

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **RAYNSFORD VC LOWER SCHOOL**

Henlow

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109601

Headteacher: Mrs S Phillips

Reporting inspector: Ms J Cutler  
20934

Dates of inspection: 25 – 28 February 2002

Inspection number: 243959

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 to 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Park Lane Henlow Bedfordshire
Postcode:	SG16 6AT
Telephone number:	01462 812319
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A Painter
Date of previous inspection:	September 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20934	Ms Cutler	Registered inspector	English Art and design Design and technology Physical education Music Foundation Stage	Characteristics of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well pupils are taught? How well the school is led and managed? What the school should do to improve Further information about the school
14324	Mr M Hudson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well the school cares for its pupils How well the school works in partnership with parents
23917	Mr T Clarke	Team inspector	Mathematics Science Information and communication technology History Geography Religious education Special educational needs Equal opportunities	The curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Raynsford VC Lower School in Henlow opened in new premises in the late 1960s. It aims to create high quality, caring personal relationships within a Christian environment. The village consists of a mixed community with families living in owner-occupied, and council and shared-ownership homes. Although it has expanded since the last inspection, the school is considered smaller than most other primaries. There are currently 124 pupils from four years old to nine years old on roll, 50 girls and 74 boys, taught in five mixed-age classes. There are 19 part-time children in the reception class. Twenty-two (18 per cent) pupils are identified as having some kind of learning difficulty. However, there are no pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Need or with English as a second language. The free school meal take-up ranges from seven per cent to ten per cent, depending on the time of year. Currently just over eight per cent of the pupils have free school meals<sup>1</sup>. This is below the national average for schools of this type. Children's attainment on entry covers a wide spectrum of ability. The local education authority tests given to children just before they start school report attainment to be below and well below the county average when compared with similar schools in Bedford. Raynsford School also qualifies for a turbulence allowance because a significant percentage of pupils move into the school at times other than joining the reception class. (Twenty-nine per cent of Years 1 - 4 pupils did not start in the reception class. A small group of these pupils are from RAF families.)

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

Raynsford VC Lower School is a very effective school. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. She maintains a high focus on the standards pupils achieve and her attention to raising attainment through the monitoring and evaluation of the work in the classrooms is very good. This has had an important effect on the role of the subject co-ordinators and the quality of teaching. The governing body supports the headteacher well in her work. Their knowledge of what the school needs enables them to plan efficiently and to make sure that the school gives good value for money.

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

- The school achieves very high standards in English, mathematics and science.
- The headteacher is a very good leader and governors support the school very well indeed.
- Overall, the quality of teaching is good.
- The school is very good at working with external agencies to assess and monitor the work of registered teachers.
- The attitudes of pupils are very good; they are enthusiastic and enjoy school.
- All members of the school care for the pupils and, in particular, the provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good. Staff take great care of pupils' personal development, and relationships are very good.
- There are very good links with parents and attendance is very good. The school is very good at promoting this.

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<sup>1</sup> The Autumn Package 2001 data on free school meals shows that the school falls in the eight per cent to 21 per cent category.

### What could be improved

There are no major areas for improvement. However, the headteacher, governors and staff should consider:

- Improving pupils' handwriting.
- Improving pupils' spelling.
- Developing the assessment procedures in the foundation subjects so that they are as good as those in the core subjects.
- Clarifying the new arrangements for the school's child-protection procedures.

*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 1997, when it was judged to provide satisfactory value for money. Since that time improvements have been good. The leadership and management of the school are now very good because of the headteacher's focus on raising standards. Standards are much higher; the curriculum has been reviewed and is now much better. The climate for learning has improved, particularly in Key Stage 2, where there were significant weaknesses in the standards of teaching for the oldest pupils in the school. The accommodation has improved and an extra classroom has been built. The key issues have all been rigorously addressed. Overall, the quality of teaching is now good. Weak areas in the curriculum, such as design and technology, are better because teachers' knowledge and understanding of the curriculum have improved. Performance management is well established. Developments in catering for pupils' cultural development are satisfactory. The developments in English have been effective; a reading policy is in place and there is an agreed approach to reading; library facilities for pupils have been improved and there has been a great deal of investment in classroom furniture and computer software to help pupils develop their research skills. The importance of effective marking and the role of the subject co-ordinators have had an impact on the standards pupils achieve. Pupils are assessed and their progress is monitored regularly. This is a significant improvement. Governors are much more involved in the work of the school. Links with financial planning to make changes in the school are more focused. However, there are still a few minor areas for governors to rectify in their annual report to parents. The health and safety issues identified in the last report have all been dealt with. The school is in a good position to make decisions about any future improvements it considers necessary.

### STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
Reading	A	B	A	A*	very high A* well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Writing	A	B	A	A	
Mathematics	D	B	A	A	

Although the Bedfordshire County baseline test judges children as coming to school with standards below or well below expectations in comparison with those in similar schools in the



county, they make good progress and reach the Early Learning Goals<sup>2</sup> in all areas by the time they come to the end of the Foundation Stage.<sup>3</sup>

In the year 2001, seven year olds attained very good results in the national tests. They were well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Reading standards were very high in comparison with those in schools that are similar to Raynsford. Over the past three years the school has maintained its high standards, and teacher assessments in science show that pupils' attainments in this subject have improved greatly. In the year 2001, the results of the tests for pupils who left the school at the end of Year 4 were well above the national and local authority averages. The targets set for all pupils are ambitious. However, the strategies that the school uses indicate that they are achievable.

Observations during the week of the inspection support the most recent test results, and the predictions and targets for the current group of seven year olds. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1, and by the time pupils leave the school, are above average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and above expectations in information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils make good and sometimes very good progress over their time in the school from the reception class to Year 4. Overall, standards in most other subjects and religious education meet expectations for this age group. Only a few lessons were seen in art and design, design and technology, history, geography and music. In these cases a range of other evidence is called upon to support judgements. Sometimes pupils achieve high standards in dance by the time they are nine years old. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls, and the achievement of pupils with SEN is good. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) makes sure that their work is appropriately linked to their individual education plans (IEPs).

## **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are enthusiastic, interested and involved. This is a strength of the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Overall, pupils behave well in lessons in and around the school. There is no sign of oppressive behaviour. Pupils' good behaviour benefits their attainment and progress.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils have high self-esteem. Strengths lie in the very good relationships between pupils and teachers and between pupils themselves. Pupils are learning to accept differences in people.

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<sup>2</sup> Early Learning Goals: these are targets for children by the end of the reception year. They refer to personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy skills, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, and physical and creative development.

<sup>3</sup> The Foundation Stage: The Foundation Stage begins when children reach the age of three and finishes at the end of the reception year. It is a distinct stage in preparing children for later schooling and is based on six areas of learning. These mainly refer to communication, language and literacy, mathematical development; and personal, social and emotional development, but also include knowledge and understanding of the world, and physical and creative development.

Attendance	Very good. Pupils' very good attendance has a significant effect on the standards they achieve.
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The school's strengths lie in the very good attitudes pupils have, the relationships between all members of the school community, and the parents' good work in keeping up attendance rates. All these factors have a very good effect on the standards pupils achieve.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-9 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Satisfactory	Good

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

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. It is good in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2, and satisfactory in Key Stage 1. A small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Ninety-four per cent of all teaching is satisfactory or better. Twelve per cent (two lessons) were either very good or excellent in Key Stage 2. This is a very positive picture and shows the extent of the improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection.

The teaching of literacy and numeracy has a positive impact on pupils' attainment. In good lessons throughout the school, teachers have very good relationships with pupils; they plan well and are clear about what they want children to learn; questioning is good and pupils have to think carefully about what they are learning, why they are learning it and whether they feel they have learnt something new; assessments are good and records plot achievement and pupils' targets for improvement. These are helpful to the teachers in keeping track of how pupils are progressing and whether they are making the progress of which they are capable. Overall, discipline is good and teachers help the children behave and participate in lessons. Teaching assistants are deployed well and play an invaluable role in helping pupils to learn. Areas for development in teaching include making learning objectives sharp and precise; increasing the pace and challenge when lessons take too long to get started; insisting that pupils behave well all the time; keeping expectations high and not accepting poorly presented work; and not relying too heavily on worksheets.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are having a positive impact on standards. There is a good range of after-school and lunchtime clubs.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. There is good provision for pupils with SEN. The work of support staff is very effective.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and	Good overall. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. It is good for moral development and satisfactory for spiritual and cultural development.

cultural development	
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How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a caring school. All the staff have the pupils' best interests at heart. The school makes the best use possible of information it collects about what pupils can do, in order to help them to make progress.
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The school works very well with parents. This is a strength and has a good effect on the standards pupils achieve. All members of the school community have the pupils' welfare at heart.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership and the management of the headteacher are very good. She has delegated responsibility sufficiently well to subject co-ordinators. Consequently, their effectiveness in subject leadership is greatly enhanced, and this has had a good impact on the quality of teaching, learning and the standards that pupils attain.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are supportive and well informed, and play an important part in the management of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Pupils' results in tests have steadily improved and reached high levels. Teachers are very good at tracking pupils' progress, intervening at the right time and making sure that pupils achieve as well as they can.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of staff, equipment and resources. In particular, support staff contribute very well to the work of the school and the standards pupils achieve.

The school is well staffed with teachers and support staff, which allows a good ratio of adults to pupils. The accommodation and learning resources enable staff to teach properly. Above all, the leadership and management of the headteacher are crucial to the ethos of the school, which focuses on the raising of standards. Governors are good at supporting the headteacher; they spend the school's money wisely and have a good understanding of the links between good financial management and the effect this has on standards. In this way the school operates the principles of best value.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>Parents are pleased because</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• standards are very good;</li><li>• the school helps pupils, whatever their ability, to learn and make progress;</li><li>• classes are small;</li><li>• children behave well and have respect for teachers when at school;</li><li>• there is a large range of after-school clubs/extra-curricular activities;</li><li>• their children are enthusiastic about the school;</li><li>• they are very well informed and the set homework gives them an insight into what the children are learning;</li><li>• staff enjoy what they are doing.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There were no points raised.</li></ul>

Ten parents attended the meeting with the registered inspector before the inspection and 57 questionnaires were returned. Inspection findings support the positive views of parents.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

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

*The Foundation Stage. (Children under five and up to the end of the reception year)*

1. Although the Bedfordshire County baseline test judges children as coming to school with standards below or well below expectations in comparison with similar schools in the county, children make good progress and reach the Early Learning Goals in all areas by the time they come to the end of the Foundation Stage. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all areas for these children and this contributes to their achievement. Consequently, they are confident when they talk to adults and achieve well in reading and writing activities. Number work is meaningful and a good emphasis on the practical approach consolidates children's understanding of the world around them. For example, they make porridge after hearing the story about 'The Three Bears'; they play with 'giant' dominoes in the hall, and they search for information about 'bears' on the Internet. The way the curriculum is linked from one area to another is a major factor in the children's good progress. Music making, creative activities and physical activities support children's all-round development.

