

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **WILSTEAD LOWER SCHOOL**

Wilstead, Bedford

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109492

Headteacher: Stephen Elphick

Reporting inspector: Michael J Cahill  
19623

Dates of inspection: 28 – 31 January 2002

Inspection number: 243688

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Cotton End Road Wilstead Bedford
Postcode:	MK45 3BX
Telephone number:	01234 302303
Fax number:	01234 302303
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Phil Hubbard
Date of previous inspection:	8 September 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
19623	Michael Cahill	Registered inspector	Mathematics Science Information and communication technology Design and technology Physical education	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9736	John Brasier	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
11901	Pat Lowe	Team inspector	English Art and design Geography History Music Religious education Foundation stage Equal opportunities Special educational needs	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This village lower school educates 129 full time pupils (65 boys and 64 girls) from four to nine; it is smaller than the average school of its type. Most children have had some playgroup experience and their social development on joining the school is often good. On entry, overall attainment in most aspects of literacy and numeracy is below average. The percentage of pupils who claim free school meals is below the national average. Almost all pupils are from white backgrounds and none are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils on the school's register of special educational need is below the national average, while the proportion with full statements of special educational need is close to the national average.

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

This is a good and improving school with many very good features. The school is very well led and managed; pupils' attainment is above average in almost all areas of the curriculum and their attitudes, behaviour, relationships and personal development are very good. The quality of teaching is good and the school has a very pleasant, purposeful and welcoming atmosphere; pupils make good progress. This very effective school provides good value for money.

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

- Pupils' attainment is above national expectations in most subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education.
- The school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships are very good.
- The quality of teaching is good throughout the school.
- The school provides a rich and well-planned curriculum; the Foundation Stage provides children with a very good start to their full time education; provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- There is a high standard of care; pupils' educational and personal development are supported very well.
- There are very good links between the school and parents.
- The headteacher and the governing body provide strong leadership directed at improving standards.

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

**The school has many strengths and is committed to continual improvement. It recognises the need to improve further:**

- The formal assessment procedures in subjects other than English, mathematics and science.
- The role of co-ordinators in developing teaching and learning in their subjects throughout the school.
- The use of pupils' skills in information and communication technology to develop and extend their learning across the curriculum.
- The attendance of a minority of pupils whose parents take holidays during term time.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made a very good level of improvement since its last inspection in 1997. The school has dealt very effectively with the issues identified at that time and has also considerably improved the overall quality of teaching. National Curriculum test results at seven have improved, as has pupils' attainment across most areas of the curriculum. The very strong partnership between the governing body, headteacher and staff and the very good level of involvement of parents provide a very good basis for further improvement.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
Reading	C	C	B	D
Writing	A	C	A	B
Mathematics	B	C	A	C

**Key**

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

Schools are described as similar when they fall into the same band for free school meals, in this case less than eight per cent. At present 5.4 per cent of pupils claim their entitlement. Caution should be exercised in interpreting National Curriculum results in small schools; each pupil represented around three per cent of the last Year 2 and this percentage can make the difference between *below average* and *average* or between *average* and *above average*.

Children in the reception class are well on target to achieve in line with national expectations before they move into Year 1. The school's results in the national testing programme for seven year-olds represent an improvement compared with the last inspection and the overall trend over the last five years has been upwards, although the results in 2000 of the present Year 4 were only average. Most pupils make good progress in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding from the time they enter the school at four until the time they leave at nine.

The inspection team judged that overall attainment exceeds national expectations in English, mathematics, science, religious education, information and communication technology, art, design and technology, geography and history. This represents a considerable improvement since the last inspection when attainment was judged to be in line with expectations. Pupils' attainment is in line with expectations for seven and nine year-olds in music and physical education.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils enjoy coming to school and join enthusiastically in all that the school offers. They have very positive attitudes to learning and work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave in a courteous and sensible way, meeting the high expectations set for them.



Personal development and relationships	Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and adults are very good. Pupils welcome being given responsibility; their personal development is very good.
Attendance	Satisfactory, although there is concern about the increasing number of term-time holidays.

Relationships are a real strength of the school. Pupils develop very good attitudes towards each other and their learning. This owes much to the very good example set by the adults in the school community.

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good. During the inspection, the teaching in many lessons was at least good, including a few that were very good; there was no unsatisfactory teaching. This represents a substantial improvement since the last inspection. The teaching of English, including literacy, was always good. In mathematics, including numeracy, it was good in 40 per cent of lessons and satisfactory in the rest.

The teaching has many strengths, including teachers' good subject knowledge, pupil management skills and high expectations of work and behaviour. An area for improvement is the use of pupils' skills in information and communication technology to support and extend learning in other subjects.

Pupils of all abilities are being successfully helped to become confident in their ability to learn and to work independently where that is appropriate. They work hard, with interest and a good level of concentration. They have a good knowledge of their own learning through their involvement in setting targets for their own improvement.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a good range of learning opportunities in the Foundation Stage and in all of the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. The curriculum is planned well and is enriched by regular opportunities for pupils to play their part in class assemblies and in whole school events.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils make good progress towards the targets agreed for them as a result of the very good, and very well organised and planned, support provided by all teachers and their assistants.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The school maintains a pleasant purposeful working atmosphere, with a clearly understood code of conduct, in which pupils thrive.

How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a very good level of care. Pupils benefit from very good educational support and guidance. There are very good procedures for keeping track of pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science; those for other subjects are relatively undeveloped.
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The school has very good links with parents, who hold very positive views of the school. Many parents are very involved in their children's learning.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides strong and very effective leadership focused on raising pupils' achievements by improving the quality of education provided. He is very well supported by his deputy and by the rest of the staff team, all of whom are committed to further improvement. Most subject leaders now need more opportunities to observe teaching and learning in other classes.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have a very good knowledge of the school and actively contribute to its development. They ensure that all statutory requirements are fully met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The governing body and the headteacher keep all aspects of the work of the school under continuous review. There are very good procedures for checking on standards and target setting has been successfully introduced.
The strategic use of resources	Development and financial planning are very good. The school makes very good use of specific grants to raise standards. The school actively seeks to obtain best value for the money allocated to it.

The levels of staffing, accommodation and learning resources are good. A particular strength of the school's leadership and management is the shared vision and commitment of the headteacher, staff and governing body.

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

The views of the 55 parents who returned completed questionnaires and of the 23 who attended the pre-inspection meeting with the registered inspector were taken into account. Percentages refer to questionnaire returns.

What pleases at least 90 per cent of parents	What some parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school and they make good progress.</li> <li>• Teaching is good and the school has high expectations of children.</li> <li>• Behaviour is good.</li> <li>• The school is well managed and led and they are comfortable about approaching it with questions or problems.</li> <li>• The school helps children to become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of homework. (14 per cent)</li> <li>• Information about their children's progress. (21 per cent)</li> <li>• The degree to which the school works closely with them. (17 per cent)</li> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons. (25 per cent)</li> </ul>

The inspection team completely agrees with the positive views expressed by parents. Homework is making a good contribution to improving pupils' achievements and many parents are very involved in their children's learning and the work of the school. Through the programme of meetings and written reports parents are kept very well informed about their children's progress. The range and quality of extra-curricular activities are satisfactory for a school of this size.

## PART B: COMMENTARY

### HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

#### The school's results and pupils' achievements

- 1 Children enter the reception class with a range of pre-school learning experiences including attendance at the local playgroup, with which the school has a very good working relationship. Evidence from the assessments made soon after children have joined the school shows that most children have developed social skills that are above what is expected for their age. In most aspects of literacy, the skills of more than half of the children are below expectations; this is particularly the case in terms of their knowledge of letters and words. A high proportion of children attain at below the expected level in their knowledge of numbers and use of mathematical language. Lesson observations indicate that children make good progress in all the appropriate areas of learning. Almost all children are on target to achieve the early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1, with some children exceeding the goal in one or more areas. This good progress is directly due to the good quality planning and teaching and the very good use of assessment in the reception class. There is no significant difference in attainment between boys and girls.
- 2 In the National Curriculum tests and assessments for seven year-olds in the summer of 2001, results show that pupils' attainment was above the national average in reading, well above average in writing and mathematics and close to the national average in science. In respect of the proportion of pupils who achieved the higher National Curriculum level 3, the school's results were above the national average in science, well above it in writing and mathematics and in line with it in reading (but very close to being above). These results represent an improvement compared with the last inspection and the overall trend over the last five years has been upwards, although the results in 2000 of the present Year 4 were only average. When compared with those of schools with a similar take-up of free school meals, results are below average in reading, close to the average in science and mathematics and above average in writing. There were some gender differences in attainment in the national tests in 2001 at the age of seven, but they were not significant. The progress of boys and girls is regularly monitored to ensure equality of opportunity. At the present time, the differences are not significant.
- 3 Among the factors that have led to the improvement in results are the school's successful introduction of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy and the school's own sustained focus on writing and, more recently, on reading. Improvement has also been helped by the increasing involvement of the pupils in the setting of realistic, short-term targets in literacy and numeracy. In addition, teacher's targets for individual pupils in terms of National Curriculum levels are frequently reviewed and this ensures a continual focus on improvement. Caution should be exercised in interpreting National Curriculum results in small schools; each pupil represented around three per cent of the last Year 2 and this percentage can make the difference between *below average* and *average* or between *average* and *above average*.
- 4 Pupils currently in the small (16) Year 4 class have made overall good progress during their 18 months in the junior classes. Results of the voluntary tests taken at the end of Year 3 and of individual pupil reviews in October indicate that these pupils are well on track to show a good level of improvement compared with their Year 2 results. Inspection evidence, based on examination of pupils' work as well as lesson

observations supports this judgement. Pupils in the large Y3 class are taught in two groups for both literacy and numeracy. This arrangement is enabling the school to meet the learning needs of all pupils effectively. As a result progress for pupils of all levels of ability is good; higher attainers and those who learn more slowly are appropriately challenged.

