

INSPECTION REPORT

KEMPSTON RURAL LOWER SCHOOL

Kempston

LEA area: Bedford

Unique reference number: 109463

Headteacher: Mrs C Howell

Reporting inspector: Mr J White
17242

Dates of inspection: 7th – 9th May 2002

Inspection number: 243732

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 (Lower)
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Church End Kempston Bedford
Postcode:	MK43 8RH
Telephone number:	01234 854286
Fax number:	01234 854286
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr G Dix
Date of previous inspection:	15 th September 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17242	Jeff White	Registered inspector	Mathematics; geography; history; physical education; Foundation Stage; equal opportunities; English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements. How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
14178	Patricia Willman	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20911	Judy Dawson	Team inspector	English; music; religious education	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
21114	Malcolm Johnstone	Team inspector	Science; information and communication technology; art and design; design and technology; special educational needs	

The inspection contractor was:

SES
 132 Whitaker Road
 Derby
 DE23 6AP

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

With a roll of 91 (38 boys, 53 girls) the school is much smaller than other primary schools. The roll is larger during the summer term because there are three entries each year into the reception. At the time of the inspection there were 16 children in the reception year. Pupils are almost all white; five pupils are of minority ethnic background or mixed parentage. None is at an early stage of English acquisition. Eligibility for free school meals is below average but has increased over the last two years. The number of pupils with special educational needs has grown. Eighteen are on the special educational needs register, a figure below the national average. Two have statements. Assessments of children on entry to the school indicate a broad range of abilities but attainment in English is higher than what is typical for this age group. The headteacher teaches a class for two days a week and has been at the school for less than two years. Three of the current teachers are temporary.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is improving under the good leadership of the headteacher. Standards are good in English and art and design and satisfactory in all other subjects. Most pupils are making satisfactory progress overall, but progress is developing quickly in information and communication technology (ICT). The teaching is generally satisfactory but was often good during the inspection. Governors are becoming increasingly better informed about the work of the school and support the headteacher well. Partnership with parents is increasingly effective. Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes. Satisfactory value for money is provided.

What the school does well

- Pupils in Years 2 and 4 are achieving good standards in English and in art and design.
- Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are making rapid progress in ICT.
- The headteacher leads the school well and is well supported by staff and governors.
- Partnership with parents is very effective and they support the school well.
- Pupils are keen, enthusiastic and behave well.
- Good links are made between subjects.

What could be improved

- Pupils in Year 1 have not made enough progress, especially in English and mathematics.
- The most able pupils are not consistently given hard enough work.
- Pupils do not achieve as well in mathematics as they do in English.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in September 1997 and has improved satisfactorily since that time. Improvement has accelerated in the last two years. The current headteacher has acted quickly to address the last inspection report's key issues. Improvements have been made in the curriculum, assessment procedures, the information provided for parents, strategic planning, financial control, monitoring of the school's work and the role of governors. Standards in the work seen have risen in English throughout the school. Standards in ICT, geography and history were unsatisfactory in Year 4 at the time of the last inspection. They are now satisfactory. At least satisfactory standards have been maintained in other subjects. In the national tests over the last three years the school has not progressed as well as other schools with similar eligibility for free school meals. Given the current standards, and the increase in the number of pupils eligible for free meals, the signs are that the

school's progress is improving. Under the leadership of the headteacher and governors the school has the capacity to continue to improve, especially when the staffing situation becomes more stable.

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	A	C	B	D
Writing	A	C	C	E
Mathematics	D	D	D	E

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

The results show that, taking the three years 1999 to 2001 together, pupils' performance exceeded the national average for their age group. Pupils performed better in English than in mathematics. A combination of low year group numbers, pupil mobility and an increase in special educational needs has contributed to the overall fall in standards since 1999. However, over the period 1999 to 2001 pupils did not perform as well as those in schools with similar eligibility for free school meals. Also, Year 4 pupils' results in the non-statutory tests in 2001 showed that they had not progressed as well as they should have, even though they attained good standards overall. Standards in English in the current Year 2 are good overall and have improved in writing because pupils have been set individual targets. Standards in mathematics are satisfactory and are improving because the school's analysis of test results has identified areas for attention. Standards in most other subjects are satisfactory. In Year 4, standards are good in English, and satisfactory in mathematics, science and in most other subjects. Standards in art and design are good throughout the school. Most pupils make sound or better progress in all subjects but it is rapid in ICT in Years 3 and 4 because of some expert teaching. In all subjects, the most able pupils could achieve better and need to be challenged further. Pupils in Year 1 are not making enough progress because the work does not sufficiently build on what they already know, understand and can do. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. The very few pupils of ethnic minority background are achieving as well as their peers. Children in the reception year are making satisfactory progress overall and are on course to achieve the learning goals expected for when they enter Year 1. Many are likely to exceed most of the goals in personal, social and emotional development and in mathematical and creative development because the teaching is good in these areas of learning.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have positive attitudes and they are very enthusiastic.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils relate well to one another and enjoy taking on responsibilities.
Attendance	The attendance rate is well above average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

During the inspection, the teaching was good or better in about six out of ten lessons and was rarely unsatisfactory. There was more good teaching in Years 3 and 4 than elsewhere. However, when also taking account of pupils' progress the teaching is satisfactory overall. Pupils in Year 1 have not made enough progress and, throughout the school, the most able pupils are often not challenged enough. Teachers make good links between subjects and especially enable pupils to apply their numeracy and literacy skills. English and mathematics are taught competently. The good teaching has brisk pace and good questioning makes pupils think. Discipline and relationships are usually good. Teachers make good use of ICT throughout the curriculum and the quality of the skilled technician's support is excellent. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well. Personal, social and emotional development, and mathematical and creative development are taught well in the reception year. Pupils are generally keen and interested in their work, including the youngest.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is satisfactory and has improved in the last two years.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good and it is well managed.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision is good for the very few pupils with English as an additional language
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is good in all aspects of pupils' development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The day-to-day care of pupils is good.

The school works very well in partnership with parents. Pupils' personal development is monitored and supported well.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher leads the school well and is developing the senior teacher in her relatively new role. Management is good and the school runs smoothly.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities satisfactorily and are quickly becoming more actively involved in the life of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher and governors have developed sound procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance in the last two years.
The strategic use of resources	Strategic planning and use of resources are satisfactory.

Staffing, accommodation and resources are adequate overall. Although the premises are inspected regularly there is no formal system of risk assessments. The governors currently apply the principles of best value satisfactorily but are learning quickly.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children like school, are being helped to become mature and responsible and are expected to work hard. Behaviour in the school is good. The school works closely with parents and they are comfortable about approaching the school. The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The range of activities outside lessons is not interesting enough.

The inspection team endorses parents' positive views. In the inspectors' view the school, given its small size, provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. The school provides parents with information on what their children are learning and the expectations with regard to homework. However, a small number are unsure of the best way to help and would appreciate guidance from the school. The homework diaries and reading diaries are not currently used effectively as a channel for day-to-day informal communication for parents of those children who come to school by bus. This is particularly important for the parents of the youngest children.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- 1 Taking the three years 1999 to 2001 together, pupils' performance in reading, writing and mathematics in the national tests for pupils in Year 2 exceeded the national average. Although standards in relation to the average for all schools did not fall in 2001, a combination of small year group numbers, pupil mobility and a rise in the numbers of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) has meant that standards have not returned to the high levels achieved in 1999. The school acknowledges that progress over this period was not as good as it should have been and pupils' performance was below the average of schools with similar eligibility for free school meals. Although girls have attained higher standards than boys, boys have made better progress over time. Although, in 2001, in the non-statutory National Curriculum tests, Year 4 pupils achieved higher standards than the LEA average, they had made less progress over time than in other schools.
- 2 Overall standards in English are above average in Year 2 and Year 4. Standards have been maintained in reading but they have improved in writing since the last inspection. Writing standards are also better than in the last test results because the school has striven to improve pupils' writing, especially that of the boys, by, for example, setting individual targets. However, pupils in Year 1 have not made enough progress in writing because their work has not taken sufficient account of their prior attainment. Pupils in Year 4 have made good progress in writing from the age of seven. Pupils achieve well in speaking and listening and attain above average standards in Years 2 and 4. They are encouraged throughout the school to contribute to class discussions. Also, teachers and support staff ask well-focused questions and this enables pupils to apply their wide range of vocabulary well.
- 3 Standards in mathematics are average in Year 2 and Year 4 and are similar to the standards at the time of the last inspection. They are better than in the last test results for seven-year-olds because the school's analysis of the results helped identify where improvements were needed, for example, in subtraction. Pupils in Year 1 have not made enough progress and there is little of their work that is above an average standard. Pupils in other year groups achieve satisfactorily. Generally, pupils are not doing as well in mathematics as they are in English because they do not have individual targets. Standards in science in Year 2 and Year 4 are average and have been maintained since the last inspection. In general, pupils make satisfactory progress but in the good lessons seen they achieved well.
- 4 Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) have improved since the last inspection, especially by Year 4, where they were unsatisfactory last time. They are rising especially quickly in Years 3 and 4. Pupils are making good or better progress and standards in Years 2 and 4 now meet expectations for pupils' ages. Several factors have accounted for the improved standards and achievement including the leadership by the headteacher, the use of ICT across the curriculum and the use of specialist teaching from a technician with excellent expertise.
- 5 In history and geography, standards in Year 4 have improved since the last inspection because the school now uses national guidelines for both subjects. Standards were unsatisfactory last time and now they meet expectations. Art and design is taught well and consequently standards are above what is typical for pupils in Years 2 and 4.

Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. In all other subjects standards in the work seen were satisfactory and similar to those at the time of the last inspection. There was not enough evidence to evaluate overall standards in music and physical education.

- 6 Pupils who have SEN receive good support from teachers and teaching assistants. In all subjects, this support helps them to achieve well. They make good progress towards the specific subject targets that are set in their individual education plans (IEPs). This is because the targets develop learning in simple achievable steps. The oldest pupils are aware of their targets and when appropriate they have the opportunity to comment on them. This develops good knowledge of their own learning and has a good effect on their progress. Pupils who have a statement of SEN make good progress and one pupil is in the high ability group in literacy and numeracy. There is no significant variation in the achievements of boys and girls who have SEN.
- 7 There are very few pupils of ethnic minority background and those with English as an additional language (EAL) are orally fluent in English. They make similar progress to other pupils and achieved well in the lessons seen.
- 8 Throughout the school, the most able pupils often do not make the progress of which they are capable and in many aspects of their work they ought to be attaining higher standards. Not enough attention is paid to what pupils already know, understand and can do and this results in them not being challenged enough. This is especially the case in Year 1 where in English and mathematics very few pupils are attaining above average standards.
- 9 Children in the reception year make satisfactory progress overall and are on course to reach many of the expected outcomes for the beginning of Year 1. Many are likely to exceed most of the outcomes for personal, social and emotional development, mathematical development, and creative development, because the teaching is good in these areas. In general, but especially in literacy, there is scope to challenge the most able children further.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 10 Pupils' overall positive attitudes, values and personal development contribute significantly to the school's happy community and have been maintained well since the last inspection.
- 11 The reception children in the Year R/1 class arrive happily at school. They get on well with each other and with the adults who work with them. They also relate well to Year 1 pupils. They come to school regularly, mostly on time, settle confidently into the routines of the classroom and are eager to get started. They participate enthusiastically in the daily activities, respond well to instructions and listen carefully to each other and to adults. They tidy up carefully and sensibly and clearly understand how the school expects them to behave.
- 12 Pupils in Years 1 to 4 are well motivated and enthusiastic about most aspects of their time in school. The majority of parents who expressed an opinion prior to and during the inspection feel that their children like coming to school and this was confirmed by many of the pupils. They talk with interest about visits they have made. For example, a recent visit to a sculpture park inspired them to create their own sculptures for the school garden. Several have already come up with interesting ideas of what they plan

to make. Pupils are keen and inquisitive learners who are enthusiastic about their lessons and respond readily and often thoughtfully during discussions. This was particularly evident in a Year 3 religious education lesson when, because of the very good techniques used by the teacher, they were able to relate the experiences of an important religious leader to their own lives. Pupils are proud when their good work or behaviour is recognised and try hard to gain the approval of their teachers.

- 13 The vast majority of pupils are courteous and well behaved and this enables them to concentrate on their learning and to enjoy their playtimes. They settle quickly to their tasks in lessons and clearly understand how their teachers expect them to behave both in classrooms, around the school and in the playground. During playtimes pupils are lively and active, but there is no evidence of rough or deliberately aggressive behaviour, isolation or harassment. Pupils are trustworthy; they respect the school's resources and treat each other's property with care. There have been no exclusions.
- 14 Pupils' personal development is good and relationships are invariably good or better. These are important elements in the development of their personal and social skills. They enjoy working and playing together, sharing resources and taking turns with good humour. They respond especially well to opportunities to carry out research, for example, when using the computer, and apply themselves with enthusiasm using a variety of sources. In a Year 4 geography lesson, for example, pupils enjoyed the challenge of finding out about a village in India, showing mature attitudes and sensitivity. Pupils take part in fund raising for charity and learn about others less fortunate than themselves. They have a good understanding of the difference between right and wrong and are aware that sometimes their actions may make their friends unhappy. Classroom jobs are carried out sensibly and the oldest Year 3 and 4 pupils take their school responsibilities seriously. For example, they come in early to fill up the water bottles and, during the day, monitor the movement of pupils between the school and the Church Hall. When a new pupil joins the school another pupil is chosen to be a special friend to help the new classmate settle into the routines of the school. Pupils' ideas of how to make the school better were informally sought by the headteacher and were then incorporated into the school improvement plan where appropriate. Pupils are polite and friendly and express their views clearly.
- 15 Pupils with SEN have good attitudes to school and behave well. The sensitive support they receive and good relationships with teachers and support staff ensure that the pupils know that their efforts will be valued. This improves their confidence and develops their self-esteem well and is a key factor in their good achievements. They are fully involved in all aspects of school life.
- 16 As a consequence of the high level of parental support and pupils' own enjoyment of school life attendance is very good. It has been consistently well above the national average since the last inspection and there is no recorded unauthorised absence. Pupils generally arrive at school in good time and the school day starts promptly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 17 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In the lessons seen it was good or better in about six out of 10 lessons. Most lessons are well organised and have clear objectives for pupils' learning. In many lessons teachers make good links between subjects, for example, in geography and English, and science and mathematics. In a good art and design lesson, Year 3 pupils' work in the school garden contributed to their spiritual development. ICT is used well throughout the school as an integral part of pupils' work in other subjects and the skilled technician's teaching is having a major impact on the rise in standards. Good pace is a feature of the effective teaching especially when teachers are asking questions of whole classes. The best questions make pupils think and they know they are being challenged. For example, in a response to a teacher's question one pupil replied; "*That's a tricky question*".
- 18 Relationships between adults and pupils are usually good or better and help to ensure that pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to their learning. In most lessons pupils work diligently and are interested in their work. When the teaching is effective the quality of their learning is good and most achieve well. In the very effective teaching all pupils make good or better progress and work at a consistently rapid pace, for instance in the ICT work taught by the specialist technician. The quality of teacher's marking is too variable and often does not help pupils to improve their performance.
- 19 Pupils with SEN are taught effectively. All teachers and support staff know the personal targets in pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) and make effective reference to them in their lessons. In a literacy lesson for pupils in Year 3, for example, in order to add interest to their writing, the teacher worked intensively with five pupils on the use of adjectives. Other elements such as the development of pupils' knowledge of letter sounds and spelling patterns were introduced at appropriate times. These activities, whilst connected to the general lesson theme, also built successfully on pupils' individual targets. Support staff are well briefed about the objectives of the lessons and their role with the pupils. All staff promote pupils' confidence well by encouraging them to work in groups and to participate in whole class discussions. Support staff are proactive in their work with pupils and take any unforeseen opportunities to develop learning. They contribute well to the assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress in lessons. Good use is made of computers to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Good relevant homework is set in relation to their individual targets.
- 20 The very few pupils of ethnic minority background are taught as well as other pupils. Teachers encourage them to share their family and cultural experiences where appropriate.
- 21 Some of the teaching in Year 1 challenges all the pupils suitably but on other occasions expectations are not high enough. The average standards attained by these pupils suggest that, over time, the teaching has not stretched the most able pupils. In other classes there are opportunities when more could be expected of the most able, for example, in mental arithmetic sessions.
- 22 The overall teaching of the reception pupils is satisfactory but it is good in personal, social and emotional development and in mathematical and creative development. Better use of assessment findings is needed to ensure children make the best possible progress.

