the miracles he performed. In this lesson, a variety of strategies kept pupils interested, developed self-confidence and independence and enabled them to share ideas and report back on their findings. Most significantly, there was very effective encouragement of language and literacy skills. Skilled discussion explored what pupils already knew, invited them to share possibilities about how Jesus had spent his time as an adult, or to retell familiar parables. In some cases, these pupils were happy to stand up and speak in front of the whole class. Group work allowed pupils to read, research and discuss different miracles amongst themselves. By the end of the lesson, they were able to confidently report back on their ideas, give the reasons for them, and reflect empathetically on the surprise and awe with which the miracles would have been greeted by onlookers. Even pupils with particularly challenging behaviour were successfully managed and motivated. All pupils made very good progress in their knowledge of the stories, their understanding of Christian beliefs and the importance of respecting the views of other religious groups.

19. Relative weaknesses in otherwise satisfactory lessons occurred where behaviour was not as effectively managed as in other lessons, or discussion did not prepare pupils well enough for their subsequent tasks. In others, although tasks had been adequately varied

for different ability groups, they were not challenging enough for middle and higher attainers. Where these features were seen, pupils' were sometimes restless and some did not apply themselves closely to their work. This inhibited their learning to no more than satisfactory.

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

20. The quality and range of learning opportunities continues to be good in the Reception Class and satisfactory in Years 1 to 4. Key issues noted in the last inspection report have been partially addressed. The National Numeracy Strategy has been further improved with regard to mental mathematical sessions. Curriculum planning is in place for all subjects and appropriately takes account of national guidance, although planning for the systematic development of skills in design and technology has only recently been drawn up. However, opportunities for food technology have been improved because of the development of a kitchen area. This was a key issue in the last inspection report.

21. Children in the Reception Class benefit from a stimulating curriculum based on clear learning objectives for all the areas of learning. The development of speaking and listening skills is given close attention and there is a good area for outdoor education. The time devoted to English and mathematics in Years 1 to 4 reflects the school's commitment to raising standards in these subjects whilst, at the same time, giving appropriate time to all other subjects. Opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills are satisfactory, particularly the emphasis on subject related vocabulary in English and mathematics. However, planning in these year groups does not pay enough attention to giving pupils opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills, and there are limited chances for them to write imaginatively in history. Neither does planning fully encourage the application of mathematical knowledge and understanding or the development of investigative skills in science. Most importantly, planning in many subjects does not routinely include enough modification or challenge for pupils of all abilities. There are not enough planned opportunities to use ICT across the curriculum and, in particular, the computers in the ICT suite are not used sufficiently during the mornings when literacy and numeracy activities mainly take place. These factors contribute to limiting pupils' achievement over time to being no greater than satisfactory.

22. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Learning support staff work well with these pupils in lessons, including those with statements of special educational need. Targets on individual education plans are specific and cover a range of areas, although the predominant focus is on improving literacy skills. These are set by class teachers and checked by the co-ordinator. The introduction of the new Code of Practice is planned for after staff training and the school plans to make a major review of its provision at the same time. There is good provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties through the school's involvement in a local project, which aims to improve behaviour through raising self-esteem.

23. Provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. It includes football, inter-school matches, chess, gardening, and a lunchtime club, although some have recently been affected by staff changes. A pre-school and after-school club is also available to all pupils and to some ex-pupils currently attending the middle school. These clubs provide a range of learning opportunities in a safe and secure environment. Pupils in Year 4 participate in a five-day residential visit, which promotes sporting and personal development. There are also opportunities for pupils to learn the cello or violin.

24. The provision for equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Learning support assistants give valuable help to pupils who experience difficulties. The small proportion of traveller children, and those for whom EAL, are well integrated into the school. Extra-curricular opportunities are open to both boys and girls. In most lessons, all pupils are equally included in activities and discussion. However, there is often a lack of sufficient challenge for all ability groups, for example the most able pupils.

25. The provision for personal social and health education (PSHE) is satisfactory. The governors have approved the school's sex education programme and the school makes suitable provision for drug awareness. There are timetabled lessons for personal, social and health education and pupils also consider health issues in science and in physical education. A local project operating within the school fosters the personal development of a small group of pupils who experience difficulties with their behaviour. There are opportunities for pupils' social development in the groupings of pupils, in fund-raising activities, visits and through visitors to the school.

26. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is satisfactory. There are good links with the local churches and religious groups, and these are used as a resource for learning.

27. The annual carol concert has been held in the local Anglican and Methodist churches. Members of the Joint Churches in Leighton Buzzard introduce and discuss Bible stories with pupils in Years 3 and 4. The Parent Teacher Association holds social and fund-raising events, which attract local residents. The school is also active in raising money for a number of local and national charities. Pupils visit a local day Nursery and perform at a local music fiesta. They make visits in the locality, for example to the Grand Union Canal and the shopping precinct in Leighton Buzzard. Visitors to the school from the wider community have included an Afro-Caribbean Dance Group, an Animal Roadshow and the Bedford Youth Opera Group.

28. There are satisfactory relationships with partner institutions, particularly the middle school. This helps to ensure an easy transition for pupils into the middle school. There are links with a local playgroup, from which the school draws some of its children. University students frequently spend set periods of time, helping and learning in the school.

29. The school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education (SMSC) is satisfactory in all aspects. The new headteacher is in the process of developing the school's work in these areas. As a result, the impact of spiritual provision has been strengthened, but the social, moral and cultural provision has declined, due to the school's recent disrupted period.

30. In the limited time since joining the school this term, the headteacher has concentrated first on improving spiritual provision. There is a good collective worship policy, with a good balance of religious and secular themes. As a result, pupils enjoy these occasions, move easily and naturally into prayer and sing hymns robustly. In lessons, pupils are given satisfactory opportunities to gain insights into the values and beliefs of the principal faiths.

31. They reflect on the life and times of Jesus, their visits to the local church, and the significance of prayer. During the inspection, pupils in Year 1 experienced moments of wonderment, as a result of carefully timed introductions of artefacts in history and of paintings in art and design. However, planned opportunities for reflection across the curriculum are generally under-developed.

32. The school's good relationships and positive tone are a solid Foundation for both moral

and social development. Throughout the day, staff members act as very good role models, because they consistently try to raise the self-esteem of all pupils and encourage mutual respect. A helpful improvement to moral provision has been made, by specifically timetabling circle time sessions. This is in contrast to the previous strategy of holding such sessions only as issues arose. Pupils are involved in drawing up class rules and these are clearly displayed around the school. At lunchtimes, each class has its own supervisor. Through this consistent relationship, pupils gain an understanding of acceptable standards of behaviour. The school is developing a sense of community through its assemblies, lunchtime arrangements, clubs, and collective fund raising activities. Although the School Council has been temporarily disbanded, it is the school's intention to reassemble the group as soon as possible now that staffing issues have stabilising. Sometimes pupils have the opportunity to work together in lessons. For example, during an ICT session in Year 2, each small group of pupils successfully negotiated what instructions to give a programmable toy. However, such chances are generally limited during lessons, for example in investigative activities in science and mathematics, or in planned opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills.

33. The school has a strong sense of its local cultural heritage. It is proud of its history and its development within the local community, and displays of school memorabilia and photographs give pupils a sense of belonging. Pupils make visits to the local area and study their immediate environment within Leighton Buzzard. Such activities enrich their history and geography lessons. They also learn about other cultures, times and beliefs in history, geography and religious education. They study the work of painters, such as Van Gogh, in art and design, and listen to music. The school has a multicultural statement, and pupils have undertaken studies of African and Indian paintings, music and festivals. However, opportunities are limited for pupils to develop an understanding and appreciation of other cultures and traditions.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

34. The headteacher and staff are committed and dedicated to the welfare of all pupils, and the school remains a caring community. This strength has sustained the school well through recent difficulties and ensured that the pupils have a secure and safe environment. The headteacher has shown a quiet and determined dedication to support pupils' welfare, and this commitment has quickly gained parents' confidence. However, some formal monitoring systems are not fully developed. This is currently true for procedures to monitor and promote attendance, for example. Additionally, while assessment systems are satisfactory overall, there is not enough use of this information to influence and guide planning so that work meets the needs of all ability groups.

35. The monitoring of the personal development of pupils throughout the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, with well-documented procedures that produce accurate assessments. The school has also made progress in agreeing, between teachers and pupils, both individual and group targets for personal development. There are good opportunities for the school to monitor and support the personal development of those pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties through a local programme for nurturing self-esteem. Informal monitoring is strong at Key Stage 1 and 2 through the strength of the school's relationships. Information about pupils' personal development is shared verbally between teachers at the end of the school year, although there are no formal whole-school systems for tracking and monitoring pupils' personal development.