- 5 Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to the targets set for them and good progress overall, particularly when they receive support individually or in small groups. They make progress similar to that of their peers across the whole curriculum. They are well supported by teachers, learning support assistants and the headteacher, who has responsibility for special educational needs.
- 6 The inspection team judged that attainment in the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education was above what is expected of seven and nine year-olds except in music and physical education. In these two subjects it was in line with national expectations. These overall good levels of attainment represent a substantial improvement since the last inspection when pupils' attainment in almost all respects was judged to be in line with national expectations. The improvement is due to a number of factors. These include the school's commitment to continuing to provide a curriculum that includes worthwhile experiences in all the areas of learning and the greatly improved planning structure that the school has developed in response to the last inspection. The improved quality of teaching and the better library and computer facilities have also contributed to raising standards of attainment. (For further details of pupils' achievements and progress in the Foundation Stage and in the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, see paragraphs 65 - 142)

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

- 7 Pupils' attitudes to the school are very good. This represents an improvement since the last inspection, when attitudes to learning were satisfactory. Pupils enjoy coming to school and show interest and involvement in the activities provided for them. They are keen to answer questions and contribute to discussions. They apply considerable intellectual and creative effort to their work and enthusiastically engage in physical activities. They enjoy the extra-curricular activities that the school provides. Their levels of interest, concentration and independence are very good. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good gains in their learning. Pupils are encouraged to carry out self-assessment and, as a result, most pupils have a very good knowledge of their own learning.
- 8 Pupils' behaviour is very good. They understand and respect the few school rules. Pupils' behaviour reflects the school's practice of care and concern for others. Lunchtimes are a pleasant, social occasion; behaviour in the playground is very good. Pupils participate enthusiastically in the games that the lunchtime supervisors organise for them. Parents are confident that pupils behave well in school. There have been no exclusions in the past year.
- 9 Pupils have a very good knowledge of the impact of their behaviour on others. From an early age, they are taught to respect the feelings, values and beliefs of other people. They take care of their own property and show respect for the belongings of other people and for school resources. They treat computers, musical instruments and other resources with great care. The school does not suffer from graffiti, and rare incidents of vandalism are not carried out by pupils at the school.

- 10 Pupils' personal development and relationships are very good. Pupils relate very well to each other and to adults. They show courtesy to one another, to adults and to visitors. They are polite in their speech and courteous in standing aside for others in the corridors and in opening doors for others. They work well together in pairs and groups and with pupils from other classes. They socialise well in family groups, at lunchtime. Pupils in Year 4 write and illustrate books for pupils in the reception class and read them and other stories to them.
- 11 Pupils with special educational needs are integrated well into the life of the school. Their very good attitudes, behaviour and relationships contribute to their good progress and integration.
- 12 There are many opportunities for pupils to show initiative and independence. Year 4 pupils control the tape recorder and the overhead projector during assembly. All pupils are given opportunities to carry out small tasks within the classroom and around the school, appropriate to their stage of development. Older pupils play with and guide younger pupils. All pupils enjoy talking to visitors and explaining their work. They are proud of their school and keen to contribute to its success.
- 13 Attendance is satisfactory. It is better than at the last inspection and slightly above the national average although absence has increased by one per cent since the best recent year of 1998/9. There is no unauthorised absence but the school is rightly concerned about the high incidence of holidays taken in term time. The school day starts on time and good timekeeping is maintained throughout the day. Daily registration is carried out efficiently.

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

- 14 The overall quality of teaching is good. During the inspection it was good or better in 77 per cent of lessons and satisfactory in the remainder; there was no unsatisfactory teaching. This represents a considerable improvement since the last inspection, when a little over 30 per cent were judged to be good or better. A criticism of some teaching at that time was that it was too directive, with too few opportunities for investigative work, particularly in science. The school has dealt very effectively with this weakness and all teachers encourage independent and investigative work. This is now particularly evident in science; there is scope for further development of the investigative approach in mathematics. Other reasons for the overall improvement include the successful adoption of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy and increased emphasis on monitoring by the headteacher. Lessons are planned so that work is matched to the needs of individual pupils and no child is disadvantaged. Resources are vetted for bias. Attention is given to promoting an understanding of the multicultural nature of society through the texts used in the literacy hour, music, art, dance and religious education lessons.
- 15 The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage was always good; it was good in more than two-thirds of lessons observed in the infant and junior classes, including 16 per cent of lessons in Key Stage 2 that were very good. The teaching of English, including literacy, was always good. In mathematics, including numeracy, it was good in 40 per cent of lessons and satisfactory in the rest. As in all schools, teachers have had less time to become completely confident in teaching to the numeracy strategy and the co-ordinator recognises the need to give further staff support so that the quality approaches that in literacy.

- 16 The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs is good. The headteacher works closely with teachers and learning support assistants in helping pupils with special educational needs. Together with class teachers, he draws up individual education plans for pupils on the register of special educational needs. Teachers and trained learning support assistants have a good understanding of the needs of individual pupils and they provide a good range of suitable work and activities for them. The support for small groups of pupils is particularly valuable in literacy and numeracy lessons, enabling pupils to make good progress towards their individual targets.
- 17 Particular strengths of the teaching include teachers' knowledge and understanding of the curriculum and of how children learn. This was evident throughout the school and especially noticeable in work in the Foundation Stage. For example, when the teacher was taking the whole class for a session designed to improve counting, the matching of number names to quantities and recognition of numerals, she had set up a very appropriate whole class activity that she led. She fully involved the children in a practical way at the same time using, and expecting the children to use, correct mathematical language. The learning support assistant kept good records of the children's responses so that both adults have a good idea of individual children's understanding and will base further work on this.
- 18 Teachers manage their pupils very well and have high expectations of them in terms of both work and behaviour. Teachers go to a lot of trouble to prepare work that is interesting and appropriate to where the pupils have reached in their learning. As a result of this and the very good relationships between adults and pupils, there is a pleasant and purposeful working atmosphere in classrooms. Pupils show a lot of interest in what they are set to learn, concentrate well and work hard. This was the case in a literacy lesson in Year 4 where pupils were developing the stories that they were writing with an audience of younger children in the school in mind. They enthusiastically discussed characters, situations and vocabulary, the use of short sentences with repetition and possible illustrations. This resulted from the teacher's very good preparation and modelling of what was required as well as the very brisk pace and the focus on learning that was maintained throughout the lesson.
- 19 A further strength of teaching and learning is the involvement of pupils throughout the school in setting short term and achievable targets for improvement. Most of these are to do with developing the skills of literacy and numeracy and are often displayed in classrooms. In the Year 2 classroom, for example, pupils have written their targets on individual coloured cards that are mounted together on the wall. Pupils refer to them and are pleased to talk about their progress; they show a very good level of knowledge about their own learning. This is a very valuable outcome of the whole school emphasis on developing independence and self-esteem and thereby accelerating pupils' learning.
- 20 **Other features common to the good or better teaching seen during the inspection included:**
- teachers identified clearly what pupils were to learn and shared this information with them at the start of the lesson;
  - good use of questions to revise what had been already learned and to check on and reinforce learning at the end of the lesson;

- further questioning to build on and extend what pupils say, with an insistence on full explanations and good listening by other pupils;
- a good balance of whole class, group and individual work and of different activities – speaking and listening, writing, practical;
- good teamwork and planning between teachers and learning support assistants.

**21 Where teaching was less successful, although still satisfactory, the reasons included:**

- the learning intentions were too long-term or broad and not specific to the lesson;
- too little time was allocated to the lesson so that there was not enough time for checking and consolidating learning.

### **Learning and progress**

22 Pupils of all abilities are being successfully helped to become confident in their ability to learn and to work independently where that is appropriate. In all lessons in the Foundation Stage and more than two-thirds of those in Years 1 – 4, learning was judged to be good. Pupils' attitudes to their work, and their behaviour, were never less than satisfactory; in 90 per cent of lessons they were judged to be good, including more than one-third where they were very good.

### **The quality of marking**

23 The quality of teachers' marking of work in books varies between classes and subjects. At best it includes comments that clearly show pupils what is good (or not) about their work and how it can be improved. In some cases, however, the pupil does not correct work that is wrong, or it is not clear how it should be put right. Sometimes there is an over-emphasis on neatness and layout and lack of comment on the subject work. Because of these occasional lapses, some opportunities for enabling pupils and their parents to engage more fully in learning are missed.

### **Homework**

24 Homework is set regularly and is making an important contribution to improving pupils' achievements and to involving parents more fully in their children's education. (For further details about the quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage and in the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, see paragraphs 65 - 142)



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

- 25 The school has successfully addressed the issues that were identified in the previous report. At the time of the last inspection, the curriculum was described as *balanced* and all subjects were taught, but design and technology did not meet National Curriculum requirements. Key issues related to *long term curriculum planning, developing detailed schemes of work to ensure continuity and progression and the limited number of extra-curricular activities.*
- 26 The quality and range of learning opportunities provided by the school are good in all year groups. The appropriate curriculum is in place in the Foundation Stage and legal requirements are fulfilled in Years 1 to 4. The requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education are met. The time allocation in each subject is carefully considered and is appropriate. The time devoted to English, mathematics and science reflects the school's commitment to raising standards in these subjects whilst, at the same time, giving appropriate time to all other subjects. The school is concerned with the whole curriculum and it has not reduced the curriculum experience of children in order to achieve higher results in the national tests. Although less time may be spent on the foundation subjects than formerly, the school has taken care to ensure that no subject is neglected.
- 27 The curriculum is planned on a two-year cycle, in order to provide equality of opportunity for pupils who were in mixed aged classes last year. Systems for planning the curriculum are good in the Foundation Stage, and in Years 1 to 4. Planning for the use of learning support assistants is good and they make an effective contribution to pupils' learning. Different work is provided for pupils of varying abilities in each class and all pupils are appropriately challenged. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Classroom provision is organised to meet their specific needs. Good teaching ensures that their work is both related to what is taking place in the classroom and meets the needs of their individual education plans. Equality of access and opportunity for all children is good.
- 28 The school has reviewed its schemes of work. In its long-term plans, it has taken account of national guidance, which provides an effective structure for pupils' learning. The teaching of literacy skills is good and the school provides planned opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills in other subjects, for example in science. The strategies for teaching numeracy skills are good and pupils develop their skills further when recording information in science in the form of graphs or charts and when measuring in design and technology. Information and communication technology skills are not yet fully used across the curriculum.
- 29 The school has a range of policy documents to support the curriculum. There is very good provision for personal, social and health education. All staff have a programme of study for this and also for drug education and citizenship. There is a marking policy and a homework policy, which support learning.
- 30 The provision for equality of opportunity is good. Care is taken to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding according to their abilities. All children work towards specific targets. Learning support assistants give valuable help to pupils who experience difficulties. More able pupils are given differentiated tasks to extend their learning. Extra-curricular activities promote equal opportunities and are open to both boys and girls. In this

predominantly white school, there are planned opportunities for multicultural awareness.