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

- 23 The curriculum is broad and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Religious education complies fully with the Bedfordshire Agreed Syllabus. Most schemes of work are based on the government's guidance for subjects. This ensures that pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills are developed throughout the school. Several subjects are taught in a two-year cycle of topics. The headteacher has maintained this system of curriculum planning so that, if year groups are ever taught together, work is not repeated. Although, currently, pupils in Years 2 to 4 are taught in single aged classes the number of pupils varies from year to year. The provision for history and geography, which was a weakness at the time of the last inspection, is now satisfactory. There has been a considerable improvement in the ICT curriculum and it is now based on government guidance for each year group. The teaching time for the two oldest classes was below the recommended time during the last inspection but is now above that of most schools. Pupils in Year 1 and in the reception year share the same classroom and in the mornings are usually taught separately for English and mathematics. At other times they undertake similar activities. Planning for this class has not taken sufficient account of what pupils know, understand and can do especially for Year 1 pupils. They have not therefore made the progress they should have. Arrangements for pupils personal, social and health education are developing well. The school has recently introduced commercial schemes of work to support this aspect of pupils' learning. There is a policy for sex education and teachers are receiving training on the teaching of drugs awareness and abuse.
- 24 All pupils have access to the curriculum. The very few pupils with EAL are fully included in all aspects of the curriculum and there are opportunities for all pupils to share their particular interests or experiences with their peers. For example, in an assembly a pupil volunteered information about his own religion while another was encouraged to share her experiences of learning the violin to illustrate overcoming dilemmas. The provision for pupils with SEN is good and has improved since the last inspection. A good policy has been developed and individual education plans (IEPs) now meet all statutory requirements. They are more tightly focused on what the pupils have to do in order to overcome any difficulties. The register of SEN is now kept up-to-date. Pupils receive their full curriculum entitlement, including those with a statement of SEN, and there are good arrangements for individual and small group support. In general, there is not enough challenging work for the most able pupils.
- 25 The planning for literacy and numeracy is satisfactory overall. Most teachers apply the recommended structure for the lessons effectively and both the English and the mathematics curriculum have a good balance between the different elements of each subject. A strength of the curriculum is that opportunities are planned for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. For example, Year 4 pupils extended their science work with descriptions of imaginary planets while Year 2 pupils wrote clear accounts of how they made their puppets. Year 3 pupils described Viking life and have made a class encyclopaedia about "Our Body". ICT is applied well throughout the curriculum, for instance computers are regularly used for research and to present and access information.
- 26 A good range of extra-curricular activities enhances pupils' learning opportunities and includes recorder and choir clubs. A thriving French club, run by a local teacher, provides some twenty pupils with a good preparation for their residential trip to France. There is a daily after school club. The school has good links with other schools in the area. Local headteachers meet every term to ensure that there is continuity in the curriculum as pupils move to the middle schools. The lead teacher

for the pupils' next school year visits Year 4 and there are regular events such as concerts and shared musical experiences between the schools. However, there are no links with the playgroups or nurseries that most pupils attend before joining the reception class. The community supports the school well and there are effective links that enhance the curriculum. Pupils visit the local library and the librarians have visited the school. Parent volunteers regularly support the work in the classroom. A member of the community talks to pupils about World War 2 experiences.

- 27 Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural has been maintained since the last inspection and remains good. Much of the curriculum for religious education and personal, social and health education involves pupils in discussion about beliefs, feelings and values. Seven-year-olds, for example, explore issues relating to self-esteem and feeling safe and secure and the attributes of a good friend. They have discussed the wonders of creation and learnt about some of the different beliefs associated with the way the world began. Older pupils use the school garden as a stimulus for their sketching. Throughout the school, pupils are given time to reflect and are encouraged to think before they speak. In a literacy lesson, nine-year-old pupils were encouraged to discuss jealousy and the dilemmas it creates. This was followed up in the next lesson, with a different teacher, as pupils explored how characters in their story dealt with their feelings and how important it is to communicate with each other. Pupils are expected to listen to each other's point of view. Teachers set a good example by listening carefully to pupils and valuing their contribution. Sometimes in assembly, a visual stimulus, such as candles or mime, is used to aid personal reflection. Pupils are exposed to the work of different artists and sculptors, music and literature and discuss the stimulus for the work and their reaction to it. The school's caring ethos and emphasis on self-esteem permeates throughout the school day.
- 28 This caring ethos extends to the provision for pupils' moral development. Teachers expect their pupils to care for and consider the feelings of others. Each class has a code of conduct and from these a whole school code has been developed. Discussions about right and wrong are regular features of the lessons. Nine-year-olds, for example had a lively discussion about Jonah... "*Should he have gone to Nineveh?*" "*Should the sailors have thrown him overboard?*" Throughout the school pupils explore the similarities in life's rules associated with their own and other faiths. The consistent attention to moral development has created a school where good behaviour and respect for others are the norm. The school's "dot" award system, used in all but the reception and Year 1 class, is an effective tool in promoting understanding of personal responsibility.
- 29 A strong sense of community pervades the life of the school. For example, lunchtime is a social occasion and Year 3 and 4 pupils, acting as monitors, guide others to the nearby Church Hall for lunch and assemblies. They also organise the music and set out chairs for the assemblies and take care of visitors very well. The teachers promote pupils' understanding of wider issues. In the oldest class, for instance, there is a news board that displays cuttings from newspapers, especially local issues. The school supports a range of charities, both locally and nationally. Harvest Festival contributions support the homeless in Bedford. Pupils are encouraged to work co-operatively in pairs and groups and to attend after-school clubs regularly. When homework is set, the expectations are that it will be completed. School trips, including the residential trip to France, provide opportunities for adults and pupils to socialise outside the school and home environments. The headteacher has suitable plans to provide more opportunities for pupils to undertake responsibilities and to voice their own ideas

- 30 Pupils have access to a good range of cultural experiences. Librarians visit the school and pupils visit the library to promote research skills. The school runs book weeks and poetry days as well as theme days, when, for example, a “Viking” visited the school. Pupils visit local museums and the outdoor centre. There is good provision for music both in school and beyond. Pupils play the recorder and there is a thriving choir. Some pupils learn to play the violin or the piano. The violinists are practising for a “Fiddle Fiesta”, an annual event in Bedford. The choir performs in the “Festival of Voices” at Wembley, joining schools from all over the country. Pupils learn about music and art from their own and other cultures. African artefacts, including carvings and sculpture, stimulate pupils’ interest alongside repeated patterns in the style of William Morris. The Year 3 and 4 pupils are studying the village of Chambakolli in India. Pupils are being satisfactorily prepared for life in a multi-cultural society. The small number of pupils and adults who are from ethnic minority groups are encouraged to share their knowledge with their peers and major non-Christian festivals are recognised. Pupils also visit different places of worship

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 31 Parents value highly the school’s good daily care of its pupils. The welfare of all is a fundamental priority for the school and this is supported well by the kindness and commitment of all who work with and care for them. The quality of the care has been maintained well since the last inspection
- 32 Children in the reception year are well cared for in a happy and welcoming atmosphere. There are good induction procedures for them and their parents and they settle quickly and happily into the routines of the classroom. Several parents commented on their delight at how happy their children are. There are good opportunities for parents to speak informally to staff about any small matters of concern at the beginning and end of each session. Staff know children well and consistently reinforce good work and behaviour with praise. As a result, children quickly learn what is expected of them and willingly accept the routines of the classroom.
- 33 Because of the common sense and commitment of staff, the protection and physical well being of pupils are safeguarded. A new health and safety policy has been developed and there are regular inspections of the school premises. However, there is currently no programme of formal risk assessment. Emergency evacuation is practised at least once a term and appropriate records are kept. Fire, electrical and other equipment is checked annually and the arrangements for first aid are good. Supervision during the mid-day break and at playtimes is good. As the child protection co-ordinator, the headteacher has a good awareness of the particular needs of pupils who may be at risk of harm, and receives very good support from external agencies. Pupils say that they like their teachers and would talk to them if they were unhappy about something. They are taught how to use resources safely and the importance of good hygiene and diet.
- 34 The formal systems for monitoring and supporting personal development are good. The high levels of attendance are achieved by involving parents and pupils in the home-school agreement and by ensuring that the school is an open and welcoming environment. Registration complies with legal requirements and the registers are checked regularly to identify any patterns of absence or emerging trends. The school receives good support from external agencies when any concerns arise over individual attendance or punctuality. Formal and informal procedures for recording and monitoring instances of unacceptable behaviour are good. Pupils are taught that

bullying is unacceptable and any particularly kind or thoughtful behaviour is rewarded. All members of the school community have been involved in drawing up the class and school rules and this encourages self-regulation. There are, however, no formal records of other areas of pupils' personal development. As a result, because of staff changes, the personal support and guidance are not as good as they could be.

