

INSPECTION REPORT

MICKLEM PRIMARY SCHOOL

Hemel Hempstead

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117231

Headteacher: Mr Brian Langley

Reporting inspector: Mrs Patricia Davies
OIN: 22460

Dates of inspection: 10 - 13 June 2002

Inspection number: 245772

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Boxted Road Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire
Postcode:	HP1 2QH
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Gary Oldham
Date of previous inspection:	March 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
22460	Mrs Patricia Davies	Registered inspector	Design and technology; Physical education; Areas of learning for the Foundation stage; Equality of opportunity.	The school's results and achievements; How well pupils are taught; How well the school is led and managed.
9053	Mrs Vivienne Phillips	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development; How well the school cares for its pupils; How the school works in partnership with parents.
23413	Mr Robert Allen	Team inspector	English; Art and design; Music.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
19026	Mr Brian Downes	Team inspector	Science; Geography; Information and communication technology; Provision for pupils with special educational needs.	
1723	Mr Michael Milton	Team inspector	Mathematics; History; Religious education.	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Micklem Primary School is about average in size for this type of school. There are 208 pupils on roll, the majority of whom live in the immediate area. While the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average, the proportion with special educational needs is above average. The latter have a wide range of needs, including emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are very few pupils with statements of need. The school population is generally stable, though there has been a small, but significant, proportion of new pupils who recently joined the present Year 6. There are a very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Children enter the school into the Nursery class in advance of their fourth birthday. They attend part-time for three terms, and then move into the Reception class where attendance is full-time. When children enter the Nursery, their attainment is below that expected for children of this age. A significant minority attain well below expectations and this affects attainment throughout the school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Micklem gives its pupils a sound education within a supportive and caring school community. Staff have worked hard to raise standards, and their success has been recognised by national achievement awards. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall, with good progress over time in speaking, listening and reading skills and in science. Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to their work. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but the quality of teaching has improved and was good, and sometimes better, in many lessons seen during the inspection. Pupils in the present Year 6 are attaining expected standards in speaking and listening skills, reading and science. Standards are below national expectations for writing, mathematics, information and communication technology and geography, and do not meet agreed objectives for religious education in Year 6. The overall quality of leadership and management is sound, with a growing emphasis on monitoring and evaluation. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- A stimulating learning environment in the Nursery class enables children to make a good start to school life.
- Teaching and learning were good, and sometimes very good, in many of the lessons seen during the inspection.
- There is effective support in lessons for pupils with special educational needs.
- A strong sense of community fosters very effective relationships and good levels of initiative and responsibility amongst pupils.
- Pupils behave well and are keen to learn. These factors contribute much to their learning in lessons.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Standards in writing, mathematics, information and communication technology and geography, and in religious education in Year 6.

Standards in writing, mathematics and information and communication technology are already being addressed. The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made much improvement to the quality of its work since it was last inspected in March 1998. Most significantly, the school now has a purposeful sense of direction, focused on raising standards and improving the quality of its academic work. The capacity for future improvement is good. There has been considerable improvement in behaviour and relationships, and in teaching and learning. Provision for social development is now very good. Pupils' sound academic progress overall has been maintained and is increasing over time in English, mathematics and science, in response to improvements in teaching. Pupils with special educational needs now make good progress. Staffing and learning resources are also now good. All the key issues identified in the last report have been tackled well, particularly the one relating to challenging behaviour at lunchtimes. There has been much improvement to the monitoring of the school's work by the headteacher. However, co-ordinators are not given enough time to monitor and evaluate within their areas of responsibility, and so ensure that all subjects are effectively developed and the needs of all pupils consistently well met. Assessment information is not used as well as it could be to identify the next steps pupils must take in order to improve their learning. Much recent investment has been made in resources and staff training for information and communication technology, but these good improvements have yet to make a full impact on teaching and attainment. Consequently, the school is not currently meeting its statutory requirements to teach all aspects of the subject.

STANDARDS

The table below shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	D	C	D	D
Mathematics	E	E	E	E
Science	D	D	D	E

Key	
<i>well above average</i>	A
<i>above average</i>	B
<i>average</i>	C
<i>below average</i>	D
<i>well below average</i>	E

Few pupils attained the higher level (Level 5), particularly in mathematics and science. Within the broad picture illustrated in the above table, test results have improved over time, enabling these results to keep pace with the national trend. Results of national tests for Year 2 pupils also show increasing attainment. Improvements are most marked in Year 2 test results for reading and in the English tests for Year 6 pupils, where there have been almost steady upward trends since 1997. There have also been improvements to the test results in other subjects, although these have been smaller. Results show some differences in the performance of boys and girls, particularly in reading and writing in the Year 2 tests and in mathematics and science in the Year 6 tests, where boys have done better than girls. Targets for the current Year 6 will be challenging to meet, because a small but significant proportion of new pupils have recently joined the class. Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall as they move through the school, including those identified as having talents or gifts. Those with special educational needs make good progress. Inspection evidence shows pupils in the current Years 2 and 6 to be reaching standards in line with national expectations in speaking, listening and reading skills and in science. Standards are below national expectations in writing, mathematics, information and communication technology and geography, and do not meet the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education in Year 6. In all other subjects, standards are as expected. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are meeting the objectives for religious education.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils' strong levels of motivation and interest contribute much to their increasingly good levels of progress.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good at all times, and a significant factor in pupils' achievement during lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good. Pupils understand the effect of their actions on others, and use their initiative well.
Attendance	Satisfactory. The frequent absence and lateness of a handful of pupils cause the school concern.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

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

Evidence from lessons and from pupils' work shows the overall quality of teaching and learning to be satisfactory, but with strengths. Much improvement has been made to teaching and learning since the last inspection, and this is helping to increase pupils' achievement over time, particularly in English, mathematics and science. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during this inspection, and more lessons were very well taught. When pupils were stimulated by practical, investigative and creative activities, they showed significant levels of effort and enthusiasm and made very good progress. The greatest strengths of teaching were the very good management of behaviour, clear learning objectives and the use of support staff with small groups, especially with those of lower attainment or with special educational needs. However, marking and assessment notes are not used consistently to identify how pupils' work might be improved or to set specific targets to increase achievement. Neither is work always varied to meet the needs of pupils with different abilities. This often affects more able pupils in mathematics and science. Children learn well in the Nursery, and satisfactorily in the Reception class where tasks are not as closely matched to children's needs as they are in the Nursery. English and literacy skills are well taught overall, as is music particularly when it is taught by the specialist teacher. Teaching is satisfactory in the case of mathematics, numeracy skills, science, geography, and history, and in religious education in Years 1 and 2. Religious education is not taught well enough over time in Year 6 because weekly lessons are too short. It was not possible to make overall judgements about teaching and learning in other subjects, including information and communication technology. However, information and communication technology is not yet used enough in lessons to support learning in other subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Sufficiently broad, but depth and balance are affected because teaching time is below the recommended minimum in Years 3 to 6. Statutory requirements are not met for information and communication technology. Extra-curricular activities and links with the community and with partnership institutions are good. The Literacy Strategy is well established.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Targets in individual education plans are met well because these pupils have effective small group support in lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall with a particular strength in social development. Moral development is fostered well and provision for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory overall. Procedures are good for ensuring pupils' safety, welfare and pastoral care, including behaviour and personal development, and the informal monitoring of attendance. Assessment systems are satisfactory overall but are not used well enough to guide planning.

Informal day-to-day links with parents are good, and the quality of information they receive is satisfactory.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Sound. The headteacher's caring leadership inspires the loyalty and trust of staff. Provision for special educational needs is well managed, but there is no overall co-ordination of the Nursery and Reception classes to guide and hasten improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactorily. Governors are now better informed and more involved in looking at the school's work. Some key governors and committees are particularly active in the role of critical friend.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Much more monitoring and evaluation now takes place, but there is not enough time set aside to allow monitoring and evaluation to take place in all subjects, nor do evaluations focus sharply enough on what pupils must do to improve.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school gives sound consideration to whether it is getting best value for the standards it achieves.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school expects children to work hard and do their best.• Parents find the school approachable if they have a question or problem.• Their children enjoy school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The range of activities available outside lessons.

Parents' views are more positive than they were at the time of the last inspection. Inspection findings generally agree with what parents like most, but not with what they would like to see improved as extra-curricular activities were found to be good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. On entry to the Nursery, children show a wide range of attainment, but attainment overall is below what is expected of children of a similar age. A significant minority attain well below these expectations in all areas of learning, and this factor makes an impact on attainment right through the school. Children make good progress in the Nursery. Progress is satisfactory in the Reception class, where work is not so well targeted at children's particular needs. The attainment of the current Reception group remains below expectations, and a significant minority are unlikely to meet the learning goals expected of children of this age by the time they move into Year 1.
2. In the national tests in 2001, pupils then in Year 6 attained standards below national averages in English and science, and well below the average in mathematics. In comparison with those of similar schools, these results were below the average for English and well below for mathematics and science. Few pupils reached the higher level (Level 5) in mathematics and science. A greater proportion reached that level in English, but it was still below the national average. In the national tests for Year 2 pupils in 2001, the results for reading and writing were broadly in line with the national average for all schools and similar schools. The results for mathematics were below the average for all schools, but were well below the average for similar schools. Teacher assessments of Year 2 pupils in science, taken in 2001, were very high in comparison with national averages. The school is aware that these assessments were too high.
3. The school has worked hard to raise standards over recent years. Its success is reflected in an improving picture in the national test results over time, and this success has been acknowledged in the last two years by national Achievement Awards. Improvement is most marked in the English tests for Year 6 pupils, and in those for reading for Year 2 pupils, where there have been almost steady upward trends. The success in reading in the Year 2 tests is mirrored in those for Year 6 tests in 2001, because these older pupils attained a much higher result in the reading aspect of the test than they did in writing. There have also been improvements in the results of other tested subjects in both year groups, but these have been smaller. Improvements have meant that, over recent years, test trends for Year 6 pupils have kept pace with the national trend. Results show some differences in the performance of boys and girls. These are most conspicuous in reading and writing in the Year 2 tests, and in mathematics and science in the Year 6 tests. In all these tests, boys have generally performed better than girls.
4. Early information from the school about results of the most recent Year 2 national tests indicates a reduced percentage of pupils gaining the expected level (Level 2) in reading and mathematics, but an increase at the higher level (Level 3), particularly for mathematics, where the percentage has doubled. No information about the writing test was available at the time of the inspection. The lower percentages at the expected level reflect the greater proportion of pupils with lower attainment in this year group in comparison with the previous Year 2. Overall attainment in the present Year 6 has been affected by the arrival of a significant minority of new pupils in the last twelve months. The school is working hard to meet its Year 6 test targets for this year, although these are likely to be challenging, as they were set before the arrival of these new pupils. Current targets are slightly lower for English and a little higher for mathematics than those set for 2001, which were exceeded in English but not met in mathematics.

5. Year 6 results in 2001 indicated that these pupils had made satisfactory progress since taking national tests when in Year 2. Inspection findings reflect this picture and also the findings of the last inspection. From below average attainment on entry, the pupils' overall achievement is sound. There is evidence that the good, and sometimes very good, teaching is increasingly improving pupils' progress over time. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) also make good progress, because they are well supported in lessons. The very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, and those who have been identified by the school as having particular talents and gifts, make the same sound progress as pupils overall.