- 31 The provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. There are opportunities for pupils in Years 3 and 4 to join the lunchtime choir and to attend two out of six different after-school activities during the year, some of which are conducted by parents and other members of the community. Activities include football, cooking, drawing, gardening and cricket. All pupils in Year 1 learn the ocarina; pupils in Years 2 and 3 learn the recorder and some pupils in Year 4 choose to continue to develop their recorder skills. The school participates in a range of visits, including visits to the church and the Cecil Higgins Museum in Bedford. The curriculum is enriched by visits from theatre groups, music groups and authors. An annual book week is held and a varied programme of activities develops pupils' reading skills and their appreciation of books. Pupils have the opportunity to learn the violin; their parents pay for lessons. The Reception Class perform an annual nativity play and other classes join to give performances such as *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* and *Holy Joe*.
- 32 The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is good. There are strong links with the local church which is used as a resource for learning, as well as for worship at harvest time. The Life Bus visits the school, in connection with the Healthy Schools Award. The school nurse comes to talk to children and parents on various issues. The Parent Teacher Association holds a number of social and fund-raising events, which attract a large number of local residents. The school is active in raising money for various charities. A number of people from the community come in to talk to pupils about their jobs in the community.
- 33 There are very good relationships with the playgroup that adjoins the school and from which the school draws many of its pupils. Two-way visits by staff and children ensure an easy transition into school and continuity and progression in pupils' learning. There are careful induction procedures and transfer arrangements to various middle schools. There are also links with De Montfort University from which the school receives students. Pupils who learn the violin participate in a 'Fiddle Fiesta' each year at a local school.
- 34 The provision for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. This improves the position at the last inspection, when the school successfully promoted the spiritual, moral and social development of its pupils but was less successful in adequately providing for their cultural development.
- 35 The promotion of pupils' spiritual development is very good. There is a useful spiritual and moral development policy document. The spiritual dimension is firmly embedded in the curriculum, with planned opportunities for appreciation of the spiritual elements associated with music, art, dance, literature and science. All pupils say grace in their classrooms, before going to lunch. There are opportunities to listen to all types of music, as well as music by the great composers, and to sing songs of praise. Periods of reflection in the daily acts of worship, in personal and social education lessons and on other occasions across the curriculum allow pupils to reflect on their own beliefs and those of others. Background music, such as Indian music and Tudor music, is sometimes played in the classroom to support learning. There are good links with the local church. Pupils visit the church, during their studies of special places and special people. Assemblies are carefully planned with a theme for the week. They are reverent occasions that contribute to pupils' spiritual development. Religious education lessons also encourage spirituality. Pupils learn

about the customs observed by different religious groups and how they are important to those observing them. They handle objects of religious interest with great respect and care.

- 36 Arrangements for promoting pupils' moral development are very good. Care for all pupils, particularly younger children and pupils with special educational needs is implicit in the daily life of the school. The school is very supportive of all its pupils. Adults provide very good examples of how to behave and work together. Respect for oneself and each other is encouraged. Very good relationships prevail. Pupils are taught the difference between right and wrong actions. Their understanding of the impact of their actions on others is very good. The fact that no oppressive behaviour, such as bullying, sexism or racism, was observed during the inspection is a tribute to the inclusive policy of the school and the encouragement of respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. The consistent application of the behaviour policy, the home-school agreement, school and class rules, individual targets, personal, social and health education lessons promote very good personal responsibility. Opportunities are provided for children to take responsibility for various tasks, appropriate to their age. This ranges from small tasks in the classroom, looking after younger children at lunchtime and reading with children from other classes. Moral issues are considered through stories from a range of cultures.
- 37 The provision for pupils' social development is very good. Pupils are encouraged to show consideration towards others and to work co-operatively in pairs and groups. They show respect for the feelings expressed by others and the contribution of their peers in class discussions. They take on responsibilities within the class and the school as a whole. They develop their social skills through participation in break, lunchtime and after school activities. They socialise with others as they visit places of interest, meet with visitors to the school and participate in social and fund-raising activities, for example, for 'Blue Peter' and in events organised by the Parent Teacher Association. The special activity weeks, such as 'Book Week' enable pupils to socialise with pupils of all ages and with parents and visitors to the school.
- 38 Provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. Pupils are taught about the various cultural traditions and religious beliefs in the world through literature, history, geography, music, art and dancing. They study life in other countries, such as Sri Lanka. They meet with members of different faith communities, such as Christianity and Sikhism. They visit museums and experience African art, music and dance. There is a good range of multicultural instruments, which are used in music lessons and assemblies. Visiting musicians enrich the music curriculum. Citizenship is taught and promotes pupils' understanding. There are a good range of objects of religious interest and books for promoting an understanding of the multicultural nature of society, including some dual language books. Displays throughout the school value the traditions of other cultures. Pupils are being well prepared for life in multi-cultural and multi-ethnic Britain.

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

- 39 The high quality of pastoral support pervades every aspect of the school. This is an improvement over the last inspection. Academic assessment has improved significantly (see below). There have also been improvements in the procedures for child protection, monitoring and supporting personal development and for promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour.
- 40 The school is a safe environment with all the expected safety measures in place and regular safety inspections that are recorded and lead to action. There are good procedures for school visits, fire drills and first aid. Child protection procedures are good, the nominated person (the headteacher) being very experienced in this field with good contacts and knowledge of local procedures. Staff have been trained. Pupils who have poor home circumstances or who are on the 'at risk' register are known well and, where appropriate, are offered extra support. Topics and issues covered in the personal and social education programme help pupils to look after themselves. Pupils with health problems are identified to staff, who take appropriate measures.
- 41 The procedures for the promotion of attendance are good. Full attendance is rewarded. Telephoning home to make enquiries if no message has been received relating to an absence is standard practice in the school. Parents are frequently reminded of the importance of high attendance often with specific reference to avoiding holidays in term time.
- 42 The procedures for promoting good behaviour are very good. All the staff have high expectations of behaviour and demonstrate a consistent approach. Their friendliness towards each other and their attitudes to their work are a fine example for the pupils to follow. Rewards are an important feature of the behaviour policy. There are sessions where pupils talk about experiences with their teacher and these are used effectively to establish good relationships and create an environment where bad or oppressive behaviour is discouraged. The headteacher has a high profile around the school and encourages a 'family feeling'. He is keen to promote friendships across the age range. These are all very good procedures for discouraging oppressive behaviour.
- 43 The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good. They are almost entirely informal, but this is effective because of the whole school emphasis on pastoral care. Teachers know their pupils extremely well and talk knowledgeably about them in a very positive way. When problems are apparent pupils are given much encouragement to overcome them and parents are involved where it is appropriate.
- 44 The school gives very good educational support to pupils. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are very good and are crucial to the raising of standards. Teachers know their children well and are aware of their specific needs. They respond to them in a very positive and supportive way. The accurate assessment of how individual pupils are learning in English, mathematics and science is a major priority of the school. Assessment procedures have been developed in parallel with curriculum planning, target setting and reporting of progress. Pupils are regularly assessed in reading, writing, spelling, mathematics and science. Pupil performance in the initial tests on entry to the reception class is used to predict the level that pupils may be expected to achieve by the end of Year 2 and Year 4. Data from legal and optional national tests in English and mathematics are used to assess future performance and take effective action. The area for further

development is formalising assessment in subjects other than English, mathematics and science.

- 45 As pupils progress through the school, the results of formal tests are collated and an academic profile is built up for each child. These records are systematically passed on to the next teacher as pupils progress through the school and are sent on to the receiving middle school. Progress is tracked from year to year. Groups of pupils who will benefit from additional support are identified. These records provide the basis for reporting to parents at the end of the academic year. Reports contain targets for pupils to work towards. As pupils progress through the school, they are increasingly active in setting their own targets and reviewing their own progress.
- 46 The use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning is very good. This represents very good progress since the last inspection when a key issue for improvement was to further develop assessment procedures to inform lesson planning by setting and sharing clear learning intentions and reviewing them at the end of the lesson; also setting clear feedback procedures. Teachers' weekly, half termly and termly planning is now detailed with clear learning intentions that are made known to pupils. Feedback procedures are related specifically to the learning intentions of each lesson. At the end of each lesson, pupils review their progress against the learning intention.
- 47 The assessment and evaluation of lessons are used very effectively to inform future planning. The marking policy is constructive and its consistent use helps pupils to know how they can improve their performance. The analysis and use of assessment information are very effective in challenging and supporting pupils. Any weaknesses highlighted by self-review and comparing performance with that of similar schools, such as specific weaknesses in writing, mathematics and science, are vigorously addressed. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics dipped in 2000, but targeted action restored it to previous high levels.
- 48 Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic performance are very good. Formal monitoring of lessons is carried out by the headteacher and deputy headteacher and governors visit the school to look at specific areas of the curriculum. Work sampling is carried out by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and subject leaders. Analysis of this enables key standards to be tracked and improved where necessary. It leads to intervention programmes for pupils and adjustments to teaching and learning. The school now places more value on self-evaluation. It assesses the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, teacher development and children's progress.
- 49 The school has very good procedures for identifying and assessing pupils with special educational needs. It uses all available information, together with target setting in individual education plans to set appropriate targets for pupils with special educational needs. The headteacher tracks their progress and support is directed effectively to those who need it. The support provided by the headteacher, teachers and learning support assistants is instrumental in the progress that pupils make towards their targets. The school works closely with external specialist agencies, as the need arises.

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

- 50 There is a very good partnership with parents. This is further improvement on the good position reported at the last inspection. Parents returned nearly one half of the

questionnaires sent out and the features they like about the school include its high expectations for their youngsters, the high quality of the teaching, the progress made, the school's approachability, pupils' good behaviour and the management of the school. The only area of concern is the range of activities outside lessons. The inspection team agrees with the parents' favourable views, but finds the range of activities outside lessons to be satisfactory. At the parents' meeting and in notes on the questionnaire, parents expressed concern about the wide range of middle schools the pupils move on to. They see the effect this has on friendships and how families without transport are unable to make a choice – an equal opportunities issue outside the scope of the inspection.