- 35 Assessment and the use of assessment information to plan developments in the curriculum for English, mathematics and science are satisfactory and have developed well since the last inspection. At that time, there were no whole school systems to inform the development of the curriculum. Children are assessed a few weeks after their entry into the reception class and the findings are used satisfactorily to identify particular strengths and weaknesses in their learning. However, there is scope for them to be used much more thoroughly to help plan their subsequent work. In Years 1-4, the range of assessment systems in English, mathematics and science are sound and are used to help track significant features of pupils' progress. The results are passed to each new teacher so that they have better information about strengths and weaknesses in learning.
- 36 Pupils' performance in the statutory National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, and in the optional tests in Years 3 and 4, is analysed well and there are some good examples of action being taken as a result. For example, in reading, the analysis of pupils' performance has led to more focus on the development of inference and deduction skills. Personal targets for pupils have been introduced in writing and these are beginning to have a good effect on their progress. This good development has not been extended into other subjects, although there are plans to do this. Generally, however, the assessment information is not used thoroughly enough to help match work sufficiently accurately to the needs of the most able pupils. Consequently, in all subjects, their learning is often not as challenging as it should be.
- 37 Assessment in subjects other than English, mathematics and science is less well developed, although manageable new systems are being introduced in most. These are based securely on nationally recommended guidelines that outline what pupils should know, understand and be able to do at the end of each year. These have not been established for long enough to have had any significant effect on pupils' learning.
- 38 Assessment procedures for pupils who have SEN are good and records of their progress are well maintained. IEPs have achievable targets and are primarily focused on literacy and numeracy. These are regularly reviewed and amended in the light of pupils' progress. Where appropriate, they indicate when it is necessary for pupils to move up or down the various stages. Parents of pupils who have SEN are aware of the targets and relevant activities that they can help with at home are indicated in the plans.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 39 Parents who expressed a view prior to and during the inspection are very positive about all aspects of school life. They value the care the school takes of their children and the range of educational opportunities provided. Most parents are involved in the work of the school and the learning of their children and this has a positive impact on the day-to-day life of the school and on how well the pupils achieve. As a result, the school's partnership with parents is very effective. The school has remedied the criticisms in the last report concerning the information provided about pupils' progress and has maintained the strong and effective links with parents well.

- 40 The information provided for parents is good. The school brochure is practical and interesting, enlivened by pictures of the children taking part in different activities. The governors' annual report for parents contains useful information about the school and its achievements. The annual reports on pupils' progress are satisfactory. The text describes what the children have learned and, in many cases, identifies weaknesses. There is, however, insufficient emphasis on identifying explicit targets for improvement and it is difficult to gain a clear idea from the text of the level of achievement. There are two opportunities during the year for individual consultation with staff about their children's progress and a third is offered in the summer term for any parents to discuss their child's report. All parents attend these important meetings. Parents are kept up-to-date with activities taking place in school through regular letters both from the school and from the parents' association. Helpful details of what their children will be learning are also sent to parents.
- 41 Parents of pupils with SEN are kept well informed about their progress. They contribute to decisions about pupils' IEP targets and have the opportunity to be involved in reviews of pupils' progress. They have regular contact with the SEN co-ordinator and their children's teachers.
- 42 The school recognises the positive impact of parental involvement in raising pupils' attainment and improving school life. Several parents are actively involved within the school and their help and that of the parent governors is valued. Many parents volunteer to accompany the children on visits and they support the events organised by the very active parents' association well. The delightful school garden masterminded by parents is not only an attractive and pleasant area but also supports pupils' scientific and environmental studies. Parents comment that they feel welcome in the school and are confident that they will be informed in the event that their children do something special or if the staff have any concerns. All parents responded favourably to the recent survey of their views concerning the home targets, and they take their responsibilities as partners in their children's education very seriously. They help their children with their reading and other homework and ensure that they attend regularly and on time. Despite receiving information about what their children are learning and the school's expectations with regard to homework, a small number of parents are unsure of the best way to help and would appreciate guidance from the school. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have homework diaries and all pupils have reading diaries. Although these provide a form of communication, they are not currently used effectively to provide the parents of those children who come to school by bus with a channel for day-to-day informal communication. This is particularly important for the parents of the youngest children.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 43 The headteacher joined the school in September 2000. Her immediate priority, which was supported by the governors, was to respond to the issues in the last inspection report. These have subsequently been addressed well in the last two years and the headteacher is providing good leadership. She has steered the school through a fairly turbulent period. Several teachers have left in the last two years and others are due to leave at the end of the current term. A more stable staffing structure is expected from the beginning of the next autumn term. The headteacher carries a heavy load. Apart from teaching a class for two days a week she is also the SEN co-ordinator and also co-ordinates several subjects. Most parents who have expressed a view feel that the school is well led.
- 44 The governing body has become increasingly more involved in the life of the school in recent times and they fulfil their responsibilities satisfactorily. They are kept well

informed by the headteacher's reports, have undertaken training in their roles and now discuss the school's performance more regularly. Since the Spring of 2001 governors have been visiting the school on a termly basis and have designated responsibilities. Committees now have clear terms of reference. Although there are regular inspections of the school premises there is no formal programme of risk assessments and governors should address this as soon as possible.

- 45 The headteacher has been instrumental in instigating procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's work. This has involved lesson observations and scrutiny of planning and of pupils' work. Staff were given non-teaching time during the Autumn of 2001 to undertake some of these duties. Currently, because of the staffing situation, these arrangements are largely on hold. The headteacher has made good use of self-evaluation to audit the school's provision and practice. For example, in her first term she interviewed staff to identify their professional needs. The school improvement plan has clear targets for the school's development and success criteria and costs are identified. A suitable "strategic vision" plan looks ahead over the next five years. Annual improvement plans do not include an evaluation of how well the targets in the previous plan have been met nor are they informed by the results of any evaluation of the school's work.
- 46 The school is managed well. It runs smoothly and the administrative support is very good. The headteacher has ensured that the curriculum is suitably broad and is steadily updating curricular and general policies. The policy for performance management is clear and the arrangements are on course. Targets for performance management are appropriately identified in the school improvement plan.
- 47 Finances are controlled efficiently and the recommendations in the last auditor's report have been addressed. Following significant financial problems two years ago the governors have tightened up the financial control arrangements. The draft budget is submitted to the finance committee before approval and the finance committee meets monthly to monitor expenditure. Governors are becoming increasingly more aware of the need to have clear procedures for seeking best value. Recent help from the LEA in interpreting the school's results in National Curriculum tests has helped the governors to compare the school's performance with other schools.
- 48 The leadership and management of special educational needs are good and have improved since the last inspection. Both the headteacher and the governor with responsibility for SEN have attended recent training on the implementation of the new Code of Practice and are building recommendations into the school's policy. The governor visits the school regularly in order to review provision with the headteacher. Support staff have received good training and as a result, have greater understanding of how needs can be met. The headteacher keeps all staff and governors well briefed and manages record keeping efficiently. All specific grants designated to SEN are used for their designated purpose.
- 49 Staffing, accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall. There have been some problems with recruiting teachers. The Year R/1 class is currently being taught by two teachers who job share, covering a permanent teacher's leave of absence. This is not the best arrangement for such young pupils. Class assistant support is only provided in the mornings in this class and this inevitably affects what activities can be provided. Five pupils from Year 1 join the Year 2 class in the afternoons to help ease this situation. A graduate trainee teacher has been successfully trained in the school and now has newly qualified status. The building has disadvantages. There is no hall so the school uses the nearby church hall. The area that houses a

central collection of books is too small to be used as a library. One of the classrooms is small and lacks daylight and ventilation. The school's five-year plan includes improvements to the accommodation. The headteacher and staff make good use of the accommodation despite its disadvantages. Classrooms are well displayed with pupils' work and pictures and artefacts to interest the pupils. A key development in resources has been the improved provision for ICT, including the appointment of a skilled technician.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

50 The governors and headteacher should

- (1) Improve Year 1 pupils' progress and attainment by:
 - setting higher expectations of their performance;
 - ensuring that assessment findings are used to plan their work
 Paragraphs: 2, 3, 8, 21, 23, 58, 61, 66, 70, 89.
- (2) Make sure the most able pupils are achieving their capabilities by ensuring they are given more difficult work than their classmates.
Paragraphs: 8, 21, 22, 24, 35, 51, 53, 58, 60, 63, 67, 69, 70, 76.
- (3) Raise standards in mathematics by setting targets for individual pupils' performance.
Paragraphs: 3, 21, 67, 69, 70, 71.