6. Inspection evidence shows pupils in the current Years 2 and 6 to be attaining standards in line with national expectations in speaking, listening and reading skills and in science. Standards are below national expectations for writing and mathematics. The Literacy Strategy has had a positive impact on teaching and learning, and particularly in the development of reading skills, where pupils make good progress. There is also a rich culture of reading in the school, and this promotes the subject well. Pupils are confident speakers because the strength of relationships between adults and pupils creates a classroom environment in which pupils feel able to express their ideas. Achievement rates in mathematics are good in some year groups, and are increasing overall, because of improvements to the teaching and assessment of mathematics. Pupils have benefited from some good and very good teaching of science, particularly where work is investigative and practical. Inspection evidence also found pupils' good attitudes to be making a strong contribution to learning in English, mathematics and science. Pupils are not making quite the same degree of good progress in writing as they are in other aspects of English, largely because they do not have enough opportunities to write at length, or to take part in systematic drafting and redrafting to improve their written work. However, most significantly, pupils are not routinely given enough specific information about how their work can be improved in order to increase their progress to a faster rate, nor are more able pupils always sufficiently challenged by their work in mathematics and science.

7. Progress is satisfactory in all other subjects, except in information and communication technology (ICT) and geography, and in religious education in the case of Year 6, where pupils do not achieve well enough. Improvements to ICT are too recent to have yet had a full impact on attainment. Allocations of time to the teaching of geography and religious education are too little to allow these subjects to be covered in enough depth.

8. Most pupils are confident speakers and listen well, although some continue to have difficulty expressing their thoughts and ideas. More able pupils in Year 2 read fluently. Middle attainers in Year 2 pay good attention to the meaning of what they read, but there is a significant proportion of lower attainers who have a limited reading vocabulary. While more able Year 2 pupils write with some accuracy and interest, many complete only simple statements, although with some punctuation. Inaccurate spelling often gets in the way of meaning in the writing of lower attainers. Handwriting is mostly joined, but is often not well formed. In Year 6, more able pupils read challenging texts fluently and make spontaneous comparisons between books and their filmed versions. The best writing in Year 6 is lively, with a careful choice of words, but choice of words by other pupils is often unoriginal. Basic grammar is usually correct, but spelling mistakes are frequent, even of commonly used words.

9. Most Year 2 pupils multiply numbers by ten, and the more able accurately add and subtract two digits to make up to 100. Lower attainers add and subtract correctly to ten. All complete tally charts and represent the data in the form of bar charts. About half of the pupils in Year 6 confidently multiply three-digit numbers by two-digit numbers. More able pupils find percentages of numbers to two decimal places. Lower attainers calculate simple mathematical operations accurately, but with relatively small numbers. In science, Year 2 pupils are beginning to develop basic scientific concepts, about plants and their growth for

example, and carry out simple experiments. More able pupils increasingly understand the principles of what makes a test fair. By Year 6, pupils have developed a sound factual knowledge and confidently use a range of scientific vocabulary. They design and set up their own tests, and more able pupils explain what happens when one variable is changed and how a test can be improved in the light of their experience.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Improvement in pupils' attitudes, values and personal development since the last inspection has been good. The school has been very effective in dealing with the key issue related to raising standards of behaviour in the playground. Reasonable steps have been taken to improve punctuality and persistent absenteeism to help limit the harm to pupils' progress.

11. Children in the Nursery are happy and work and play confidently because routines are firmly established, so that children know what to do and how to behave, and activities are stimulating and closely matched to their needs. They work and play together and alongside each other with little difficulty, their good relationships drawn from the example of the close working relationships of adults. Those with special educational needs (SEN) or emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) usually behave well and respond appropriately. This is largely because they are sensitively handled by adults when, for example, they are sometimes demanding of attention during group sessions. Most children in the Reception class are well behaved and keen to participate, especially when activities are interesting and creative. These good attitudes were seen during science activities, when they had to sort different materials, and in a dance lesson when they performed their final piece of movement. A small group of challenging children in this class are inattentive, and sometimes disruptive, when activities do not meet their particular needs or the class sits together closely rather than spread out in a circle.

12. Pupils with SEN generally show good attitudes to work, particularly during small group work with adults, and behave well in lessons and around the school.

13. Pupils' attitudes to school and work are good and they respond well to the school's efforts to encourage them to develop an interest in learning and to work hard. Pupils of all ages are happy to come to school and to take part in activities they find interesting and enjoyable, particularly when practical, investigative or creative work challenges them to put in more effort than usual. For instance, in a very well taught physical education lesson, Year 4 pupils showed great determination to try to improve on personal performances in sprint, jump and throwing tasks, and enjoyed the deep sense of satisfaction when they succeeded. These strong levels of interest and motivation make a considerable contribution to the increasingly good levels of progress in English and science. Even when tasks are not well matched to pupils' interests and capabilities, they usually try to do what they are asked, but without the same enthusiastic effort or pride in their work.

14. Pupils of all ages behave well in lessons, which is also a significant factor in what they achieve. Their willingness to sit still and listen, sometimes for long periods, helps them to add to what they know. In some lessons, pupils become slightly restless when teaching is not well focused on what individuals know, understand and can do. Individuals with EBD usually respond well and work as hard as everyone else, with good support from adults in class. They have sensitive support to help them to cope with their difficulties and to get on with others as constructively as possible at playtimes. As a result, behaviour outside lessons, including at lunchtime, is good. The dining area is civilised and the playground full

of active, friendly children learning to play together happily without resorting to argument to resolve conflict. There is little evidence of bullying or racism, which the school is determined to eliminate, and pupils get on well together. The school is committed to inclusion, and its rate of exclusion has fallen to almost zero in response to the impact of very clear behaviour management strategies.

15. Pupils' personal development is good because they have a clear understanding of the effect their actions have on others. They are well involved in the daily routines of the school. Pupils show good levels of respect for one other, help out when necessary, and usually listen with care to what others say. They use their initiative well when given the chance in the classroom and at play, and are quick to notice and help someone who is hurt or needs help. In the Nursery, for example, a child was quick to show his friend how to print out a piece of artwork from the computer, without being asked by the teacher. One lunchtime during the inspection, a few pupils swept up the bark that had spilled from the climbing area on to the playground, and did so without being asked. Pupils are quite good at asking others to join in when they are setting up their games, and they sometimes look out for others who are alone, though there is no buddy or befriending system to ensure that this happens swiftly and consistently. Pupils really enjoy the responsibilities they are given, as in helping in the office and feel that they have a voice in school life even if the school council does not meet very often.

16. Relationships are very good. Pupils get on very well together and relate very well to all the encouragement and attention of a wide range of adults. Pupils of all ages value the positive approach of their teachers and respond very well to the care they are given. As a result, pupils are confident to answer questions and take part in discussion, even when they sometimes struggle to express their ideas. The way in which they talk to adults, try hard to please them, and follow the rules shows that children respect adults in the school. They work constructively in pairs or groups when asked, particularly when the tasks set are well planned for them.

17. Attendance is satisfactory, although the frequent absences and lateness of a handful of individuals cause the school concern. Most pupils come to school regularly and generally arrive on time, as expected. A handful of pupils are absent too often without good reason, which means that their progress is not as good as it could be. The school is also concerned that too many pupils fail to arrive in time for lessons to start promptly. The inspection confirmed that a significant minority of children arrive in class several minutes after the first lesson is due to start and that some teaching and learning time is lost as a result. These pupils miss key instructions and opportunities to practise basic skills such as listening and sharing ideas.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

18. Evidence from lessons and from pupils' work shows the overall quality of teaching and learning to be satisfactory, but with strengths. There has been much improvement to teaching and learning since the last inspection. A clear indication of this success was seen in lessons, in 60 per cent of which the teaching was good or better. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and, at 19 per cent, the proportion of very good teaching was higher than at the time of the last inspection. Significantly, some good or very good teaching was seen in almost every class and in many subjects. These positive factors point to the hard work of staff and their commitment to raising standards. Increased monitoring of lessons by the head and deputy headteachers has also contributed. Most importantly, improvements to teaching and learning are having a positive influence on improving all pupils' achievement in

the longer term, particularly in English, mathematics and science. Where pupils were particularly stimulated in lessons during this inspection, by practical and investigative activities, for example, they showed significant levels of effort and enthusiasm and made very good progress. Children make an effective start to school life in the Nursery, where activities are varied and interesting, and closely matched to their needs.

19. However, improvements to teaching and learning are not yet having a full impact on pupils' achievement. There are several reasons for this. Most significantly, teachers are not consistently using assessment opportunities, such as marking, to identify ways in which pupils could improve their work or to set them specific targets for improvement. Neither is work always varied to match and meet the needs of pupils with different abilities. This tends to affect more able pupils, who are not consistently set challenging enough work in mathematics and science, for example. In mathematics, higher attainers sometimes complete work that is too easy or similar to work they have already covered. In some cases, in both mathematics and in science, all pupils are given the same tasks. This reduces their rate of progress over time to no greater than satisfactory. Lastly, the monitoring of teaching and learning has yet to be more extensively developed and more sharply focused, particularly on the outcomes of teaching to be seen in pupils' work.

20. Teaching and learning across the Foundation Stage are sound. They are good in the Nursery because staff have a thorough knowledge of the curriculum for these young children and make careful daily assessments of children's work and achievement. Most importantly, this information is then used to plan work that targets the small steps in learning which individual children need to take. These positive factors enable the children in the Nursery to make good progress. However, in the Reception class, work is not as consistently well matched to the specific needs of children as it is in the Nursery, and consequently progress is satisfactory rather than good. In the Nursery, adults work as a team, so much so that transitions between activities are almost seamless and children move to new activities with the minimum of fuss. Well-established routines and good relationships give children confidence and independence, and these attributes provide a firm basis for their overall good progress. The sometimes more boisterous and demanding behaviour of a few is well managed. In the Reception class, creative and practical activities, such as dance and scientific investigations, for example, interested and engaged all the children, including those with higher attainment or with challenging behaviour. However, when work was not matched to children's specific needs, higher and lower attainers in particular did not achieve the best they could, although the overall progress in lessons was sound. Previously completed work also shows that reception aged children with different abilities are often given the same language and literacy and mathematical tasks to complete.

21. In lessons during the inspection, there were several common and conspicuous teaching strengths. Very good management of pupils, enhanced by warm and supportive relationships, enabled pupils to contribute with keenness and confidence, even when they were not always able to express ideas clearly. Planning had clear learning objectives and these were often shared with pupils so that they understood the purpose of their work. Where activities were more practical or creative, for example investigative work in science, or design and make projects in design and technology, and in musical activities, pupils were quick to give much enthusiasm and effort to their work, contributing significantly to their own learning. For example, Year 6 pupils made very good progress in a history lesson because their interest and effort was captured and sustained by an excellent range of challenging resources. These resources were used to good effect by the teacher and by pupils to explore and extend historical knowledge and understanding and to develop skills of enquiry and research. Other individual lessons of this calibre, with high levels of interest and pupil participation, were seen in English, mathematics, science, geography, music and physical education. In these lessons, teaching was firmly based on what pupils already knew. The main teaching and discussion included all pupils and systematically increased their

achievement. Where mathematics teaching was lucid and concise, pupils learned new ideas and knew what they had to do in subsequent activities. Their learning was further accelerated, because they were asked to explain their own methods for arriving at answers and were introduced to different ways of answering questions and solving problems.