36. Under the guidance of the headteacher and an appropriately skilled committee, health and safety procedures are good. So, too, are first aid facilities, with a dedicated on-site

medical room and a sufficient number of qualified first aiders. Information technology is well used to update all pupil personal information, and this is sufficiently accurate and detailed to support any medical emergency. The school's administration has thorough procedures for dispensing medication. There is a good range of recently updated support, guidance and welfare policies. These policies are being implemented consistently across the school, and with good understanding by all staff.

37. Child protection procedures are satisfactory, with a policy that has been customised to meet the school's needs. The school is vigilant in this area of its work, and is well supported by a number of outside agencies. However, staff have not had any recent training to update their knowledge. Outside agencies support pupils on a routine basis, or for specific needs. The support of the local education welfare service has been significant, and has been complemented by a support project for local schools, with particular emphasis on helping pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties or attendance issues. The Traveller Education Service supports the school well. Pupils are being acquainted with health and safety principles through the school's PSHE provision. However, there is not enough analysis of the school's records of minor accidents to discover why these incidents occur.

38. During the last year, the school has not kept a careful enough check on attendance and punctuality. This is because there is little analysis of registers by school staff, and the school does not systematically analyse attendance and punctuality data to identify and track trends. Additionally, although there is a good attendance policy, new staff have not been sufficiently briefed on recording absence. However, the school is well supported by the educational welfare service, and the local project mentioned in the previous paragraph. Parents are generally aware of the need to contact the school if their child is absent, but the school does not practice a system of telephoning on the first day of absence when it has not been informed.

39. The procedures for monitoring and promoting behaviour are good and are fundamental to the school's caring ethos. The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour, and teachers focus on good behaviour and raise pupils' self esteem well, particularly within the classrooms. The Code of Conduct is very evident throughout the school, and pupils assist the development of class rules. The behaviour policy has a good definition of systems and procedures that maintain an effective balance between sanctions and rewards. Staff fairly and consistently apply these. Despite the many instances of behaviour incidents in the playground, staff are effective in detecting any poor behaviour in the school. Behaviour problems are effectively managed and resolved, sometimes involving parents. The school collects behaviour data, but has yet to undertake a more thorough analysis to shape future strategies and tactics. The constant contact with the many good teacher role models throughout the school day has a positive effect on all pupils within the classroom, where expectations are made clear.

40. Assessment procedures are satisfactory overall, with a suitable emphasis on English, mathematics and, now, on science. Assessment procedures are good at the Foundation Stage, although the close scrutiny of information from assessments taken when children first enter the school is underdeveloped. Recent analysis of information about national and option tests is helping the school to identify broad ability groups in English and mathematics for whom standards need to be raised, and this information has been used to set whole school targets for improvement. National Curriculum Level targets for English and mathematics are also set annually for individual pupils and reviewed mid year. Teachers regularly retain examples of pupils' work, although these are not always annotated with attainment information or given a National Curriculum Level. However, new or temporary staff have not always had enough information about pupils' attainment to enable them to match tasks to the different needs of pupils. To improve present systems, the new

headteacher has already introduced more detailed tracking and recording documents for English and science. These enable staff to identify pupils' attainment more closely, indicate what pupils must do to improve further and help staff to plot class attainment and set measurable class targets. The same approach is soon to be introduced for mathematics. Teachers have begun to fill these in and, as a result, are gaining a fuller and clearer picture of the overall attainment profile of pupils in their classes. However, as the system is new it has not yet had an impact on planning and, therefore, activities still do not always sufficiently meet and challenge the needs of pupils with different abilities. The school is also establishing the use of a computerised assessment tracking system. There are no formal assessment systems for all other subjects, although teachers complete half-termly evaluations of work covered during that period for all subjects. While giving some broad-brush information about achievement these evaluations do not have sharply focused information about the attainment of individual pupils or ability groups.

41. Systems for assessing and supporting the development of pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory, although further development has also been arrested by the recent period of difficulty. Individual education plans (IEPs) show evidence of pupils moving up and down the register and the school has been recently successful in moving pupils to the highest stage of need. However, the school is aware that it needs to review the position of pupils on the register of need to ensure that they are appropriately placed. Additionally, a few pupils with learning difficulties in Year 4 have not been placed on the register. Provision for those pupils with statements of educational need is satisfactory. Those few pupils with EAL are assessed in the same way as other pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

42. The strengths in this area of the school's work have been well maintained since the previous inspection. Parents continue to be steadfastly supportive of the school and have positive views about its work. They are particularly appreciative of how hard the school worked to maintain a happy and stable atmosphere for their children during a difficult time and feel that the school is now improving under its new leadership and management. Significantly, responses to the parents' questionnaire show little variation in the overall good level of satisfaction with the school found at the time of the last inspection. Parents feel that their children still enjoy coming to school. They also view the school as approachable, and this reflects the good links the school has sought to encourage between home and school. Parents are also particularly pleased with how much their children are encouraged to work hard. The only major area of concern is with the lack of extra curricular activities. Inspection findings largely agree with all these views as those areas mentioned were found to be satisfactory.

43. Parental support has a very good impact on the work of the school. Some parents are members of the school's staff, and one in seven parents support the school as voluntary helpers, either in classrooms, running clubs or helping teachers with school visits. Parent governors are committed, enthusiastic and have played essential roles during the school's period of instability. The Parent Teacher Association works tirelessly through a large enthusiastic committee to provide memorable and fun events for all parents. It raises significant funds to be used for the school's benefit. For example, association funds are used to finance the rental of ICT resources. Parents have helped to refurbish and develop the school library and now run sessions for all classes to encourage pupils' library skills.

44. There are good links with parents. The new headteacher has quickly established herself with parents and is keen to build on present strengths and improve the relationship further. Induction procedures start before children join the reception group and include a visit

to the child's home by staff. From the Reception Class onwards, parents have good access to the staff through an open-door policy. In this way, the school demonstrates how much it values its parents and makes sure that problems are promptly handled. The school's reception area is accessible and welcoming and administrative staff are readily available to answer any queries. Many aspects of information for parents are good, with a strong accent on quality. The school's prospectus is innovative in design, attractive and helpful. Other general written communications, including newsletters, are sufficient and give parents enough time to react. However, some parents feel that they could be better informed where there are short-term changes to staff. Notice boards are informative and homework diaries are used well to support a dialogue with parents. There is also sufficient information on topic work to enable parents to be involved in their children's learning. The annual report to parents is particularly informative of pupils' achievements in the core subjects of English and mathematics, for example, but is less so for other subjects. There is general feedback on past targets and future targets are identified. However, these reports do not ask for parental feedback. Family literacy sessions have been run in the recent past and there is satisfactory involvement of parents with children who have special educational needs as they participate in the review and setting of learning targets.

45. The majority of parents have a solid interest in their children's education and wish to sustain a purposeful relationship with the school. Consultation evenings are well attended and parents have signed the home-school agreement. However, some parents are less supportive in helping the school to improve its levels of pupil attendance and punctuality.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

46. The school has been well managed by the governing body and the staff through an uncertain time. The school is particularly successful at meeting its aims with regard to creating a caring environment, valuing pupils and creating good relationships. These strengths have supported the school effectively during recent difficulties and helped to keep circumstances as stable as possible for its pupils. As a result, all pupils make sound academic progress overall, they behave appropriately and have satisfactory attitudes to their work. In recognition of this effort and its positive outcomes, parents expressed to inspectors their appreciation of and support for the school and its work. However, several important areas of the school's work have been curtailed during this period, most notably the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. The school is aware that a senior management team needs to be developed with some urgency, to help oversee and evaluate the work of the school. Because staffing difficulties are not wholly resolved and some improvements are very recent, the capacity for future improvement is currently satisfactory.

47. The new headteacher is already giving thoughtful leadership. She is experienced and had much contact with the school last term, working closely with the then acting headteacher, staff and LEA advisor to draw up the new school improvement plan and prepare the school for this inspection. Her vision is firmly focused on raising standards and promoting the self-esteem of pupils to enable them to achieve better. She has already made valuable improvements to the school's assessment systems and has taken on a part time teaching responsibility to ensure greater stability for pupils in the present Year 3. She taught well during the inspection and is a good teaching role model for other staff. The school's priorities are entirely appropriate and the governing body has taken swift action to eliminate the over spend in last year's budget within the space of this financial year. The acting deputy headteacher was acting headteacher in the latter half of last term and did much to support the staff. She is currently teaching Year 4 pupils, and these pupils made good progress overall in lessons during this inspection. However, the whole senior management team has yet to be re-established next term, when a key staff member returns with responsibility for

mathematics and ICT, and a permanent deputy headteacher is appointed. While teachers have continued to produce half-termly evaluations for each subject, limited use has been made of this information to influence the school's work. Subject leaders and key staff have had little opportunity to monitor and evaluate the quality of education or pupils' achievement in their area of responsibility. This includes the co-ordination of provision for special educational needs.