- 51 The information provided for parents is very good. There are good newsletters, a very good annual report and a well-produced prospectus with much curriculum information. Pupils' annual reports have very good descriptions of what has been achieved although they contain no information on levels of attainment (except in Year 2). There are very good targets for improvement and the comments make it quite obvious how well the teacher knows the pupil and wants him or her to succeed. There is good advice on how parents can help their children improve. There are two evenings per year for parents to discuss their children's progress and these are very well attended. There is a *meet the teacher* event early in the school year where the curriculum plans are shared with parents. Occasional evening sessions are held on curriculum subjects, such as numeracy and literacy. Parents are advised of their children's targets in English.
- 52 The school works closely with the parents of pupils with special educational needs. It keeps parents well informed about their progress. Most parents are appropriately involved in identifying their children's needs. Their support is essential to the progress that their child makes. They are encouraged to share their concerns with the school and seek guidance at any time. Parents of pupils with statements of special educational needs are invited to attend the annual review of their child's progress.
- 53 Many parents help in the school. They also help with sports activities and with school trips. There is a lively parent – teacher association that raises useful funding for the school. Parents help at home with reading, tables and spellings. Parents are invited to school performances and class assemblies. The Christmas performance is put on three times to ensure that all members of the extended family and community can come. Parents are also invited to violin assemblies, book week, Harvest Festival, a Carol Service, including the Reception play, a Bring and Buy sale organised by the top class, and take part in an Easter Competition, May Day, and Sports Day.
- 54 Parents have been asked by the governors to complete a questionnaire about the long-term development of the school and the response is currently being analysed. A group of parents are very involved in the after school club for pupils in Years 3 and 4. There are six options and each pupil can elect to attend two of them; this has been a great success.
- 55 Arrangements for the induction of new pupils are very good. There are close links with the playgroup, including the sharing of some facilities to familiarise children with the school. In addition to the initial taster sessions, each new entrant is visited at home.

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

- 56 The leadership and management provided by the headteacher and key staff are very good. The headteacher provides strong leadership, focused on raising the level of pupils' achievements through improving the quality of education that the school provides. Staff respond positively to his leadership and there is a strong sense of teamwork throughout the school. The deputy headteacher provides very good support to the headteacher and has led the improvement with respect to some of the areas identified at the time of the last inspection, most strikingly with respect to investigative and experimental work in science. The school has improved its curriculum and its development planning and assessment procedures. Standards, as measured by the national tests at the end of Year 2, have risen at a better rate than the national trend. There has been overall improvement in standards in the other subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, partly due to the school's insistence on maintaining a good coverage of all aspects. The school's aims and values are reflected in all its work. There is a conscious effort on the part of the school to promote the personal and academic development and achievement of all pupils. Children thrive in surroundings that promote the understanding and appreciation of the value and contribution of others.
- 57 The governing body fulfils its responsibilities very well, including contributing to shaping the future direction of the school. Governors are well informed and involved in the work of the school and have a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The school's priorities for development, such as providing more opportunities for pupils to compose music, developing the role of the learning support assistants and continuing to apply accelerated learning principles are entirely appropriate. The action taken to meet earlier targets in the school improvement plan, for example with respect to the standard of writing and the library and computer facilities, has been very effective. The governing body, including the headteacher, regularly monitors progress towards agreed targets.
- 58 Educational priorities are very well supported through the school's financial planning. The headteacher and the governing body, through its finance committee, manage the budget very well. The school makes very good use of specific grants, for example the standards fund, to achieve improvement. The governing body has been prudent in ensuring that the contingency fund is adequate to cover items such as the imminent conversion of a boiler room to a store and the consequences of cracks in walls. The carry forward figure has been reduced by £11000 during the present financial year and further expenditure will bring it well within the nationally recommended level. The school provides good value for money. The secretary is very efficient in the day-to-day financial control and administration as well as being an important and welcoming first point of contact for parents and other visitors. The school uses new technology well to maintain its administrative and financial procedures and actively seeks to obtain best value for the money allocated to it.
- 59 The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching are good. The headteacher has a very visible presence around the school and through this he continually monitors the quality of teaching, learning and behaviour. There has also been more formal monitoring by the headteacher and by subject co-ordinators for English, mathematics and science. There are plans for all subject co-ordinators to monitor teaching and learning in other classrooms; this is a desirable further development of their role. Through providing advice and support to colleagues, co-ordinators already make an important contribution to raising standards.
- 60 The leadership and management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs are very good. This is a significant factor in the good progress made by these

pupils and reflects the school's policy for inclusion. The requirements of the Code of Practice for special educational needs are fully met. The specific grant for special educational needs is used very effectively for its designated purpose. The governor with oversight for special educational needs is well informed and visits the school on a regular basis. Reports regarding special educational needs' provision are given to the governing body each term.

- 61 The school is well staffed and there are good procedures for professional development and performance management. Individual targets reflect whole school priorities and are clearly focused on raising standards. Arrangements for the induction of staff new to the school are good. Teachers and pupils are very effectively supported by a strong and committed team of assistants who make an important contribution to ensuring that all pupils have full access to what is offered by the school. The school very effectively promotes inclusion.
- 62 Accommodation is good and the site agent ensures that it is cleaned and maintained to a high standard. All staff have contributed to the creation of a bright and pleasant interior, with stimulating and interesting displays in corridors and classrooms. Space has been used well in the creation of a computer room and improved library facilities and in making sure that the large Year 3 class is taught as two groups of 17 for the majority of the week. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good, except that the lack of a covered area restricts outside play when it is wet or hot and sunny.
- 63 Money has been spent well on learning resources and parents commented enthusiastically on the good range of both fiction and non-fiction books and the access to computers that their children enjoy. Resources, for example science equipment or tools for design and technology, are of good quality and well organised and stored so that class teachers have easy access in their rooms to what they need most often and can get what they need only occasionally from central locations.



## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

64 In accordance with the existing agenda for school development, the headteacher, with the governing body and staff, should plan to improve:

1. The formal assessment procedures in subjects other than English, mathematics and science by:
  - Building on the good systems already in place for English, mathematics and science;
  - Making sure that day-to-day assessment is directly based on clear and precise learning intentions;
  - Developing simple manageable ways of recording assessment information so that it is easy to use in subsequent planning.
2. The role of co-ordinators in developing teaching and learning in their subjects throughout the school by:
  - Extending the present good system of classroom observation so that all teachers have opportunities to observe their subjects being taught;
  - Maintaining at least the present level of focused monitoring of planning and of the quality of pupils' work.
3. The use of pupils' skills in information and communication technology to develop and extend their learning across the curriculum by:
  - Developing the current good use of the computer suite in this respect;
  - Increasing the school's range of software that supports different areas of the curriculum;
  - Incorporating the class-based computers more fully into daily teaching and learning.
4. The attendance of a minority of pupils whose parents take holidays during term time by:
  - Continuing to impress on parents the importance of their children not missing units of work in the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	39
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	35

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	3	27	9	0	0	0
Percentage	0	8	69	23	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 three percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/A	130
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/A	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/A	20

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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*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)**

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	20	12	32

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	18	18	18
	Girls	11	12	12
	Total	29	30	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (78)	94 (83)	94 (89)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	18	18	17
	Girls	11	11	12
	Total	29	29	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (89)	91 (83)	91 (100)
	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	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	2
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	0
Any other minority ethnic group	2

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

### **Teachers and classes**

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.6
Average class size	26

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y4**

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	95

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

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

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

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	327,305
Total expenditure	310,508
Expenditure per pupil	2,127
Balance brought forward from previous year	19,585
Balance carried forward to next year	25,008

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
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

43.1%

Number of questionnaires sent out

130

Number of questionnaires returned

56

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	68	29	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	52	38	5	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	57	36	2	2	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	48	9	4	5
The teaching is good.	54	38	2	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	34	14	5	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	68	27	0	5	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	34	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	36	45	13	4	4
The school is well led and managed.	64	29	5	2	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	55	41	4	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	43	18	5	11

Some rows do not add to 100 because of rounding

### Other issues raised by parents

Parents were pleased with recent improvements to the library and the development of the computer suite.

## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

65 The attainment of children in the reception class is in line with expectations for their age in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development. Overall attainment on entry to the reception class is below the standard expected for children of this age. It improves steadily as a result of good teaching, which leads to good learning. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good. The new curriculum for children in the reception class has been introduced and implemented well and most children are on course to reach the nationally agreed learning goals, by the time they enter Year 1. This maintains the position at the last inspection. All children, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well because of very good provision. Teaching is good in all six areas of learning detailed below, representing an improvement since the last inspection when teaching was described as 'satisfactory and often good'. Teachers and their assistants have a clear understanding of the needs of young children. Planning is based on clear objectives for all areas of learning. Assessments take place on entry to the reception class and inform the planning of future work. Very good records are kept of children's progress. They are shared with parents and the teacher of the class to which pupils progress. Children make a very positive start to their education within a challenging learning environment.

#### **Personal, social and emotional development**

66 Children build well on their pre-school experience. They make good progress and achieve well. The attainment of most children is in line with expectations for their age by the time that they leave the reception class. They settle well into the routines of school and the calm, welcoming atmosphere helps them to feel confident and secure. The staff ensure that all children are fully included in the activities provided. They form very good relationships with the children. Children learn to work together and play co-operatively, for example in role-play in the doctor's surgery. They gain the confidence to try out new activities and learn to organise themselves independently, because materials are easily 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 gain increasing self-control and begin to understand the difference between right and wrong. They learn to take turns, for example, at the computer, and 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. Children adapt well to increased independence and responsibilities. They develop concentration and perseverance, as they practice their writing and reading skills. They gain confidence in expressing their feelings, as they talk about their families and learn that not all families are the same. They show a developing respect for the contribution of others. Adults use every opportunity to reinforce appropriate behaviour. For example, they ensure that children say 'please' and 'thank you' and praise them when they line up sensibly.

## **Communication, language and literacy**

67 The attainment of most children in communication, language and literacy is below expectations for their age on entry to the reception class. Children make good progress as a result of good teaching. They achieve well and their attainment is generally in line with expectations for their age by the time that they leave the reception class. There are many formal and informal opportunities to develop language skills as, for example, when they speak to the class about their interests. Direct teaching and practical activities introduce and consolidate the key skills of language. Children are encouraged to ask questions and give answers, using full sentences. They learn to concentrate when listening to stories and the contribution of other children to discussions. Adults effectively develop children's listening skills, by insisting on full attention when they are talking and ensuring that children listen carefully to each other. They speak clearly, thus providing a good example. Adults listen well to children and extend discussions so that children become increasingly confident speakers. Children become familiar with a range of traditional rhymes. They begin to blend sounds together to form words and higher attaining pupils read simple books with repetitive texts. Children benefit from the school's early introduction of the practice of teaching letter sounds and shapes and building up word banks. Most children write their names satisfactorily and begin to write simple sentences by the end of their time in the reception class. Teachers and learning support staff take every opportunity to extend children's vocabulary and encourage them to explain what they are doing. In the literacy lesson, teachers choose books, which stimulate children's interest in words, spelling, rhyming patterns and simple punctuation, for example, 'I fell out of bed'. Children are encouraged to share books with adults at home.