22. Teaching assistants and supporting teachers are used well in lessons to give support to small groups of pupils. This is particularly so for those with special educational needs (SEN) or with lower attainment, and it enables these pupils to progress well. Supporting adults are not always well used during whole group sessions, however, when they take little part in what is happening. Relative weaknesses within otherwise satisfactory lessons related to the use of time and to opportunities during discussion for all pupils to be involved. Where this occurred, the attention of some pupils would stray. In physical education lessons, there is not always enough chance for pupils to evaluate their performance. Some good examples of marking of pupils' work were seen, where specific pointers were given about how to improve, but these were not routinely found. Additionally, where comments had been made, these were not always subsequently followed up either by the teacher or the pupil. Teachers regularly add assessment notes to their weekly plans, but this good information is not consistently used for planning next steps of learning for pupils in future lessons.

23. English and literacy skills are well taught overall, although pupils do not have enough opportunities to write at length or re-draft their work. Music is also taught well overall, with very good teaching from the specialist teacher. Mathematics, numeracy skills, science and history are satisfactorily taught overall. Whilst individual religious education lessons were well taught during the inspection, there is not enough time to cover topics in sufficient depth notably in Year 6, and, as a result, teaching is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 2. This problem also affects the teaching of geography so that, although it is generally satisfactorily taught, pupils do not make enough progress over time. It was not possible to make an overall judgement about the teaching of information and communication technology (ICT). However, sessions where skills are taught by class teachers are too short and, as improvements are recent, ICT is not yet used enough in lessons to support learning in other subjects. There was not enough evidence to make overall judgements about teaching and learning in other subjects, although where teaching was seen it was at least sound.

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

24. The school meets statutory requirements for the curriculum, except in information and communication technology (ICT), where all the required aspects of the subject are not yet taught, and its use is not yet effectively applied across the curriculum. In all but ICT, the overall level of improvement since the last inspection is as expected and, due to considerable improvements to resources, planning and staff training, the school is poised to fulfil ICT requirements. The full range of subjects is covered, and this means that the curriculum is satisfactory in terms of breadth. However, both depth and balance are compromised because not enough time has been allocated to the teaching of some subjects. This is particularly true at Key Stage 2, where teaching time is below the recommended minimum. Whilst sufficient time is given to most subjects and, importantly, to the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, not enough is given to religious education, geography and music. This is most marked in the weekly religious education lessons in Year 6. These lessons are too short to allow the subject to be covered in enough depth. The limited amount of time allocated to geography has an adverse effect on pupils' progress over time. Time for music is also limited, although pupils are enabled to make satisfactory progress because the time available is used very effectively by the specialist teacher. In history, the school has chosen to study more than the minimum number of topics

and this, too, reduces the opportunity for in-depth study. The school is aware that having given substantial and appropriate attention to improving the effectiveness of its work in English and mathematics, it needs now to turn its attention to the development of other subjects. This focus is therefore a key strategic priority, but as yet little time has been allocated to allow subject co-ordinators to review and evaluate planning and its impact on teaching and learning.

25. Planning for the Foundation Stage Nursery and Reception classes is well founded on the small steps for learning recommended for children of this age and is organised as a two year programme to avoid repetition when children transfer from the Nursery to the Reception group. In the Nursery, this planning is translated into a rich and varied curriculum that is well suited to the children's academic and pastoral needs and ensures that they make good progress. The curriculum for those in the Reception class is satisfactory, but is not as skilfully modified to meet children's individual needs.

26. Planning for English and mathematics corresponds to the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. These strategies are also usefully adopted in the Nursery and Reception classes, although in an appropriately adapted form. The Literacy Strategy is particularly well-established and both Strategies are helping to increase pupils' achievement. Religious education is being planned to the objectives of the locally Agreed Syllabus. Most other subjects use national guidance as a basis for planning, although in the main the topics and activities have not been reviewed to make sure that they meet pupils' needs or fully reflect National Curriculum requirements at each level. The school has drawn-up its own planning for physical education, which has been reviewed, and uses a commercial scheme for music to support teachers who are non-specialists.

27. The school is strongly committed to including all pupils equally in its activities and work. Overall, it does this well in relation to its pastoral care. Provision for pupils with SEN is good, most especially because they are provided with good support in lessons and across a range of subjects. This enables them to make good progress over time. Support is particularly effective in science. These pupils no longer miss other lessons for extra literacy support. Those very few pupils with minority ethnic backgrounds make similar progress to that of their peers, as do those identified as having particular talents and gifts. In lessons, all pupils are generally given equal attention. However, the achievement of individual pupils is not yet fully supported by routinely giving them specific targets or pointers for improvement. More able pupils in mathematics and science therefore do not have work that is consistently matched to their needs. Analysis of national test information has only just made the school aware of differences in the performance of boys and girls. Disparities in resourcing at the Foundation Stage mean that reception aged children do not benefit from the same level of good learning resources and facilities as those in the Nursery class.

28. The school provides a good preparation for adult life. Its general culture is concerned and caring, and teachers give freely of their own time to support pupils' personal and social development. Very good relationships enhance this. Appropriate outside agencies offer additional input to the school's established programme of health, sex and drugs education.

29. The features of curricular reinforcement, extension and enrichment are good. For example, the curriculum is extended beyond school hours through a range of other activities. There are sporting clubs, an art club, a small recorder group, and a group of pupils who produce the school newspaper. Pupils take part in a good variety of visits that successfully enrich the curriculum, and a number of them spoke enthusiastically about a recent visit to the Roald Dahl Museum. Other visits include regular expeditions to local shops, river, park, and church, and to museums in St Albans and London. Visitors to the school include representatives of the police, fire and health services, the local clergy, and members of a local group of senior citizens formed to aid literacy.

30. Community links are also good. In addition to the visits and visitors mentioned above, a number of activities take place in conjunction with other local primary schools, like sporting events, or the drugs awareness project, or mutual support and liaison groups between teachers. The pre-school providers most frequently used have been identified, and the Nursery has planned contact with them for the coming school year. There is good liaison with receiving secondary schools, including visits to the schools and visits from the Year 7 teachers. Micklem Primary School provides work experience places for students from secondary schools, one of which offers use of its computer suite to older pupils once a week.

31. Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, with a particular strength in social provision. Strengths in this area of the school's work have been maintained since the last inspection, and improvement is as expected.

32. The school gives satisfactory support to pupils' spiritual development. The school's caring ethos helps pupils to feel valued and to accept the ideas and values of others. In assemblies, themes such as personal achievement are explored usefully to help pupils think about personal qualities and goals. Sometimes there are special moments in lessons, as in a music lesson led by the specialist teacher, when pupils listened intently to a new song. Generally, however, opportunities are missed to foster spiritual awareness and reflection because of lack of planning for awe-inspiring moments and because these are limited within religious education and music by lack of time. When such opportunities do occur, pupils learn well from them. In a personal, social and health education lesson (PSHE) about feelings, children were clearly moved by Brock, the badger puppet, who cuddled up to the teacher and was too sad to look at them. This helped them to talk about feelings and experiences thoughtfully. Displays offer some scope for celebrating personal achievement and memorable experiences, such as the 'Star of the Week' board in the foyer, but visual opportunities of this kind are not fully exploited.

33. Moral development is fostered well, with consistent guidance and example from adults about good behaviour and principles of right and wrong. Golden rules are displayed in different places around the school, including classrooms, to help pupils to understand what is expected and recognise when they have done something wrong. Adults give good reminders about fair play and honesty with games and within group tasks and when pupils check their own work.

34. A strong feature of the school's work is the way it fosters very good relationships and social development. It offers pupils of all ages many opportunities to take responsibility and show initiative within a setting where a very strong sense of community has developed. This is partly the result of a tradition of families attending the school, to the extent that some grandparents are former pupils. It is also linked to the caring ethos promoted by the staff and governors, where teamwork, co-operation and a pleasant working atmosphere are valued. As a result, children's social development is fostered very well by the school's daily routines, where children are treated with respect, and taught to get on well with others and to develop self-discipline. Children of all ages have very good opportunities to learn to take responsibility with resources for lessons and for playground equipment. They look after plants in the classroom, take registers to the office and work with younger pupils. Year 5, for example, has a weekly paired reading link with Year 1 pupils. The school council has contributed well to the life of the school through suggestions for better quality play and for reducing the incidence of bullying. However, it meets less often than expected for pupils to be able to keep track of their suggestions and consider further improvements, such as finding a friend at playtime.

35. Cultural development is promoted satisfactorily. Through the curriculum and extra-curricular activities, the school teaches pupils to appreciate their own cultural traditions and the rich diversity of other cultures. Good work linked to learning about the Romans and Aztecs and the art of Mondrian, for example, help pupils to value traditions different from their own. Groups of pupils benefit from taking part in events such as the Dacorum Art Exhibition and singing at the Royal Festival Hall. There is less emphasis on highlighting the ethnic and cultural diversity of the wider society, and celebrating the achievements of artists, storytellers, scientists, mathematicians and other significant people from around the world.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. Since the last inspection the school has acted very efficiently, with help from the behaviour support team, to deal with the challenging behaviour of a minority in the playground. As a result, improvement in the quality of behaviour at break and lunchtime is very good. Good support and training for midday staff has ensured that they can work more effectively. Steady improvement in the monitoring of registers and in taking speedy action is having a positive effect on punctuality and absenteeism. Statutory requirements for matters of care, health and safety are met, which is a clear improvement since the last inspection. Improvements to procedures for academic assessment are satisfactory, but they have yet to be fully applied, and used consistently to influence planning and identify the next steps pupils must take in order to improve their learning.

37. The school's strong sense of community is used well to manage carefully pupils' health, safety and welfare. The school follows local guidelines for child protection and has satisfactory arrangements to ensure that adults are familiar with procedures. It recognises the need to monitor its quality assurance procedures for child protection to ensure that staff always receive updates on new requirements and that temporary staff know how local guidelines work in this school. The school has taken care to have regular health and safety checks carried out as required, together with monitoring by the governing body. Its procedures for monitoring and improving attendance have resulted in reduced levels of unauthorised absence and lateness, with help from the education welfare officer to track and deal with poor attendance and punctuality. The school's very good knowledge of pupils and families has helped it to monitor attendance well. It has reached a point where further reductions in absence and lateness depend on more rigorous, formal monitoring to back up the good informal procedures that have kept attendance in line with the national average.

38. All pupils are well known to adults in the school, which helps to ensure that their personal development is monitored and supported well. There is also good formal assessment of pupils' personal and social education. Staff and governors have given high priority to raising standards of behaviour and making the school a happy place in which to work and play. With constructive guidance from outside agencies such as the behaviour support team, good procedures are in use consistently to promote good behaviour and curb incidents of bullying, racism and other forms of intimidation. A policy for Race Equality is in place, as required.

39. Assessment procedures in the Nursery are good. They give detailed information for all areas of the curriculum, and this is used effectively to plan the next steps of learning for each child. Consultation documents for parents also have specific individualised targets for each child. Initial assessments, first made when children join the Nursery, are now repeated at the end of their time in the Nursery. Staff plan to analyse these results so that they can judge the extent of progress made by each child in language and literacy, mathematics, and

learning skills. Procedures in the Reception class are sound. There are also regular checks and written assessments of children's attainment during topics. These comments sometimes suggest what the child needs to do next to improve their work, but this is not routine.