*Key Stage 1 (5 – 7 year olds)*

2. In the year 2001, seven year olds attained very good results in the national tests. They were well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Indeed, reading standards were very high in comparison with those in schools that are similar to Raynsford. Over the past three years the school has maintained its high standards, and teacher assessments in science show that pupils' attainment in this subject has improved greatly. In fact, improvements in test results are better than the national trend.
3. The reason why standards at Raynsford compare so favourably with those in schools that are similar, is that teachers are very good at keeping a good check on how pupils are doing and how much progress they are making from the time they start in the reception until the time they come to Year 2 when they are seven. This is sometimes referred to as 'value added'. The value added for pupils is good and sometimes very good. Teachers are quick to intervene when there is a slowing down of progress, and support staff are instrumental to this work and the good standards pupils achieve.
4. Teachers are not complacent and the headteacher maintains a high focus on monitoring and evaluating pupils' results. This enables teachers to look at where pupils are doing well and where they need extra help. This strategy, as well as the school's approach to the way it organises its classes, is very effective in maintaining high standards. Consequently, pupils are well equipped to maintain the higher Level 3<sup>4</sup>. The targets set for the national test are ambitious. However, the strategies that the school uses indicate that these targets are achievable. For example, teachers judge that some pupils who are predicted to achieve a Level 2C in the national tests could achieve a higher Level 2B. An analysis of these pupils' work has led to teachers focusing on improving their comprehension and interpretation skills. Hence they are having regular literacy and numeracy teaching from a teaching assistant and another member of the teaching staff.

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<sup>4</sup> Levels: by the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are expected to attain Level 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Those who attain Level 3 are, therefore, above nationally expected standards.

5. Observations during the week of the inspection support the most recent test results and the predictions and targets for the current group of seven year olds. Standards at the end of the key stage are above average in the core subjects of English and mathematics, and above expectations in science and ICT. Pupils make good and sometimes very good progress over their time in the school from the reception class to Year 2. Overall, standards in most other subjects and religious education meet expectations for this age group, although there were not enough lessons seen in art and design, design and technology, history, geography and music to make firm judgements. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls, and the achievement of pupils with SEN is good. The SENCO makes sure that their work is appropriately linked to their IEPs. Pupils with SEN achieve well and make good progress in relation to the targets set for them.

#### *Key Stage 2 (7 to 9 year olds)*

6. In the Year 2001, the results of the tests for pupils who left the school at the end of Year 4 were well above those attained nationally and above those attained in the local authority. The school, in line with its rigorous approach to checking on how well pupils are doing, has set appropriate targets for its current Year 4 group. The good use and analysis of data have identified areas for development in this cohort, and strategies such as regular morning reading practice are already in place to help pupils achieve better. Standards of work seen during the inspection judge that pupils nearing the end of their time in the lower school are maintaining the progress made in the infant stage, and are attaining above expected standards in English, mathematics, science and ICT. Judgements made of the work of seven year olds are similar. Standards in all other subjects meet expectations, except in those where not enough lessons were seen and where a firm judgement cannot be made. Sometimes pupils achieve high standards in dance by the time they are nine years old.
7. There are no significant differences between the attainment of the boys and girls, and between pupils with SEN and other pupils. Pupils with SEN, as in Key Stage 1, do well because of the good support they receive.

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

8. Since the last inspection pupils' attitudes have improved and they are now very good and a strength of the school. Pupils are very happy to learn and settle quickly into lessons. They respond eagerly to challenge and sustain interest and enthusiasm. Most remain fully attentive in classes and assemblies. Pupils are very well motivated, show a high degree of commitment and stay closely focused on task. They enjoy learning activities; for example, model-making in Year 1. Pupils work very effectively both on their own, as in programmed reading before registration, and in paired and group activities such as a numeracy exercise in Year 2. They take pride in their efforts and are keen to share their pleasure in achievement. Pupils offer constructive ideas and listen to what others have to say, and their contributions to discussions are often thoughtful and imaginative. Parents confirm that their children like school and work hard. Pupils' very positive attitudes substantially enhance their learning.
9. Pupils' behaviour is good, as it was at the time of the last inspection. There are no exclusions, and parents are happy with the standards achieved. The behaviour policy and code of conduct are well understood by pupils and properly applied by staff. On entering school pupils are taught to exercise self-discipline and they respond willingly to what is expected of them. The atmosphere across the school is calm, orderly and purposeful.

Although behaviour in most lessons is good, there were some instances when pupils' behaviour was unsatisfactory, physical education in Year 2 being an example. At playtimes and around the school, pupils behave well and respect property such as computers and displays. At lunch, pupils are well mannered and friendly, making it an enjoyable social occasion. They are also polite and pleasantly inquisitive towards visitors. During the inspection there were no signs of abuse, harassment or aggression. Pupils' good behaviour has a beneficial effect on their attainment and progress.

10. Pupils' personal development has improved since the last inspection and is now good. They are self-assured and have high personal esteem and the ability to organise themselves effectively. Those who lack confidence or are socially insecure profit from the personal advice and support they receive. In lessons when they work on their own; for example, in topic research, pupils show a marked degree of independent thought. They enjoy responsibility and carry out with enthusiasm and pride any duties they are given. All pupils enhance their self-esteem by carrying out classroom tasks, while older pupils are made to feel important when undertaking whole-school activities such as playtime mentoring. Discussion of everyday issues, like physical disability, improves pupils' social awareness. They appreciate the purpose of charities, benefit from visits and local events and have a strong sense of citizenship. Pupils noticeably mature as they progress through the school.
11. Relationships have also improved and are now very good and another strength of the school. Pupils are treated with respect and flourish under the consistent and sensitive approach of staff. Pupils trust and have affinity with their teachers and readily confide in them when they are worried or upset. Relationships within peer groups are very positive and friendly, and boys and girls interact comfortably. Pupils are caring and considerate, and cooperate very successfully. They have noticeable respect for the values and beliefs of others and a good understanding of peer-group feelings. There are many constructive and harmonious relationships. Playtimes are lively but congenial and pupils show genuine concern for others if they are hurt. At lunchtime pupils sit happily together at mixed tables. Relationships are strengthened during extra-curricular activities and educational visits. Pupils with SEN are fully integrated into the school community.
12. Attendance is very good. In the last school year it was well above the national average and better than at the time of the last inspection. Unauthorised absence in the same year was well below the national average. Punctuality is very good and lessons start on time. Registration is prompt and efficient, pupils answer politely and there is an orderly start to the daily sessions. Pupils' very good attendance and punctuality have a very positive impact on their learning.

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

13. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. It is good in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2, and satisfactory in Key Stage 1. A small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Ninety-four per cent of all teaching is satisfactory or better. Twelve per cent (two lessons) were either very good or excellent in Key Stage 2. This is a very positive picture and shows the extent of the improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection.
14. The school's organisation of its classes is very flexible so that it can cater for the needs of its pupils more carefully and attend to the way in which it teaches groups of children. This means that some pupils move into the class above to be taught with the older ones. The good support they get enables them to work more intensively on activities which are better suited to their capabilities. Consequently, pupils who are more able are well catered for



and this has a great impact on the standards the school achieves. Teachers can teach more efficiently and pupils can learn more effectively. Staff are very interested in the way children learn; they are continually questioning how to cater for the needs of pupils who are more able as well as those with SEN. Indeed, courses and professional development for teachers and support staff contribute greatly to the quality of teaching in the school. Very good attention to tracking pupils' progress, and even 'fast-tracking' the gifted and talented, is well embedded in the ethos of the school. The good work of the support assistants is part and parcel of this process and the school is rightly justified in attributing its success to this committed group of staff.

15. Throughout the school there are common threads in good teaching. These are characterised by: -
  - the very good relationships between staff and children, and between the pupils themselves, which encourage whole class, group and individual learning;
  - good knowledge and understanding of subjects, especially in the way ICT is used;
  - good planning which clearly identifies what teachers want pupils to learn and which encourages pupils to revisit the learning objectives at the end of the lesson;
  - good questioning which encourages the pupils to think carefully about what they are learning, why they are learning it and whether they feel they have learnt something new;
  - very good assessments; for example, notes recorded in a notebook to which all staff can contribute, and records which plot achievement and pupils' targets for improvement. These help teachers to keep track of how pupils are progressing and whether they are making the progress of which they are capable;
  - good methods to help the children behave and participate in lessons.
  
16. Raynsford is a friendly school and pupils learn well because they are not afraid to ask questions. In turn, teachers are continually asking the pupils questions to see whether they understand what they have to do. Good and often very good teaching is seen at the beginning and at the end of lessons. All teachers clearly set out the learning objectives for the lesson. Pupils are clear about what the teachers want to teach them and what they are going to learn. They know that they will be expected to report back at the end of the session. Pupils achieve well in this climate because they know that teachers have high expectations. Pupils can talk about what they have learnt, and say who has contributed well to the lesson and whether they have been successful or not. This is a good approach and helps the pupils take responsibility for their actions. On one occasion, the teacher noticed that one pupil was not concentrating. She said kindly, but firmly, "You must try to involve yourself more in the lesson to get the best out of it!"
  
17. In an excellent lesson in Key Stage 2, the teacher did not talk down to the pupils. She asked them to 'evaluate X's performance against the criteria for the lesson'. The pupils knew exactly what she meant and were focused in their feedback on the strengths and areas for development in their classmate's dance. In a good Year 2 lesson, pupils were able to say who had achieved the desired result and who had successfully made a tile with a repeat pattern decorated in it.
  