## **Mathematical development**

68 The attainment of most children in mathematical development is below expectations for their age on entry to the reception class. They make good progress as a result of good teaching. They achieve well and their attainment is generally in line with expectations for their age by the time that they enter Year 1. Children gain confidence in counting as they join in number rhymes and songs. They learn to sort and order items, as they play with a range of carefully selected, colourful apparatus. Children confidently count beyond 10 and put the numbers up to ten in their proper order. They demonstrate early knowledge and understanding of how to solve problems involving addition and subtraction, and the use of vocabulary such as 'more than', 'less than', 'add one more', 'take one away', 'how many altogether' and 'how many are left?' Opportunities for practical activities are suitably planned and children develop an appropriate vocabulary to describe colour, size and shape. Most children are able to recognise flat shapes, such as a square, rectangle, triangle and circle. 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 and books related to number, 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.



## Knowledge and understanding of the world

69 The attainment of most children in knowledge and understanding of the world is below expectations for their age on entry to the reception class. They make good progress as a result of good teaching. They achieve well and their attainment is generally in line with expectations for their age by the time that they leave the reception class. 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 differences between night and day and the changing seasons. Stimulating activities are linked well to the early learning goals 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 and about safety. Children 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. They learn about belonging to different groups in religious education and show a developing respect for people of different cultures and beliefs. Their dolls and other toys represent a variety of cultures; many of their stories come from far away countries, such as 'Farmer Derek', which is written in English and Bengali. Children develop their scientific knowledge through the study of materials. During the inspection, as part of their topic on 'Patterns and Changes', they learnt that some changes are reversible. They added food colouring and some other objects to water and poured the water into balloons to freeze. While they were waiting for the frozen balloons to melt, they worked in small groups to explore the feel of the balloons and whether they could lift them, spin them and cut them. They were encouraged to predict what was happening to the size of the balloons and whether they could think of a way of melting them quickly. They made bread and popcorn to develop their understanding of reversible and irreversible changes. They use information and communication technology, with increasing confidence, to support their work. For example, they use programs on sound and letters and on taking away one or two numbers from ten. Children build and construct with an increasingly wide range of objects, selecting appropriate resources and adapting their work, where necessary. Two pupils building a tower of bricks demonstrated their understanding of the need for a solid base.

## Physical development

70 The attainment of most children in physical development is below expectations for their age on entry to the reception class. They make good progress as a result of good teaching. They achieve well and their attainment is in line with expectations for their age by the time that they enter Year 1. Regular use is made of the fenced-off outdoor area, which is soon to be further resourced. The school hall is used daily for physical education. During the inspection, pupils explored different movements. They moved 'as heavy as an elephant', 'as light as a feather' and 'as slithery as a snake'. They strode like a giant and fluttered like a butterfly, in time to music. On another occasion, as they moved around the hall and passed a ball around a small circle, they reinforced their understanding of 'quicker/slower' and 'more quickly/more slowly'. Their movement is appropriately controlled. They are progressively developing their ability to move with confidence, imagination, control and co-ordination in safety. Most children demonstrate a good awareness of space and others. In the school hall, they travel around, under, over and through balancing and climbing equipment. 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. All children handle tools, objects, construction and malleable materials safely with increasing control. They demonstrate developing hand and eye co-ordination when engaged in cutting and gluing.

### **Creative development**

- 71 The attainment of most children in creative development is below expectations for their age, on entry to the reception class. They make good progress as a result of good teaching. They achieve well and their attainment is generally in line with expectations for their age by the time that they leave the reception class. Children's creativity is developed within a very supportive learning environment. They 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. Colour and texture are explored through a range of resources and sensory experiences and children talk about their observations. They explore what happens when they mix colours and they understand the terms 'darker/lighter', and 'thicker/thinner'. They experiment with different media to draw themselves and others. Form and shape are explored in two and three dimensions, as they create models of houses and make moveable puppets, thus extending their knowledge of joining techniques. They contribute to collages and explore printing techniques. They learn about symmetry, as they make colourful butterflies. They experimented with clay at Christmas, as they made a candleholder.
- 72 All children enjoy music. They use their imaginations and communicate their ideas through music. Familiar nursery rhymes and songs are sung with enthusiasm and children 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. Children respond well to what they see and hear.

### **ENGLISH**

- 73 The attainment of pupils in reading in the 2001 National Curriculum tests, at the age of seven, was above the standards expected nationally for pupils of this age at Level 2 or above. The percentage of pupils achieving the higher level matched the standards attained by pupils of a similar age nationally. This represents an improvement since 2000, when attainment matched the standards expected of pupils of this age. Attainment was below the average for similar schools.
- 74 The attainment of pupils in writing in the 2001 National Curriculum tests, at the age of seven, was well above the standards expected nationally for pupils of this age at Level 2 or above. The percentage of pupils achieving the higher level was well above the standards attained by pupils of a similar age nationally. Attainment was above the average for similar schools. This represents an improvement since 2000, when attainment in reading and writing matched the standards obtained by pupils of a similar age nationally.
- 75 Standards have consistently matched or been above the standards expected of pupils of this age, in the last four years, in reading. Standards in writing have matched, been above or well above the standards expected for pupils of this age in the last four years. The rise in standards in 2001 can be attributed to the emphasis on raising

standards, the more accurate tracking of pupil progress against National Curriculum levels and the more active involvement of pupils in self assessment and target setting.

- 76 Inspection findings confirm that the attainment of pupils in reading is above the standards expected nationally for pupils at the age of seven and at the end of Year 4. This maintains the position at the last inspection. Progress in reading for all pupils is good, standards are rising and achievement is good. This improvement reflects the school's efforts to raise standards by the consistent use of good reading schemes, opportunities for pupils to read to adults on a one-to-one basis, planned opportunities for reading in every area of the curriculum and targeted support for pupils whose reading skills are less developed. There are paired reading sessions between younger and older pupils. Pupils have regular opportunities to visit the school library and borrow books for sharing with adults at home. Parental help at home is an important factor in the raising of standards. The help of parents in school is also very valuable.
- 77 Inspectors heard a total of fifteen pupils read across the age range and from all ability groups, and held discussions with them. The regular use of the reading schemes, the school library and the study of texts in the literacy hour help pupils to attain good standards in reading. Pupils follow a structured reading programme. They read to teachers and learning support assistants on a regular basis. By the age of seven, pupils' reading of simple texts shows understanding. Most pupils express opinions about the story and use more than one strategy to read unfamiliar words and establish meaning. Pupils in Year 4 respond well to a range of texts in the literacy hour and across the curriculum. They show understanding of significant ideas, themes, events and characters. They are beginning to use inference and deduction. They are taught to retrieve and collate information from a range of sources. The school library is used for the teaching of library skills. The school has recently carried out an audit of fiction and non-fiction books and updated them where necessary. It has used its resources well to purchase attractive texts for the literacy lessons and some fiction and non-fiction books for use throughout the school. Pupils are expected to read at home for a short period each day. This practice is well supported by parents, enabling pupils to make progress. A number of pupils belong to local libraries and read an increasingly wide range of fiction and non-fiction books.
- 78 The attainment of pupils in writing is above the standards expected nationally for pupils at the age of seven and at the end of Year 4. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when attainment matched the standards attained by pupils of a similar age nationally. Progress is good and all pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. The improvement of writing has been a priority in the school and has been successfully addressed. Rigorous monitoring is carried out to ensure that all pupils are working at the right level and individual targets are challenging. Pupils are encouraged to self-correct their own work and to plan, draft and redraft their work. There are planned opportunities for writing in all curriculum areas. Appropriate emphasis is placed on handwriting, phonics and spelling skills. Writing objectives are shared with pupils each lesson and an evaluation session takes place at the end. Pupils' increasing success in writing is evident in displays around the school. Work sampling and lesson observations during the inspection indicate an improvement in writing levels. Individual pupils' records track their improvement.
- 79 The attainment of pupils in speaking and listening is above the standards expected nationally for pupils at the age of seven and at the end of Year 4. This represents an

improvement since the last inspection when attainment matched the standards expected nationally for pupils of this age. Pupils are friendly and courteous and converse well with adults in the classroom, corridors, dining room and playground. In the shared reading sessions, pupils listen well. They respond well to questions and discussions. There are carefully planned opportunities to promote speaking and listening skills across the curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to express their ideas and explain their views.

- 80 The strategies for teaching literacy are good. Planning is in line with the National Literacy Strategy and the structure of the literacy hour is proving beneficial in raising standards. The school has bought very good resources and this has also helped teachers to improve pupils' literacy skills. In the best lessons, there is a strong emphasis on the use of subject-specific vocabulary, thus extending pupils' subject knowledge and general vocabulary. Lists of subject-related vocabulary are displayed in classrooms and reference is regularly made to them. Writing accounts of science investigations and evaluation of projects in design and technology support the development of pupils' literacy skills.
- 81 During the inspection, pupils in Year 1 made progress in their identification of the beginning, middle and end sounds in words, and in comparing and contrasting story language in different formats. Pupils in Year 2 read 'The Emperor and the Nightingale', a story set in China and compared it with a story set in Russia that they had recently studied. They wrote a letter to the Emperor and also developed their ability to write more interesting settings to stories. Pupils in Year 3 made progress in writing interesting opening paragraphs to stories, setting the scene, introducing the characters and engaging the reader's interest. Year 4 pupils worked collaboratively, in pairs, to write a story with a particular audience in mind, that is, children in the reception class. They are knowledgeable about the particular features of texts that target specific audiences, in this case, younger children. After reading together, 'Mr Creep the Crook' by Allan Ahlberg, they brainstormed ideas and used a planning frame to write a story, using short sentences, simple language and repeated phrases. Their stories will be put together in a book for the reception class and Year 4 pupils will read the stories to the children.
- 82 The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. It was good in four lessons observed and very good in one lesson. Teaching is characterised by detailed planning which sets clear objectives that are understood by pupils and are reviewed at the end of the lesson. As a result, pupils are very interested and work with concentration and independence. Teachers have very high expectations. They encourage independent learning, and pupils apply a very high level of intellectual and creative effort to their work. Teachers show very good subject knowledge and understanding and teach phonics, handwriting, spelling and other basic skills well. Pupils' acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding is good, as a result. Very good class management and relationships lead to very good behaviour, which, in turn, promotes good learning. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well, as a result of very good provision. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and learning support assistants play a valuable role in working with groups of pupils during the literacy hour. Time and resources are used well and pupils' productivity and pace of working are good. The quality and use of assessment by teachers, together with self-evaluation by pupils, is instrumental to pupil progress. Most pupils have a very good knowledge of their own learning. Teaching methods are effective in promoting learning. Marking is good and teachers regularly make evaluative comments that help pupils to know how to make further progress. Regular homework contributes to the extension and consolidation of pupils' learning.