40. There is a good policy for assessment, but as this was only recently agreed by the governing body, it has not yet been fully implemented. For example, the policy stipulates that teachers' marking should set pupils' targets for improvement where appropriate, but this has not yet been fully achieved. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory. In the case of English and mathematics there are detailed checklists for each pupil against National Curriculum Levels or key learning objectives. For physical education, there are skills checklists for each pupil. For other subjects, there are useful assessment sheets to be completed at the end of each unit of work, but these are not yet completed consistently and they do not always make clear the necessary next steps of learning. This is also true of reading records.

41. In general, assessment information is not used well enough to guide curricular planning, though there are examples of sound use of assessment to improve the curriculum. For example, an identified weakness in pupils' attainment in using and applying mathematics resulted in improvements to training for teachers and to assessment activities. For most subjects, however, teachers' lesson planning is based on national guidance but assessment information has not yet been used to improve this national guidance or adapt it to the pupils' needs. The school is aware of the differences in the national test results of boys and girls in English and mathematics in Year 6, but has yet to take action to seek to address these differences.

42. Procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress are satisfactory, but there are weaknesses in procedures to support pupils' academic progress. For each class, there is a system for tracking pupils' progress in reading, writing, mathematics and science. In each of these subjects a target is set in terms of National Curriculum Levels. During the year, pupils' progress towards these targets is monitored and then, at the end of the year, pupils' attainment is assessed. This is achieved by means of a formal National Curriculum assessment in Years 2 and 6 or an assessment provided by a national organisation in Years 3 to 5. However, procedures to support pupils in reaching their National Curriculum targets for the end of each year do not generally include the setting of specific, short-term targets for groups or individual pupils, to indicate exactly what needs to be done to improve further.

43. The early identification of those children with SEN gets off to a good start in the Nursery, and close and careful assessments of their attainment and progress maintain effective support. There are satisfactory procedures in place for tracking attainment and progress for pupils with SEN in other classes. Individual education plans are regularly reviewed and contain suitably specific targets. Teaching assistants and class teachers alike make regular notes of pupils' progress towards their targets, and this yields sufficient information to allow new targets to be set where appropriate. Assessment systems for those pupils identified as having particular talents or gifts are satisfactory.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

44. Improvement since the last inspection has been steady. Parents' views are more positive because concerns expressed at that time have been reduced, particularly through the school's work to improve playground behaviour and its handling of complaints.

45. Parents generally think that the school is doing a good job. They are particularly pleased with the school's expectation that children will work hard. They feel comfortable about approaching staff and that their children like school. A significant minority of parents would like to see more activities beyond those in lessons, although inspection evidence indicates these opportunities to be good.

46. Informal, everyday links with families work well, so that a good working partnership between a parent and staff in school underpins children's sense of security and well being. Parents come to events and consultation evenings to show support for their children. They are not all active in supporting work at home, because they are not always clear about what is expected of them and how they can help, or lack the confidence to work with their children, for instance on problems in mathematics. The school has taken steps to help with this by using funds to provide families whose children are in the Nursery with mathematical activities to use at home and by giving clear ideas on what to do with them.

47. There are arrangements for meetings and visits to the Nursery for parents before their children start school. Subsequent informal contact, at the start of each day for example, is warm and friendly in both the Nursery and Reception classes. Good consultation documents are prepared by Nursery staff to share with parents during consultations about their children's work and progress. Three or four specific targets are set for each child and parents are invited to add a written comment if they wish.

48. A few very committed parents assist in classrooms, work as lunchtime supervisors, help to plan or run activities for the parents and teachers' association (PTA), take part in specific trips, and supervise swimming activities. Other parents come to meetings and social events when they can. The level of parental involvement in the life of the school is as expected and the impact of this on pupils' learning and standards achieved is satisfactory.

49. The school provides parents with the range of information expected and its quality is sound. Parents do not always feel that they are kept as well informed as they could be, partly because there is no regular newsletter and partly because there is no routine for sending messages and checking that they reach home. The booklet provided for parents of children in the Nursery is very helpful and sets the tone for the warm welcome which is offered to them. The school's brochure covers what is required, as does the governors' report to parents, but both lack a lively presentation likely to encourage parents to take more interest in what their children do at school.

50. Reports on children's progress give a better idea of what they have learned in English and mathematics than in other subjects, where general descriptions of what everyone is supposed to know often replace evaluative comment about the individual's strengths and weaknesses. It is rare to find any comment that indicates clearly whether the rate of progress is what would be expected for that child and for someone of that age. Targets for improvement in English, mathematics and science vary from general encouragement to keep trying, for example with reading, writing, counting or thinking, to those that valuably focus on specific steps to take to develop a new skill. Reports do not include space for pupils to evaluate their achievements or set themselves targets. In general, reports provide satisfactory information on progress.

51. There are good formal and informal contacts with parents of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN), and parents' responses in the questionnaire indicated that they are pleased with the provision made. Parents usually attend reviews of pupils' progress where these apply. In line with the new Code of Practice, parents have been involved for some time in reviews of their children's progress and in setting new targets.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

52. Much improvement has been made to the school's work since the last inspection. Most significantly, there is now a purposeful sense of educational direction, focused on raising standards and improving the quality of education for all pupils. Staff have worked hard to improve teaching and learning, and the overall good level of teaching seen in lessons during the inspection pays tribute to their efforts. Improvements to national test results indicate that academic aims are now soundly met overall, and the school's success has been recognised for the last two years by national awards for achievement. Within this positive picture, the capacity for future improvement is good.

53. The headteacher is very supportive of staff and pupils' welfare, and inspires the loyalty and trust of staff. His caring leadership is reflected in the school's strong pastoral ethos and its impact on pupils' behaviour, attitudes and the high quality of relationships throughout the school. Pastoral aims are, therefore, well met. The headteacher now regularly monitors lessons and is using performance management objectives to target and support the school's academic priorities for improvement in English, mathematics and Information and communication technology. However, although the school's analysis and evaluation of its work and performance has grown significantly, these responsibilities are not yet spread extensively enough amongst co-ordinators and governors, or across all subjects: nor are monitoring and assessment strategies focusing sharply enough on what pupils must do next in order to improve their work and increase academic achievement. The school is aware that these are areas needing further attention, and they are therefore highlighted as important priorities in the school's strategic planning. There has been considerable improvement to information and communication technology (ICT), but much of this is very recent and has yet to ensure that pupils are being taught all aspects of the subject.

54. The deputy head and headteacher work together closely and form the core senior management team. The deputy headteacher supports staff effectively, both formally and informally, in a range of management and pastoral roles. She has now joined the headteacher in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and acting as a team leader for performance management. She also plays a key role on the governors' curriculum committee. Both senior managers have updated and extended their leadership and management expertise through training and through good support from the local education authority (LEA).

55. Within the limited time available to them, key co-ordinators for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science have gained a generally clear view about how their area of responsibility needs to develop. In some cases, monitoring has focused more closely on the quality of pupils' learning, for example by a scrutiny of pupils' work in English. The school is aware that it now needs to review the small amount of time available, so that it can ensure more sharply focused monitoring and also allow for the monitoring and evaluation of work in all subjects. Despite the increasing liaison between the Nursery and reception classes, and the good support of the deputy headteacher in supporting their joint planning, there is no overall co-ordination of this key stage to guide and hasten developments or spread effective teaching strategies across it. The provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is managed well, although the school has yet to review the use of the co-ordinator's time in the light of the new Code of Practice.

56. The governing body continues to be supportive of the school's work; it fulfils its responsibilities and is now better informed and more involved in looking at the school's work. Some key governors are particularly active in their role as critical friend and have good links with staff. Initiatives in the school development plan are reviewed regularly by the curriculum committee, but similar evaluations are not yet made in all committees. All staff and governors take part in strategic planning. The school development plan is detailed, and

priorities are entirely appropriate to the school's present needs. Measurable targets are included for core subjects, but criteria for judging the success of projects are too few and are not always sharply focused on what impact they will have on the quality of education and pupils' achievement. Neither is enough attention given to how progress will be monitored, or when and by whom the extent of success will be evaluated.

57. Financial planning and monitoring are sound. So, too, are administrative procedures, and recommendations in the most recent auditor's report have been closely followed-up by governors. Specific grants and any additional funding are satisfactorily used. The principles of best value are satisfactorily understood and applied. Staffing is good and generally used well, which represents an improvement on the findings of the last inspection. Teachers are well qualified and there is a good spread of experience. Funding has been directed at creating two Year 2 groups, rather than place some of these pupils with another year group. Pupils benefit from specialist music teaching, and support staff give effective help overall to small groups of pupils in lessons across a range of subjects, and particularly to those pupils with SEN. Support staff are not consistently well used, however, during whole group sessions. Teaching assistants are well trained, and lunchtime staff have also received training and now supervise effectively. New and newly qualified staff get good support from the deputy headteacher. Performance management is well embedded and is being used constructively to improve the school's performance, as well as to support the particular needs of teachers. The administrative officer was highly spoken of by parents. She fulfils many roles and is dedicated and efficient.

58. Accommodation continues to be good. The school is well maintained by the caretaker and her staff. Classrooms, hall, play and grassed areas are spacious and the outside fabric of the school has recently been renewed. Playtime activities are enhanced by the use of fixed climbing apparatus. Swimming skills are well provided for because the school has its own pool, which is well used during the summer term. Plans are in place to increase the outdoor play area for the Nursery and create a discrete play area for the Reception group. Library facilities are adequate and further improvement is planned, although little use was made of it during the inspection. Learning resources have been much improved since the last inspection, including those for mathematics which were formerly found to be unsatisfactory. They are plentiful in English, science, art and design, music and physical education. Resources for ICT have just been considerably increased, although new technology is not yet fully used to teach all aspects of the subject or support work in other subjects. Funding has been set aside to correct the discrepancy between the quality and extent of resources in the Nursery, where they are good, and those for children in the Reception class, where they are only just adequate.

59. The school's pastoral ethos and support are strong, and achievement is increasing in response to the hard work and commitment of staff and the improvement of teaching and learning. Standards of behaviour and attitudes to learning are good, and relationships very good. Pupils' progress, the leadership and management, and the quality of teaching and learning are all satisfactory overall. The cost per pupil is close to the higher end of national averages. When all these factors are taken into account, the school gives sound value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

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

- improve standards in writing, mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT), geography and religious education, by:
(Paragraphs: 6-8, 19,22-24,27,36,40-42,53,55,70-80,81-89,106-111,117-120,128-132)
 - * using assessment opportunities, such as marking and assessment notes on weekly plans, to identify the next steps in learning and give pupils specific targets and pointers for how to improve their work;
 - * increasing the amount of taught time at Key Stage 2, so that it meets the recommended level and allows religious education and geography to be taught in depth;
 - * using assessment information to adapt national guidance and curricular planning to meet pupils' needs, including the more able pupils in mathematics;
 - * allowing co-ordinators the time to monitor teaching and pupils' work more closely, in order to identify and address areas for improvement:

- in writing, by:
(Paragraphs: 6,73)
 - * giving pupils more practice in extended writing and in systematic drafting and re-drafting of their work:

- in ICT, as planned, by:
(Paragraphs: 7,23-24,40,53,58,79,88,94,110,117-120)
 - * teaching all aspects of the subject, so that the school fulfils statutory requirements;
 - * establishing the regular use of computers across the school to increase pupils' progress;
 - * planning and implementing the use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum;
 - * increasing the length of present short sessions taught by the class teacher;
 - * using consistent procedures for checking attainment and tracking progress.