OTHER ISSUES THAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE GOVERNORS FOR INCLUSION IN THE ACTION PLAN

- Ensure that teachers' marking helps pupils to improve their work.
Paragraphs: 18, 63, 76, 90.
- Ensure there are appropriate systems for formal risk assessments.
Paragraphs: 33, 44.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

29

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

15

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	1	16	10	1	0	0

Percentage	3.5	3.5	55.5	34	3.5	0	0
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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 more than three percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	83
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	18

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	3.8
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	6	12	18

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total			
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (81)	94 (76)	89 (81)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total			
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	94 (81)	83 (71)	83 (100)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year. Results for boys and girls are omitted where there are less than eleven pupils in either group.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	-
Black – African heritage	-
Black – other	-
Indian	2
Pakistani	-
Bangladeshi	-
Chinese	-
White	80
Any other minority ethnic group	1

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)	4.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.8
Average class size	22.8

Education support staff: YR – Y4

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	64

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1.6
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.6
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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	[]
	£
Total income	[]
Total expenditure	[]
Expenditure per pupil	[]
Balance brought forward from previous year	[]
Balance carried forward to next year	[]

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	83
Number of questionnaires returned	44

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	57	34	7	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	43	39	11	0	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	59	36	2	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	50	9	2	7
The teaching is good.	61	25	9	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	50	11	0	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	73	25	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	25	5	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	41	52	7	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	52	41	5	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	39	5	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	16	57	20	0	7

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

- 51 Children are admitted into the reception class at the beginning of the term in which they become five. They share a classroom with Year 1 pupils. Because there are more pupils in this class during the summer term, a class assistant is deployed to work with the reception children during the mornings. During the inspection there were 16 pupils of reception age. The class assistant is mainly responsible for teaching literacy and numeracy but the children join Year 1 pupils at other times and are taught by two part-time teachers covering for the permanent class teacher's leave of absence. The school was not able to appoint a full-time teacher and one of the teachers has little experience of teaching this age group. The reception children's attainment on entry represents the full ability range but is better than what is typical for this age group. Children are on course to achieve most, if not all, the expected learning goals for the beginning of Year 1 and in some aspects of their work they should exceed them. This picture is very similar to the findings of the last inspection. Assessment is under-used to help plan children's work and consequently some of the most able children are not achieving as well as they could do.

Personal, social and emotional development

- 52 Children are making good progress in this area of learning and many are already exceeding the early learning goals because the teaching is good. They behave well, listen carefully to adults and each other and are keen to work. They respond well to working with each other, for example, in role-play in the "Travel Agents", but also to opportunities to work independently when painting a picture or using constructional equipment. Children tidy away their work and resources sensibly and when they have the opportunity occupy themselves well when making their own choice of activity. The oldest children have grown in confidence and contribute maturely to discussions. In all but one of the lessons seen the adults' quiet and reassuring manner helped children, especially those who joined the class at the beginning of term, feel comfortable and well cared for

Communication, language and literacy

- 53 Children enter the school with mainly above average skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Teaching is satisfactory and children make satisfactory progress overall. However, some of the most able children under achieve because not enough account has been taken of what they already know and can do. The class assistant is growing in confidence and uses the teachers' planning for literacy suitably. She provides good opportunity for children to use and develop their oral skills, for example, at the beginning of literacy lessons when sharing a "Big Book". Good links are made with reading, for instance, when children are asked to notice words or pictures that begin with a particular letter sound. Children respond well to the opportunities to talk about their work, especially at the end of lessons, for instance when talking about their number work. Many talk clearly and use a good range of vocabulary. Literacy lessons include regular opportunities for children to practise and learn the sounds of letters and they have a keen interest in books. They listen carefully to stories and several read simple words accurately. They are aware that books have titles and authors. Handwriting is practised regularly but sometimes this goes on for too long and children need more opportunities to develop writing for different purposes.

Mathematical development

- 54 Children enter the school with broadly average attainment in number. Because of good teaching they are making good progress. Many children will exceed the expected outcomes by the time they enter Year 1. In a good lesson they counted backwards and forwards accurately to 10 and beyond. Most recognised written numbers and several named large ones, such as 86. They quickly grasped how to add on “one more” and several were beginning to add on “two more” accurately. Children responded confidently to the class assistant's calm and methodical approach. Activities were well organised and helped children to re-inforce their learning of number. At the end of the lesson the class assistant made good use of a counting rhyme and also gave children the opportunity to talk about their work. Children use the language of shape generally accurately and are beginning to name common shapes, for example, in their work on “houses”, as part of their knowledge and understanding of the world.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

- 55 Children make satisfactory progress in this area of learning and the teaching is sound overall. Children have planted seeds and observed their growth under different conditions. In a good lesson, they showed good designing and making skills as they made model houses. They used scissors, paper and glue carefully and, when painting, used brushes accurately. They carefully held two pieces of card together until they had dried. In these activities they were well supported by a parent. Work on houses around the world and in the past and present has contributed satisfactorily to children's sense of time and place. However, in an unsatisfactory lesson they would have made better progress in their understanding of old and new if they had been given more opportunity to talk about the work. Good progress is being made in ICT because of the support by a skilled technician. Children are growing in confidence in the use of the “Dazzle” program, for example, when drawing pictures related to the “Big Book”. They used the mouse confidently when “dressing a teddy bear”.

Physical development

- 56 No physical education lesson was observed. However, children undertake regular physical activity in the nearby church hall as well as outside. In the work seen, they used equipment and materials safely and with good control, for example, in their designing, making and painting. Adults suitably encourage children to work carefully.

Creative development

- 57 Children have a range of opportunities to paint, print, construct collages and make models. They are making satisfactory or better progress in this area of learning and the teaching is good overall. Some careful brush work and bold use of colour are evident in children's paintings, such as in their self portraits and in their pictures of farm animals. Their drawings of plants show they have looked closely. No use of music was observed during the inspection but it features in the curricular plans. Children respond well to the opportunity for creative role-play in the “Travel Agents” and enter fully into role when deciding on which holidays to take. However, because the children share a room with Year 1 pupils there is insufficient space for the staff to promote more varied role-play activities.

ENGLISH

- 58 Overall standards in English are above average in Years 2 and 4. Standards in reading have been maintained since the last inspection but standards in writing have risen. Writing has also improved since the national tests for Year 2 pupils in 2001 because the school has acted to improve the quality of pupils' writing throughout the school. Taking the three years 1999 to 2001 together, pupils' performance in the national tests for Year 2 pupils exceeded the national average. Pupils' achievements have tended to be lower than those of pupils from similar schools but year-on-year comparisons need to be treated with caution because of the small numbers in successive year groups. Most children enter the school with achievement levels that are above those of the majority of children nationally. Pupils do not make enough progress in writing in Year 1 but many of the Year 4 have made good progress since Year 2. There have been significant differences in the achievements of boys and girls. The school identified this and was successful in improving boys' performance in the 2001 national tests. The most able pupils throughout the school generally do not achieve as well as they could do but pupils with average or below average abilities do well.
- 59 Pupils throughout the school are confident and articulate speakers and good listeners. This includes the very few pupils for whom English is an additional language who achieve as well as their peers in all aspects of English. From the time they start school all pupils are encouraged to contribute to class discussions. Teachers and support staff are good at asking questions that require explanations or opinions. Some of the discussions are mature and make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. The oldest pupils, for example, explored the impact of jealousy on relationships and how to solve the dilemma produced by the outcomes. Later in the week, another teacher developed this as pupils discussed the importance of communication in resolving issues. Pupils throughout the school have a wide vocabulary and apply this well to their speech, reading and writing. Year 2 pupils, for example, defined both meanings of the word "crane" as they make a comprehensive list of words beginning with "cr". In this class, and throughout the school, pupils listen attentively to each other and to their teachers. They are active listeners, often making relevant comments. Teachers encourage "thinking partners". Year 3 pupils learnt from each other as they discussed the meaning of challenging vocabulary with their partners, including defining "inched" and "up wind". Attentive listening as the text of a passage from "Fantastic Mr Fox" unfolded enabled the pupils to include words from the text in their discussions and writing. Teachers are careful to include pupils with SEN by asking direct questions matched to their needs.
- 60 Most pupils enjoy books and reading and enter school with a well-established appreciation of stories and books. Pupils of similar abilities read together and take their group reading book home to read. Pupils are taught how to recognise the sounds that letters make and to decode words throughout the infant classes. By the time they are seven the majority of pupils are accurate and confident readers. They understand the difference between fiction and non-fiction and understand how to find and retrieve information from books. They are beginning to express likes and dislikes in reading material. Pupils with SEN make good progress throughout the school. The classrooms are rich in all types of books although the school library is cramped with no space for pupils to sit and read or to undertake research. Older pupils have appropriate library skills. They explain the categorisation system and use the index and contents, thesaurus and glossary with ease. From the age of seven, pupils skim and scan text to extract the main points. However, the system of using group reading books for independent reading, while raising the attainment of the average and below average abilities, does not provide sufficient challenge for the more able readers.