48. The governing body fulfils its roles and responsibilities well. It has worked together closely over the past year, under a dedicated chair of governors, and individual members have given much of their time to the school. Previously, governors have made regular visits into school as part of their links with each curriculum area, and have given helpful written reports on their observations and interviews with co-ordinators. These visits are now being re-introduced, for example with the new co-ordinator for physical education. The governing body has also conducted a survey of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and used this to inform its strategic planning. During last term, the school's improvement plan was updated and considerably improved. Although it is initially planned only for a twelve-month period, its contents are comprehensive. Criteria for judging the success of initiatives are linked well to their impact on teaching and learning, although targets for raising standards are broad and lack a measurable element to allow the school to judge its success in achieving them.

49. Financial planning is satisfactory. A drop in pupil numbers across the area has affected the school roll and brought with it a reduction in the school's budget. Short-term measures have, of necessity, been used to balance the budget for this year. However, the governing body is aware that savings have been made in key areas, such as learning resources and staff-development that cannot indefinitely sustain low spending without adversely affecting the quality of education in the longer term. Financial procedures and monitoring of expenditure are satisfactory. Administration is well managed by effective and efficient administrative staff who have a good knowledge of the school. Resources are used satisfactorily overall and the school is beginning to seek best value for the standards it achieves. Learning support staff are well deployed and work effectively with individuals and groups of pupils, including those with special education needs. Learning resources are well used in mathematics, science, geography, history and religious education. However, resources in the ICT suite are seldom used during morning sessions. Other resources are also under-used, including the library to improve research skills and the hall in the mornings for physical education. Satisfactory use is made of new technology for administrative purposes, but its potential is not fully developed for promoting or monitoring pupils' learning.

50. Staffing arrangements have stabilised this term, with following the appointment of the new headteacher, and are satisfactory. Although some classes are still taught by more than one teacher or by temporary staff, the school has created the best organisation it can in the circumstances. Plans are already being made for the summer term, when key staff return, and for the start of the new academic year in September. Learning support staff, and volunteer helpers who have been closely associated with the school for many years, have also made a valuable contribution to maintaining a stable school community. Useful, regular meetings with learning support staff were started last term. The Reception Class is very well staffed with a full time nursery nurse in addition to the class teacher. Performance management policy is being restarted and new assessment procedures are intended to

help staff set informed pupil progress targets. Despite the recent difficult circumstances, planning has been readily available to support the work of new or temporary staff, and the acting headteacher gave good support to new staff last term. Additionally, there was a useful guidance sheet outlining the school's procedures for special educational needs.

51. The school's accommodation is satisfactory. There are good facilities for the reception group and a well developed outside area. Improvements have also been made to the library, which is now an attractive area, and to ICT and food technology facilities. Additional classroom space enables the school to have a discrete room for the breakfast and after school clubs. However, older parts of the building, whilst spacious and historically interesting, provide poorer facilities. Easy movement between classes and teaching areas is inhibited by the split-level site and steep steps. The governing body has decided that the school's swimming pool is too costly to maintain and, therefore, can no longer be used.

52. Learning resources are satisfactory overall, and good for mathematics and music. Literacy resources have been extended, particularly reading books for use with groups of pupils. The quantity of scribed reading books is adequate, but not all of them are put to full use. Larger apparatus for physical education is barely satisfactory.

53. Although the cost per pupil is high, given the challenging nature of the school's circumstances, it gives sound value for money. Pupils make satisfactory progress from low attainment on entry to the reception group. Leadership and management are satisfactory, so too is the overall quality of teaching and learning.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

54. To raise standards of achievement in all subjects and for all pupils, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- Improve standards in English, mathematics, science and ICT for all pupils, by:

English:

- * planning specific opportunities in lessons for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills;
- * giving pupils more opportunities in writing activities, and in other subjects, to explore language and ideas more widely and imaginatively, beyond writing stories;
- * linking sessions on developing library skills to a whole school approach to teaching enquiry and research skills;
- * making full use of all reading scheme books to give pupils a wider range of reading opportunities.

Mathematics and science:

- * increasing the opportunities for pupils to use and apply their skills, knowledge and understanding to investigations and solving problems;
- * giving pupils more experience of working at speed.

Information and communication technology (ICT):

- * making more use of the computer suite and computers in classrooms, throughout the school day, to increase ICT skills and knowledge and to support learning in all subjects;
- * fully exploring and exploiting links between ICT and other subjects.

- Establish systems for monitoring teaching and learning, including the full implementation of the school's performance management policy, by:

- * re-establishing, with some urgency, a senior management team to help oversee and evaluate the work of the school;
- * enabling key staff and subject leaders to monitor teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility;
- * introducing a full timetable for the performance management of teaching staff, as planned;
- * allocating, as soon as possible, funding for the professional development of staff.

- Further develop the analysis and use of test and assessment information to more effectively track progress, set targets and plan work in lessons to meet the needs of all pupils, by:
 - * continuing to develop the use of new tracking and recording documents to enable staff to identify attainment more closely, know what individual pupils must do to improve, plot class attainment and set measurable class progress targets;
 - * undertaking a closer scrutiny of information from assessments taken when children first enter the Reception Class to identify areas of strength and weakness and track trends and progress;
 - * annotating and giving a National Curriculum Level to samples of pupils' work;
 - * reviewing the register of pupils with special educational needs to ensure that all pupils with need are included and appropriately placed;
 - * fully establishing the use of the computerised assessment tracking system;
 - * introducing formalised procedures to systematically assess attainment and progress in ICT, religious education and Foundation subjects.

- Other areas in need of development, which the governors should consider for inclusion in the school's action plan, are:
 - * raising standards in design and technology for pupils in Year 4 and extending the scheme of work for the systematic development of skills in this subject;
 - * the checking and analysis of information about attendance, punctuality and behaviour incidents to identify and track trends;
 - * formal systems for monitoring pupils' personal development in Years 1 to 4;
 - * improving the use of sketch books for exploring and developing ideas in art and design.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	27
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	45

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	9	9	9	0	0	0
Percentage	0	33	33	33	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents nearly four percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Reception	Y1–Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	21	120
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	28

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Y1–Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	32

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	23

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.3
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	23	18	41

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	17	19	22
	Girls	14	16	16
	Total	31	35	38
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	76 (72)	85 (86)	93 (72)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	18	20	18
	Girls	16	16	13
	Total	34	36	31
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	83 (76)	88 (76)	76 (76)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	3
White	107
Any other minority ethnic group	7

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	2	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes:

YR–Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	5.45
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	28:1
Average class size	28

Education support staff:

YR–Y4

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	158

Qualified teachers and support staff:

Nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	N/A
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	N/A
Total number of education support staff	N/A
Total aggregate hours worked per week	N/A
Number of pupils per FTE adult	N/A

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
	£
Total income	457523.00
Total expenditure	438351.00
Expenditure per pupil	2449.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	-19172.00
Balance carried forward to next year	0.00

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out
Number of questionnaires returned

141
45

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	60	38	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	58	36	7	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	58	11	2	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	51	9	2	2
The teaching is good.	47	51	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	49	33	13	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	20	2	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	33	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	31	51	9	0	9
The school is well led and managed.	20	53	11	0	16
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	58	2	0	9
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	38	20	2	18

Other issues raised by parents

Some concern was expressed that the school does not always give parents enough information about short-term staff changes, particularly over the recent disrupted period.

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

55. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good, and remains a strong area of the school's work. The teaching space, inside and out, is spacious, interesting and attractive. Children are taught well and, as a result, make good progress from a low level of attainment on entry. Children join the school in the term following their fourth birthday. They attend part-time initially, and start full time in the term following their fifth birthday. Older part-time children benefit from working with the full-time children each morning. The younger part-time children develop their early learning skills in a small group in the afternoons. Staff plan very carefully to ensure equality of opportunity for all children. The results of assessments taken when children first enter the Reception Class at the age of four show that they now enter the school with standards in all areas of learning that are well below those expected for children of their age. This would appear to be lower than was indicated in the last inspection report. The current low attainment of these children is most significant in relation to their speaking and listening skills and continues to have an impact on attainment throughout the school. The majority of children have little experience of pre-school education. Children with special educational needs, and those for whom EAL, make satisfactory progress in relation to their individual targets, because of the good support that they receive. Teaching is at least good, and often very good, in all six areas of learning detailed below. Despite making good progress overall, children continue to attain standards well below those expected of pupils of a similar age when they enter Year 1 because of their low level of knowledge, understanding and skills on entry.