- Other areas in need of development, which the governors should consider for inclusion in the school's action plan, are:
 - * the use of assessments to plan more effectively work that consistently meets the different needs of pupils in history, and the needs of the more able and those identified as gifted and talented in science;
(Paragraphs: 6,91,113-115)

 - * the development of overall co-ordination of the Foundation Stage to hasten improvements and extend good practice, and improve resources and outdoor play facilities for the Reception class, as planned;
(Paragraphs: 20,27,39,55,58,63,68)

- * the review and improvement of the use of teaching assistants during whole class sessions;
(Paragraphs: 22,57,87)
- * allowing pupils more opportunities to evaluate their own performance and that of others in physical education;
(Paragraphs: 22,127)
- * planning opportunities to foster spiritual awareness and reflection, where appropriate, in lessons;
(Paragraph: 32)
- * increasing the emphasis on the ethnic and cultural diversity of the wider society and celebrating the achievements of people from around the world;
(Paragraph: 35)
- * monitoring absence and lateness more formally and rigorously, to back up the present good informal procedures;
(Paragraph: 37)
- * improving the school's development plan by including more criteria that focus sharply on how initiatives have improved the quality of education and increased pupils' achievement, and by giving more attention to how progress will be monitored and evaluated.
(Paragraph: 56)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	52
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	75

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	10	21	21	0	0	0
Percentage	0	19	40	40	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	11	197
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	30

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	6	70

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1*

*This pupil is fluent in English

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	5.2	School data	0.5
National comparative data	5.6	National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	01	18	14	32

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	16	15	17
	Girls	14	13	12
	Total	30	28	29
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	94 (86)	88 (86)	91 (95)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	16	18	18
	Girls	14	11	14
	Total	30	29	32
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	94 (76)	91 (100)	100 (95)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	01	16	15	31

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	11	13	13
	Girls	13	7	15
	Total	24	20	28
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	77 (65)	65 (61)	90 (74)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	11	13	14
	Girls	14	13	14
	Total	25	26	28
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	81 (71)	84 (71)	90 (77)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

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

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	1	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 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25:1
Average class size	25

Education support staff:

YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	111

Qualified teachers and support staff:

Nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20:1
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	17.5
Number of pupils per FTE adult	20

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
	£
Total income	512723.00
Total expenditure	528820.00
Expenditure per pupil	2542.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	20957.00
Balance carried forward to next year	4860.00

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out
Number of questionnaires returned

208
72

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	39	4	0	3
My child is making good progress in school.	44	51	3	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	53	4	3	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	51	12	1	1
The teaching is good.	46	50	1	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	43	11	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	61	36	0	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	34	4	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	36	44	15	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	36	54	1	3	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	44	46	4	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	38	20	4	4

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

61. At the time of the inspection, there were 21 children in the Nursery and a further 21 children in the Reception class. Children join the Nursery in advance of their fourth birthday, in either September or January, and attend each morning. They spend three terms in this class and then move through into the Reception class, where they attend full time. During the autumn term of this school year, the Reception class had also contained a small group of Year 1 pupils. When children join the Nursery, they are admitted in small groups over a two-week period to ease the transition from home.

62. Assessments made when children first join the Nursery show there to be a wide range of attainment. However, overall, attainment is below what is expected of children of a similar age. A significant minority are attaining well below expectations in all areas of learning. This makes an impact on attainment in each year group right through the school. Children make good progress in the Nursery, where there is a rich, varied and stimulating curriculum, and where children's individual needs are carefully identified and closely and systematically met. This strength has been maintained since the last inspection. The early identification of pupils with special educational needs (SEN), for example, is particularly effective. Reception aged children are currently making satisfactory rather than good progress because activities are less well targeted at children's particular needs than they are in the Nursery. The current group's overall attainment remains below expectations and a significant minority are unlikely to meet the learning goals expected of children of this age by the time they move into Year 1.

63. A well-structured two-year rolling programme of work has been planned to support teaching and learning, and staff meet regularly to establish further links and develop common practices. However, this liaison is not fully effective because there is no specific staff member with responsibility for leading this key stage and for ensuring that effective teaching and learning practices are fully shared and influence teaching and learning across the key stage. Consequently, whilst teaching and learning are good overall in the Nursery, they are satisfactory in the Reception class. Disparities in the quality and extent of resources between the two classes also affect the quality of children's experience in the Reception class. The school has already recognised this inequality and is targeting funding to improve both indoor and outdoor resources and facilities.

Personal, social and emotional development

64. There is a supportive, happy and purposeful environment in the Nursery, where routines and expectations are firmly established. Opportunities to promote these skills are seized on all occasions. They are also demonstrated through the close and effective working relationships of staff, which create a well-organised pattern to the morning, and through timely interventions when children are frustrated or upset. As a result, children are relaxed and confident, take pride in their success and clearly enjoy being with each other and with adults. Most understand the idea of waiting their turn and sharing resources, and they play good-naturedly alongside each other. They often initiate conversation and sometimes collaborate to bath and dress the dolls in the role play area, for example. A minority, however, find it hard to settle without direction from adults; they need coaxing to try activities or are easily frustrated when things do not happen as they wish. Sometimes, during class group literacy sessions, one or two children persistently call out and demand attention, for example when they are particularly enthusiastic about the book they are

reading. Similar responses were seen in a small group of challenging children in the Reception class. Routines continue to be well supported in the Reception class through social occasions, such as milk time. The good organisation of this daily session, with children spread out into a circle, gives adults a valuable opportunity to chat generally or discuss work. Within this calm and friendly atmosphere children listen quietly to each other's contributions and all are well included in discussion, including those very few from minority ethnic backgrounds. Other lessons, however, are not always so effective. Most reception-aged children are keen to explore new experiences and show good levels of independence when working with adults, but there is a small group in this class for whom routines are not wholly consolidated, for example when it comes to clearing up. They find it difficult to maintain their attention and co-operation and this sometimes disturbs their own concentration and that of others.

Communication, language and literacy

65. While most children are attentive listeners and speak confidently, some find it difficult to remain attentive, as described above. Teachers pay good attention to the development of speaking and listening skills in the Nursery, through taking every opportunity to talk with children within formal and play situations. A tray of objects covered with a cloth, for example, allowed each object to be carefully discussed without distraction from the other items, and also gave an element of excitement to the conversation as each object was revealed. The teacher was careful to make sure all children had a chance to contribute. Many children reply or share ideas in phrases or sentences, but a few have a limited vocabulary. This is also true of children in the Reception group. For example, during a discussion about trees in preparation for some descriptive writing, some did not know the words *bark*, *trunk* or *branch*. Most children are keen to share stories as a group or on their own. During the inspection, more able children in the Nursery recognised the letter of the week and picked out examples in the big book they were sharing. All joined in confidently with the story's repeated phrases when they had heard them once or twice. Higher attainers in the Reception group accurately read the most commonly used words and re-tell a familiar story as they talk about the illustrations. Middle attainers have a limited knowledge of some simple words, while lower attainers, and those with SEN, recognise only a few letters. Reading diaries show that Reception-aged children regularly read with adults, but some do not read often at home. More able children in the Nursery have a knowledge of and write letters beyond those found in their name, although not all the letters are correctly formed. Difficulties with forming letters were found in both the Nursery and Reception classes, particularly amongst the significant minority of lower attaining children, and this inhibits their progress. Higher and middle attainers in the Reception class complete simple sentences, using full stops. Lower attainers have an awareness of full stops and write some recognisable letters. During the inspection, most of the reception-aged children wrote some simple descriptions of trees in response to the stimulus of an earlier dance lesson.

Mathematical development

66. Sessions at the start of the day in the Nursery are well used to reinforce and extend mathematical understanding. In one such session, children readily used both hands to demonstrate different ways of making five. They did so with increasing understanding, and corrected themselves when alerted to their mistakes. They counted the children present, one by one to 15, and calculated how many were away. Small group work with an adult was enabling more able children to make repeating patterns with two colours, while middle attainers used one colour. Lower attainers recognise numbers one to four, but this knowledge is not secure. In a numeracy lesson during the inspection, all the Reception group counted confidently to ten and up in fives up to 55. By the end of the lesson, higher

attainers had grasped how to record five in a tally form, but this understanding was not fully established for many, and particularly for lower attainers, mainly because they had not had enough chance to first explore strategies of their own. More able children record simple calculations as a sum. Lower attainers count and draw up to five objects, but not always accurately. Once again, a minority of children write poorly formed or incorrectly orientated numbers.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

67. During the inspection, children in both classes benefited from interesting activities in this area of learning. In the Nursery, for example, the role play area was set up as a well-equipped bathroom. The importance of personal hygiene was carefully promoted by having a named toothbrush for every child and holding small group sessions about washing hands and brushing teeth. In previous work, these children had dressed in authentic costume to celebrate Divali, grown cress and runner bean seeds when they studied harvest, made miniature gardens and picture frames, and completed simple stitching on binka material. They had also used a paint program to produce bright and cheerful computerised art work, often to a good standard. Some had confident enough skills to show others how to print their work. Children also showed increasing skill when guiding battery-operated vehicles. In a lesson about materials in the Reception class, children identified different materials, and started to organise these into groups and talk about their different properties. During milk time, they discussed the different materials they might use to mend a hole in a bucket, and why, and planned their experiments for the next day. In previous work, children had gone out into the school grounds to draw picture maps of the school. All but a few of them had representational features to show different parts of the school. All the children had made paper kites and grown sunflowers as part of their earlier work. However, some children in both classes have a limited experience beyond that they meet in school. For example, a few children in the Nursery did not recognise the ingredients they were to use to make carrot bread.

Physical development

68. This area of learning is satisfactorily taught overall, with strengths seen in both classes. In a physical education lesson for children in the Nursery, the children responded readily to instructions and showed some early awareness of their heart beating fast because of their exercise. Movement was confident and controlled, but many had difficulties hopping or holding their balance on one foot. Progress was well promoted through a good variety of activities to develop the children's sense of balance and sequences of movement, but limited by a lack of comment about how their performance might be improved. Achievement was good during a dance lesson for Reception aged children. They performed a sequence of movement, working in pairs, to depict tall, wide and crooked trees. Children moved into and held their shapes with good co-ordination and balance, using a variety of levels and different parts of their body. The Nursery has a good outside area and plenty of play equipment to encourage the development of children's physical skills. The Reception class has access to this area, but it is not close and is rarely used. Now that recent external building work has been completed, the school plans to develop a discrete outside area for the use of the Reception group. Children have sufficient opportunities to use small tools and writing and painting implements, but a small proportion of children in both classes have underdeveloped fine motor skills.

Creative development

69. Children experience a variety of art activities. Examples of two- and three-dimensional work were seen in both classes, from observational pastel pictures of leaves, hand printing and a papier mâché model of a tiger in the Nursery, to clay and collage castles and stencilled sunflowers in the Reception class. Following their dance work about trees, children used oil pastels to complete observational drawings of gnarled wood, with a careful use of colour. A few children in both classes, however, complete drawings that are barely representational. Role play areas in both classes allow children to build on their own experience. The bathroom in the Nursery, for example, allowed children to talk about home and then involve others in various experiences and share roles. During a music lesson in the Reception class, children were keen to play the instruments but had a weak sense of rhythm, and this depressed attainment. Planning had not taken sufficient account of differences in skill and experience, so children were not given enough opportunity to repeat tapped rhythms or explore the sound of each instrument.