18. A strength of the teaching and the way pupils learn is the high quality of the assessments and tracking systems that teachers employ. In the Foundation Stage, teachers and support staff regularly record notes in a notebook and track children's progress towards the Early Learning Goals. Assessments in English and mathematics are particularly good. Teachers are knowledgeable about the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and know their areas for development. In the recent analysis of the Key Stage 2 test data, the school hypothesises that the Year 4 spelling and reading scores reflect strengths and weaknesses in the teaching of literacy and numeracy. It is precisely this commitment to

continual development that enables teachers to improve the way they teach and raise standards even further. Resources are used well in most lessons and enable pupils to learn more easily.

19. Characteristics of only satisfactory or, on the few occasions, unsatisfactory teaching and learning are characterised by:
  - learning objectives that are too wide and imprecise;
  - slow pace and challenge because the lesson takes too long to get started;
  - lessons where pupils are not challenged and do not learn anything new;
  - poor strategies for managing pupils' behaviour;
  - low expectations and the acceptance of work that is rushed and poorly presented;
  - the use of too many worksheets which restrict pupils' approach to their work and which demand little other than filling in blank spaces.
20. Satisfactory teaching is not very 'sharp' and does not involve the pupils so intently. When there is more pace to good lessons, pupils are more involved and are willing learners. In a few lessons where behaviour starts to deteriorate, pupils lose concentration, disturb others and start to act in a silly way. When the teacher has to continually stop the lesson and raise her voice above loud noise to get attention, and when pupils do not listen or do as they are told immediately, the climate for learning is less favourable. Teachers and pupils feel dissatisfied.
21. Lessons which are merely satisfactory often have the pupils sitting and listening for too long, rather than doing something. Worksheets inhibit pupils when they think they do not have to write any more than nine lines, and only a few more able pupils see the need for extra paper to continue writing their story. In science, worksheets do not encourage pupils to think for themselves. Furthermore, the analysis of pupils' work in English, mathematics and science shows that there is considerable variation in the quality of presentation, which is often unsatisfactory. This is mainly a result of some pupils' weak vocabulary and other pupils' poor spelling, but also because of marking which fails to encourage good presentation. Although the quality of teachers' marking is much improved since the last inspection, when it was identified as an area for development, the best examples make clear to the pupil what is good about the work or what needs to be improved. Stickers for good work or good efforts are much appreciated by pupils and parents alike. Homework is also a regular part of pupils' learning and helps reinforce what has been taught at school. All these features do a great deal to help pupils make good progress throughout their time in the school.
22. The teaching of pupils with SEN is good. All teachers are aware of the pupils on the register of SEN and all make reference to the IEPs when planning their teaching. Teaching is informed and attention is given to ensuring that the set work is appropriate and progressive. Particularly notable features of the provision for pupils with SEN are the regular assessments of the progress that they make towards learning targets and the detailed, informed records kept of their progress. Teachers show patience and understanding and have high expectations of both the academic performance and the behaviour of pupils on the register of SEN. They are given very skilled assistance from the well-qualified, experienced and committed support staff. The combined attention of teachers and support staff has a positive impact upon the progress that the pupils make. Teachers are extremely positive about integrating pupils with SEN into classes. There is never any hint of discrimination. In fact, many pupils are very willing to support their classmates with praise and kindness. This does a great deal to raise pupils' self-esteem and contributes greatly to equal opportunities for all in a school where everyone is included.

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

23. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage and both key stages is appropriately broad and balanced and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. The provision for religious education meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The last inspection found that the planning for English did not sufficiently promote reading; there was no policy for mathematics and the planning for design and technology was unsatisfactory. All these issues have been addressed effectively, which indicates considerable improvement. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good overall. Planning is differentiated to meet the needs of all pupils and, in the main, ensures that there are progression and continuity in the learning of pupils of different ages and abilities. Appropriate time is allocated to each subject and aspect of the curriculum, with suitable emphasis being placed upon the delivery of literacy and numeracy.
24. There is good provision for pupils with SEN, which is a marked improvement on the findings of the last inspection. Pupils are provided with well-constructed IEPs, and the targets set for improvement are clear, attainable and regularly reviewed in order to meet specific needs. Pupils get good support from teaching and support staff; they have a broad and balanced curriculum and most make good progress towards meeting individual learning targets.
25. The planning to deliver the basic skills in English and mathematics is satisfactory overall and the strategies for teaching numeracy and literacy skills are good. However, the use of mathematics across all subjects is underdeveloped. Schemes of work and policies are now in place for all subjects and provide effective guidelines for ensuring the appropriateness of pupils' learning.
26. Detailed long-term plans are in place which reflect the content of the schemes of work. Medium-term planning within year groups is satisfactory. Planning for the shorter term is completed regularly and plans are drawn up which identify appropriate activities to support learning. Weekly plans, particularly for literacy and numeracy, give ample detail about the content and progression of lessons. The school has a policy for teaching the more able pupils with pupils in the year group above. Planning for these pupils is equally comprehensive and their curriculum is adapted to ensure equality of opportunity.
27. The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is satisfactory. Sex education is taught within the context of family relationships and together with drugs education is covered through science and personal, social and health education. Personal development is promoted on a day-to-day basis through the good care and attention that staff pay to all pupils. Overall, the curriculum successfully promotes the school's caring ethos and the intellectual, physical and personal development of the pupils. It prepares pupils appropriately for the next stage of their education, and the very good links with partner institutions ensure the effective transfer of pupils at the Foundation Stage and at the end of Year 4, when pupils move on to the middle school.
28. A good range of extra-curricular activities including French, dance, board games, music, art, and games skills enhances the curriculum and widens learning opportunities. Many pupils join these clubs, and teachers are involved in their organisation. Parents are happy with the wide range of activities offered. The curriculum is further enhanced and enriched by visiting performers, visits to theatres and museums, and an annual residential French study visit.

29. The provision overall for SEN is good. Currently there are no pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need. Reference to the register of SEN and to IEPs, and discussions with SENCO, class teachers and learning support assistants indicate that most pupils are making good progress towards meeting their individual learning targets. Provision is good for those pupils who have specific learning difficulties in English and mathematics. The provision for those pupils who have behavioural and physical difficulties is equally comprehensive and detailed, and they make the same good progress towards targets set.
30. The SENCO is relatively inexperienced, but she is enthusiastic and diligent in her co-ordinating role. She ensures that all pupils have access to any necessary support and that their needs are met in lessons. She liaises well with fellow teachers and is in regular contact with external agencies such as the Learning Support Service, the educational psychology service, the audiology service, social services and relevant medical practices. Early contact is made with all parents as soon as concerns are noted about their children, and there is evidence of parental involvement in all stages of the Code of Practice.
31. The organisation and the quality of the records kept by the school, including the register of SEN, are very good. Individual education plans, compiled by the co-ordinator in consultation with the class teachers, are reviewed regularly and learning targets modified accordingly. The overall quality of the IEPs is good. They are detailed and clear, and give precise, attainable learning targets.
32. Generally, pupils' attitudes to learning are good. The behaviour of those pupils without specific behavioural difficulties is good. They respond well to their teachers and learning support assistants. The response of other pupils towards pupils with SEN is also good. Special educational needs' status appears to have no negative effect on relationships. Taking account of and recognising differences in pupils are significant factors in the success of the school.
33. Overall, the provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
34. The provision for pupils' social development is very good and they are all very well supported. Teachers clearly demonstrate respect for pupils, including those with SEN, and take every opportunity to increase their self-esteem. Pupils are encouraged to respect each other, to form constructive relationships and to work together collaboratively. The promotion and provision of values such as friendship and caring for others are an important part of the school ethos. Pupils raise money for a range of charities, including the Poppy Appeal. This teaches them about their responsibility to both the local and the wider community. All classes have a range of monitors with jobs such as distributing and collecting books, and pupils help with the organisation of the daily assemblies. A 'Buddy' system encourages older pupils to supervise younger ones, and their social development is strengthened by the warm relationships between adults and pupils. Pupils' social confidence is further developed by welcoming visitors to the school, by taking part in extra-curricular activities, and by the annual residential visit to France.
35. The school places a high priority on equipping pupils with a clear set of moral values. This encourages good behaviour, and ensures that teachers, support staff and parents have a consistent attitude and high expectations. The adults in the school are very good role models. Pupils learn from their example that it is important to value and respect other people, and they develop a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong.

36. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory, and is promoted appropriately through planned collective worship. The daily assemblies are thoughtfully prepared and delivered. Pupils are given opportunities to consider the purpose and value of prayer, and gain knowledge and insight into the values and beliefs of other people. However, apart from this there are not enough planned opportunities across the curriculum to promote spiritual awareness, and opportunities are missed to give pupils a sense of awe and wonder in response to the world around them.
37. The school is successful in promoting pupils' appreciation of their own cultural traditions through its planned provision in curricular areas such as history, art and geography. It has put in place a four-yearly cycle of events that develop the curriculum through visits to places of interest and visits from different people and groups. For example, pupils visit Henlow Grange and Verulamium, and the school has musicians, writers and dancers as guests. This represents an improvement since the last inspection, when the provision for cultural development was found to be unsatisfactory. Art displays include examples of pupils' work in the style of different artists. A particularly attractive millennium mural made by Year 4 pupils represents aspects of local culture and history. However, lessons and displays do not provide pupils with sufficient opportunity to celebrate the wide diversity of cultures within Britain and the wider world or emphasise the contribution they have made to art and literature.

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

38. Overall, the procedures for the care and welfare of pupils are satisfactory. This judgement is consistent with that of last inspection. The school has a sound Christian ethos, staff know pupils very well and pastoral care has a high priority. Pupils feel nurtured and secure. Procedures for accidents, illnesses and medicines are very good and sufficient staff have current first-aid qualifications. However, the child-protection arrangements are unsatisfactory and being reviewed. A new child-protection co-ordinator has recently been designated, a policy and procedures are being written and further training is planned.
39. Health and safety procedures are good. The key issue from the last inspection relating to the perimeter fence and interior hazards has been resolved. Health, safety and related policies are well structured and staff have a good awareness of health and safety matters. Cleanliness and hygiene within the school are very good and hazardous substances are properly managed. All equipment and appliance inspections are in-date. Risk inspections are carried out and emergency evacuations practised. The retention of attendance registers in classrooms is to change.
40. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are good. Circle time, during which pupils express themselves freely, is used to develop their confidence and self-image, while class and assembly discussions on topics such as bullying broaden their worldly understanding. Pupils' efforts and achievements are recognised in merit certificates at celebratory assemblies. Staff closely monitor pupils who have personal or social difficulties and give them good support as they move through the school. Lunch seating plans ensure that all pupils relate easily to their peers. To help younger pupils become more mature and self-assured they are given classroom duties like tidying books and sharpening pencils. Older pupils have more challenging tasks to exercise their increased personal and collective responsibility, supervising play-area equipment and helping in assemblies being examples. Older pupils also go on residential visits and assist with charitable collections.