Personal, social and emotional development

56. Most children settle well into the routines of school and soon begin to feel confident and secure. They are familiar with the classroom from their visits prior to entry and have met staff during home visits. Staff ensure that all children are fully included in the activities provided and form good relationships with the children. Children learn to work together and play co-operatively, for example in the African hut. They gain the confidence to try out new activities and learn to organise themselves independently. Resources are readily accessible. Activities are carefully planned and structured so that children are enabled to work well individually and in groups. Everyday routines encourage self-confidence and a sense of belonging. Children are encouraged to carry out special jobs throughout the day. They gain increasing self-control and begin to understand the difference between right and wrong. The ability to take turns is developed, for example, at the computer, and children learn to show consideration towards others. Adults insist that children tidy away resources and this helps them to develop respect for their environment and the property of others. All children gain confidence in expressing their feelings, as they talk about their families and tell their daily news. In talking together about pictures and books, recent part-time entrants already show a developing respect for the contribution of others. Adults use every opportunity to reinforce appropriate language and behaviour. For example, they ensure that children say 'please' and 'thank you' and take turns.

Communication, language and literacy

57. A high priority is placed on this area of development and, particularly, to the encouragement of speaking skills. There are many formal and informal opportunities to develop language skills. For example, when younger part-time children talk about what they can see in the picture 'All About My World', and relate them to their own experiences, such as playing in the park. Direct teaching and practical activities introduce and consolidate the key skills of language. Children are encouraged to ask questions and give full and reasoned answers. They learn to concentrate when listening to stories and the contribution of other children to discussions. Adults develop children's listening skills by insisting on full attention when they are talking, and ensure that children listen carefully to each other. They speak clearly, thus setting a good example. As they circulate during activities, adults listen well to children and extend discussions, so that children become increasingly confident speakers. Children also become familiar with a range of traditional rhymes. They begin to blend sounds together to form words, and the more able read simple books with repetitive texts. Children benefit from the school's early introduction of phonics and the teaching of letter sounds and shapes. Most children write their names satisfactorily, and about a third are able to write simple sentences by the end of their time in the Reception Class. Adults take every opportunity to extend children's vocabulary and encourage them to explain what they are doing. In a very effective literacy lesson, an African story, 'Handa's Surprise' was introduced. Most children learnt the names of seven tropical fruits and seven African animals. Their learning was enriched by supportive activities on Handa's play mat, painting, using 'hot' colours, drawing fruit and animals, counting animals, using the vocabulary 'more' and 'less,' and role play, dressed in African clothes in the African hut. The teacher's own knowledge, from time spent in Africa, enriches discussion with children as she circulates amongst the groups. Children's interest in words, spelling, rhyming patterns and simple punctuation is encouraged through alphabet bags. These have been introduced to aid the learning of phonics. They contain a book, pictures and items that begin with a specific letter. Children take home story sacks, for a week at a time and share these with adults at home. These contain a storybook, a soft toy, a non-fiction book and a game, all connected to the storybook. Where parents support the school in this, pupils make steady progress towards early reading skills.

Mathematical development

58. Children gain confidence in counting as they join in number rhymes and songs. Through play with a range of carefully selected, colourful apparatus, they learn to sort and order items. Half the children confidently count to 20 and are beginning to order numbers accurately to ten. They use vocabulary such as 'more than', 'less than', 'add one more', 'take one away', 'how many altogether' and 'how many are left?' Younger, part-time pupils have a good understanding of comparative terms, such as 'long', 'short' and 'how many?' Older children understand the terms 'longer', 'longest' and 'shorter', 'shortest'. Opportunities for practical activities are suitably planned and children develop an appropriate vocabulary to describe colour, size and shape. Most children recognise flat shapes, such as a square, rectangle, triangle and circle. They learn about symmetry as they make symmetrical patterns. They gain some knowledge of capacity and weight through practical experiences with sand and water. Mathematical vocabulary is emphasised and classroom resources reinforce mathematical concepts well. There are displays, books and resources related to number, shapes, games, puzzles, weighing activities and computer programs. Work is matched well to children's prior learning and, at

the end of each lesson, teachers help children to explain what they have learned. In mathematics, as in all areas of learning, children draw a picture in their activities books to show what they have learnt after visiting an activity. Most need adult support to add words and sentences.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

59. Children develop early investigative skills as they learn about the layout of the school and people who work in it. They identify features of the natural world in the school grounds, plant seeds and bulbs and study new growth. They show a keen interest in the weather and the changing seasons. Stimulating activities are linked well to the early goals for learning and teachers ensure that children gain knowledge, skills and understanding in practical contexts. When exploring and investigating the environment, children talk about the features that they like and dislike. They learn about people in the community who help them. Children are taught about road safety, and safety in the home and school. They begin to develop a sense of time and relationships as they talk about themselves and their families, and gain a sense of the past as they study old toys, such as teddy bears. Children learn about belonging to different groups in religious education and show a developing respect for people of different cultures and beliefs. Resources represent a variety of cultures. Many of their stories come from far away countries. For example, during the inspection, they were sharing and enjoying a story about Africa. Children develop their scientific knowledge through the study of materials. For example, they test materials with water to see if they are waterproof. They learn about healthy living, good food and the importance of hygiene. Children progressively develop their ability to use the mouse on the computer and follow programs on number, spelling, rhyming words and patterns. They use programmable toys to support their learning. Children build and construct with an increasingly wide range of objects, selecting appropriate resources. Form and shape are explored in two and three dimensions as they create models of houses, picnic boxes and moving pictures, thus extending their knowledge of joining techniques.

Physical development

60. Regular daily use is made of the large, secure, attractive outdoor area, which is very well resourced. The school hall is used for physical education. Younger part-time children take their example from full-time children in the Reception Class and progressively develop their ability to move with confidence, imagination, control and co-ordination. Most children demonstrate a developing awareness of space and others. They develop their skills further, using low apparatus, and travel around, under and over balancing and climbing apparatus. The majority of children are beginning to recognise the importance of keeping healthy and the things that contribute to a healthy lifestyle. They recognise changes that happen to their bodies when they are active. Physical skills in the classroom are taught well. Many children find it difficult to use a pencil and to cut out with scissors, but they are developing their ability to handle tools, objects construction and malleable materials safely and with increasing control. Half the children demonstrate poor hand and eye co-ordination when engaged in cutting and gluing. With careful teaching, they are all making good progress.

Creative development

61. Children's creativity is developed within a supportive learning environment. Children explore and experiment, developing confidence as they try out new ideas, with adults working alongside them, talking to them about their work and introducing appropriate vocabulary. Younger part-time children make handprints, complete collages of themselves, bubble-paint shapes and use paint and simple prints to make Elmer the elephant and triangular flags. The full-time Reception Class children explore colour and texture through a range of resources and sensory experiences, and talk about their observations. They explore what happens when they mix paint to create hot, cold and warm colours. They talk about 'milky blue' and 'snowy white'. Most children are beginning to understand the terms 'darker/lighter', and 'thicker/thinner'. They experiment with different media to draw themselves and others. Children also gain some experience with clay. All children enjoy music. Much encouragement is given to help them to learn how to use their imaginations and communicate their ideas through music. Familiar Nursery rhymes and songs are sung with enthusiasm and children attempt to tap out repeated rhythms and 'compose' music. They are developing their ability to sing tunefully, in unison. They explore a range of musical instruments and develop their understanding of pitch as they experiment with high and low sounds. Social skills and imagination are developed as they dramatise stories and participate in role-play in the home corner and in the outdoor play area, but most children still require considerable support in this. During the week of the inspection, the role-play area had been transformed into an African hut and staff had collected a good range of African material for the children to dress in.

ENGLISH

62. Year 2 pupils who took the most recent national tests in 2001 attained standards in writing that were broadly in line with the national average for all and for similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher level (Level 3) was also close to the national average. This was a particular success for the school because it had specifically focused on raising standards in this aspect of English. There has, in fact, been a steady rise in the school's national test standards in writing since 1997 and those results have increased at a faster rate than the national trend. There has also been an overall increase during the same period in test results for reading, but the rise is smaller and less consistent. National test results for reading in 2001 were, therefore, not as good as those for writing. Reading results were well below the average for all and similar schools. This was because a much smaller proportion gained the higher level than for writing. The school is now focusing greater attention on the development of reading skills, whilst still maintaining its drive to improve the quality of pupils' writing. Year 4 pupils take optional tests. The local education authority's analysis of the results of these tests taken in 2001, by pupils then in Year 4, shows these pupils have made progress in reading and spelling during Years 3 and 4 above the authority's average. However, progress was slower in writing and fell short of the authority's expected rate of progress.