ENGLISH

70. In the national tests in 2001, pupils then in Year 6 attained standards below national averages and below the averages for similar schools, with the proportion gaining the higher level (Level 5) also being below the national average. Within this picture, the results for reading were much higher than for writing, both at the expected level (Level 4) and at the higher level. In comparison with schools which had similar results when the pupils had been in Year 2, these results suggest that their progress had been at the expected level. Year 2 pupils taking the tests in 2001 reached standards broadly in line with national averages for all schools and with the averages for similar schools, for both reading and writing.

71. A key issue in the last inspection report was to raise attainment in English. The school has worked hard to address this, and with success, particularly in reading. Evidence of this is to be seen in improvements in national test results. There has been an almost steady upward trend in test results for both Year 2 and 6 pupils, although the rise is less marked in writing. There is some evidence of boys reaching better standards than girls in reading and writing, although girls' performance has improved since 1998 in the Year 6 English tests. Information from the school about test results for the present Year 2 indicate a reduced percentage of pupils gaining the expected level (Level 2) and above in reading, but a slightly higher percentage reaching the higher level (Level 3). Results at the expected level are lower than those reached by the previous Year 2 because the current group has a larger proportion of lower-attaining pupils. No information about the writing tests or about the Year 6 results was available at the time of the inspection.

72. Inspection evidence shows pupils currently in Years 2 and 6 to be attaining standards in line with national expectations in speaking, listening and reading skills, and below national expectations for writing. While the picture remains broadly similar, in both Years 2 and 6, to the findings of the previous inspection, since that time the school has successfully introduced the National Literacy Strategy, which has had a positive impact on teaching and learning. This, in turn, is improving all pupils' achievement over time, particularly in reading, where, from a below average attainment on entry to the school, pupils achieve well. Other factors successfully influencing progress are pupils' good motivation and the commitment of the co-ordinator and staff to raising standards. The quality of relationships also creates a happy and secure atmosphere in lessons and so enables pupils to contribute confidently during discussion. This helps them to make good progress in developing their speaking skills. However, in each year, there is a significant proportion of pupils with lower attainment or special educational needs (SEN), and this makes an impact on the overall attainment of each group.

73. The school is now appropriately focusing on raising standards in writing. Pupils are not making quite the same degree of good progress in writing as they are in other aspects of the subject, primarily because they do not have enough practice in extended writing and in systematic drafting and redrafting before final 'publication'. Target setting does not yet focus enough upon achievable goals which are continuously revised, so that pupils know the next step in their learning and reach it quickly, thus accelerating progress. Neither are pupils sufficiently involved in evaluating their own work, for example during the final sessions in literacy lessons. Whilst work is always marked, it does not always give comment, or follow up comments previously made. However, pupils' most recently completed work includes a wider range of writing styles. Additionally, writing standards in the present Year 5 group are closer to national expectations. Unlike that of Year 6, this group's attainment has not been affected by the recent arrival of a significant proportion of pupils who are new to the school.

74. Pupils with SEN achieve as well as others of the same age. This is because their teachers know them well and usually plan work to fit their requirements. It is also because they share in the generally positive attitudes of the majority of pupils, and have additional support from teaching assistants, who have well-developed skills in relationships and in meeting the learning needs of individuals and small groups. The very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, and those who have been identified by the school as having particular talents and gifts, also make the same progress as pupils overall.

75. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are keen and confident to answer in class, their confidence conferred by good teaching and good relationships. Their responses are usually relevant and considered, show evidence of attentive listening skills, and are expressed in simple terms. By Year 6, pupils have gained in confidence. For example, in a study of explanatory writing, more able Year 6 pupils responded to a text with carefully worded analysis. However, a significant proportion in this year group, although willing to have a go, gave brief or hesitant replies, sometimes starting but running out of words.

76. Reading is well supported by teachers' shared enjoyment of books, especially in literacy lessons. There is a rich culture of reading in the school, promoted by its joint home and school strategy, by reading links between classes in each key stage, and by such enrichment as the recent visit to the Roald Dahl Museum, of which pupils spoke and wrote with great enthusiasm. More able Year 2 pupils read fluently and accurately, often with lively expression. They have good reserves of known words on which to draw. Middle attainers read with good attention to meaning and retell the story confidently. There is, however, a significant proportion of pupils whose reading skills are below the expected level and whose repertoire of known words is limited. When heard to read individually, those Year 6 pupils with higher attainment are accurate, keen and mature readers, tackling challenging texts, such as 'The Lord of the Rings', and making spontaneous comparisons between the book and the filmed versions. Middle attainers read clearly and with expression and swiftly correct any mistakes. They uncover meaning beyond the literal when talking about plot and character, but are less secure when exploring the story's themes. Lower attainers are mostly accurate, with some hesitation. They confidently summarise the story and make predictions about what might happen next. Book exchanges for these pupils are frequent, promoting good progress. When pupils are reading aloud in small groups, however, reading tends to lack expression.

77. More able Year 2 pupils write with some vividness and accuracy, but for many the communication of meaning does not go beyond simple statements. There is some punctuation, but most writing comes out as it is spoken. Among lower attaining pupils, inaccurate spelling often gets in the way of meaning. Handwriting is almost all joined, but it is often not well formed. Although pupils practise handwriting, what they learn is not always transferred into their day-to-day work. The best writing in Year 6 is lively, interesting and

accurate, with careful choice of words, but among pupils of middle and lower attainment the choice of words is often obvious and unoriginal. Narratives tend to be simple, although they follow a clear sequence. Basic grammar is usually correct, but spelling mistakes are frequent, particularly with commonly used words.

78. The quality of teaching in the last inspection was described as at least satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2. There has been a good level of improvement, as teaching and learning are now good overall at both these key stages. During the inspection, teaching and learning were never less than good in these classes, and very good in nearly one third of lessons. Planning, with clear learning objectives which are shared with pupils, is a strength of all lessons. So, too, is the very good relationship between teachers and pupils. This promotes confidence and good motivation and behaviour. In the best lessons, individuals were given well-directed advice based on accurate knowledge of what they already knew and understood. Management and control were easy and unobtrusive. Questions included all pupils and systematically increased pupils' achievement.

79. Standards of literacy are generally well promoted across the curriculum. In addition to the National Literacy Strategy and the home/school reading scheme, teachers ensure that specialist vocabulary is included in lessons, for example in science and art. In one classroom there is a display of key words for all subjects. Well-ordered discussions in personal and social education lessons enhance pupils' speaking and listening. In some subjects, such as science and, sometimes, in history, pupils have opportunities to record their own observations freely, rather than copying or following teachers' prescriptions. Drama was used well in religious education and also gives pupils good opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills. Information and communication technology (ICT) is largely used for word-processing work, and its full potential in supporting and promoting literacy skills has not yet been harnessed.

80. The co-ordinator has a good perception of the priorities for the subject, and has successfully presided over improvements since the last inspection, including the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy. However, while she has at times in the past monitored teaching through observation and has started to look at pupils' work, she is not routinely provided with non-contact time for this purpose, and this means that the school is denied some aspects of her expertise. Assessment is largely through tests, and is satisfactory. However, it lacks more detailed tracking of progress, for example by noting the times at which pupils achieve particular targets. Moreover, it is not yet used enough to identify specific ways in which individual pupils can improve their work. Resources in terms of books for guided reading, for whole class use and for loans, are good, and they are well used by teachers in classrooms. There is a satisfactory collection of non-fiction in the library area, which pupils were not seen using during the inspection. Its location is adequate and plans to develop and re-model this area have already been initiated.

MATHEMATICS

81. In the national tests for Year 6 pupils, in 2001, results were well below national averages and the averages for similar schools. In comparison with schools which had similar results when the same pupils were in Year 2, these results suggest that their rate of progress had been below the expected level. However, following a dip in 1998, results have improved overall and the school's trend has kept pace with the national trend. In most years since 1997, boys' results have been better than those of the girls. Results for the Year 2 national tests, taken in 2001, were below the national average for all schools and well below

average for similar schools. In these tests, boys and girls had similar results. No comparative data is available for the results of the current Year 2 pupils, but information from the school indicates that although the overall percentage gaining the expected level is lower than that gained in 2001 the percentage reaching the higher level has doubled.

82. Inspection evidence shows the standards of the pupils currently in Years 2 and 6 to be below national expectations. This is similar to the standards reported at the previous inspection. At both key stages, pupils' achievement is satisfactory, but achievement rates are improving and are good in particular year groups. Pupils' achievement is getting better because of the improvements made to the teaching and assessment of mathematics.

83. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make good progress with their learning. Teaching assistants and special need teachers give effective support during lessons and ensure that the work is well matched to pupils' needs. The very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make the same satisfactory progress as pupils overall, as do those who have been identified by the school as being gifted and talented.

84. In Year 2, the majority of pupils multiply numbers by ten. A minority are confident and accurate with the 5-times table. Lower-attaining pupils add and subtract accurately to 10. Higher-attaining pupils accurately add and subtract two-digit numbers to make up to 100; they know their 3- and 5 -times tables well, and they identify different number patterns. The majority of pupils identify lines of symmetry and right angles on simple two-dimensional shapes. Lower-attaining pupils name common two- and three-dimensional shapes accurately. All pupils complete tally charts and then represent data in the form of bar charts. In Year 6, a minority of pupils are not confident with the 6 and 7 times tables. About half are confident in multiplying three-digit numbers by two-digit numbers. Higher-attaining pupils are reaching above average standards across the full range of the mathematics curriculum. For example, they find percentages of numbers to two decimal places. When solving problems, they check their answers by using inverse operations. They draw and measure angles accurately, but do not calculate the areas of triangles. Pupils draw a variety of graphs to represent data, but their interpretations are often rather brief. Lower-attaining pupils use the four operations accurately, with relatively small numbers, to solve problems involving one calculation step. They identify equivalent fractions, percentages and decimal numbers. Pupils calculate the areas of squares and rectangles, and draw a sound range of graphs.

85. Evidence taken from lessons and previously completed work shows the overall quality of teaching and learning to be satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during this inspection and, of the lessons seen, over half were well taught, with very good teaching in one. This indicates that there are many strengths to the present quality of teaching and learning. A strength common to all lessons was good planning. This usually included useful detail about the plenary session to ensure that this part of the lesson was well used to add to pupils' learning. Learning objectives were always shared with pupils and, in the best lessons teachers checked that pupils understood their meaning. Classes were all effectively managed and this secured a good response from the pupils, who were well behaved and keen to learn. The teaching always involved the pupils and was usually lucid and concise, so that pupils learned new ideas and knew what they had to do. Pupils were frequently asked to explain their methods and encouraged to learn different ways of answering questions or solving problems. In particular years, there is good and regular marking that includes personal comments for each pupil, but this is not common to all classes. The best marking promotes learning by setting pupils targets for improvement and involves them in replying to the teachers' comments and questions.

86. In the lessons seen, the work was well matched to pupils' differing levels of attainment. For example, in one lesson, three sets of problems were used in the mental starter sessions. However, previously completed work in several year groups showed that higher-attaining

pupils are sometimes asked to complete work that is too easy or similar to work they have already completed successfully. This reduces their rate of learning. In a few year groups, pupils of differing levels of attainment are given the same tasks. Teachers regularly add to their weekly plans assessment notes about the progress of individual pupils, but this good information is not always acted upon when planning the next steps of learning. In addition to assessment notes on weekly plans, teachers have sound systems for tracking the progress of each pupil against the key learning objectives.