41. Since the last inspection the school's procedures for monitoring and improving attendance have improved and are now very good. The school actively promotes very good attendance, and pupils' absences and punctuality are carefully checked. Most parents observe the absence procedure and ensure that their children arrive at school on time. The school contacts any parents who do not follow the proper procedures. Application forms for pupils taking holidays in term time properly emphasise the educational disadvantages of such holidays. Although attendance registers are generally well kept, some do not clearly identify the reasons for pupils' absences. Closer monitoring is intended.
42. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour continue to be good. The behaviour policy, to which pupils contribute, suitably defines standards and expectations and reinforces the importance of positive behaviour. It includes a balanced range of rewards and sanctions which are implemented by staff with consistency and common sense. The policy is supplemented by a code of conduct which is prominently displayed. Instances of unacceptable behaviour are discussed with the pupils concerned. Playtimes are well supervised and wet weather arrangements are good. The school's procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are good and no groups or individuals are unfairly treated or disadvantaged. The equal opportunities and multicultural policies are fully inclusive. The school has no anti-bullying policy, but its attitudes are forthright and pupils are well aware that any signs of abuse, harassment or aggression will be dealt with firmly.
43. The school's procedures for monitoring and assessing pupils' academic progress are good overall and have improved significantly since the last inspection, when assessment procedures were judged to be insecure and the lack of a marking policy was considered to be a weakness. The procedures for monitoring and assessing pupils' progress in English and mathematics are very good. The school now carefully tracks progress through the results of national tests, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority optional tests, and others such as SPAR and non-verbal tests. The information gathered is carefully analysed, collated and used well to provide an overall picture of achievement by individuals and different groups of pupils. Subsequently individual and group learning targets are set and the progress made by each pupil throughout the school is recorded. The school uses an Excel-based program for obtaining a detailed overview of targets and results. Teachers maintain a wide range of information about pupils' attainment in their record books and consequently have a clear picture of individual achievement, which they use to plan future work. Pupils are encouraged to refer to their agreed targets when completing written work and teachers use the achievement of particular targets as indicators of pupils' progress in relation to national targets. Targets for pupils with SEN are reviewed regularly.

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

44. Parents' views of the school have continued to be very positive. Opinions expressed at the parents' meeting, through the parents' questionnaires and during the inspection indicate that they very strongly support the school's provision for their children. Parents say that the school is well led and managed, teaching is good, and their children work hard and make good progress. They confirm that their children enjoy school, they are becoming more responsible and mature and their behaviour is good. Parents add that they are happy with home-school links and the information they receive about children's progress. They find it easy to approach staff with questions and problems. They support the amount of homework their children are given and are content with the range of school activities outside lessons. Evidence gained during the inspection upheld these views.

45. Since the last inspection the school's partnership with parents has further improved. The effectiveness of its links is now very good and a strength of the school. The parent-teacher association is thriving and attracts wide support for its fund raising and social events. The home-school partnership agreement properly emphasises mutual commitment and parents comply with their undertakings.
46. The quality of information provided for parents, including that on pupils' progress, is good. Parents receive regular newsletters which keep them up to date with school activities. There are two annual parents' evenings and staff are readily available to speak to parents at any time. School reports provide a good commentary on pupils' efforts and achievements and they include clear targets for improvement. They do not give a synopsis of the curriculum or allow space for pupils' comments. The parents' handbook is comprehensive and clear, and imparts very useful information. It meets statutory requirements. The key issue from the last inspection about the governors' annual report has not been fully addressed. The report is well structured, but it does not mention the last OFSTED report and, more importantly, insufficient information is given about the arrangements for pupils with SEN.
47. Parents' involvement in the work of the school has also improved and is now very good and another strong feature. The school greatly values the part parents play in pupils' education and encourages their interest in all aspects of school life. Parents respond well. Many assist in classes, accompany educational visits and work in their own time to improve facilities such as the adventure area. Parents support school occasions and some take part in extra-curricular activities. Home-school reading diaries are kept and parents help their children with homework. Parents of pupils with SEN work very closely with staff in drawing up and implementing individual plans. Most parents fully understand the importance of their role in reinforcing the school's education of their children and they are very happy to contribute both to the learning process and to the life of the school. Pupils' attainment and learning benefit accordingly.

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

48. The headteacher's leadership is very good. She gives clear educational direction and is committed to school improvement. She is very good at evaluating the work of the school, and keeping a high focus on standards and the raising of pupils' achievements. All the staff and the governing body support her well and there is a strong team ethos. This has enabled the school to move forward quickly since the last inspection and to address the last set of key issues. The school has also been able to identify the priorities for further development and is in a good position to make decisions about any future improvements it considers necessary.
49. Raynsford School has a sound Christian ethos and clear aims and values. Staff know pupils very well and pastoral care has a high priority. Pupils feel nurtured and secure. There is a commitment to good relationships, the school is welcoming to visitors and all feel very proud of their school. The headteacher has been very effective in delegating curriculum responsibilities to all members of staff. This has clarified the role and the status of the curriculum co-ordinators who now lead, monitor and evaluate the work in subject areas. The effect has been that standards in teaching have been raised and pupils' achievements and test results are much higher. Indeed, last year's test results were very high and a testament to the very good work in this area.
50. The SENCO is very effective and knowledgeable. The management of the work for pupils with SEN is good. The Code of Practice is being implemented effectively and assessment

of these pupils' progress is carried out regularly. There are good links with external agencies.

51. Overall, governors are much better organised than they were at the time of the last inspection. The chair of governors is very well informed about the curriculum, visits the school regularly and works in partnership with the headteacher. They work together as a good team. Other members of the governing body carry out their work assiduously. They make an effective contribution to the running of the school and help the headteacher make improvements. The school development plan is a good example of how the headteacher and governors work together. The governors are guided by the headteacher's professional knowledge, and after the developments have been planned the governing body discuss the strategy to achieve its aims.
52. The governor attending to the financial aspects of school development planning is clearly ready to assist the headteacher in her work. All grants and extra money are used appropriately, and this has a direct impact on the provision for the pupils in the school. There is an increased workload on the team now that the school is fully funded by the LEA. However, the results of the most recent audit reflect the school's willingness to improve and gain even tighter control over its resources. The generous reserves are suitably accounted for, as the governors are aware that they need to be prepared for making roof repairs and replacing old central-heating boilers. Finances are well linked to the school development plan, and each month the headteacher monitors the school's spending and passes on the information to the chair of the finance committee. 'Best value'<sup>5</sup> for goods and services obtained is achieved because the school enlists the assistance of a bursar. The local education authority provides information so that the school can compare itself with similar schools in the authority and gives it a good benchmark against which to compare spending levels. Furthermore, the good work of the school secretary is unobtrusive and helpful to the smooth running of the school and the school office. Statutory requirements are met, except for some minor omissions in the governors' annual report to parents.
53. The strength of the headteacher's leadership lies in her emphasis on the importance of raising standards through the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching in the classrooms. Her use of data and the rigour with which she tracks pupils' achievements are a great influence on the way the school approaches its work. This has improved greatly since the last inspection and accounts for the continuous, sustained improvement in standards over the last three years. The school now has effective systems in place for staff appraisal and performance management. Staff targets are suitably linked to the school's priorities for development. The governing body carries out regular development reviews with the headteacher, who has met the performance-management targets in the last year. The induction of new staff is very good and the school's involvement in the registered teacher programme with Luton University is an exciting initiative. A rigorous programme of assessment and monitoring is carried out. Meetings, observations and assignments are regularly completed and matched to the competencies required to complete the programme towards qualified-teacher status.
54. There are a good number of teaching and support staff to deliver the National Curriculum. Some class sizes are small. The school's successful decision to become involved in the registered teacher programme enables it to keep classes small, but has also made it possible for registered teachers to take part in interesting research initiatives relevant to the school's development. This has created an ethos of learning amongst all staff, who

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<sup>5</sup> 'Best value' covers four principles (comparing, challenging, consulting and competing) to ensure that the school is receiving the best value for money when it uses its financial resources.



regularly involve themselves in educational development and courses relevant to the school's advancement. In addition, the school also employs a librarian, a French teacher, and a musician to teach the clarinet, flute and violin. All these opportunities enhance the curriculum the pupils receive.

55. The accommodation for the school is good. It is clean and well cared for by the site manager. There is adequate space for pupils to learn in and the outside facilities are spacious and pleasant. The school has wisely planned to work with parents to make these areas more attractive for the pupils. Learning resources are satisfactory overall, and there is a good range of computer software available to support the way pupils learn. Effective use is made of ICT throughout the school. The playground equipment for the very youngest children is adequate but well worn and well used. However, plans to improve all outside facilities are well in hand.
56. Taking into account the high standards pupils attain, the overall good quality of teaching, the way the school cares for pupils, the very good links there are with parents and the very good leadership of the headteacher, the school gives good value for money.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE?

There are no major areas for improvement. However, the headteacher, governors and staff should consider:

1. improving pupils' handwriting and spelling<sup>6</sup> so that they:
  - learn to write in a well-formed and neat style, and learn to join their writing at the appropriate stage;
  - have the skills to spell correctly;
  - improve their presentation and take more pride in their work;
  - have more opportunities to organise their own work without depending too heavily on the guidelines of worksheets;
2. developing the assessment procedures in the foundation subjects so that they are as good as those in the core subjects;
3. clarifying the new arrangements for the school's child-protection procedures so that:
  - all staff are clear about who to contact about child-protection issues; and
  - all staff are clear about what to do when there is an incident involving the protection of children.