63. Bearing in mind the low levels of attainment with which children first enter the school, and the recent disruptions to staffing, all pupils currently make satisfactory progress in English, including those with special educational needs and the very few with EAL. Inspection evidence shows pupils in the present Year 2 attain standards below expected levels in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Pupils in the current Year 4 are attaining the same standards in all aspects except writing, where standards are well below expected levels. There are three reasons why writing standards are so low for the present Year 4. Firstly, pupils in Years 3 and 4 have not benefited to the same degree as younger pupils from the school's focus on writing. Secondly, pupils in Year 4 have a wide range of

attainment. But, thirdly, and most significantly, the effect of staff changes has had a negative impact on the progress of this year group and work has not always been well planned to meet their wide ranging needs. In contrast, Year 2 pupils have had a more stable staffing experience and currently benefit from consistently good teaching. However, in both classes there is limited evidence of pupils attaining at the higher than expected level.

64. Throughout the school, pupils' attainment is impeded by underdeveloped speaking skills. Many pupils listen satisfactorily to adults and to each other, and listen and respond with interest when teaching quality is strong. However, in some lessons, there is an undercurrent of restless and inattention during discussion or direct teaching sessions. Although some pupils are initially reluctant to speak with adults, pupils happily initiate conversations and ask questions as their acquaintance increases. In lessons, they willingly come to the front of the class to speak to or share their work with their classmates and teachers. However, many pupils have a limited vocabulary and few explain their ideas in detail or at length.

65. Pupils' attitudes to reading are generally good. They talk about the books they are reading or share stories with interest and, often, with enthusiasm. For example, Year 1 pupils were thoroughly enjoying 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt'. They remembered detail from looking at the story in previous lessons, joined in with the repeated passages and expressed disappointment when they had to stop. Pupils' knowledge of book-related vocabulary, such as *fiction* and *non-fiction*, is increasing, and Year 3 pupils spoke confidently of *fales* and *myths*. However, pupils do not have a wider knowledge of books beyond the ones they meet in school. Neither do they often use books to seek for or research information, although some choose to read non-fiction books for pleasure. Additionally, pupils are generally better at reading text than they are at talking about it. This is true of pupils in the present Years 2 and 4. While more able pupils in Year 2 read increasingly demanding texts accurately and with expression, they tell the story in broad terms and with limited detail. Middle attainers read simple texts correctly, only sometimes needing help from an adult. Middle and lower attainers largely use the book's illustrations to help them talk about the book's contents or tell the story, although middle attainers will sometimes use the text. The few more able pupils in Year 4 read fluently. They consider what type of story they are reading, name books they have particularly enjoyed and sometimes locate particular words within the text. However, there is little evidence of them beginning to deduce or infer information from what they read. Many pupils in this year group struggle to explain the meaning of unfamiliar words in the context of the sentence.

66. Throughout the school, pupils benefit from plenty of opportunities to write independently in English, although activities often lack the chance to explore language and ideas widely or imaginatively in different forms, beyond writing stories. More formal skills, such as handwriting, spelling and punctuation, are better promoted. As a result, pupils' attainment in these formal aspects is stronger than in the quality of the content, which tends to lack an interesting variety of vocabulary, expression or ideas. Only the writing of more able pupils in Years 2 and 4 has some interesting vocabulary or turns of phrase. Because they are well taught, pupils of all abilities in Year 2 have made good progress in extending the length of their written work. Full stops are used by most pupils, although less confidently by middle and lower attainers. Higher attaining pupils use question marks and apostrophes correctly. Handwriting is legible, but not always correctly formed, and there is little evidence of joined handwriting. Higher and middle attainers in Year 4 use joined handwriting, although it is not consistently so in the case of lower attainers. Punctuation,

such as commas, is beginning to be used correctly by more able and middle attaining pupils and spelling is mostly accurate. The large proportion of lower attaining pupils complete only short pieces of writing independently, and full stops are not used consistently.

67. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, although it is consistently good in Year 2. For example, Year 2 pupils made good progress in a literacy lesson. This was because the well prepared and confidently taught lesson held the pupils' interest and attention and, as a result, they were responsive and hard working. There was good support for developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. Paired discussion allowed even the least confident pupils the opportunity to rehearse their information in a more intimate situation before being invited to share it with the whole class. Writing character descriptions was given an interesting and personalised context by asking pupils to create passports for themselves. The learning support assistant was well used to note the achievements of particular pupils and she was constantly vigilant, moving to encourage less attentive or confident pupils as needed. The work of learning support staff was a strength of other English lessons, particularly for lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. Pupils are often well managed, including those with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Subject vocabulary is also often effectively promoted and pupils use it in their explanations. For example, pupils in Year 3 remembered and used *fable*, and *myth* during a literacy lesson about these types of stories. The quality of marking is also often good, with helpful comment about how pupils can improve their work, as well as encouragement and praise for good achievement. In some lessons, however, progress was inhibited to no more than satisfactory because activities were not varied enough to challenge the needs of all pupils, for example the higher attaining and some middle attaining pupils. The most extreme example of this was seen in written work completed earlier in the school year by pupils in Year 4, where pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, had consistently completed the same work. However, these pupils are now being satisfactorily taught and are making sound progress.

68. The English curriculum and the development of literacy and basic skills are generally satisfactory, although there is no formal planning for speaking and listening skills. A phonics programme has usefully been introduced at Key Stage 1 to improve reading and spelling skills. Library skills are boosted by timetabled sessions in the school's recently refurbished library. These are valuably led by parents. As a result, all pupils are learning systems for locating books and information, although these sessions do not yet link with a whole school approach to teaching enquiry and research skills. The amount of reading scheme books is adequate and group-reading books have been extended. However, these resources are not fully used or exploited to give pupils a wide enough range of reading opportunities. Neither is ICT being used enough to promote literacy skills in English or in other subjects.

69. Assessment and target setting systems are also satisfactory. End of year National Curriculum Level targets are set for each pupil and these are reviewed during the year and adjusted if necessary. Pupils also have targets linked to their work. Valuable additions have been introduced this term in the form of level descriptors and whole class attainment sheets. The first will allow staff to track the progress in small steps of individual pupils and to use this information to plan more precisely what each pupil needs in order to improve. The second will enable teachers to set measurable whole-class targets. However, because these are very new, they have not yet fully influenced lesson planning or pupils' achievement. The subject has been satisfactorily led and managed, although the school's

recent difficult circumstances have inhibited the development of careful monitoring and analysis of teaching and learning right across the school. All teachers complete half termly evaluations of teaching, which are passed to the subject leader, but the information gives a broad view and does not focus closely enough on pupils' achievement or attainment.

MATHEMATICS

70. In the national tests in 2001, Year 2 pupils attained standards below the national average for all schools. These results were well below national averages in comparison with similar schools. However, over time since 1997, there has been an overall improvement in test results. Evidence in previous years of boys' performance exceeding that of the girls, was reversed in the most recent tests. Inspection findings suggest that the difference in the attainment of boys and girls is not currently significant. The results of optional tests taken by Year 4 pupils last year show these pupils have made progress above the LEA expected level since they took the national tests in Year 2.

71. Inspection evidence shows pupils in the present Years 2 and 4 attain standards below national expectations. This is lower than standards found during the last inspection.

72. However, given the recent challenging circumstances of the school and the low levels of attainment when they join the Reception Class, pupils make satisfactory progress overall at Key Stages 1 and 2. This includes pupils with special educational needs and the few with EAL. The greatest impact of staffing disruption has fallen on the present Year 4, although improved teaching, particularly this term, is enabling them to make a much greater rate of progress in lessons. There has been a satisfactory level of improvement since the time of the previous inspection. Recent training has helped teachers to take more focused whole-group mental mathematics sessions. There is also an appropriate emphasis on mathematical vocabulary to help pupils explain their work. Test and assessment data is analysed and used to set broad attainment targets in the school's improvement plan. Assessment systems are satisfactory and will be improved further this term with sheets for tracking pupils' progress in greater detail and allowing staff to compile a class profile for plotting attainment and setting class targets. However, progress is inhibited from being better than satisfactory because assessment information is not used sufficiently to ensure that work is always well matched to need, and so enable activities to challenge and increase pupils' achievement. Neither do assessment procedures focus enough on evaluating pupils' mathematical skills.

73. By Year 2, the majority of pupils recall addition and subtraction facts to 10 and are beginning to understand the place value of digits. About half of these pupils choose appropriate methods to calculate addition and subtraction problems. They identify and use halves and quarters in number and area, with varying degrees of success. Most pupils recognise sequences, such as odd and even numbers. They know the mathematical names for common two and three-dimensional shapes. About half of them are secure in describing the properties of these shapes, including the number of sides and corners. During this inspection, Year 2 pupils used their ICT skills to instruct programmable equipment to do straight and turning movements of 90, 180 and 360 degrees. They were introduced to the terms 'clockwise' and 'anti-clockwise', but found these terms confusing. Pupils are beginning to use everyday standard and non-standard units for length and mass. They make sound progress in handling data. After sorting objects using various classifications, they communicate their findings in tables, block graphs and diagrams.