87. There were instances of weaknesses in otherwise satisfactory teaching and learning, though none were common weaknesses. For example, the teaching assistant was not always involved in actively supporting the learning of pupils during the whole-class teaching. In two lessons, the mental starter and the whole-class teaching were too long, and this slowed the pace of pupils' learning. There were instances when errors were not corrected by marking. However, pupils have positive attitudes to the subject, and, even when the pace of teaching slows they are keen to contribute.

88. There are some good examples of the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance pupils' mathematical learning. For example, in one class, a spreadsheet was used effectively for data handling, as pupils used data from a traffic survey to draw a variety of graphs and charts, considering the advantages and disadvantages of each. Overall, however, there is insufficient use of this resource. Sound use is made of pupils' numeracy skills in other subjects, though these opportunities are not yet systematically planned. In science, pupils make good use of numeracy when using a variety of graphs to represent data collected during experiments. There are good opportunities for measurement in design and technology and for data handling in geography.

89. Mathematics remains a key priority for whole school development. The management of mathematics has been good, and much improvement has been made to the provision for mathematics since the last inspection. All aspects of the key issue have been addressed, and in addition many steps have been taken to help to raise standards. For example, the time allocation for teaching mathematics has improved since the last inspection, and the national numeracy strategy is fully implemented. Pupils' opportunities to use and apply their mathematical knowledge and skills have been improved and teachers' expectations of the standards pupils can achieve are now appropriate. Learning resources have also been expanded and are now good. In order to improve teaching and learning, eight teachers have attended a five-day training course and there has been school-based training. Results of national tests have been analysed for 2000 and 2001. The differences in the achievement of boys and girls have been recently identified, although no steps to improve the relative performance of girls have yet been taken. The impact on pupils' standards of the many improvements made to mathematics is not yet complete. While there has been a good range of monitoring activities, it has not always been rigorous enough in identifying aspects for improvement. Neither has the co-ordinator been able to complete all her planned lesson observations. Consequently, the leadership of the subject has not been specific enough about the next steps needed to drive up standards, or had sufficient opportunity to ensure that initiatives are fully implemented and have the desired effect.

SCIENCE

90. Results in the 2001 national tests at the end of Year 6 were below the national average for all schools and well below the national average for similar schools. Results were depressed to these levels because the proportion gaining the higher level (Level 5) was well below average. However, the results also indicate that these pupils had made satisfactory progress since assessments made of their attainment at the end of Year 2.

There has also been a small improvement overall to the test results since a fall in 1998, such that the school's trend has generally kept pace with the national trend. Over time, however, boys have tended to perform better in these tests than girls, although results have been more balanced in the last two years. In the 2001 teacher assessments at the end of Year 2, the number of pupils at Level 2 and above and Level 3 and above was very high in comparison with national averages. The school is aware that these assessments were too high.

91. Pupils enter the school with below average attainment overall in their knowledge and understanding of the world, and many are now making good progress through a combination of some good and very good teaching and their own positive attitudes to the subject. Inspection evidence indicates that standards of pupils in the current Years 2 and 6 are in line with those expected of pupils of a similar age. Pupils with special educational needs receive very effective support in class. Because of this they also achieve well and make good progress towards their individual targets. The previous inspection reported that pupils with special educational needs made satisfactory progress, and this has clearly improved. However, more able pupils, and those identified as gifted and talented, achieve satisfactorily rather than well. This is because the planning of work to suit the needs of high attaining pupils is not sufficiently well developed. Evidence of this is to be seen in the lack of grades at higher levels in the national tests. Additionally, although there are satisfactory procedures in place for tracking pupils' attainment and progress, the use of the information to set targets or track the progress of classes and groups is not sufficiently well developed. No significant differences in attainment between boys and girls, or across the four aspects of the subject, were found during the inspection. The very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make the same progress as pupils overall.

92. By the end of Year 2, pupils are beginning to develop the basic vocabulary and concepts associated with science. For example, these pupils describe the conditions needed for plants to grow, and draw and name the basic parts of plants such as the stem, flowers, buds and petals. Pupils carry out simple investigations and make predictions about what may happen, as was seen in work on plant growth in Year 2. More able pupils are beginning to understand the principles of setting up fair tests and what is involved in making them fair. Pupils write short notes about the methods used, often on worksheets provided by the teacher, and give their results in simple tables. Good scientific vocabulary is regularly used, and pupils in Year 1 are able to use and understand such terms as *magnetism*, *poles*, *repels*, *attracts* and *magnetic north*.

93. By the end of Year 6, pupils have developed a sound factual knowledge and a range of scientific vocabulary, which they use with confidence. They use and understand such terms as *evaporation*, *habitat*, *food chains* and *static electricity*. Pupils express their own ideas about finding solutions to problems. Those in Year 4, for example, were able to work out some clever solutions to the problem of how to separate paper clips, pasta, rice and sand from a mixture. When they are conducting investigations, pupils in Year 6 are able to design and set up their own tests, and all pupils use equipment with care. They can recognise the need for fair tests and describe the most important features in making sure that those tests are fair. Higher attaining pupils explain what happens if one variable in a test is altered, such as adding extra light bulbs to a circuit. Pupils generally choose their own methods of writing up results and recording information. When discussing the tests, and writing about them afterwards, higher attainers describe any shortcomings in their methods and make suggestions as to how the test could be improved in the light of their experience.

94. Science makes a good contribution to pupils' literacy and numeracy development. Pupils usually write up results of investigations for themselves and are encouraged to develop their own writing style. A very good example was seen in a Year 6 lesson, where

pupils were writing instructions for other groups about how to conduct a test. This was a valuable experience because it called for clarity and precision. Pupils also routinely use measurements of different types in science and present evidence on a range of graphs and tables, often designed by themselves rather than by the teacher. This makes a good contribution to numeracy. However, the use of computers to produce graphs, and to refine, edit and produce written work is unsatisfactory and, therefore, science does not make enough contribution to ICT development.

95. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection, and there was good, or very good, teaching in a third of the lessons seen. Teachers manage pupils well, without fuss and with good humour. Pupils respond well to this approach, and behaviour is consequently good in lessons. Pupils are interested in science and their interest is promoted well through the use of investigative activities. This contributes to good levels of concentration and independent working habits, which have improved since the last inspection. This in turn helps the pupils to make good progress. When they work together in small groups, relationships are very good. A good level of teamwork and planning between teachers and teaching assistants also contributes to raising standards, especially for pupils with special educational needs. Teaching assistants provide an effective and caring service to the pupils. Where teaching was very good, lesson objectives were shared with pupils so they had some knowledge of how well they had progressed during the lesson. Work is carefully planned to give pupils clear enough instructions about what to do, so they can succeed, but also allows them to think out solutions to problems for themselves. All aspects of classroom management and health and safety are carefully thought out. This was clearly demonstrated in a Year 4 lesson, where pupils were set a task to work out how they could separate various solids from a mixture. In the lessons seen, teachers planned a range of work tailored to the needs of most pupils. The process was especially good for pupils with special educational needs. However, in previously completed work, activities have not always been varied to meet the needs and challenge pupils of different abilities.

96. The subject has made satisfactory progress overall since the previous inspection. Test standards have improved and clear priorities for further development have been established by the co-ordinator.

ART AND DESIGN

97. In keeping with the findings of the previous inspection, standards in art and design are generally in line with those expected of pupils of a similar age. In this inspection only one lesson was observed. For this reason, judgements of attainment are to a large extent based upon samples of work, and no overall judgement could be made about teaching and learning. Pupils in general make satisfactory progress, including those with special educational needs. Teachers exploit the lively and imaginative elements of the subject, and there is plenty of evidence in pupils' work that demonstrates their enthusiasm for art and design.

98. In Year 1, only one lesson was seen. This was a good lesson, in which pupils applied their enthusiasm to the making of sculptures from pieces of twig and bark, stones, string, glue and rubber bands. They had very pleasing success, giving their works vivid names which showed sensitivity and perception, like *Lizard*, or *Crushed Boat*. The work of higher attainers in Year 2 shows a good sense of pattern and colour, and all produced some careful pencil drawings of leaves. All pupils have sketchbooks, but they are not well used as an instrument for the development of skills, and most had very little in them, even at the end of the year.

99. Skills improve as pupils get older, and by Years 5 and 6, their handling of paint is competent. Subjects are well placed on paper, and pupils are beginning to show depth by shading and perspective in their drawings. Throughout Key Stage 2, there is some well observed work in the style of well-known artists, particularly in Year 6, with a very sensitive version of Turner's 'The Fighting Téméraire', in which paint was delicately used. In the same year group, and as part of a joint design and technology project, pupils had made headdresses for their teddy bears, and these showed imaginative decoration as well as a sense of humour.

100. Lesson planning is based on national guidance, but this has yet to be adapted to the school's needs, and some topics, like portraits, tend to be repeated in different year groups. Nor is full use made of the school's kiln for three-dimensional work. The co-ordinator has a good perception of key priorities for the subject's development but does not have the opportunity to monitor teachers' approaches in the classroom. Pupils' progress is not currently subject to formal monitoring and assessment.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

101. Standards in design technology in Years 2 and 6 reflect those found at the time of the last inspection, and are broadly similar to those expected of pupils of a similar age. All pupils continue to make satisfactory progress. Improvements have been made through the use of national guidance as a basis for planning work, and the subject is now taught discretely. All aspects of the subject are given equal emphasis within each termly project and the purpose of activities is now clearly stated in planning. There was not enough evidence to make overall judgements about teaching, learning and pupils' attitudes, but previously completed work and the very few lessons seen during the inspection indicate that teaching and learning are now at least satisfactory. The careful and imaginative standards of finish, seen, for example, in work by pupils in Years 2 and 6, also suggest that pupils thoroughly enjoy this subject and contribute much effort and attention.

102. Materials had been chosen with care by Year 2 pupils to make their hand puppets, particularly in those individual details that made each unique. One puppet had painted fingernails, for example, and a necklace of beads, whilst another wore a ring. Stitching was regular and neat and other attachments had been stitched or stuck on to the fabric. At the end of the project, pupils had indicated what they liked about their puppet, and whether or not they had changed their original designs, and more able pupils included some further comment about what had been changed. In an earlier project, they had designed and made a wide range of individual vehicles, attaching axles and wheels to the chassis, as part of their work on moving toys.

103. A display of finished work and original designs by Year 6 pupils, as part of a joint project with work in art and design, was colourful and highly decorative. Pupils had used a good range of materials to create headwear and slippers for teddy bears. These were adorned with feathers, pom-poms, sequins and spangles, even, in one case, on the soles of the shoes. The design's brief, of *look good and stay on*, had been well met by all. Designs had been adapted as they went along and the finished items had been evaluated. Ways in which the designs could be improved further had also been identified.

104. During the inspection, a project in Year 4 on *moving books* made a good link with literacy, as pupils were designing and making books of Nursery rhymes for children in the Reception class. Skills had been practised beforehand, so that pupils had a range of ideas from which to choose when making different parts of the illustrations move. New computer equipment had given the pupils the opportunity to type and print the text, so that the book was more 'real', and easier to read. Year 3 pupils were starting a project on packaging.