- 83 The quality and range of learning opportunities are good. An enriched curriculum is in place. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The curriculum is enriched by annual book weeks and visits by authors and poets. All children participate in annual school productions. Pupils' work is monitored at regular intervals and samples of work are moderated. Opportunities are provided for pupils to consider moral issues in relation to conservation of the environment. Their social development is enhanced through class groupings and discussions, and through paired reading of older and younger pupils. Information and communication is sometimes used in literacy lessons for word processing and research, but its use is under-developed.
- 84 Leadership and management of the subject are very good and ensure clear educational direction. The subject leader has a good overview of teaching and learning, teachers' planning and pupils' work. Resources are very good. They are used well and are important factors in pupils' good learning. The accommodation, including the library, is good. There is a good match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum. Appropriate action is taken to meet the school's targets. There is a shared commitment to improvement and the capacity to succeed is very good.

## **MATHEMATICS**

- 85 Standards seen in mathematics were above average in Year 2 and Year 4. The present Year 3 includes more pupils of higher ability than the present Years 2 and 4 and their performance in the 2001 National Curriculum tests was well above average. There has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection when pupils' attainment was judged to be in line with national expectations.
- 86 Pupils enter Year 1 having made good progress in the reception class. They build well on this start, continuing to make good progress across the mathematics curriculum. Many become confident about writing numerals to 20 and joining numbered dots in the correct order, all at least get better at writing the correct numeral after counting the spots on a domino. Most correctly perform simple additions based on pictures of objects and draw the coins that make a given sum of money. Skills in recording measurement in non-standard units such as cubes improve as does the recognition and naming of common shapes such as the circle, triangle and square. The teacher sets tasks at different levels of difficulty and this helps the progress of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. For example, pupils were asked to identify coins totalling 20p or 10p or 5p according to their current level of understanding.
- 87 Pupils in Year 2 make good progress in their number work, many correctly ordering 52, 14, 1215, 25 and 261. Higher attaining pupils show good understanding when they split to *5 and a bit* when adding 6 or 7 or 8. Most pupils correctly add on 22 repeatedly until the answer exceeds 100, at which point they show some confusion. Slower pupils correctly add on 5 or 10. All pupils have completed several worksheets on recognising and naming 2D and 3D shapes; most of the work is correct. Recent work on measurement in centimetres of pictures and drawings is largely accurate. A graph showing favourite transport has been completed correctly by most pupils apart from uneven spacing of numbers on the vertical axis. Pupils are well on track to achieve overall above average results in this year's National Curriculum tests.

- 88 Pupils in Year 3 achieved above average results in their Year 2 tests and have built successfully on this. Being taught numeracy in half classes by two experienced teachers helps their progress. Work in exercise books and on work sheets shows development of understanding as well as skills. For example, more able pupils work out  $\frac{1}{2}$  of 82 as  $\frac{1}{2}$  of 80 +  $\frac{1}{2}$  of 2 and understand how multiplications can be represented by areas of rectangles. Pupils of average and above average ability have developed their knowledge and understanding of shapes and the associated vocabulary of *sides, vertices, right angles, symmetrical*, through investigation-based work. This was of good quality but this aspect of mathematical learning is not well represented in the curriculum. Pupils of lower ability benefited from their teacher's use of practical apparatus to help them learn how to add 'near doubles' and to tackle real-life problems involving multiplying by two or by three.
- 89 Pupils in Year 4 benefit from their teacher's very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject; they are making good gains in their understanding of what they are learning. For example, they offer several different ways of identifying where 500g would be along a stick representing 1kg and later explain how they worked out  $500\text{g} + \frac{1}{4}\text{kg}$ . They are comfortable with the relationship between different units of mass, having been led to build well on their experience of metric units of length. Most pupils are confident in writing 123 cm as 1m 23cm. When working collaboratively against the clock they are accurate in mentally doubling and halving. Earlier written work shows that pupils of all abilities have improved their numerical skills and have been helped to develop computation strategies, including visualising a number line. Higher attaining pupils correctly calculate  $479/10 = 47.9$ . There are some good examples of marking by the teacher that is directed at both encouraging and correcting. This is good and promotes improvement through increased understanding.
- 90 Pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons, responding well to the challenge of mental arithmetic and being required to explain their methods. Teachers promote confidence well through questions and tasks that are matched to pupils' differing learning needs. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory with good features. Numerical skills are successfully used and developed in other areas of the curriculum, for example geography, science and design and technology. The co-ordinator is well qualified and provides good leadership and support to colleagues. She has rightly identified two areas for further development. One is to build more work of an investigative nature into the teaching and the second is to use more fully the pupils' developing skills in information and communication technology to support and extend their mathematical learning.

## SCIENCE

- 91 Pupils in Year 2 and Year 4 attain standards that are above those expected for their ages. In 2001, teachers identified the standards of the seven-year-olds as in line with the national average in terms of the proportion of pupils achieving the national standard of level 2. However, the proportion achieving the higher than expected level 3 was above the national average. Pupils have a particularly sure grasp of scientific investigation, an area that was identified as a weakness at the time of the last inspection. The co-ordinator has been extremely effective in leading the improvement through demonstration, working alongside other teachers and providing good advice and support. There is now a very good development of both experimental skills and of recording skills throughout the school. The quality of the teaching of science is good and provides well-planned opportunities for the development and practice of the skills

of literacy and numeracy. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are fully included in all learning activities and make good progress.

- 92 Pupils enter Year 1 having been encouraged to enquire and investigate in the reception class. In a well-prepared and presented lesson, pupils in Year 1 explored how they could move certain objects without touching them. This work built on an earlier investigation into trying to move a boat using a drinking straw, squeeze bottle, narrow and wide tubes. Because of the teacher's clear explanations and task setting, pupils confidently experimented and talked animatedly about what they were doing.
- 93 The teacher circulated well, stimulating discussion and further challenge. For example, some pupils realised that a cylinder moved more easily on its round face than a flat one while others recognised that the nature of the contact surface might make a difference. The lesson promoted good development of the skills of scientific enquiry.
- 94 Examination of Year 2 pupils' records of work carried out before the inspection reveals good progress in developing practical and recording skills. There is also good progress in gaining scientific knowledge, for example about variations among plants and animals and about dissolving and evaporating. During the inspection, pupils made good progress in their understanding of electrical circuits and solved the problem of how to make a switch using simple materials. The teacher's preparation and organisation promoted good learning and she carefully checked for understanding of key points, for example the importance of the foil in the cardboard-based switch.
- 95 Pupils in Year 3 were treated to an imaginative modelling of rock formation when their teacher used a range of ingredients to make a 'no-bake' rock cake. By the end of the lesson pupils saw very clearly that they could gain some information about a rock from its surface but even more if they could slice through it. Pupils developed a good list of characteristics to look for when examining rocks and use vocabulary such as *particle size, smoothness, weight, conglomerate, sedimentary* correctly. They were led to this by the teacher's own very good use of scientific language and her modelling on the whiteboard of how recording was to be done. The improvement of pupils' observational skills was very effectively promoted by this lesson, as was their knowledge of rock formation.
- 96 Pupils in Year 4 show good understanding of friction as a force and of different levels of friction. They know the characteristics of a fair test, showing this when exploring water resistance with pieces of plasticene of the same weight. In the lesson on friction, the teacher used questions particularly well to challenge pupils to explain and refine their understanding, for example of when each of *high* and *low* friction would be useful. Through good organisation and detailed knowledge of each pupil's learning needs, teachers enabled all pupils to be fully included in these practical lessons and to make good progress.
- 97 Science is co-ordinated very well by the deputy headteacher, who has ensured that there is good support for colleagues through the scheme of work, good quality and well-organised resources and her own enthusiasm and expertise. Improvements in the investigative and independent learning aspects of science have benefited the quality of pupils' learning in other areas of the curriculum.

## ART AND DESIGN

- 98 During the inspection, one art lesson was observed. Further evidence was obtained from an examination of pupils' work, the policy and scheme of work, long-term, medium-term and short-term plans, resources, photographic evidence, current displays and a discussion with the teacher with responsibility for art.
- 99 The attainment of pupils in art and design, by the age of seven, is above expectations for pupils of their age. This reflects the importance that the school places on good standards in art and display. By the age of seven, pupils use a variety of materials and processes to communicate what they see, think and feel. During the inspection, pupils in Year 1 used a limited viewfinder, which they had made in design and technology, to make a simple observational sketch. Their sketches will be compared with views that they take with a digital camera, so that they will be able to assess their success and identify areas for improvement. Through self-portraits, they communicate ideas about themselves and record events in their own lives using different media, including photography and collage. They explore line, shape, colour and texture in natural forms as a basis for textile design. Pupils in Year 2 develop an understanding of shape, form and texture and qualities of materials. They explore shape and patterns in buildings, prints and rubbings and produce relief sculptures. They investigate the qualities and varieties of natural and artificial materials, their properties, colours and textures.
- 100 The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 4 is above the standards expected nationally for pupils of this age. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when attainment matched the standards attained by pupils of a similar age nationally. An appropriate amount of time is given to art and there are strong links with design and technology. All pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well. Pupils in Year 3 extend their compositional skills when making portraits. They investigate patterns in different cultures and experiment with stencilling and print making techniques, using symmetry, rotation and reflection and a stippling technique to create a design on paper. They explore shape, form, colour and patterns in public buildings and spaces in order to make sculptures. Year 4 pupils make observational drawings and a collage linked to their studies of the Vikings and Sri Lanka. They use water colours, chalk and charcoal, and mix and blend them in the production of weather pictures. They do appliqué work linked to the Tudors. In conjunction with their studies of the Second World War, they use a range of techniques and media in their environmental pictures. In all classes, attention is given to the work of great artists. There is photographic evidence of work based on the work on Van Gogh, Claude Monet, Paul Klee and William Morris.
- 101 Teaching and learning were good in the lesson observed. Evidence shows that they are good in all classes and are characterised by an emphasis on skills, attention to detail, and the promotion of close observational skills. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when teaching and learning were satisfactory. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are very good and, as a result, pupils' acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding are good. Teachers' expectations are very high. Lesson time is used effectively to ensure that pupils explore and develop ideas and pupils demonstrate a very high level of interest, concentration and independence. Originality and creativity are encouraged. Good support by learning support assistants and parents is an important element in ensuring the good progress of all pupils. The management of pupils is very good and pupils' very good behaviour and relationships promote learning. Teachers' planning is good. They engage pupils' interest, with the result that pupils apply a high level of creative effort to their work. Teaching methods are effective and enable all pupils to achieve well. The tasks set



are well matched to pupils' learning needs. This leads to good progress for all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Most pupils have a very good knowledge of their own learning. Time and resources are used well and pupils' productivity and pace of working is good. The quality and use of ongoing assessment are good.