74. In the current Year 4, the majority of pupils have a good understanding of the four rules of number, short division and of place value to 1000. They are competent in solving simple money problems. Only a minority of pupils understand negative numbers in relation to temperature. Most pupils confidently sort shapes and recognise shapes and movements. They estimate and measure, and convert millimetres to centimetres, centimetres to metres and grams to kilograms. During the inspection, Year 4 pupils applied their knowledge of length to the solution of simple problems. Most measured accurately and used the correct vocabulary related to measures, for example, *length*, *breadth (width)* and *height*. About half of these pupils know the eight points of the compass and have some understanding of reflective symmetry. The majority of pupils can access and collect data, construct simple pictograms and read block graphs. However, at both Years 2 and 4, pupils find it hard to apply their mathematical knowledge to investigating and solving problems, and find it difficult to work at speed.

75. Evidence both from the small sample of lessons seen and from pupils' work shows the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Basic mathematical skills are soundly taught. During the inspection, teaching was never less than satisfactory and, in two lessons, it was very good. In all lessons seen, mathematical vocabulary was well modelled and encouraged. Imaginative strategies and resources were used to gain the interest and attention of younger pupils in Year 1. In these lessons, pupils' progress was enhanced as a result of direct, first-hand and practical experience. Not a moment of time was wasted in this lesson and the learning support assistant also gave good support to lower attainers, and those with special educational needs, through practical demonstration. This last feature was a strength of all lessons. Another very good lesson in Year 4 was characterised by clear and specific teaching. A careful explanation of learning objectives for the lesson made clear to pupils the purpose of their activities. Quick-fire questioning reinforced mathematical vocabulary and the teacher responded well to the need to establish the accurate understanding of abbreviations for measures of length. In this lesson, activities were well modified to meet the needs of different ability groups, and expectations of pupils were high in all aspects of achievement and behaviour. As a result, pupils showed good levels of involvement, application and enjoyment. They were enabled to use appropriate mathematical language and measure with increasing accuracy. The few more able pupils used their knowledge to solve simple problems. However, previous work does not always reflect these strengths. For example, activities are not regularly modified to meet pupils' needs or make enough demands on all ability groups. Neither does marking regularly give pupils pointers for how to improve. Homework opportunities are satisfactory. Pupils do their homework regularly, thus consolidating and extending their learning in lessons.

76. The quality and range of learning opportunities are satisfactory, as are strategies for teaching numeracy skills. There were very effective links with ICT work in Year 2, as described above, which promoted knowledge and skills in both subjects. However, these opportunities are not fully exploited. The permanent subject leader is due to return in the summer term, and she has considerable expertise in the subject. Currently, the subject is led well by an experienced teacher who has been acting as a temporary subject leader for only a few weeks. She has a clear sense of educational direction, and strategic priorities for development in the subject are good. However, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is underdeveloped. While half-termly evaluations by all teachers give the subject leader some useful information, they are not rigorously focused on pupils' achievement or fully used to improve provision or to raise standards.

SCIENCE

77. Teacher assessments in Year 2, in 2001, showed that pupils attained standards well below the national average and well below that for similar schools. The proportion of pupils who achieved the higher level was below the national average for all and similar schools. There appear to be no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls.

78. Inspection evidence shows that pupils in the current Years 2 and 4 are attain standards below nationally expected levels. While this reflects the standards found at the time of the last inspection for Year 2 pupils, it is lower than those found for Year 4 at that time, when standards were above national expectations. While pupils make satisfactory progress overall, including those with special educational needs and the few with EAL, those in the present Year 4 have not made enough progress over recent years. This is because this group of pupils has been most affected by staff changes. However, there are also other factors inhibiting progress from being no greater than satisfactory. In common with English assessment, the school has introduced a means of closely tracking pupils' progress against National Curriculum Levels and of plotting whole class attainment levels. However, these improvements are new this term and have yet to make a significant impact on the quality of teachers' planning, or to ensure that activities are demanding enough. While pupils conduct tests and experiments, these activities do not have enough opportunities for pupils to plan their own investigations or improve how well they apply their scientific knowledge to these activities. The school has already prioritised these weaknesses for development in the school's new improvement plan, although points for action are less focused on improving teaching and learning than they are for English and mathematics.

79. Most pupils in Year 2 have a basic understanding of the growth and reproduction of living things and the conditions basic to their survival. Within these studies, they classify living things according to observable similarities and differences. They grow plants, are able to name the main parts of a flower, name the main external parts of the human body and realise the importance of exercise and a healthy diet for humans. Through practical activities, pupils gain an understanding of electric circuits. Most pupils understand how to test and record results. During a lesson on forces, these pupils investigated the impact on how far a toy car would travel when ramps were placed at different heights and decided what standard or non-standard measurements they should take. Their results were recorded in a table and used to make comparisons and evaluate whether the test was fair. However, pupils' mathematical and ICT skills are, as yet, insufficiently used to record results in a variety of forms. Pupils show developing skill in making predictions and comparing them with their results. However, there is little evidence of pupils showing initiative and independence by setting up their own investigations. As a result, pupils are not challenged to reach their full potential.

80. By the end of Year 4, the majority of pupils use their knowledge of basic life processes when distinguishing between living and non-living things. They describe various ways of sorting materials into groups according to their properties and explain why some materials are suited for specific purposes, for example, to classify various changes as reversible or irreversible. During the inspection, Year 4 pupils investigated the changes that occur when some solids are added to water. They learned about the different degrees of suspension. At the beginning of the lesson, pupils understood that some solids float, some sink and that some changes are irreversible. By the end of the lesson, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, described the results in terms of floating, sinking,

dissolving and suspension and were increasingly using key vocabulary, such as *float*, *dissolve* and *viscosity*, to explain their observations and results. However, earlier work indicates that these pupils do not confidently apply their skills to investigative work and are not practised enough in working at speed under test conditions.

81. Teaching and learning were good in two of the three lessons seen and very good in the third. However, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. This is because pupils' completed work did not reflect the same expectations of pupils' achievement as was seen in lessons. Where teaching was particularly successful, as it was in a very strong science lesson in Year 4, pupils' efforts were well supported by a high level of adult intervention and clear expectations of individual contribution, accuracy and outcome. Pupils' understanding was improved through direct experience whilst taking part in group experiments. This was an effective element of all the lessons seen. The teacher built on the content of earlier experiments to introduce more demanding work. Her very good subject knowledge showed plainly in the quality of planning, the use and promotion of scientific vocabulary and in her clear explanations of what these words meant. As a result, levels of concentration and motivation were good. One pupil was fascinated by sand sinking to the bottom of the container and looking like a beach. Pupils' work shows that marking sometimes gives them helpful evaluative comments on how to improve their work. However, activities are not sufficiently modified to challenge each ability group.

82. Curriculum planning is satisfactory overall. Literacy skills are soundly promoted as pupils label diagrams, carry out research, engage in discussion, develop their vocabulary and report on results. However, pupils' ICT skills are insufficiently used for the recording of scientific information. Management is sound. The subject leader has taken over responsibility for science recently. She has clear ideas about how the subject should develop, and the school's priorities for development in the subject are good. However, the monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching in the subject is unsatisfactory, since the subject leader has not had the opportunity to monitor teaching and learning.

ART AND DESIGN

83. In keeping with the findings of the previous inspection, evidence from work on display and in sketch books shows that standards in art and design continue to be broadly similar to national expectations for pupils in Year 2. There was little work available to make an overall judgement about standards for the present Year 4, but what was seen on display indicates that standards are just meeting national expectations. The subject leader is enthusiastic about the subject. Although her general monitoring role is limited, she promotes the subject well through high profile events, such as whole school art days. Photographs of the most recent occasion indicate that both staff and pupils had spent an enjoyable and productive day.

84. Displays in classrooms and around the school indicate that many pupils take part in an imaginative range of activities, sometimes linked to their work in other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 1 learned about homes and houses and, as part of this topic, had painted different kinds of houses and studied the work of Friedrich Hundertwasser. They had looked at the characteristics of his paintings of buildings before reproducing these in paintings of their own. This class had completed a good range of work since September, including simple portraiture and prints, and making repeating patterns of regular shapes as part of their work in mathematics. Much of the work currently on display in Year 2 is three

dimensional. An interesting variety of junk materials had been imaginatively used to create very individually designed sculptures of figures and faces. Different sized cardboard rolls were used to make imaginary planets. Present work with pebbles involves pupils 'feeling' the creature they contain and then painting the pebbles to make that creature.