*(see paragraphs 19, 21, 38, 73, 75 and 97)*

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<sup>6</sup> It is acknowledged that the school is already considering making improvements in pupils' spelling and that this is part of the school development plan.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	32
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	13

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	2	17	9	2	0	0
Percentage	6	6	54	28	6	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	n/a	124
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	n/a	10

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	n/a	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	n/a	22

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	2.7
National comparative data	5.6

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	12	10

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	11	12
	Girls	10	10	10
	Total	21	21	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	95 (89)	95 (89)	100 (100)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	12	12
	Girls	10	10	10
	Total	22	22	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (90)	100 (90)	100 (100)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

### Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	122
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

### Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	5.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23
Average class size	22.2

**Education support staff: YR – Y4**

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	92

**Financial information**

Financial year	2000-2001
	£
Total income	249,671
Total expenditure	224,555
Expenditure per pupil	2,364
Balance brought forward from previous year	10,377
Balance carried forward to next year	35,493

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.4
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	124
Number of questionnaires returned	57

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	70	28	0	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	74	21	2	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	56	42	0	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	53	44	2	0	2
The teaching is good.	81	18	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	67	21	9	0	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	86	14	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	81	18	0	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	53	35	11	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	67	32	0	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	70	26	0	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	51	37	4	0	9

### Summary of parents' and carers' responses

There are no significant areas to comment upon.

## **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**

57. Since the last inspection, the arrangements for children in this stage have become well established. Parents are very supportive and happy about their children starting their school life at Raynsford. The quality of education for children in the Foundation Stage is good and provides them with a good start for the next stage of their education.
58. There are three times during the year when children can be admitted, initially on a part-time basis the term after they are four years of age, building up to a full-time placement after the child's fifth birthday. The school's organisational arrangements are very flexible so that it can cater for the needs of the individual child more carefully. This means that some children move to the reception and Year 1 class to be taught with the older pupils. The good support that they get in this class enables children to work more intensively on the 'stepping stones' which identify the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes that they need to achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Foundation Stage. Although the Bedfordshire County baseline test judges children as coming to school with standards below or well below expectations in comparison with those in similar schools in the county, they make good progress and reach the Early Learning Goals in all areas by the time they come to the end of the Foundation Stage. This is because the quality of teaching, and the support from classroom assistants and volunteer helpers are good. All staff working with these children have a good rapport with one another and a good knowledge of what is needed in order for young children to learn effectively and make good progress. Good teaching and learning are characterised by:
- the very good relationships between staff and children, and between the children themselves;
  - good planning which clearly identifies what teachers want children to learn;
  - good questioning which encourages the children to think carefully about what they are learning, why they are learning it and whether they feel they have learnt something new;
  - very good day-to-day assessments; for example, post-it notes and notes recorded in a notebook to which all staff can contribute, and which are helpful to the teachers in keeping track of how the children are progressing;
  - very good tracking systems (a traffic-light method) which record children's progress towards the Early Learning Goals;
  - good ways to help the children behave and participate in the activities offered in the early years classrooms.
59. Minor areas for development include allowing children to be even more independent in demanding situations such as collecting and putting away games equipment, and in allowing more time in games lessons for them to practise new skills.

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

60. By the end of the Foundation Stage children meet the Early Learning Goals in their personal and social development. They understand the class and school routines, and staff have high expectations for behaviour and learning. Children are able to go to the toilet independently and know why they must wash their hands afterwards. They listen well to adults when they are sitting on the carpet during story times, work well together, share resources, help one another and talk sensibly about the work they have been asked to

complete. This is seen when two children take turns at the computer whilst using the Internet to find out about different breeds of bear. The support assistant asked the children to continue their work independently and sit and discuss the picture of a brown bear they had found on the Internet. The children work happily together, one pointing out the forest background seen in the picture. They play amicably together in the 'Three Bears' Cottage', at the water trough, at the sand tray and with the play-dough. In the reception and Year 1 class, the youngest children get changed for games independently and line up sensibly and without fuss before they go into the hall. In creative activities, they think for themselves and decide how to make a bear from the junk materials provided for them. The children in the Foundation Stage work in a calm and friendly atmosphere where adults make them feel secure. This makes them confident learners.

### **Communication, language and literacy**

61. Most children meet the Early Learning Goals in this area by the end of the Foundation Stage. Many listen attentively and are confident when talking about their work or their experiences. Although there are some with less clear speech and with speech problems, they are not reluctant to respond eagerly to questions. They want to talk about their families and enjoy listening to one another's stories about their mums, dads, brothers and sisters. Some children know the alphabet and the associated phonetic sounds for reading. The strategy of linking actions to the 'sounds' of letters of alphabet is very successful and teachers constantly use this method to help children with their reading. Children know that an author writes stories and are beginning to understand about sequencing of events; for example, they can sequence the events in the story of 'The Three Bears'. They recognise important words in the story because they learn about the 'ch' sound and are able to read the word 'chair'. Teachers have good methods to encourage children to write. Their small homemade books about 'The Three Bears' are illustrated carefully and give children the opportunity to develop their writing skills as they copy under the teacher's writing. They know the importance of being able to communicate with one another through modern technology. Their Internet messages, fax messages and hand-written messages on display show the teacher's awareness of the importance of introducing children to different ways of sending messages. Children take home reading books and 'word-pots' to share with their family. When parents help their children to practise their reading and comment in the reading record books, children improve their skills and confidence in reading.
62. The quality of the teaching of language and literacy for the children in this stage is good and most make good progress. Teachers have a good understanding of the National Literacy Strategy and teach it well to meet the needs of these youngest children. Planning is effective and lessons are at a good pace to hold the children's interest. Staff use questioning effectively to develop children's skills and understanding. This was seen in activities such as the discussion about families. In the best situations staff interact and intervene with each child to raise standards. There are many opportunities for children to talk together, read and write which all contribute to them working in a stimulating language environment.

### **Mathematical development**

63. The majority of children are likely to reach the expected levels by the end of the Foundation Stage. The teacher supports learning in mathematics with a wide variety of resources and experiences, and no opportunity is lost to reinforce number work in a variety of ways. Children make sound and sometimes good progress in counting skills, number recognition and mathematical language when they read about Goldilocks in the bears' cottage. Some know names of common shapes such as 'triangle', 'circle', and 'square'. They begin to



use non-standard measures in capacity and volume, and learn to compare size; for example, the size of the furniture in the bears' house. When playing with large plastic-covered dominoes in the hall, most children match the spots and match the numbers to the appropriate piece. They show that they are becoming confident in understanding 'zero' and concepts such as 'more than' and 'less than'. All the staff working with Foundation Stage children teach mathematics very well. The dominoes game successfully allows the teachers to build on what the children learn in the lesson and to progress naturally to simple addition. In both classes and all group activities the emphasis is on practical experience and talking about what children are doing and what they know and understand. Teachers plan in detail, with clear learning objectives, and they have a very good understanding of the National Numeracy Strategy and how to teach it to young children, building on the knowledge of what the children know and can do.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

64. By the end of the Foundation Stage, children meet the expectations of the Early Learning Goals. They talk about themselves and their family with an understanding of different generations and the relationships between them. They know that families celebrate special occasions together such as weddings and birthday parties. They learn about fruit and vegetables and healthy eating. After reading the 'Three Bears' story, they make porridge to observe the 'changes', and are able to describe the sequence of events. Good teaching is evident because the teacher allows the children to experiment and put too much liquid in the porridge mixture. The children know it is wrong. However, the finished result is tasty and adults are invited to taste the porridge that is 'just right'!
65. Children develop good skills in design and technology. They make models of bears that they have learnt about, play with play-dough and make cakes. Most children know how to use the computer mouse and are becoming well acquainted with using the Internet to carry out their own research. Teachers provide a wide range of exciting activities that fully engage the children's interest.

### **Creative development**

66. By the end of the Foundation Stage, children's creative development is good and most are on line to meet the requirements of the Early Learning Goals. They paint and draw using a variety of media. Previous work covered shows that they are beginning to understand art techniques such as the effect of a paint wash over drawings in wax crayons. Activities are well linked to literacy themes, and children paint pictures of polar bears and brown bears. They explore the sound of percussion instruments and are able to demonstrate 'long' and 'short' sounds, and repeat the patterns played to them. Teacher's good questioning techniques keep children interested. The quality of teaching and learning is good for all children. Interesting and exciting creative activities are planned within the curricular themes, which link well to other areas of learning. This is good and makes the curricular provision for children cohesive and meaningful.

### **Physical development**

67. By the end of the Foundation Stage children's physical development is good. They meet the requirements of the Early Learning Goals and some exceed them. They move confidently with good body control, co-ordination and awareness of space when working in the hall on physical warm-up activities. Children learn to evaluate how they are getting on. Most can throw under-arm and control their aim. The reception children improve their throwing and catching skills because they work with pupils in Year 1. They begin to join in a team game and soon realise the importance of taking turns and running to the back of

the team line so that the next person can have their turn. In the playground, children run and kick balls and manoeuvre wheeled vehicles with ease. They have good opportunities in these activities to develop their personal and social skills. Teachers successfully encourage children to be friends and help one another. Children have appropriate hand control for their age; they can build models with construction kits, and use modelling tools, pencils, paintbrushes and scissors as expected for their age group. The quality of teaching is good. The staff are aware of safety at all times during physical education activities and expect high standards of behaviour from the children, including cooperation and awareness of others. There is an appropriate range of apparatus and equipment for children in the Foundation Stage. However, much of the playground equipment is tired, well used and in need of replacing.