- 61 The school has worked hard to raise the achievements in writing of pupils from Year 1. Opportunities to write in a range of different styles and forms within the whole curriculum have especially helped standards to rise. ICT is also being used increasingly. In science, religious education, history and geography, pupils write accounts, descriptions and play scripts. They list, summarise and “bullet point” the main features of their writing before starting their final work. Much of the writing shows a mature understanding and empathy with characters. The oldest pupils have written war diaries, for example, dedicating them to people killed in action. From Year 2 onwards, pupils have accurate secretarial skills. Correct punctuation and grammar are expected and mostly achieved; standards in spelling are above average. Handwriting is almost always well formed, with joined script and presentation is good. Pupils are taught how to recognise and use spelling patterns, beginning with the systematic teaching of letter formation and letter sounds in Year 1. However, not enough is expected of these pupils. In spite of the fact that children start school well prepared for writing there has been little progress in the pupils’ writing throughout the year. Many start and finish the year achieving little more than an inaccurate sentence or two of their own writing. The most able pupils should be achieving much more, including stories and extended texts. At the end of Year 1 there are no pupils achieving more than the average level of writing, making it very difficult for them to achieve a higher than average National Curriculum level at the end of Year 2.
- 62 Teaching is never less than satisfactory and it was good in half the lessons observed during the inspection. Strengths in the teaching include very good relationships with the pupils, clear explanations and effective questioning. As a result, pupils enjoy their lessons and generally work hard. Where the teaching is good, the teachers adapt the lesson to meet the needs of individuals and groups of pupils to ensure that they are working at suitable levels. All teachers make sure that pupils know what they are expected to learn. Teachers use interesting and challenging vocabulary and expect their pupils to do likewise. The conventions of writing, including grammar, spelling, handwriting and punctuation are taught well in Years 2, 3 and 4. Pupils are given lots of opportunities to discuss and to read independently and to the class. Teachers extend literacy skills to other curriculum areas and ensure that the work pupils cover is relevant and useful. The teaching of pupils with SEN is never less than good and there is some very good practice. Learning support assistants are skilful in supporting these pupils. Teachers plan the work to help the pupils achieve their learning targets.
- 63 In most of the lessons observed during the inspection, however, opportunities to challenge the most able pupils were not grasped fully. In one lesson, for example, the majority of the class answered the same questions about the text they had read. The more able pupils began to lose interest because this task was too easy. Pupils’ work over the last year shows that teachers expect a lot of the average and below average ability pupils but not always of the most able. Although there are some examples of teachers’ marking that helps pupils to improve their work, in most cases there are few written comments to extend their learning. Pupils have targets for writing but these are rarely referred to in the teachers’ marking.
- 64 Teachers keep appropriate records of the pupils’ progress in reading and spelling. Pupils complete a piece of independent written work at regular intervals and teachers match this to National Curriculum levels. The results of national and other tests are used to track pupils’ progress. Underachievement in writing has been identified and the curriculum has been adjusted to address this.

MATHEMATICS

- 65 In the national tests for Year 2 pupils, taking the three years 1999 to 2001, pupils' performance exceeded the national average for their age group. However, standards over this time fell and performance compared with that in similar schools was well below average. In 2001 standards were below average compared with all schools. Small year group numbers, pupil mobility and an increase in the number of pupils with SEN have all contributed to the fall in standards over this period. Girls' progress fell most sharply but they achieved higher standards than boys. Although in 2001 Year 4 pupils' performance was higher than the LEA average, pupils had not progressed as well as pupils in other schools. Standards in the current Year 2 and Year 4 are broadly average and similar to those at the time of the last inspection. The school's analysis of its test results and consequent action has helped standards to rise, for example, by improving the teaching of subtraction.
- 66 By the end of Year 2 pupils have made satisfactory progress in number, shape, space and measures. They have plenty of opportunities to practise and develop basic number skills. Many add and subtract two digit numbers accurately and use their knowledge of number facts to solve simple problems. However, in the lesson seen pupils' mental recall of number facts was often too slow. For example, only a very few subtracted 8p from 20p reasonably quickly and only one pupil attempted 50p-8p. Several pupils in Year 2 understand simple fractions and recognise equivalents. They recognise common shapes and describe their properties. In the lesson observed, pupils were beginning to use vocabulary related to capacity and most showed reasonable understanding of standard units of measure. However, a small group of pupils were unable to work confidently on their own and needed constant help because they did not understand the work they were asked to do. Pupils in Year 1 have not made satisfactory progress over time. Little of their work is at an above average level. In a numeracy lesson many struggled to subtract simple numbers using a number line.
- 67 Year 4 pupils have made satisfactory progress over time and, in some of their work, progress since September 2001 has been good. In the lesson seen, they achieved well and made good progress in their understanding of shape. In September pupils were working with multiples of numbers 3-5 and during the inspection showed that they now work confidently with multiples of 10. They explain their thinking well, for example, when talking about place value, and calculate quite quickly. Pupils' work shows growing knowledge and understanding of shape, space and measures including accurate calculation of areas and perimeters. However, in the lesson seen, several pupils did not draw and measure carefully enough in their work on reflective symmetry. Pupils in Year 3 have also made satisfactory progress over time in all aspects of mathematics. In a good lesson, most pupils made discernible progress in their recognition of right angles in turns. In their mental work in number, pupils added together two and single digit numbers generally accurately but the tasks did not stretch the most able pupils.
- 68 Throughout the school ICT is used regularly to support pupils' learning in mathematics. For instance, in Year 4, in the work on shape pupils used the Dazzle program confidently to draw symmetrical shapes and in Year 1 pupils entered data on their favourite colours into a simple spreadsheet. Pupils have good opportunities to apply their numeracy skills in science, especially when recording data.
- 69 Pupils with SEN make mainly good progress over time and in lessons. For example, a high attaining pupil with a statement of SEN made good progress in his

understanding of reflective symmetry and repeating patterns. In general, there is scope for the most able pupils to undertake more challenging work. Too often the work undertaken is similar across the ability range. The very few pupils of minority ethnic background, including those with EAL, are achieving well.

- 70 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. During the inspection, the teaching was never less than satisfactory and was good in two out of the five lessons seen. In the good lessons, the pace of teaching in the opening mental arithmetic sessions was brisk and questions were clearly focused. In Year 3 the use of a number game captured pupils' interests very quickly. The lessons were well organised, time was used productively and pupils worked diligently with sustained concentration. As a result many of the pupils made good progress. In the vast majority of lessons relationships were very good and pupils behaved well. Year 1 pupils often take time to settle to work and their interest is not always sustained. In all lessons and especially where the teaching was satisfactory there were opportunities to challenge the most able pupils further. For example, in the mental arithmetic sessions there were few occasions when teachers specifically posed more difficult questions for the ablest pupils or adapted the work when it was clear that pupils found it easy.
- 71 Good use has been made of analysis of performance in statutory and non-statutory tests to identify where pupils, in general, need more help, and to help set year group targets. Assessment findings have not been used to set targets for individual pupils and this now needs to be addressed to help raise standards and ensure that pupils are making the progress of which they are capable.

SCIENCE

- 72 Standards in science are similar to the national average by the end of Years 2 and 4 and pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall. This reflects the position at the time of the last inspection, although improvements have been made in key areas. A good scheme of work now provides a secure planning base for the teachers. Whole school assessment systems are sound and enable teachers to build key skills more effectively from year to year. Teachers are now better at developing scientific enquiry skills, although there are not enough opportunities provided for Year 3 and 4 pupils of above average ability to choose their own equipment in investigative work or to suggest their own lines of enquiry.
- 73 In last year's Year 2 National Curriculum teacher assessments, the teacher assessed overall standards as well below average. This was a reflection of the different abilities in the group of pupils. In the current Year 2 there is a higher percentage of pupils with above average ability and assessment of their attainment reflects the inspection findings.
- 74 By the end of Year 2, pupils have developed sound knowledge and skills in all aspects of the subject. For example, Year 2 pupils know that pushes and pulls are forces and can make things move and change shape. They know that air can be a force and, in an investigation with a ping-pong ball that moved along a track, pupils of average and above average abilities made a reasonable prediction as to whether blowing down a straw, squeezing air from a plastic bottle, or using a fan, would move the ball furthest. Most pupils were able to explain how the investigation could be made fair. Pupils' work over the past year indicates that they have acquired a satisfactory knowledge of the properties of solids and liquids and have investigated the effects of heating and cooling. They have observed and recorded, for instance, how an ice cube converts to a liquid when heated and how a jelly forms a solid when cooled. They have

investigated which type of paper would be suitable for sending a package through the post and how various papers are affected by water.