85. Less work was seen in Years 3 and 4. Observational studies in Year 4 had been stimulated by Van Gogh's paintings of sunflowers. The drawings of many pupils in this group showed a growing care in their observation and reproduction of detail, although others were more simple representations. During the art day, they had made full sized chairs from different materials.

86. As a mark of the value the school places on the subject, all pupils have their own good quality sketch pad. However, the potential for this valuable resource is not well used, for example to develop ideas or themes. Pupils' work in these books is often untidy or merely a scribble. Additionally, pupils' work also indicates that a significant minority of pupils have limited dexterity in finer physical skills, such as cutting.

87. There was not enough evidence to make overall judgements about teaching and learning. However, pupils in Year 1 experienced a real moment of wonderment when they were first confronted with a silhouetted painting of a skyline of buildings. Subsequent discussion satisfactorily drew out their ideas about what kind of building it might be and who might live there. While teachers make evaluative notes at the end of each unit of work, these tend to be broad and do not focus on individual pupils where appropriate. There are no formal systems in place for tracking the development of skills.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

88. Standards in design and technology in Year 2 are now similar to national expectations for pupils of this age. This is an improvement of the findings of the last inspection. However, pupils in the present Year 4 are now attaining standards below those expected nationally. This deterioration in standards found during the previous inspection reflects the many staff changes these pupils have experienced over the last few years.

89. The systematic development of design and technology skills was a key issue in the last inspection report; so, too, was provision for food technology. Improvement to these areas is satisfactory overall. There is now a designated food technology area and pupils are therefore able to take part in these activities. For example, pupils in Year 3 had designed and made sandwiches. Limited progress was made initially on the development of a scheme of work for improving pupils' skills. However, one has now been completed, although the school is aware that it represents a narrow range of skills and needs further extension.

90. Pupils in Year 2 had made individually designed jointed figures, although all were joined using the same technique. A range of materials had been selected by pupils for creating these figures, and some were used with particular imagination and originality. Standards of finish and subsequent evaluations, however, indicate that some pupils have under-confident making skills. They recorded difficulty when cutting materials or inserting the split pins. These difficulties were also seen in Year 3, where pupils were making picture frames. A significant minority needed help with cutting out shapes, particularly that of the

inside section, and in deciding how big the clear plastic piece should be in order to fit. Pupils in Year 4 had designed torches. Where drawings of their designs were completed, some were labelled. Others gave a list of materials they would need but did not indicate how the torch would be made, what techniques they would use or the tools they would need. There was no evidence available of the finished products or of any written evaluation.

91. The scheme of work is appropriately based on national guidance. Year 3 work, on making sandwiches, indicates that there is due regard given to all aspects of the design and make process, including the exploration and evaluation of products. For example, these pupils looked at types of bread and appropriate fillings, and recorded evaluations on simple charts. They subsequently evaluated their sandwich and indicated how it could be improved. Written evaluations are valuable opportunities to promote literacy skills, although the content is inhibited by pupils' limited vocabulary. There was not enough evidence to make an overall judgement about teaching and learning. However, during this inspection, pupils in Year 3 were clearly enjoying making their picture frames and their efforts were well supported by adults. Pupils were well motivated and moved sensibly around the classroom to collect their equipment and materials. A good range of attractive and inviting materials was available to decorate their frames and they were able to choose from several joining methods, including glue and sticky tape. Half-termly evaluations by teachers give useful monitoring information but, beyond broad comments, give little information about pupils' progress and attainment.

GEOGRAPHY

92. The attainment of Year 2 pupils in geography reflects the findings of the last inspection and remains at the expected level for pupils of this age. The attainment of pupils in Year 4 also matches the standards expected nationally for children of this age, but this is lower than was found in the last inspection, when standards were above national expectations. Sound improvements have been made to the subject since the last inspection. A scheme of work has been introduced, based on national guidance, and learning resources are now satisfactory. There are useful links made with other subjects, such as history, although there is not enough use of ICT.

93. At Key Stage 1 pupils have a developing knowledge of the school environment, the immediate locality and the natural world. Pupils in Years 2 make plans and maps of the local area. They develop their mapping skills, as they study direct and indirect routes. Life on the Isle of Struay is contrasted with life in Leighton Buzzard. Pupils record weather conditions and patterns and consider how the weather affects the way that we live. Through a study of an Indian village, they increase their awareness that the world extends beyond their own locality. Pupils in Year 4 investigate the physical and human features of Leighton Buzzard and make comparisons with a contrasting locality. They also study the effects of weather around the world.

94. Evidence from pupils' work, teachers' planning and a small sample of teaching show the overall quality of teaching and learning to be satisfactory. Scrutiny of work indicates that there are sometimes good evaluative comments to help pupils to improve their work. In the one lesson seen in Year 3, learning objectives were shared with pupils at the start of the lesson so that they understood the purpose of their work. Teaching and learning in this lesson were sound, with any greater progress being inhibited by the restlessness of many pupils, despite the teacher's good attempts to enliven and stimulate discussion. The quality and range of learning opportunities is satisfactory, but not enough challenge is included in planned activities for pupils of all abilities. Pupils' social development is enhanced through discussion with adults and through their local studies. They gain an understanding of other

cultures as they study other parts of the world, such as India. However, assessment systems are underdeveloped and do not focus enough on the acquisition of geographical skills. Numeracy skills are soundly promoted. For example, pupils in Year 3 recently surveyed parking at the school. They recorded their findings in a simple graph and made observations about the results. A decision was made that the car park is too small for the volume of cars at certain times of the day. Whilst there is sound leadership of the subject, there is little monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning.

HISTORY

95. The attainment of Year 2 pupils in history matches the standards expected for children of this age. At the time of the last inspection, standards were slightly higher. The attainment of pupils currently in Year 4 matches the standards expected for children of this age. This is lower than was found during the last inspection, when standards were above what is nationally expected.

96. The limited speaking skills of many pupils often inhibits their ability to talk about their historical knowledge and understanding. For example, pupils in Year 1 were very perceptive in their observations about a picture of a Victorian kitchen, but were often unable to express their ideas clearly. Pupils in Year 2 think about famous people of the past, such as Florence Nightingale and Samuel Pepys and why we remember them. They learn about the Great Fire of London. Life today is compared to times when there was no electricity. The history of writing, from cave paintings to computers, is also explored. By the end of Year 4, pupils have studied particular periods of history. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 4 were studying life in Leighton Buzzard at the time of the Second World War, and comparing the experiences of children in the war with their own lives. Pupils' knowledge of the period, and their research and enquiry skills, were effectively enhanced by questioning lunchtime staff and looking at artefacts. Many had also done some research out of school about wartime. These pupils were fascinated by the accounts of life in Leighton Buzzard during the war. They learnt about rationing, ration books, the corner shop and how families occupied their time. This gave the pupils a chance to imagine life without cars, television and computers. They noted how bombers tended to bypass Leighton Buzzard on their way to big cities, such as Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool. During the lesson, they visualised the searchlights scouring the sky for bombers. They learnt where firebombs were dropped and where two Polish camps were sited. This work gave them an insight into why there are so many Polish and German names in Leighton Buzzard.

97. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, although it was good in the small sample of teaching seen during this inspection. Pupils in Year 4, for example, were clearly benefiting from a thorough and interesting exploration of World War Two. The two midday supervisors had supplied artefacts and a video, and shared with pupils their memories of wartime in Leighton Buzzard. These artefacts had contributed to a stimulating classroom display. There was good support for literacy skills as pupils took notes during their smaller group discussions and then used them to share their findings in the subsequent whole group session. Despite an undercurrent of restlessness in the history lesson in Year 1, good relationships with pupils and careful questioning encouraged pupils to successfully explore and deduce information from the picture of a Victorian kitchen. Consequently, most pupils made good progress in their knowledge and understanding during that lesson, although not all were fully involved. Wonderment was successfully created by well-timed presentations of artefacts.

98. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. There is now a sound scheme of work for planning activities, although these do not always challenge pupils of

different abilities. There are also some helpful cross-curricular links with other subjects, such as geography. Artefacts continue to be well used to arouse pupils' interest and to extend their knowledge and understanding, as is described above. However, whilst there are satisfactory opportunities for using and developing literacy skills, there is limited opportunity for imaginative writing, nor are there enough opportunities for using ICT. Assessment systems are underdeveloped and do not give teachers enough information about individual pupils for use in planning lessons, nor are there enough opportunities for the subject leader to monitor the quality of the school's work in the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

99. The school's provision for ICT has been greatly improved since the last inspection, with the development of a designated room with a suite of computers. Staff have also taken part in training to increase their expertise. However, although there are timetabled sessions for all classes in the computer suite, not enough use is made of this valuable resource, particularly during each morning when most literacy and numeracy lessons take place. Little use of computers was seen during lessons and, where teaching of ICT took place, it was only during the afternoons. Consequently, pupils are not getting enough opportunities to use computers and increase their skill and knowledge. As a result, standards are below national expectations for pupils in the current Year 2. There was not enough evidence to make an overall judgement about the attainment of pupils in Year 4. The subject leader is temporarily absent and so the further development of the subject has recently been inhibited.