- 102 The quality and range of learning opportunities are good. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have the opportunity to attend an after school art club. They are taught by a local artist and have produced some very good chalk and charcoal pictures and some close observational drawings of fruit. There are strong links through collages to other areas of the curriculum, such as the Vikings, Sri Lanka, the island of Struay and the Tudors.
- 103 The subject is well led by an experienced teacher with responsibility for art. Her leadership is good. She has an overview of teachers' planning and pupils' work. She has not had the opportunity to monitor teaching and learning in the classroom. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are not yet formalised. At present, pupils' skills in the use of information and communication technology are not fully utilised in art and design. Resources are good and are used well.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

- 104 The attainment of pupils by the age of seven and by the age of nine is above national expectations. This is an improvement compared with the situation at the time of the last inspection when pupils' designing skills were unsatisfactory. The leadership of the co-ordinator has been crucial to the improvement. She has introduced design folders that the pupils build up as they move through the school and has provided very good support through the scheme of work and the provision and organisation of good resources.
- 105 The subject has a secure place in teachers' planning, time allocation is sufficient and the overall quality of teaching is good. The teaching of design and technology provides well-planned opportunities for the development and practice of the skills of literacy and numeracy. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are fully included in all learning activities and make good progress. Pupils' developing skills in information and communication technology are used well in promoting learning in design and technology.
- 106 Pupils in Year 1 build well on the good start that they receive in the Foundation Stage. They talk with understanding about designing and making their string puppets and musical instruments. Their skills across a range of materials have been developed well through a number of well-chosen projects, including sewing Christmas stockings and making a picture with a moving part where they cut wood and stuck it in order to make a frame. They recalled clearly how they had used their computer skills in creating the border for a pop-up Christmas card and said how they could improve some of the articles they had made.
- 107 In a well-planned and taught lesson, pupils in Year 2 made good progress in building the body of their vehicles. They have been taught to use saws and other tools correctly and explained clearly how they will attach the body to the chassis. High standards of construction were encouraged and pupils worked hard with the result that all completed their task successfully.
- 108 Pupils in Year 3 enjoyed the challenge of learning how to use paper to create a structure strong enough to support a plastic bucket. The lesson was planned and

taught well to build on earlier learning that had been based on looking at the importance of triangulation (camera tripod) and a wide base (mug tree) in creating strong and stable structures. Pupils made good progress in their problem solving and making skills. In earlier work they showed good understanding of the function of each part of the picture frame that they made.

- 109 In Year 4, pupils' evaluations of the purses and money holders that they have made show good understanding of the design process and the finished articles are to a good, sometimes very good, standard. Descriptions of the intended use of fabric paints and tie dying to decorate the purse material were particularly detailed and well written.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

- 110 During the inspection, three geography lessons were observed. Further evidence was obtained from an examination of pupils' work, the policy and scheme of work, long-term, medium-term and short-term plans, resources, photographic evidence, current displays and a discussion with the teacher with responsibility for geography.
- 111 This evidence indicates that the attainment of pupils at the age of seven is above the standards expected nationally of pupils of this age. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when standards matched those attained by pupils of a similar age nationally. This improvement is due to the fact that teaching has improved and the support of a good scheme of work based on national guidance. All pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when progress was satisfactory. Pupils in Year 1 have a good knowledge of the school environment, the immediate locality and the natural world. They make plans and maps of the school and their route to school, drawing on knowledge gained from walks around the school, the school grounds and the local area. During the inspection, they planned routes between two places and learnt that routes may be direct or indirect. They investigate local issues regarding safety and plan how to make the environment safer.
- 112 Pupils in Year 2 learn about the island of Struay in Scotland and compare life on Struay with life in Wilstead. During the inspection, they identified the physical and human features on the island of Struay and constructed a map to record them. They are beginning to recognise how places differ from each other. They study the main features of seaside resorts and how seaside resorts have changed over time. Local weather studies lead to comparisons with weather in other parts of the world. The travels of Barnaby Bear continue to engage pupils' interest, as they take turns to take him on holiday and send postcards of his 'experiences'. This practice increases pupils' awareness that the world extends beyond their own locality.
- 113 The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 4 is above the standards expected nationally for pupils of this age. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when attainment matched the standards attained by pupils of a similar age nationally. An appropriate amount of time is devoted to geography and there is good emphasis on geographical skills. All pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well. Pupils in Year 3 have a good knowledge of place names associated with the early settlers in Britain. They continue to explore the local area and make suggestions on how it can be improved. Year 4 pupils carry out a local area study and discuss environmental issues. Life in Sri-Lanka is compared with life in Wilstead. During the inspection, pupils looked at weather conditions in the United Kingdom and around the world and studied the effect

on human activity. They asked and responded to geographical questions, using geographical vocabulary.

- 114 Teaching was good in all three lessons. Evidence shows that it is good throughout the school, leading to good learning. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when it was satisfactory. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are very good. Pupils' acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding is good, as a result. Geographical skills, including map work and fieldwork are taught well. Teachers' expectations are very high and pupils demonstrate a very high level of interest, concentration and independence. The management of pupils is very good and pupils' very good behaviour and relationships promote learning. Teachers' planning is good. They engage pupils' interest, with the result that pupils apply a very good level of intellectual and creative effort to their work. Teaching methods are effective and enable all pupils to achieve well. Work is differentiated to meet the abilities of all pupils. This leads to good progress for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs. Most pupils have a very good knowledge of their own learning. Time and resources are used well and pupils' productivity and pace of working is good. The quality and use of ongoing assessment are good. Literacy skills are supported through discussion, research, writing and word processing. Marking is generally good and helps pupils to know what they have achieved and how they can progress further.
- 115 The quality and range of learning opportunities are good. There are good opportunities for fieldwork and an emphasis on geographical enquiry skills. Provision for pupils with special needs is very good. Opportunities are provided for pupils to consider moral issues, such as conservation of the environment. They gain an understanding of other cultures, through their study of Sri Lanka and weather around the world. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is good. Pupils explore the local area and talk to local people. They learn about people who play an important role in the community.
- 116 The co-coordinator provides good leadership. She has an overview of teachers' planning and pupils' work and this contributes to raising standards; she does not directly monitor teaching and learning in the classroom. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are not yet formalised. Information and communication technology is not sufficiently used to support and extend learning in geography. Resources are good and are used well.

## **HISTORY**

- 117 During the inspection, two history lessons were observed. Further evidence was obtained from an examination of pupils' work, the policy and scheme of work, long-term, medium-term and short-term plans, resources, photographic evidence, current displays and a discussion with the teacher with responsibility for history.
- 118 This evidence indicates that the attainment of pupils at the age of seven is above the standards expected nationally of pupils of this age. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when standards matched those attained by pupils of a similar age nationally. This improvement is due to the fact that teaching has improved. Progress is good and pupils achieve well. There is an appropriate emphasis on the development of research skills, a sense of chronology, significant events in the past and the influence of famous men and women. This was illustrated during the inspection by a lesson in Year 2. The emphasis was on historical enquiry skills, as pupils compared transport today, with transport in their grandparents' time.

Skilled questioning techniques were used to probe pupils' knowledge and understanding. Most pupils showed a good understanding of aspects of the past beyond living memory. They made links with mathematics as they compiled a block graph of how pupils in the class travel to school and compared it with how their parents and grandparents travelled to school. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, made good progress because the work was challenging for all ability groups.

- 119 The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 4 is above the standards expected nationally for pupils of this age. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when attainment matched the standards attained by pupils of a similar age nationally. An appropriate amount of time is devoted to history and there is good emphasis on historical enquiry skills. Pupils make good progress and achieve well. During the inspection, pupils in Year 3 researched the life of an Anglo-Saxon monk. They posed historical questions and found the answers. They demonstrated a good level of knowledge about other aspects of Anglo-Saxon life, particularly the archaeological discoveries at Sutton Hoo. Pupils are beginning to reason and to judge the period by the standards of the time and not the present day. The topic is well resourced and pupils have extended their knowledge by reading a range of books on Anglo-Saxon times, which are displayed in the classroom.
- 120 Teaching was good in both lessons. Evidence shows that teaching is good throughout the school, leading to good learning. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when it was 'satisfactory and often good'. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are very good, with the result that pupils' acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding is good. Teachers teach historical enquiry skills well. Their expectations are very high and pupils show a very high level of interest, concentration and independence. The management of pupils is very good and their very good behaviour and relationships promote good learning. Teachers' planning is good. They engage pupils' interest, with the result that pupils' apply a very good level of intellectual and creative effort to their work. Teaching methods effectively enable all pupils to achieve well. Work is usually appropriately challenging for all groups of pupils and leads to good progress for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs. Most pupils have a very good knowledge of their own learning. Time and resources are used well and pupils' productivity and pace of working is good. The quality and use of ongoing assessment are good. Teachers support the development of pupils' literacy skills through discussion, research and writing. Marking is good and helps pupils to know what they have achieved and how they can progress further.
- 121 The quality and range of learning opportunities is good. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Opportunities are provided for pupils to consider moral issues in relation to historical events, for example, the early invasions of Britain and the Second World War. Their social development is enhanced through discussions with adults about the recent past and through their work in groups and pairs. They gain an understanding of other cultures as they learn about the invaders and settlers of Britain. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is good. Pupils explore the local area, visit the Cecil Higgins Museum in Bedford and learn from visitors to the school.
- 122 The subject is well led by an experienced teacher with responsibility for history. She has an overview of teachers' planning and pupils' work, although she does not directly monitor teaching and learning in the classroom. Procedures for the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress are not yet formalised. At present, the opportunities

presented by information and communication technology are not fully utilised in history. Resources are good and are used well.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