- 75 By the end of Year 4, knowledge and skills across all aspects of the subject are developed satisfactorily. Pupils in Year 3 develop a good knowledge of the characteristics of teeth and their function in humans and animals. In a good lesson the teacher used good resources such as models of human and animal skulls to develop learning. Good use is also made of ICT, such as CD-ROMs, to help pupils gain additional knowledge of the topic being studied. Year 4 pupils' work over the past year shows that they have a sound knowledge and understanding of habitats; for example, they have made a chamber for woodlice. This has helped them learn whether woodlice prefer light or dark places. They have investigated how plants take up water for nutrition and how waterproof are various materials. Pupils have recorded their work in an appropriate variety of forms including writing, drawing, tables, charts and graphs. They have used the Internet to download pictures and text to supplement their work. In the lessons seen, pupils' attitudes to the subject were good. They were interested in the work, particularly in the practical investigations. All pupils, including those who have SEN, co-operate well together when working on practical activities and work at a productive pace.
- 76 On the basis of a scrutiny of pupils' work in all year groups, the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In the two lessons seen, one in Year 2 and the other in Year 3, the teaching was good. Teachers have a secure understanding of the subject. This is exemplified in the good scientific vocabulary that pupils use, the range of the work covered and the emphasis on practical investigation. However, in pupils' completed work over time, there is very little difference in the challenge provided, irrespective of pupils' abilities. For example, the work of pupils of above average ability is similar in quality and quantity to that of pupils of average ability. There is little evidence of extension work of a more challenging nature for the above average pupils in all year groups. The achievements of the above average pupils, whilst satisfactory overall, should be higher. There are few comments in the marking of pupils' work to indicate how it might be improved. In the two good lessons, teachers used effective questioning to develop pupils' understanding, for example, in the Year 2 lesson the teacher asked; 'How can we make this fair?' and; 'What do you think is going to happen next?' Both lessons were well structured to include good whole class introductions and closing recaps of what had been learnt and good focused group activities to consolidate and extend learning. Resources were used well to stimulate discussion. As a result of these factors, pupils made good progress in the lessons. Pupils with SEN made good progress and received effective support from teachers and support staff. This ensured their participation in all aspects of the lessons.

ART AND DESIGN

- 77 By the end of Years 2 and 4, standards in art and design are better than those expected for pupils' ages. The quality of teaching is good across the school and helps all pupils to achieve well and make good progress in lessons. These are similar judgements to those made at the time of the last inspection and represent satisfactory progress.
- 78 By the end of Year 2, pupils draw good self-portraits that show well observed positioning of facial features and good progress from similar portraits produced in Year 1. This work shows that teachers develop key skills well from year to year. In Year 1, for example, the teacher provided pupils with a facial template to guide their efforts whilst in Year 2, they worked without this using the skills they had developed in

their previous work. Teachers' link art work well to work in other subjects and this gives more meaning to the work and contributes well to pupils' progress. Pupils in Year 2 produced good images of lions to illustrate tongue twisters they had studied in a literacy lesson. By the end of Year 2, most pupils have had experiences of working in a good variety of media and with a wide range of materials. Paintings on display show confident and effective use of colour, and co-operative friezes on topics such as spring show good skills with collage techniques.

- 79 By the end of Year 4, pupils' work shows good development of skills learnt previously. Teaching is good and the teachers' good knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject has a marked effect on pupils' standards and achievements. Teachers use the work of artists such as Picasso, Lear and Klee effectively as inspiration for pupils' work. Sketchbooks are used well by pupils to record designs and sketches of various features in the environment. These develop pupils' observational skills and pencil techniques effectively. Teachers use these well to encourage pupils to evaluate and amend their work. Visits to places of interest are used successfully to interest and motivate the pupils. Pupils in Years 3 and 4, for example, made a recent visit to a Sculpture Park where they observed sculptures made for a variety of natural and man-made materials. This experience was used very well to develop pupils' learning in this aspect of the subject. They are currently planning their own sculptures and deciding where they will site them in the school garden in order to achieve the best effect. There have been no opportunities for pupils to draw inspiration from visits to art galleries or to learn from the work of visiting artists. This is identified as an area for development in the subject action plan. Computers support work well and all pupils have used them to create designs and pictures in various aspects of their work
- 80 Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good and they are proud of their achievements. In the lesson seen in Year 3, pupils were working in the school garden with sketchbooks. They showed respect for the surroundings and behaved well. The teacher used the activity well to encourage pupils to reflect on the peacefulness of the garden, the birdsong and the abundance of plants. This made a good contribution to their spiritual development.
- 81 There are no established whole school procedures to assess the development of pupils' knowledge and skills in the subject. This makes it more difficult for teachers to ensure that key skills are developed from year to year. The school is aware of this and is working on the development of a whole school assessment record.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 82 In the work seen, standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 4 were similar to those expected for pupils' ages with some examples of work that was better than that expected. Although little direct teaching was observed during the inspection, a scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' past and present work indicates that it is satisfactory overall with examples of good teaching. This has led to satisfactory achievements for all pupils with good progress in some activities. These judgements are similar to those made at the time of the last inspection and indicate satisfactory progress since that time.
- 83 By the end of Year 2, pupils use a satisfactory range of tools to assemble, join and combine materials in different ways and use models, pictures and words to describe their designs. In a lesson in Year 1, pupils used a variety of two-dimensional shapes to design a house. The teacher encouraged pupils to discuss which shapes are suitable for which parts, for example, a triangle for the roof. This developed understanding of simple design well. The teacher extended the activity well and pupils moved on to work with toy construction equipment to build a model by following a simple plan. Effective teaching in a topic on puppets in Year 2 was exemplified in the scrutiny of work that had been produced by the pupils. There was good work in drawing a design, making a template, cutting out fabric and sewing pieces together to create a puppet. The pupils had been encouraged to think about how their designs might be improved. This was evident in pupils' drawings, which included ideas for modifications and in the case of the above average pupils, drawings had detailed labelled sketches of ideas for the finished product.
- 84 By the end of Year 4, pupils begin to recognise that their designs have to meet a range of different needs. They use more detailed labelling of sketches, pictures and models to communicate the details of their designs. In Years 3 and 4, work in pupils' design books and sketch books shows that they have designed and made attractive Mothers' Day cards and Easter cards and looked at the use and position of furniture in a room. In their work on sculpture, teachers encourage the pupils to plan out their ideas for a piece of sculpture with notes on aspects such as colour, texture and shape. In Year 4, the teacher links design and technology effectively to work in science; for example, pupils have designed and made a working flashing light alarm using skills and knowledge acquired in a science topic on electrical circuits. This heightens pupils' interest and develops learning effectively because pupils see a practical application for their work. Other than basic work with simple programmable toys, little work is evident whereby pupils use a range of equipment, including computers to make things move in various ways. In the scrutiny of work over the past year, no evidence of work on food technology was seen.
- 85 There are no whole school assessments of pupils' progress from year to year and this makes it more difficult to plan from what pupils already know, understand and can do. This is recognised as a weakness in the subject and there are appropriate plans to build a system based on the good scheme of work.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

- 86 Three lessons were observed in geography and one in history. In the small amount of work seen in Year 2 standards in both subjects met expectations, a similar picture to that at the time of the last inspection. Standards in Year 4 have improved and also meet expectations. In the last inspection they were unsatisfactory. Standards are better because the school now uses the national guidelines for the subject.

- 87 Generally, pupils make satisfactory progress but in lessons their achievement ranged from good to unsatisfactory. Pupils with SEN make similar progress to their peers. The very few pupils of ethnic minority background make similar progress. Those who have visited India contributed their own experiences in the geography lessons seen in Years 3 and 4. Pupils in Year 1 talk about the present and the past, for example, in identifying different features of houses. They also learn to recognise different houses around the world and compare them with their own. Pupils' work in Year 2 has included writing about famous historical characters and events such as being a Roman legionary on Hadrian's Wall and the Great Fire of London. In geography pupils have labelled their own maps of the area and sorted differences between geographical terms and places into a Venn diagram. Work on distant places has included simple listing of geographical features of Mexico. There is little evidence in Year 2 pupils' completed work, in history and geography, of thorough development of their enquiry skills. In an unsatisfactory lesson pupils in Year 1 were not challenged enough and therefore made unsatisfactory progress in their historical understanding.
- 88 Pupils in Year 3 and 4 have covered a suitable range of work in history. Pupils in Year 3 have written informatively about Viking life and in Year 4 good links have been made with geography as pupils mapped the likely best places for human settlement. In both year groups pupils are developing their understanding of chronology, helped by the displays of time lines, for example, from the Romans to Harold. Year 4 pupils have usefully listed Anglo- Saxon words and English town names with Anglo-Saxon endings. Some of the best work is about Britain since 1930 especially where pupils have written about their conversations with people who remember the 1930's and 40's. For example, a pupil recorded clearly the memories of his grandmother including her walking two miles to school and using slate and chalk in her lessons. Year 3 and Year 4 pupils responded very well to the opportunity to interview a local resident. Other good work includes writing about evacuation and how pupils might have felt. One pupil wrote that she would have "missed her mum". A good display of pictures and artefacts supports work well in Year 4. In a good lesson in geography in Year 4 pupils showed a range of basic knowledge about work they are undertaking on life in a rural village in India. They identified climatic conditions and named several places, rivers and animals that are found in India. They responded well to the opportunity to discuss quite complex issues pertaining to geographical location. In Year 3, pupils began to articulate differences between their own lives and life in a distant country. They were excited by the prospect that they would subsequently have the opportunity to use a range of resources, including CD-ROMs. The Internet is used well in Years 3 and 4 to support pupils' work in both subjects.
- 89 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It was good in two of the lessons and unsatisfactory in one. In the best teaching, pupils' interest was captured by the teachers' good use of questions. For example, in a good geography lesson in Year 4 the teacher's careful questions helped pupils to broaden their knowledge of life in India beyond some initial stereotyping. For example, they learnt that India has major cities apart from villages and that there are rich and poor people. A good opportunity was provided for pupils to develop their literacy skills as they kept written notes of their discussions in small groups. In an unsatisfactory history lesson, Year 1 pupils did not make enough progress because they were given the same work as children in the reception year.
- 90 The quality of teachers' marking is weak and there are very few occasions when it suggests how pupils might improve their work. New assessment arrangements are

currently being developed and have not had time to make any significant impact on the teaching.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