100. Not enough teaching was seen to make overall judgements about teaching and learning. However, during the inspection, a group of Year 2 pupils were making good progress in their understanding of how to plan a route for and program a programmable toy. They had clearly been previously well prepared for the activity. This enabled them to plan simple instructions in the right order, to move and turn the toy on a route across a map and confidently type in their instructions. This lesson had valuable links with the current geography topic and also helped to promote numeracy skills. Subject vocabulary was promoted well during the second half of the lesson in the computer suite. Pupils used terminology, such as *capslock* and *font*. They explained the use of the shift key to make capital letters, and why it was necessary to log on properly. However, Year 2 pupils are making slower progress in their logging on and keyboard skills. The same group of pupils painstakingly picked their way into the word processing program, with most needing a lot of adult support. Only a few more able pupils completed this process independently and wrote their name.

101. Little work by Year 4 pupils was seen. Some samples of work remained from last term but these were not annotated or dated. Within word processing activities, these pupils had experimented with different fonts and colours. Other tasks had introduced cut and paste activities, the reordering of text and the insertion of simple illustrations. Current work in science, PSHE and an art program had been used as backgrounds to some tasks, but the activities were limited in their scope and allowed little opportunity for exploration or individuality.

102. Planning follows national guidance and covers all the required aspects of the subject. As indicated above, some useful cross-curricular planning has been identified, but this potential has not been fully explored or exploited. There are no formal whole-school assessment systems for recording and tracking pupils' attainment or progress.

MUSIC

103. Pupils in Years 2 and 4 are attaining standards in music that are in line with those

expected for their age. This reflects the findings of the previous report. Pupils in the present Year 4 are attaining the same average standards. These older pupils have not made the same good levels of progress as was found during the last inspection, when standards were above national expectations. The subject has been satisfactorily maintained since the last inspection, particularly in terms of longer term and lesson planning, which are soundly supported by a published scheme.

104. Pupils enjoy singing and listening to music. They explore the use of instruments to enhance their work. For example, pupils in Year 2 play tuned and untuned instruments with increasing skill. They explore and express responses to music, create musical patterns and rehearse and perform with others. In this work, they use given and invented signs and symbols to represent their music making. During the inspection, these pupils explored an African song, entitled 'The Magic Bird'. They learnt a call and response pattern and subsequently sang in unison and in two parts. A few pupils volunteered to sing solo parts. All pupils listened to the music with interest, and this enabled them to comment on features of the song. For example, one pupil noted that it ended with a prayer, whilst others commented on the use of repetition and the passages, which included the use of an African drum. Pupils in Year 4 explore ways to combine sound expressively. They perform simple parts rhythmically, improvise repeated patterns and combine several layers of sound and different musical elements. During this inspection, they explored, created, selected, combined and organised sounds into musical structures. They developed their listening skills well and showed appreciation for the contribution of others.

105. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In those few lessons seen, teaching was good. It was very good in one lesson in Year 2. In this lesson, the school's published scheme was particularly well used and adapted as the teacher's subject knowledge was very good. She engaged and kept the interest of the pupils by giving some background to the African song and relating it to the pupils' own experience of different kinds of birds. Good preparation meant that the words were well displayed so that the pupils could talk about the lyrics and how the song was organised. An effective combination of factors, such as very good relationships and a variety of activities, engaged pupils' motivation and attention throughout the lesson and, as a result, they made a high level of progress in knowledge, skills and understanding. In other lessons, good use was made of adult support. Ongoing assessment of pupils' understanding was used well either to modify the lesson or to encourage them to achieve more. However, teachers' planning suggests that activities are not routinely modified for pupils of differing abilities, or to challenge higher attainers.

106. The quality and range of learning opportunities is satisfactory overall and include some good opportunities to develop and extend pupils' cultural understanding. This was true of the Year 2 lesson. Opportunities are provided for all pupils to listen to music from different times and places. For example, pupils listened in assembly to music by Bach, and there are visits from musicians, such as the Bedford Youth Opera Group. Additionally, pupils have the chance to learn to play the cello and violin from specialist teachers who visit the school. Older pupils sing carols in the community, for charity. Good use is made of voluntary help to give a piano accompaniment to singing during hymn practice and assemblies. The subject is both soundly led and managed. Appropriate priorities for future development have been identified, but the subject leader has not had the opportunity to monitor or evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. Assessment systems and the use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning are underdeveloped.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

107. There was not enough evidence to make overall judgements about standards in all aspects of physical education in Years 2 and 4 although, where the subject was seen,

standards were just close to those expected of pupils of a similar age. Only a very small sample of teaching was seen, and this was not enough to make judgements about the overall quality of teaching and learning.

108. Pupils in Year 2 worked confidently on apparatus in a gymnastics lesson during the inspection. They kept their balance competently whilst holding arch shapes, and confidently controlled their movement on and off apparatus. Different shapes were explored and linked into travelling to complete a sequence of movement. Careful regard was given to safety and there was an appropriate combination of floor and apparatus activity. Pupils were given timely reminders about noise levels, and these prompts ensured that pupils concentrated satisfactorily. Year 4 pupils created increasingly complex patterns of movement during a dance lesson, which they demonstrated to others and copied accurately. They worked in threes to devise their dance, and movement was generally well co-ordinated and controlled. They were also aware of the effect of exercise on their heart rate. Pupils were motivated and well behaved and, despite being a little noisy, all were busy and involved. They negotiated well with each other, although the teacher had to help the larger group to establish their sequence.

109. There is a sound scheme of work to guide lesson planning, although there is less support for planning games skills than there is for other aspects of the subject. The new subject leader has identified this relative weakness as a priority for development. So, too, has the need to increase large gymnastic equipment. Year 4 pupils benefit from weekly swimming lessons at a local pool during much of the year. Indoor and outdoor areas are of a good size but there is little timetabled use of the hall during the mornings, when literacy and numeracy lessons take place. As a result, this area is under-used for physical education. The new subject leader has barely taken on her responsibility for the subject but has already met with her attached governor and appropriately identified the priorities mentioned above. She has not yet had time to monitor or evaluate the quality of teaching and learning.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

110. Evidence from pupils' work and a very small sample of lessons shows that the attainment of pupils in religious education in Year 2 matches the objectives expected for pupils of this age by the locally Agreed Syllabus, thus maintaining the position at the last inspection. The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 4 also meets the objectives expected for children of this age, but this is lower than was found at the time of the last inspection, when standards were above the expected level. Year 2 pupils have a developing knowledge of the importance of Christmas and Easter in the lives of Christians. They study places and things that are special to people and make links with other religions through festivals, such as Hanukkah, thus increasing their knowledge and understanding of religious diversity. Year 4 pupils study Christian beliefs and gain some understanding of the underlying beliefs of Judaism and Islam. They also extend their understanding of what is felt by different religions to be special by looking specifically at holy books and places of worship.

111. Religious education is important in the life of the school and reflects the school's all-inclusive policy, aims and values. Pupils' experience is enriched by visits to the local church, and visitors from other faiths broaden pupils' understanding. During the inspection, for example, pupils in Year 1 discussed their recent visit to All Saints Church. Few had visited the church before. The visit had clearly been a valuable opportunity to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. They were genuinely impressed with the beauty of the stained glass windows, the altar, font, carvings, kneelers, flowers and 'angels'. They spoke about the work of the vicar and the reasons why people go to church. Opportunities are also

given for pupils to consider moral issues. These pupils related the occasions when they feel the need to say 'sorry' or 'thank you' to the way that Christians feel the need to speak to God in prayer. Pupils are aware that the religious traditions in the United Kingdom are mainly Christian.

112. Evidence from the few lessons seen, and from an analysis of teachers' planning and pupils' work, shows that the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. During the inspection, teaching was satisfactory in one lesson, and very good in another lesson in Year 3. The very good lesson was particularly successful because it encouraged independent thought and learning skills. Pupils were encouraged to research and report back on their findings about miracles, and their ideas were sought and valued. Within this positive atmosphere, pupils were greatly motivated, keen to share their findings, and even the most challenging pupils took a full and active part. Teachers' planning is sound but pupils' work indicates that activities are not always challenging enough for more able pupils. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress towards their individual targets when they receive appropriate support.

113. The leadership and management of the subject are sound overall and a satisfactory level of improvement has been maintained since the previous inspection. Clear priorities have been planned for the subject's development, but the subject leader has not yet had opportunity to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. There are no formal assessment systems for judging pupils' attainment or progress.