## ENGLISH

68. Observations during the inspection showed that, overall, pupils' attainment in English is just above average at the end of Key Stage 1. It is above average by the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4. This is an improvement since the last inspection and indicates that the school has taken into account the areas for improvement identified in the last report.
69. National test results have been high over the last three years and show that pupils make good and often very good progress from the time they come into school and join the nursery/reception class. This is because the school has very good assessment procedures and teachers are good at tracking how well pupils achieve during their time in the school. Indeed, targets for English for the year 2002 are challenging but the school has very good strategies for checking on how individual pupils are doing. This means that teachers are quick to intervene if pupils do not maintain the hoped-for progress. Furthermore, the school's organisational strategies are flexible. The arrangement of the classes does a great deal to cater for the individual needs of each pupil and promotes high attainment. For example, there are mixed classes throughout the school and the more able seven year olds (the Year 2 pupils) work with the Year 3 pupils; more able eight year olds (the Year 3 pupils) work with the Year 4 pupils. There is also good provision for pupils with SEN, and these pupils are included at all times and without discrimination. They make good progress in relation to the targets set for them in their IEPs.
70. Pupils' attainment in speaking and listening meets expectations and is sometimes above that level by the time they are seven years old and nine years old. There is a wide range of achievement across the school. Pupils are not reluctant to talk or offer their ideas because teachers have good relationships with them and value their views. This is seen in many lessons when teachers regularly ask pupils to evaluate how they have got on. Pupils are very clear about reporting back to the teacher on whether they have met the lesson objective and whether they feel they have learnt something new. Whether it is in a physical education lesson or a design and technology lesson, pupils learn to give their opinions. For example, Year 1 pupils were able to talk about the good strategies their friends had for throwing and catching the beanbags. 'They have to aim well!' 'They've got to concentrate!' 'They must use their eyes and their hands!' In an excellent dance lesson with Year 4 pupils, the teacher created an atmosphere of tension and anticipation as pupils explained how the music made them feel. One boy expressed his response to the music from 'The Planet of the Apes' as,

*'It was like a one-man war – I was the man – I was the man trying to save all mankind!'*

71. Pupils wanted to talk and tell their teacher how they were feeling, and in situations like these teaching and learning are very good. In a very good literacy lesson in Year 4, pupils became more confident and articulate as the lesson proceeded. The teacher's very good choice of text engaged the pupils in an in-depth analysis of adjectives and adverbs. Pupils were able to appreciate the author's strategy for creating tension in the text through the use of adjectives and were able to offer alternatives and suggestions in preparation for their own story writing. At one point, such was the atmosphere that all pupils and two other adults in the classroom had stopped to listen to the story and pupils' responses! In lessons where the pace and challenge diminish and the lesson takes a long time to get started, pupils do not listen well to the teacher and do not volunteer answers. On these occasions a significant minority of pupils become badly behaved and slow the lesson even more. When teachers are not insistent on complete attention, pupils do not achieve as well as they can and do not speak up so confidently.
72. Standards in reading are average and sometimes above average at Key Stage 1. Standards are above average by the time pupils are nine years old. The school uses a structured reading scheme to help pupils learn to read. Sounds made by individual letters and by groups of letters are thoroughly taught in literacy time and teachers pay good attention to the teaching of grammar and punctuation to help pupils improve their reading and writing. In Years 1 and 2, more able pupils read confidently and with expression. They can talk about the characters in the story and about the plot. They have a good sight vocabulary and strategies for tackling unknown words. Average-attaining pupils rely more on the picture clues to help them read the text but are not so confident in blending the sounds to make sense of the words they are trying to read. Readers in Year 2 who are struggling need constant reassurance and assistance all the time whilst they are reading. Some make wild guesses at the text which are not at all justified phonetically. Differences in attainment levels are wide and none of the Year 1 pupils in the sample reading group considered it necessary to read 'out of school'! Some pupils in Year 2, however, were able to talk about the books they have at home. They develop more confidence and accuracy in their reading as they progress through the school and comprehension is better. Overall, standards are above average in Year 3 and in Year 4. Pupils are more confident, and read with more expression and accuracy. They show that they are more aware of the content and the characters in the stories. Although Year 3 pupils were not completely sure about the way the library is classified, the nine year olds were excited and enthusiastic about the computerisation of their own classroom library. This initiative has done a great deal to interest pupils in books and in acting as librarians for their classmates.
73. Standards in writing and handwriting are wide and varied at the end of the key stage. They are above average by the time pupils are ready to leave the school. Although pupils are not reluctant to write in Year 2, they are often careless about how they copy down words and in the presentation of their work. For example, in a Year 2 literacy lesson, pupils were given words on display to help them write their story, but many did not take enough care to make sure they copied down the words correctly. Most tend to rush their work and are careless about simple words such as 'house' ('hows), 'live' ('liv'), 'lots' ('los') 'they' ('thay' 'tay'), 'come' ('cum'). In one or two cases, words are spelt correctly at the beginning of the story and incorrectly a few lines down. Letter shapes are poorly formed, letters do not sit on the line and there is little understanding of how letters with ascenders and descenders should be written. Indeed, standards are not high enough for the end of Key Stage 1, as a few pupils do not write their letters the right way round. They write 'unber' for 'under'. Others write capitals in the middle of words; for example, 'volCanoe', 'MABe', 'KNights'. Although most are becoming used to using simple punctuation, such as using a capital letter at the beginning of the sentence and using a full stop at the end, many at the end of this stage are not confident.

74. When pupils join up their writing, their spelling and handwriting tend to be better and this has a good effect on the quality of their story writing. In cases where teachers do not insist on good presentation and care with handwriting, standards fall. Furthermore, when pupils have a worksheet to write their story on, too much time is spent on drawing the picture and not enough on writing the story. Teaching is only satisfactory because the focus on the objectives of the lesson is weakened and pupils do not make as much progress as they should. Worksheets inhibit pupils when they think they do not have to write any more than nine lines, and only a few more able pupils needed extra paper to continue writing their story.
75. Standards in writing, handwriting and spelling improve in Key Stage 2. Pupils are getting better at using what they learn in their spelling and handwriting lessons in other areas of their work. However, some pupils in this age group are still not making fast enough progress at writing in a flowing, joined handwriting style. A few are still careless when writing simple words, such as 'where' when 'were' is needed, and 'whith' for 'with'. Presentation is still not as good as it should be and again, when copying words already given, some pupils are careless and write 'arfter' for 'after'.
76. Although the standards of spelling and handwriting affect pupils' achievements, by the time they come to Year 4, many show that they are more accurate in these areas and that they have made good progress. Very good and sometimes excellent teaching in story writing culminates in pupils being able to produce well-presented work in a joined script that is readable. Stories such as 'The Pied Piper' and texts from the 'Goosebumps' series hold the pupils' attention. Teaching is good when the objective of the lesson is very clear and the pupils can assess whether they have made progress in learning what the teacher wanted them to learn. Teachers are good at using the texts to illustrate the authors' means of creating tension in a story. Pupils are awakened to how they are enticed by the author to use all their senses, a strategy for heightening a physical response to 'spooky stories'! This is excellent, and pupils offer their own suggestions for creating atmosphere in their own writing: -

*'The dust in my lungs makes my tummy churn.'  
'.....and then the light flickered and I could feel my skin tingling and turning tight!  
'I am starting to feel a little uneasy now.'*

77. Other pupils in the lesson are completely involved and remark, 'Oooh! I like that!'
78. Excellent teaching is seen when the work on story writing is built up over several sessions. Pupils want to work and enjoy what they are doing. They are willing learners and want to talk about their stories and share them with others in the class. They show that they have worked hard and learnt something new about creating tension in stories<sup>7</sup>: -

*Chris writes, 'The door slammed behind us. I tried to get the door back open but it just wouldn't budge. I tried to stay calm.....'*

*Gabbi writes, 'I stumbled towards the door.....there was something on the little table in the room. Beside it was liquid. Blood. Lots of blood.'*

*Charlotte writes, 'You smell a sickish smell. You start to feel frightened. All of a sudden you feel something is watching you in the gloomy room. You hear a rustling in the air. You shudder and get a shiver down your spine. Then you feel liquid in your hand.....'*

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<sup>7</sup> The registered inspector thanks the pupils in Year 4 for their willingness to give some examples of their work to be included in the report.

*Adam writes, 'I can also smell a faint cheesy smell coming from across the hall. The cheesy smell was like the long-lost perfume just been used!'*

79. Overall, ICT is used well to support pupils in their English. It is better in Key Stage 2, when teachers plan carefully to link the activity to the work going on in the lesson. Key Stage 2 pupils are adept at using the thesaurus to choose alternative words from a given list, and are able to build up their vocabulary to help with story writing. Overall, homework is very useful and helps pupils reinforce what has been learnt at school.
80. The management of the English curriculum is good. The strengths lie in the work that co-ordinators do in the classrooms when monitoring the teaching and learning. This has a good effect on the standards pupils achieve because colleagues support one another and offer areas for improvement.

## **MATHEMATICS**

81. At the time of the last inspection in 1997, standards in mathematics were average at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Key Stage 2. The results of the 2001 national assessments indicated that attainment was well above average at Year 2. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Standards seen during the inspection judge pupils' attainment to be above average at both key stages.
82. Throughout the school the start of each lesson is successful in developing pupils' mental agility with numbers. Pupils enthusiastically take part in activities which enhance their abilities to work with numbers quickly and accurately when solving mental calculations. At the end of lessons, plenary sessions are used effectively to remind pupils of the tasks they have completed, and allow them to discuss and share their own learning.
83. The National Numeracy Strategy is fully in place and is taught consistently and well. Attainment in the mental and oral aspects of mathematics through the National Numeracy Strategy is good, and is having a positive impact on standards. Throughout Key Stage 1 and Years 3 and 4 pupils are making good progress and achieving well. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection, which found the progress of pupils in Year 4 to be unsatisfactory. As a consequence of the good organisation of the SENCO and the high-quality support given by teaching assistants, pupils with SEN make equally good progress.
84. Almost all Year 1 pupils are confident in ordering numbers to 20. The majority can count forwards and backwards to 100 in tens and many are confident with numbers up to 100. A group of pupils, with good support, quickly realise that to add nine to a number one adds ten and subtracts one. They understand the terms 'more' and 'less', and some pupils confidently add two numbers by holding the greatest and counting on. When using a 100-number square, more-able pupils recognise the pattern created when counting on or counting back in tens. They use this new information well to speed up their calculations. Year 2 pupils are reasonably secure in their understanding of odd and even numbers. They know that odd numbers end in 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9 and that any number ending in zero is even.
85. In conversation Year 2 pupils show that they can correctly name three-digit numbers and use their understanding of partition and place value to separate the numbers into hundreds, tens and units. From an analysis of pupils' work it can be seen that most understand how money is used and can make accurate addition and subtraction

calculations using 1p, 2p, 5p, 10p and 20p coins. They can read time to include quarter-hours and half-hours and understand the terms 'half' and 'quarter' as fractions.