- 91 There has been rapid improvement since the last inspection and this has been particularly marked over the past eighteen months. At the time of the last inspection, standards were just about average in Year 2 but below average by Year 4. Standards now meet national expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 4 and are rising quickly, particularly in Years 3 and 4. Pupils now achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment and make rapid progress in lessons.
- 92 This turnaround has been brought about by several key developments:
- the very effective leadership of the headteacher. This has raised the profile of the subject throughout the school
 - the use of specialist teaching support from a technician with excellent subject knowledge and teaching skills
 - greatly improved resources, including new computers and software
 - good planning based on a helpful scheme of work that develops key skills progressively
 - improved confidence and expertise of the teachers through in-service training and greater use of equipment and
 - the use of computers to support learning across all subjects.
- 93 There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement about the overall quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2. Pupils' work and teachers' planning, however, indicates it is at least satisfactory. Some good teaching of small groups and individuals was observed. Good opportunities are provided for all pupils to work regularly on computers and this enables them to develop sound keyboard and mouse skills. By the end of Year 2, the pupils of average and above average ability generate, amend and record work using text, tables and graphs successfully. The pupils of below average ability, and those who have SEN, do this with effective support from teachers and other pupils. In an activity for pupils in Year 1, for example, pupils had entered data on a tally chart about their favourite colours. They then entered the data into a simple computer spreadsheet and produce a graph. The above average pupils changed the colour of their graph unaided. These experiences and skills are built on successfully in Year 2. The teacher provides good opportunities for pupils to develop data handling skills such as changing style, size and colour of text. She enables pupils to experiment with an art program to produce attractive computer generated pictures of a firework display and pupils use a digital camera to examine plants.
- 94 By the end of Year 2 pupils have also learnt that certain devices can be controlled in pre-determined ways. They have operated tape recorders to listen to stories and have programmed a "Roamer" toy vehicle to perform forward, backward, right and left movements.
- 95 Little direct teaching of computer skills by the class teachers was seen in Years 3 and 4. As with the teachers in Years 1 and 2, scrutiny of other similar sources of evidence suggest it is at least satisfactory. Teaching of small groups of pupils by the technician is excellent and has been a major factor in pupils' rapidly rising standards and achievements. Her very good subject knowledge, expectations and good questioning of pupils contributes very well to their learning. The teachers plan well to provide opportunities that build key skills and experiences successfully from one

activity to the next. General subject planning identifies where computers will support learning in all subjects and this is clearly working in practice. In a literacy lesson for pupils in Year 3, for example, pupils explored a website for information about the author Roald Dahl. In a mathematics topic on position, direction and movement, pupils programmed a screen turtle to make clockwise, anti-clockwise, right and left turns. Pupils regularly use the Internet to access information in history, geography, religious education and science. Pupils in Year 4 have used the computer to compose a simple musical score, amend it and play it back. Pupils in Year 3 have their own e-mail address and password and have successfully e-mailed a classmate and received one in turn.

- 96 All pupils who were observed working on computers were enthusiastic about the activity and treated the equipment with care. When working in pairs and small groups, they co-operated effectively. In a Year 1 activity, for example, boys and girls worked together in pairs and shared out the task; one would read out the data while the other fed it into the computer. Pupils' good attitudes towards the subject make a positive contribution to their social development as well as their achievements in the subject.
- 97 Good new assessment systems based on the scheme of work have been recently introduced but these have not been established for long enough to have made any significant effect on standards. Since pupils' past experiences have been intermittent and their skills poorly developed in the past, it is important for the development of pupils' learning that key skills are tracked consistently across all year groups. The support technician is now using a good system to chart pupils' progress.

MUSIC

- 98 Pupils' achievements were above average in the one music lesson observed during the inspection but there was insufficient evidence to make a judgement about pupils' standards throughout the school. In this good lesson, Year 4 pupils had a good understanding of the length of notes in standard notation. They listened attentively and identified the structure of a new song. The pupils' singing was melodic and accurate. Several pupils played recorders to accompany the singing, maintaining a repeated rhythm throughout the song. Pupils made good progress in this lesson because the teacher had high expectation of the their capacity to succeed. By the end, they were performing in a round maintaining their parts accurately and accompanying the song with recorders and untuned percussion. Pupils obviously enjoyed this lesson and they worked hard.
- 99 Year 3 and 4 pupils have access to a good range of musical activities. From Year 3 pupils have the opportunity to play the violin with lessons provided by the Bedfordshire performing arts service. Others have piano lessons. The string players take part in the "Fiddle Fiesta" in Bedford and the thriving choir performs in the annual Festival of Voices at Wembley. They join with local schools to perform in concerts, including the piano and single instrument concert at Harlington Upper School and parts of "The Magic Flute" in the summer of 2001.
- 100 Pupils listen to a range of music in assemblies and teachers introduce the instrument and the source of the music at the beginning of the week. Year 4 pupils know what music they enjoy although their knowledge of western composers and the music of other cultures is rather limited.

- 101 Teachers use a commercial scheme of work for music. In the youngest two classes, one teacher usually teaches music to both classes but she was not at school during the inspection. The planning for music reflects the government guidance for the subject.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 102 Only one lesson was observed in physical education so there was insufficient evidence to evaluate overall standards. In the lesson seen, Year 2 pupils achieved satisfactory standards in their games skills as they practised sending, receiving and striking a ball. They showed good awareness of the need to act safely and what happens to their bodies when they are warmed up. The teacher's question; "What are the signs that you have been doing exercise?" elicited the response; "Your heart beats faster". Pupils participated well in the activities and behaved well. The teacher on occasion suggested how pupils could improve their performance and this helped pupils to make progress. The lesson did not end well and there was no concluding re-enforcement of skills.
- 103 Since September 2000 pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 have undertaken 10 swimming lessons per year at the local swimming pool. The school has no school hall and uses the nearby church hall for physical education lessons. Equipment has to be transported to the hall and once set out is used by all classes on that day.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 104 Pupils' achievements meet the expectations of the Bedfordshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education in both Years 2 and 4. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school. No judgements about standards or progress were made at the time of the last inspection.
- 105 By the time they are seven, pupils know a range of stories from the Bible. They make simple deductions about the lessons Jesus taught through the parables. Pupils are familiar with Christian festivals and the parts of the church associated with Christenings. Pupils' work includes the Old Testament story of the creation and the Hindu story of Rama and Sita. This knowledge-based curriculum is supplemented with more personal aspects of pupils' lives. For example, they discuss friendship and what makes a best friend. Nine-year-olds have studied celebrations in more detail, showing appropriate progress as they move through the school. They understand the importance of food in ritual and celebration. Within their study of Judaism, for example, they have listed kosher food, know the reason for the Seder meal and learnt about the Rosh Hashanah. Pupils are also aware of the Islamic festival of Ramadan and have visited a Sikh Gurdwara. Links with the personal, social and health education curriculum are good and the lessons include not only studying facts but also plenty of opportunities for discussion and reflection about the issues raised. While Year 3 pupils were studying a story from the Buddhist religion, pupils related the story of Siddhatha to difficult decisions and choices in their own lives. In this good lesson, the teacher led the discussion towards the incidents that make the pupils think about life. Pupils listed the Queen Mother's funeral, war in Afghanistan and suffering throughout the world, including the recent baby-snatching incident. Pupils had a good recall of their lesson from the previous week and made good use of the Internet, CD-ROMs and books to research the subject.
- 106 The teaching was good in two of the three lessons observed and satisfactory in the other. Very positive relationships between teachers and pupils contribute well to

pupils' learning. Pupils feel confident to express their feelings and are secure in the fact that both teacher and peers will respect their comments. In the good lessons, teachers manage the time well, allowing opportunities for discussion and research while maintaining the momentum of the lesson. The curriculum is planned well and maintains continuity throughout the school while ensuring that skills are developed at appropriate levels for pupils' ages. Assemblies, personal, social and health education and literacy, history and geography are linked to the curriculum where appropriate, giving coherence to pupils' learning. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.