- 123 At the time of the last inspection it was judged that pupils' attainment in information technology at seven and at nine was in line with national expectations. Since then, national expectations of pupils' attainment across the new information and communication technology curriculum have been raised. The school has responded very well to this challenge, improving resources and the skills of the staff. The standard of most of the work seen in lessons during the inspection, and of the completed work on display, was above what is expected of pupils of similar ages. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress as a result of well-planned lessons and good use of the computer suite.
- 124 Lessons in the computer suite were observed with three of the four year groups. Pupils in Year 1 built on earlier learning about importing a frame and a picture into a document when they accessed a word bank on Transport. The progress that they made was in terms of positioning the picture that they imported and typing in the appropriate caption. When questioned, pupils described clearly and correctly how they had created a coloured border for the Christmas cards that they made in design and technology. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are mostly confident computer users, having developed the skills of using a mouse to navigate through menus. They switch on computers, use programs, save work, close programs and switch off computers correctly. They display a good understanding of the uses of information and communication technology, including computers, in everyday life.
- 125 Pupils in Year 3 were taught in half classes, thereby making sure that they all had good access to a computer. Through the teacher's skilful questioning, pupils revised their knowledge of databases, using the vocabulary of *data*, *field* and *record* with understanding. Pupils then successfully navigated through menus to the Homes database and opened it. They were then effectively taught how to move beyond looking at a record to entering their own data. Progress was good as a result of the good planning and preparation of the teacher and her continuous supervision and direction of individuals. As well as developing their skills of data entry pupils also understood that data could be in the form of words or numbers or Yes/No choices.
- 126 In a very good, extended, lesson in Year 4, where all pupils had very good access to a computer, they made very good progress in their understanding and use of branching databases. Pupils already knew how to devise Yes/No questions to identify or classify an object and how to input data to make a tree diagram. The teacher made very good use of opportunities for supporting the development of literacy and numeracy skills through her choice of 2-dimensional shapes for the database and the focus on devising appropriate questions. Pupils of all levels of ability completed the task of creating the branching database through Yes/No questions and display it on the computer screen and print it out. Around three quarters of the class added pictures from a bank and a few added sounds as well. The combination of good resources in terms of computers and the program, the teacher's good subject knowledge and preparation and the allocation of sufficient time, made this a very successful piece of learning.
- 127 The overall quality of teaching is good; the lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and the headteacher, as co-ordinator, provides valuable technical back up in lessons as well as informed,

continuous curriculum support. The computer suite is a good resource that is used well. Teachers are developing skills in recognising which aspects of lessons are best taught in the classroom and which are best taught in the suite. The co-ordination of the subject and the good resources are making an essential contribution to the good standards already achieved in most aspects of the subject. The school recognises the need to use pupils' developing ICT skills more fully to support teaching and learning in the other areas of the curriculum.

## MUSIC

- 128 During the inspection, three music lessons were observed. Further evidence was obtained from an examination of the policy and scheme of work, long-term, medium-term and short-term plans, resources, photographic evidence, taped evidence and a discussion with the teacher with responsibility for music.
- 129 The attainment of pupils by the age of seven matches the standards attained by pupils of a similar age nationally. This maintains the position at the last inspection. Pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons, as at the last inspection. Achievement is satisfactory. By the age of seven, pupils are able to select and explore percussion instruments, use sounds to create musical effects and sustain a simple repeated rhythm. An awareness of pitch and pulse is developing and pupils recognise changes in dynamics. They learn to discriminate between high and low sounds and to create simple melodic patterns. Pupils make sounds of different duration on percussion instruments. In their performance, they demonstrate a developing understanding of dynamics and volume and an awareness of audience. During the inspection, pupils in Year 1 created simple melodic patterns and used changes in pitch to respond to the stimulus of the story of 'The Gingerbread Man'. Pupils lack confidence in communicating their musical ideas to others because they are not given enough opportunities to compose and perform. They listen to music from different times and places, for example, 'The Enigma Variations' by Elgar, in assembly.
- 130 The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 4 matches the standards attained by pupils of a similar age nationally. This maintains the position at the last inspection. Pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons as at the last inspection. Achievement is satisfactory. During the inspection, pupils in Year 3 identified musical effects that described the character of a song and developed their ability to sing in an expressive manner. The teacher read a Russian folk story, 'The Story of Baba Yaga'. Pupils listened to the recording of 'Baba Yaga' and sang the song. They worked in pairs to make scary sounds with body parts; some groups performed to the rest of the class. Pupils gained some insight into musical effects illustrating the character of the song and improved their listening and singing skills, but the planning of the lesson was too ambitious for the time allocated. The learning objectives were too global and did not clearly indicate what the pupils would learn in the lesson. Pupils in Year 4 listened to the music 'Mission Control' and attempted to recognise what sort of pulse the music had; they listened for different timbres and textures and produced a graphic score of the music, using drawn symbols to represent the sounds heard. The lesson led to satisfactory progress in listening skills, and the understanding of pulse and graphic scores. Again, the lesson was too ambitious for the time allocated.
- 131 Teaching was good in the lesson taken by the teacher with responsibility for music and satisfactory in the other two lessons. Overall, it is satisfactory. Teachers' knowledge and understanding is satisfactory, as is the teaching of basic skills. As a result, pupils' acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding are satisfactory. Teachers' expectations are high and pupils try hard to meet them. They apply a good

level of intellectual and creative effort to their work and show interest, concentration and independence. Their knowledge of their own learning is satisfactory. Teachers' planning is satisfactory. The teaching methods used enable all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to achieve satisfactorily. The management of pupils is very good and pupils' very good behaviour and relationships promote learning. Time and resources are used well, although the time allocated is insufficient. Pupils' productivity and pace of working are good. The quality and use of ongoing assessment are good.

- 132 The quality and range of learning opportunities is satisfactory. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The curriculum is enriched by additional activities, for example all pupils in Year 1 learn the ocarina. All pupils in Years 2 and 3 learn the recorder and pupils in Year 4 have the opportunity to continue to learn the recorder if they wish to do so. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are able to join the lunchtime choir. There are opportunities for pupils to learn the violin; lessons are paid for by parents. Skills learnt during these activities enrich the concerts, church services and school productions, such as 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat' and 'Holy Joe'. Listening to music from other countries enhances pupils' cultural development. Visiting music groups include percussion players and string quartets.
- 133 The co-ordinator has a good overview of teachers' planning but does not monitor teaching and learning in the classroom. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are not yet formalised. Information and communication technology is underused in music. Resources are adequate and are used well.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 134 The attainment of pupils by the age of seven and by the age of nine is in line with national expectations. This is similar to the judgement of the last inspection team. The focus of the curriculum during the inspection was on dance, games skills and gymnastics. Evidence of the quality of teaching and of pupils' attainment was obtained from three lesson observations, discussions with pupils and members of staff and from videos of physical education activities organised by the school. The curriculum is regularly enhanced by extra-curricular activities, a sports day in which everyone takes part, maypole dancing and competitions, for example in short tennis. All pupils have good opportunities to be involved in all that the school provides and they make sound, often good, progress in developing their skills in the different aspects of the physical education curriculum.
- 135 The quality of teaching is good and some aspects of pupils' attainment, for example in dance and games skills in Years 3 and 4, are of a good standard. Pupils in Year 3 made good progress in the moves of a Welsh folk dance and in their understanding of the technical language such as *phrase* and *half-phrase* associated with it. Pupils warmed up and down, clearly understanding the importance of stretching and breath control. The teacher had prepared well and communicated her own enthusiasm to the pupils who responded well to her praise and encouragement. Her teaching assistant provided good support and helped to make sure that all pupils could take a full part in the lesson. Pupils' overall level of attainment was good and they looked forward with eager anticipation to incorporating the *swing* and the *promenade* in the next lesson.
- 136 Bad weather prevented the planned Year 4 lesson on dribbling skills in football from being held out of doors. The teacher improvised to very good effect in the hall and pupils made good progress both in keeping the ball 'glued to their feet' and in using

the *wall pass*. Warm up and down were very thorough and pupils are learning the importance of these and of physical exercise generally.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 137 During the inspection, no religious education lessons were observed. Evidence was obtained from an examination of pupils' work, the policy and scheme of work, long-term, medium-term and short-term plans, resources, photographic evidence, current displays and a discussion with the teacher with responsibility for religious education.
- 138 This evidence indicates that the attainment of pupils at the age of seven, is above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus, representing an improvement since the last inspection when standards matched those of pupils of a similar age. This is due to improved teaching and the support of a new scheme of work. Religious education is an integral part of the life of the school. It reflects the school's all-inclusive policy and its aims and values. Pupils are aware that the religious traditions in the United Kingdom are mainly Christian. They have a good knowledge of the importance of Christmas and Easter in the lives of Christians and a developing knowledge of the Old Testament and Judaism. Pupils are taught about the major world religions, in addition to Christianity. They are encouraged to engage in enquiry and evaluation as they study special books, special places, special times, special people and new life. Work takes account of different levels of literacy and degree of maturity, with the result that all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well.
- 139 The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 4 is above the standards expected for pupils of this age. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when attainment matched the standards attained by pupils of a similar age. An appropriate amount of time is devoted to religious education. All pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well. Pupils in Year 3 make a thorough study of the life and times of Jesus and consider food and fasting, linking this with choices. Pupils in Year 4 study places of worship, Jewish family life and the importance of water. For example, they discuss why water is important to us all and why it is used in religious ceremonies. They learn about the baptism of John the Baptist and Jesus, the sacredness of the River Ganges in Hinduism and the Islamic ritual of 'wudu'. They compare the use of water in Christian baptism with the use of water in 'wudu'. They learn that, in Christianity, water symbolises purification and the washing away of sins whereas, in 'wudu', it symbolises preparation for worship and respect to God. Pupils think about recent floods in this country and begin to understand that water can give life and destroy. They empathise with people who have experienced the destructive side of water. Through celebrations of festivals, such as Christmas and Diwali, pupils are able to increase their knowledge and understanding of cultural and religious diversity, whilst affirming their own.
- 140 The analysis of teachers' planning and pupils' work show that the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are very good. Pupils' acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding is good, as a result. They gain an insight into the beliefs and values of others and they are encouraged to share their own religious experiences and to give explanations of related elements in their own experience. Teachers' expectations are very high and pupils demonstrate a very high level of interest, concentration and independence. The management of pupils is very good and pupils' very good behaviour and relationships promote learning. Teachers' planning is good. They engage pupils' interest, with the result that pupils apply a great deal of intellectual and creative effort to their work. Teaching methods



are good and enable all pupils to achieve well. The tasks set are matched well to the varying abilities of all pupils. This leads to good progress for all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Most pupils have a very good knowledge of their own learning. Time and resources are used well and pupils' productivity and pace of working is good. The quality and use of ongoing assessment are good. Literacy skills are developed through speaking and listening, research and writing. Marking is good and helps pupils to know what they have achieved and how they can make further progress.

- 141 The quality and range of learning opportunities are good. The local church is a resource for learning in the community. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Opportunities are provided for pupils to consider moral issues. They gain an insight into the beliefs and values of Christianity and other faiths.
- 142 The co-coordinator provides good subject leadership. She has an overview of teachers' planning and pupils' work, although she has not monitored teaching and learning in the classroom. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are not yet formalised. There is little use of information and communication technology to promote learning in religious education. Resources are adequate and are used well.