86. Key Stage 2 pupils build upon the knowledge and understanding gained earlier. By following the National Numeracy Strategy they are systematically developing their skills in multiplication, division, addition and subtraction. Year 3 pupils are able to sort and allocate shapes using particular 'criteria', such as the number of sides, colour and whether they are curved or straight. Year 4 pupils show great enthusiasm when engaged in a game of strategy designed to reinforce understanding of terms such as 'product' and 'sum'. They show good understanding and above average attainment when using their mathematical understanding to complete a series of complex number sequences. Pupils respond positively to the numeracy targets that are set in their work books.
87. The quality of teaching is good overall, with a significant proportion of good and better teaching in Key Stage 2. In all the lessons seen the teaching was satisfactory or better. Where the better teaching takes place, lessons are thoughtfully planned and the plans contain clear learning intentions based upon the National Numeracy Strategy. They provide effectively for the differing needs of all pupils. The objectives are made clear to the pupils, who consequently know what they have to learn. Teachers' knowledge of the National Numeracy Strategy is good, and all show confidence in their teaching. The management of pupils and materials is good. Control is firm, but at the same time pupils feel confident and are eager to respond to questions. Pupils engage in class activities with obvious enthusiasm and enjoyment and teachers make the most of these sessions to provide opportunities for the practice and consolidation of skills.
88. Time and resources are used well and good use is made of homework to support learning. The effective use of questioning to focus attention and aid understanding and the constructive use of praise to motivate pupils are regular features of the good teaching. Whilst many instances of good oral feedback are observed, the analysis of pupils' work indicates that some marking, though regularly undertaken, consists mainly of ticks and crosses and there is insufficient use of constructive comments aimed at improving understanding and extending learning.
89. Very good procedures are in place to assess and track each pupil's attainment and progress throughout the school. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection, when the marking, assessment and recording of pupils' progress were found to be unsatisfactory.
90. The school has focused on raising and maintaining attainment in mathematics and the concentration on number, algebra, space, shape and measuring has raised standards considerably. However, standards in other aspects of mathematics are not as high. There is some use of mathematics across the curriculum, including the presentation of time lines and dates in history and the recording of observations in science. However, inspection evidence indicates that at both key stages the practice of using and applying mathematics is limited.
91. Although some data handling and problem solving are carried out in Key Stage 2, this aspect of mathematics is not as well developed as number work. Consequently pupils' ability to use and apply their mathematical knowledge in extended investigations across the curriculum is limited. Information and communication technology is used well to support pupils' learning in lessons, but its use in extending their mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding and displaying results in a variety of ways is underdeveloped.

92. The leadership of mathematics is good. The committed and enthusiastic co-ordinator is well qualified and her understanding and competence in the management of mathematics provide a valuable source of information for other staff. She has helped compile a detailed analysis of recent and past test results in mathematics. Standards have risen clearly since the previous inspection, in part as a result of the effective introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy. The current assessment procedures, targeting initiatives and monitoring of teaching are comprehensive and have had a very positive impact upon standards in mathematics. The practice of including more able pupils in the year group above them ensures that they are suitably challenged and achieve well. The current scheme of work for mathematics, based upon the National Numeracy Strategy and supported with material from another commercial scheme, provides for comprehensive long- and medium-term planning.

## SCIENCE

93. Standards in science are above those expected nationally at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Key Stage 2. In 2001, the statutory Key Stage 1 teacher assessments showed attainment to be well above that expected nationally. Inspections found that most seven and nine year olds are attaining standards above those expected nationally. The last inspection judged that pupils were attaining national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Key Stage 2. Standards have risen well since the last inspection as a result of improved teaching, more effective planning and the greater emphasis given to scientific enquiry.
94. The analysis of pupils' work shows that they make good progress at Key Stage 1 and achieve well from a low level of understanding on entry into the school. Younger pupils acquire appropriate scientific skills, knowledge and understanding and develop their previous knowledge throughout the key stage. Most seven and nine year old pupils achieve well during lessons because of good teaching, and the majority make good progress, effectively consolidating and extending their previous knowledge and understanding. Throughout the school pupils with SEN achieve well in comparison with their prior attainment. Teachers and skilful assistants support these pupils well in the classrooms. In the best lessons they are given modified, challenging work, which allows them equal access to the science curriculum.
95. Key Stage 1 pupils understand the difference between natural and manufactured materials. They know that some materials have greater absorption qualities than others and are able to carry out and record simple tests to show this. They are developing their understanding of electricity and test the conductivity of different materials. A scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that they are beginning to use their numeracy skills to represent their findings.
96. Key Stage 2 pupils have a good grasp of scientific ideas. They have some understanding of the need for consistency in a fair test and can make predictions which are relevant in experiments. Year 3 pupils use good scientific understanding to distinguish between the properties of solids and liquids, suggesting that force is necessary to change the shape of a solid, whilst a liquid adopts the shape of any container. Good scientific discussion revolved around a Year 4 lesson on solutions and filtration. Pupils show good understanding of soluble and insoluble solids when considering which equipment will make an efficient filter. There are many instances where it is clear that pupils have good scientific understanding but lack the necessary vocabulary to articulate clearly their perceptions.

97. The quality of teaching is good overall. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed. A number of strengths could account for the good progress that pupils make. These include good subject knowledge, good deployment of very competent teaching assistants and an emphasis on the more practical, scientific-enquiry aspects of science. In the majority of lessons teachers plan their work carefully. They set appropriate objectives and provide a suitable range of activities, including practical experimental work. Good use is made of their own secure subject knowledge and they adopt a range of challenging questions to focus pupils' attention and extend their thinking and understanding. Overall, the management of pupils in science is good. Teachers are competent in ensuring a smooth transfer from discussions to practical work, and time and resources are used efficiently. In one lesson on solids, liquids and gases the teacher made good links with prior learning and set very clear objectives. She also made good use of scientific vocabulary and encouraged pupils to make comments and predictions. As a result, the pupils were fully involved in the lesson and concentrated well. They moved quickly and confidently into classifying materials, using their time well and working at a productive pace. Teaching assistants give good support, particularly to those pupils with special educational needs. Where teaching has some shortcomings, the teacher's expectations are too low. Teachers provide pupils with too many photocopied sheets for recording work, and rely too heavily on textbook exercises. This reduces the opportunities pupils have for developing independence in learning. The analysis of pupils' work shows that there is considerable variation in the quality of presentation, but it is often unsatisfactory. This is mainly as a result of poor spelling and weak vocabulary but also of marking which fails to encourage good presentation.
98. The subject is well managed by the headteacher. She has good subject knowledge and is keen to improve the overall provision and standards in science. The school has prioritised the analysis of assessment procedures in science to show how standards might be improved further. Currently, the use of ICT and displays of pupils' work are not used sufficiently to enhance the profile of science across the curriculum.

## **ART AND DESIGN and DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

99. Standards at the last inspection judged art and design to be at least in line with expectations at Key Stage 1 and at the beginning of Key Stage 2, and below expectations at the end of Year 4. Standards in design and technology were below expectations in both key stages. Since that time there has been careful improvement in both subjects. The curriculum has been reviewed and co-ordinators have taken a much more effective role in supporting their colleagues in developing the subjects. Co-ordinators check teachers' planning and observe lessons. They give helpful advice to improve lessons and have collected evidence of pupils' work. All these factors have helped to raise standards.
100. Due to timetabling arrangements it was only possible to observe one lesson in art and design and one lesson in design and technology in Key Stage 1. It is difficult to make a firm judgement on the standards that pupils attain in these subjects. However, evidence from teachers' planning and records, displays and discussions with subject co-ordinators support the judgement that standards in these two subjects are in line with those usually found in most schools.
101. In an art lesson in Year 1, pupils investigate the way different materials create different effects. They can cut material and paste the pieces to make the shape of trees. They enhance their work by 'scrunching up', 'screwing up', folding and placing materials one on top of another to create depth and texture in their work. They are well used to evaluating how successful they have been and are not afraid to say how to improve their work. In



these instances teaching is good and pupils know what they are doing, why they are doing it and what they want to achieve. Other evidence around the school, in classrooms and in photographs, shows that pupils have covered a suitable range of work. For example, they have painted and used collage to make a large picture of Dick Whittington; they have illustrated their winter poems, made mosaic portraits, worked with clay to make attractive tiles, and used the computer to make 'dazzle' patterns.

102. In design and technology, the artist in residence successfully assisted pupils in creating a very attractive wall hanging of the village of Henlow, to celebrate the turn of the century. This has done much to raise the profile of the subject and give pupils a great sense of achievement. In the lesson seen, pupils in Year 2 follow up their work completed on the computer and set out to make a tile decorated with a repeat pattern. The teacher's good choice of materials and wrapping papers helps pupils to prepare. Most are able to use a variety of material to gain the finished effect, although not all are competent at cutting out. Most apply the glue in a clean way and the support assistant helps those who are not so skilled. At the end of the session the teacher encourages pupils to talk about whether they have been successful or not. Most have managed to design their tile, but a few have not understood what it means to make a repeat pattern. However, the teacher praises all pupils' efforts and shows them how to achieve the task. Pupils enjoy their work and make steady progress in the lesson.
103. Assessment of pupils' work is not yet developed in art and design, and design and technology. However, teachers are aware of the necessity to develop this and raise standards even further.

## **GEOGRAPHY and HISTORY**

104. As a consequence of the cyclical nature of the curriculum it was not possible during the inspection to observe all pupils taking lessons in history and geography. Only one lesson was observed in history and one in geography and there were few examples of work available for scrutiny. The analysis of pupils' past work, reports, teachers' planning and records, displays and discussion with pupils support inspection findings. From this evidence standards in geography and history are seen to be in line with those usually found in most schools. All pupils make at least satisfactory progress. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.
105. Year 2 pupils develop a sense of chronology by comparing their own school experiences with those of children 100 years ago. Pupils have a sound understanding of how events in the past influenced the lives of ordinary people; for example, when learning about the Black Death and its causes in London in 1665. They widen their knowledge of important historical personalities such as Florence Nightingale.
106. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are beginning to understand the importance of artefacts in providing information about the past as they learn about the Tudors. Their understanding is supported by visits to museums and places of historical interest such as Henlow Grange and Tring Museum. Year 4 pupils' knowledge of significant people is supported through their work on Henry VIII. They have a reasonable understanding of how he came to be king, and of the events leading to the demise of his wives. Pupils have ample opportunity to use secondary sources of evidence such as books and videos. They make satisfactory progress in their ability to research historical evidence when using both the library and information and computer technology; for example, when finding out about the Tudors and the Mary Rose. In the one geography lesson observed, Year 2 pupils demonstrated a sound understanding of their own locality and could identify important

features from an aerial photograph. They used appropriate vocabulary; for example, 'oceans', 'forests' and 'mountains', when identifying and recording human and physical features from a series of photographs.

107. As only two lessons were observed, one in each key stage, there is insufficient evidence to make a judgement on teaching throughout the school. However, the lessons seen were well organised and a range of resources used effectively to support pupils' learning. Teachers assess pupils and monitor their progress at the end of each unit of work and comments are included in the annual reports to parents. However, these assessments are not sufficiently focused to ensure challenge in all lessons for all pupils.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

108. Standards in ICT are above national expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 4, and pupils are achieving well in this subject. This indicates that the good standards found in the last inspection have been maintained. At that time the development of staff expertise in teaching the subject and the range and quality of equipment were identified as priorities in the school development plan. Resources are now good, with well-appointed computers and 15 hours of delegated teaching support allocated each week. All members of staff are receiving appropriate training.
109. Five and six year old pupils develop their literacy by using the mouse to fill in missing words in the text. Seven year olds are confident when using the computer and are developing good keyboard skills. Many pupils can open programs independently and are observed using technical vocabulary such as 'space bar', 'mouse', 'click' and 'text'. Pupils are able to amend and reorganize the text by using the insert and delete functions. They can use the shift key to type in capital letters. Many are able to save and print their work with increasing independence and confidence and they use tape recorders to listen to stories. Pupils show that they can cut, paste, save and print when re-ordering jumbled sentences from 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. Pictures in folders are evidence of pupils' good mouse control when using the Paint program to create 'My House' and 'My Rainbow' pictures. By the end of Year 4 pupils are using computers regularly to support learning in English and mathematics. They can create branching databases and use PowerPoint and Clipart programs when designing and making bookmarks. Recently, pupils have had experience of manipulating sound using the Compose Junior program. In one lesson Year 4 pupils prepare well for future work on creating a newspaper about Henry VIII. They consider how headlines are presented and experiment with different fonts to gain maximum effect.
110. Many pupils enter the school with very little experience of using computers. Pupils, including those with SEN, make good progress throughout the school in developing ICT skills because of well-informed teaching and patient support.
111. The quality of teaching and support is good overall. Through their ongoing training teachers are developing a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject. This enhances confidence and enables them to set clear tasks for the pupils and give easily-understood explanations of what the pupils are expected to learn. Overall, lessons are well planned with good links made to other subjects, particularly English, mathematics and science. Teachers make good use of and encourage the technical vocabulary of ICT and this helps pupils' understanding of the subject. The very good support given in class by the ICT teaching assistant is central to the good progress being made.

112. There is good management of ICT by the well-informed and enthusiastic co-ordinator. There has been a considerable commitment to improving provision for ICT, involving the governors, headteacher and staff, and currently all classrooms are equipped with good-quality machines and printers. Plans are in hand to continue the monitoring of teaching but as yet there are no whole-school assessment procedures in place to monitor the progress and attainment of pupils. However, programs have been prepared and will soon be introduced, allowing for the appraisal of both the effectiveness of teaching and the coverage of the subject.

## **MUSIC**

113. At the last inspection standards in music were above expectations at Key Stage 1 and in line with expectations at Key Stage 2. Evidence for making judgements on the standards achieved in this inspection is limited. Timetable constraints restricted observation to one music lesson, video evidence of the school's Christmas performance and singing in assembly. The music co-ordinator's documentation indicates that an appropriate programme is followed, and that teachers' work is monitored and evaluated. Pupils also have the opportunity to learn the recorder, the flute and the clarinet. This enhances some pupils' achievements in lessons when they are able to show that their understanding of music is well developed, and when they use the correct technical terms for the value of notes.
114. Pupils sing well in assembly. The words of the songs are clear and they sing with enjoyment. In a Year 4 lesson, pupils enjoy singing well-known songs such as 'I've been to Harlem', which they sing in four parts. They know the importance of warming up their voices and sitting appropriately to sing. Teaching is good because of the teacher's knowledge of music and the resources she uses. Pupils practise singing scales in tune, and work hard to distinguish notes of different pitches. They use chime bars to combine pitched sounds with familiar rhythm patterns. They work well in groups, and are able to perform their finished pieces to one another. They evaluate each other's performances and suggest improvements. Some are able to explain confidently how to 'plot' their work on paper. The lesson ends well with another well-known song. Pupils enjoy their music lesson and say, 'Can we do it again?'

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

115. During the inspection, only games lessons and dance lessons were seen. However, the teachers' planning and supporting documentation show that pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum through the course of the school year. The curriculum is also enriched by the many extra-curricular activities that take place. These change from term to term and offer the pupils a good variety of clubs. In this way, physical education enhances pupils' social development.
116. Overall, in the aspects of physical education seen, attainment meets expectations in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. At the last inspection, pupils' attainments exceeded national expectations at Key Stage 1. Standards were in line with expectations at Key Stage 2. However, pupils' achievements are high in dance in Year 4 because of excellent teaching. When teachers do not insist on high standards of behaviour, teaching is weak, pupils make unsatisfactory progress and they do not develop their games' skills successfully.
117. In Year 4 the oldest pupils in the school are able to link their work in dance to their work in literacy. This is excellent and the teacher's well-thought-out lesson captures the pupils'

interests from the start. Her choice of music is very good and pupils warm up enthusiastically to Perfecto Allstarz', 'Reach Up'. Pupils enjoy their lesson and have fun. They work hard and know that they must prepare their bodies for activity. Strong points in the teaching and learning of the dance lesson are evident when the teacher:

- selects interesting and exciting music which appeals to the pupils' imaginations;
- has very clear objectives for the lesson and encourages the pupils to evaluate their own and others' successes against set criteria;
- makes strong links with other aspects of the curriculum, in this case the work pupils had been doing in literacy about creating tension and 'build-up' in story writing;
- encourages pupils to express their feelings and talk about how the music from 'The Planet of the Apes' made them feel. In this lesson pupils' spiritual development was successfully enriched.

118. Pupils use good facial expressions; they move their bodies in isolation and then work with a partner to create a dance which gradually builds up tension and excitement. One pupil exclaims, 'That was lovely!' And all want to demonstrate their efforts. In particular, pupils with SEN become totally involved and excel. One pupil shows very good dance skills when he moves rapidly and then stands completely still. The effect of 'stillness' in his dance successfully creates the tension and meets the criteria the teacher has set out for the lesson. This is extremely effective for creating the bond between pupils in the class and between teacher and pupil.
119. Pupils in Year 1 learn to throw over-arm and under-arm. They control their bean bags and begin to develop team skills. They work with one another and are able to take turns. Teaching is successful when teachers choose pupils to demonstrate their skills. Areas for development include giving the pupils more opportunities to get and put away their own equipment, and allowing more time for them to play the learnt team game. When pupils are badly behaved, when they do not listen to the teacher and when the teacher has to continually stop the lesson, pupils lose interest and do not develop their ball skills. In these cases, teaching is unsatisfactory and pupils do not make progress. It is unacceptable to allow pupils to become over-excited, move carelessly between others and damage sponge balls by picking them. Pupils in this class subsequently re-visited the necessary rules for taking part in lessons and showed that, with firm, clear guidelines from their teacher, and an insistence on safe behaviour, they were able to join in a physical education lesson without being disruptive. This was an appropriate strategy for the teacher to adopt. The objective of the lesson was met and pupils ended the session having learnt the importance of listening carefully and responding to the teacher's instructions the first time, and behaving in a safe way in physical education lessons.
120. The co-ordination of the subject is good. When lessons are monitored and teachers helped to develop their teaching skills, pupils' learning is better. The accommodation, school grounds and resources are adequate and generally in good condition. The school field is particularly pleasant for outside activities and enhances the teaching of the subject.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

121. At the end of Key Stage 1 and in Year 4, standards of attainment in religious education are in line with the expectations of the Bedfordshire Agreed Syllabus. The last inspection judged standards to be above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus by the end of Key Stage 1 and in Key Stage 2. Pupils make satisfactory gains in learning at both key stages. Whilst it was only possible to observe two lessons in each key stage, the analysis of pupils' past work, teachers' planning and discussions with pupils indicate that a suitable curriculum is covered.

122. At the end of the infant stage, pupils know about celebrations such as Christmas and Easter. They are familiar with marriage and baptism ceremonies and celebrations. Year 1 pupils learn about the Muslim festival Id Ul Fitr. They understand that the celebrations follow the fasting during the month of Ramadan and that Muslims wear special clothes, send decorative Id cards and give presents. Year 2 pupils make links between christenings and the Hindu naming ceremony Namakarana and they learn how Jesus told stories when they read the Parable of the Lost Sheep.
123. Year 3 pupils become aware of the beliefs of other religions through the study of Judaism. They develop their understanding of the similarities between different religions. They know that religions have special books and ceremonies, and are familiar with the names 'Church', 'Mosque' and 'Synagogue'. Through their study of Christianity and Judaism pupils understand that religions contain rules for living and that different people worship in different ways. Pupils in Year 3 show good understanding and knowledge of the traditions of Judaism and can explain the links between the Bible and the Torah. They know that the Torah is written on parchment and that a Rabbi is a teacher. They also have some understanding of the significance of the Passover Meal and the strict kosher diet. Year 4 pupils consider how Jesus taught through parables. They talk about the Prodigal Son and can explain the moral in the story of the Good Samaritan. A number of pupils grasped the significance of the story, but their limited language restricted their explanations and discussions. The amount of written work expected is limited and as a consequence religious education does not yet make a significant contribution to the literacy skills of many pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well. As a result they make satisfactory gains in learning in relation to their prior attainment. They have equal access to all activities.
124. Teaching is satisfactory overall and sometimes good. It is characterised by sound subject knowledge and the use of a range of resources to interest and inform pupils. In lessons where teaching is good, questioning is used well to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding and the lesson is thoughtfully planned. A weakness in teaching occurs when pupils are asked to complete unchallenging work sheets or colour-in drawings rather than write about or discuss the significance of different beliefs.
125. Planning for religious education meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and keen to ensure that religious education is given appropriate time and resources. There are opportunities for monitoring the teaching of religious education, but the school has yet to develop systems for assessing pupils' learning and progress. Visits to different places of worship and visits from people of different faiths enhance the religious education curriculum and extend pupils' understanding.