Despite having limited opportunities during the introduction to explore the design features of the cereal packets for themselves, they gave vent to their imagination in the subsequent design activity and generated appropriate, and sometimes catchy, ideas to attract customers to their product. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) were well supported as a small group by the teaching assistant, and were enabled to make the same satisfactory progress as other pupils. All but a very few pupils could talk about how their packaging would attract prospective buyers.

105. Assessment systems follow the methods recommended by national guidance, but this approach is not yet fully established across the school. The co-ordinator monitors informally, but has no formal opportunities for checking the quality of teaching and learning.

GEOGRAPHY

106. Standards are below those expected of pupils of a similar age, both at the end of Year 2 and of Year 6, and all pupils do not achieve well enough. This is in contrast to the findings of the previous inspection, when standards generally met expectations and pupils made satisfactory progress.

107. The main reason for pupils' below average standards lies with the overall amount of time allocated to teaching geography. Units of work are planned for each term. Whilst the quality of teaching and learning in these lessons is satisfactory, over time, work is not covered in enough depth and pupils therefore do not make enough progress as they move through the school. Other additional factors also limit pupils' achievement. For example, assessment procedures follow that which is suggested in the scheme of work. This provides adequate information about pupils' progress and attainment but the information is not systematically used to track the progress of different groups of pupils or to set targets for improvement. For some time there was no co-ordinator for the subject. The member of staff then appointed was away from school on arranged leave. During this time, the school's overall management of the subject was unsatisfactory. The subject co-ordinator has now returned and a greater sense of direction and management is evident. When account is taken of the below average standards and the lack of development, the subject has made unsatisfactory progress since the previous inspection.

108. By the end of Year 2, pupils draw simple maps and show some development of mapping and drawing skills. This is to be seen, for example, in Year 2 project work on the Isle of Struay. There is limited evidence that the pupils understand the use of keys, symbols and direction on maps, though they can distinguish between physical and human features and make basic contrasts. In a Year 2 lesson on contrasting seaside, town and country areas, pupils made very good progress and were able to make basic deductions about differences, using photographs and maps. There is limited evidence that Year 2 pupils are beginning to raise their own questions to investigate or that they study how people affect the environment where they live.

109. By the end of Year 6, pupils develop some knowledge of the local area and some of the environmental problems it faces. Pupils in Year 5, for instance, carry out a local traffic survey and report on its effects in the community. Pupils are aware of the climate and geography of some localities overseas. In Year 3, for example, pupils took part in interesting work on the basic geography of countries involved in the World Cup finals. However, in general, pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop skills in understanding geographic patterns or how people damage and improve environments. Neither do they develop the more subtle geographical skills of posing their own questions or using a range of sources to find the answers.

110. Within the limitations of what is covered in the curriculum, geography makes a sound contribution to development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils are given satisfactory opportunities to write about geographical subjects, such as the development of river valleys. Pupils use graphs and tables to present information on studies they have carried out, but this activity is limited by the lack of a range of resources for research. The use of ICT in the subject is unsatisfactory. There is little use of it for editing and presenting work, or for research purposes.

111. During lessons, teachers control their classes very well. They achieve this with quiet authority, and behaviour is good as a result. Pupils generally show interest in geography and have good attitudes to work. Where pupils work together in pairs or groups there are good relationships. Lessons are carefully planned to follow the adopted national scheme of work. In some lessons, however, teachers do not pay enough attention to the expectations of National Curriculum levels to ensure that the work provided is at an appropriate level. Where teaching assistants join lessons, there is good teamwork with teachers to support pupils and this has a positive impact on standards, especially for pupils with SEN. Where teaching is at its best, the teacher provides a range of interesting and challenging activities that make pupils think about the concepts they are being taught. There is a range of tasks suited to the needs of pupils of different levels of attainment. This was clearly seen in the very good Year 2 lesson, where the teacher's brisk pace, careful organisation and interesting methods resulted in very good learning about the differences between cities, countryside and seaside areas.

HISTORY

112. Standards in history for pupils currently in Years 2 and 6 match those expected of pupils of a similar age. This is similar to the standards reported at the previous inspection. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. In some aspects of their work they achieve extremely well, but inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and the curriculum reduce much learning to a satisfactory level.

113. At the end of Year 2, pupils study the lives of Samuel Pepys and Florence Nightingale, and recognise that their own lives are different from the lives of people in the past. They know some of the causes and consequences of the Fire of London, and compare nursing during the Crimean War with nursing today. Some good links are made with literacy, as pupils write about the life of Florence Nightingale at some length. During a study of the Victorians in Year 6, pupils identified the different views held by people of that time, in different social classes, about the employment of children as chimney sweeps. Pupils completed extended writing of a good quality about Dr Barnardo. They used census data effectively to compare two Victorian families. As part of a study of the typhoid outbreak in Tring in 1899, pupils identified the causes of the outbreak and combined evidence from a range of historical sources, including Victorian newspaper articles. They knew why the outbreak mainly affected poor people. Their work on the Aztecs was of a lower standard, as some of the tasks were not challenging enough.

114. Evidence both from the lessons and from pupils' work shows the overall quality of teaching and learning as satisfactory, although one lesson with very good teaching and learning was seen during the inspection. In this lesson there was an excellent range of challenging resources, a brisk pace and effective questioning to draw out pupils' ideas, and these features enabled pupils to make a high rate of progress during the lesson. The use of historical sources of information was a common strength of teaching. For example, Year 3 pupils had visited Verulamium and learnt a great deal about the lives of rich and poor people during Roman times. They interpreted the wide range of evidence carefully and were very enthusiastic about what they had learnt. However, their recorded work did not fully reflect

this very good learning. The best teaching has objectives that involve gains in pupils' knowledge and understanding of history as well as improvement to their historical skills. For example, Year 4 pupils were helped to develop their skills in interpreting photographs as they studied the evacuation of children in Britain during the Second World War. As a result, they developed an awareness of the possible unreliability of photographs as evidence, using their own experiences of being photographed. However, the writing task in the activity following this teaching did not make full use of the good levels of knowledge and understanding that pupils had gained. Occasionally, tasks are set that contribute little to pupils' learning about history. Sometimes, lower-attaining pupils are not given sufficient support in their recording of work, so tasks are not completed. Classes are always well managed and this secures positive attitudes and good behaviour from the pupils. Some Internet sites are used for research.

115. There is a sound system for assessing pupils' progress at the end of each history study unit, although this information is not yet used to improve the quality of planning. The school follows national guidance, but this has not yet been adapted to the school's needs.

116. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection. The co-ordinator was appointed at the start of the school year and has achieved much in a relatively short time. There is a new policy and curriculum map, although the school is choosing to study more than the minimum number of history units, and this reduces opportunities for in-depth work. Learning resources have been audited and improved, and are now well organised. There are clear priorities for improvement, although these have not yet been incorporated into a subject development plan.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

117. Standards in ICT are below those expected of pupils of a similar age, both at the end of Year 2 and of Year 6. They are below what was found at the time of the last inspection, when standards were broadly in line with expectations. At that time, many of the computers were ageing. However, much very recent improvement has taken place to this subject, most significantly to resources and to the subject knowledge and confidence of staff through training. National guidance has also been adopted as a basis for planning, but not all aspects are yet being taught. This is particularly evident in those areas such as control, use of computers to predict events, everyday applications of computers, and the exchange of information and ideas with others. Additionally, there is not yet enough use of ICT across other curriculum subjects, and although class teachers teach the subject to their classes the time allocation for each session is short. Neither has a regular use of computers yet been established across the school, and this limits progress over time. For these reasons, the school is not currently meeting the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum, although recent improvements indicate that the school is now well placed to overcome its present deficiencies. The headteacher and subject co-ordinator are actively pursuing clear priorities for the development of the subject.

118. Where pupils were seen using computers they showed interest and are already beginning to progress well. By the end of Year 2, pupils are familiar with the basic skills. These include using a mouse, finding letters on the keyboard and some basic word processing skills. These pupils, for example, use a range of tools and paint programs to produce basic pictures of faces. They produced a report, using various fonts and colours, of a visit to the Roald Dahl Children's Gallery. Pupils are shown how to save and print their work, but there is very limited evidence that pupils use ICT to edit and record their work or to investigate the outcomes in real and imaginary situations, using computers.

119. By the end of Year 6, pupils carry out basic work with computers, such as loading, saving and printing their work, and using fonts of various sizes and types. Most access other programs such as Powerpoint and Excel. Pupils in Year 6, for example, use Powerpoint to produce attractive pictures, with a range of colours and slogans. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 use Excel to draw graphs for history topics and to show the results of local traffic surveys. During the inspection a group of pupils was working during lunchtimes to produce the Micklem News. There is limited use of ICT to present information in a variety of ways, for control, or for using ICT produced simulations to explore and predict results. The use of websites for research and to produce information is also limited.

120. Not enough teaching was seen during the inspection to make overall judgements about teaching and learning. In the short sessions seen, where class teachers were working with their pupils, it was evident that teachers had good subject knowledge and were able to teach the basic skills effectively, so that pupils progressed well. Pupils are also having greater opportunities to use computers during other lessons, for example in literacy in Year 1 and design and technology in Year 4. There are no consistent procedures in place to record pupils' attainment and progress, so it is not possible to maintain a record of the skills that pupils have learned or of what they still need to do.

MUSIC

121. Standards remain as they were found to be at the time of the last inspection, being generally in line with those expected of pupils of a similar age in Years 2 and 6. In singing, pupils achieve well and attain above expected standards. Although the overall quality of teaching and learning was good in lessons during the inspection, particularly when taken by a specialist teacher, the amount of time allocated to the subject is tight, and this inhibits the progress made by pupils over time, which is satisfactory.

122. During the inspection, Year 2 pupils showed a sound knowledge of instruments that can produce both loud and soft sounds, and how they might be handled to move from soft to loud. These pupils also started to create compositions with a small number of instruments. In Year 3, pupils receive specialist teaching on the recorder in half-class groups, and this enables them to make good progress in their knowledge of the technicalities of music and in their performance skills, which in this group are above expectations. Year 4 pupils understand melody and compose well for their ages. Year 6 pupils used glockenspiels and chime bars well, understanding patterns of high and low. They knew how formal notation works, even if they were not able to apply it. By Year 6, pupils understand the terms 'crotchet', 'quaver' and 'minim', and can read a very simplified stave, interpreting on a glockenspiel.

123. Pupils' good achievement in singing is aided by the very good teaching of a specialist from the local music school. Pupils showed that they could sing sweetly, that they had a good reserve of known songs, and that they could improve with rehearsal. In terms of tunefulness, the performance was better than might be expected of pupils of similar ages. This was evident in two separate lessons, one at Key Stage 1 and the other at Key Stage 2. These lessons were particularly successful because they were highly focused on specific tasks. In the Key Stage 1 lesson, the teacher's contagious enthusiasm and good exemplification of expectations, through her demonstrations and choice of challenging singing material, inspired the pupils to put their hearts into their singing and enabled them to make very good progress. There were also moments of considerable success when, for example, the teacher introduced a new tune on the glockenspiel. Pupils listened with rapt attention, which was close to being magical. Such moments strongly contribute to pupils' spiritual and cultural development. All pupils are enabled to join in with these musical activities. This was particularly well demonstrated in a lesson where a pupil with significant

communication problems was completely included in the musical activity through the skills of her learning support assistant, of the teacher, and especially the other children who worked with her. Sometimes, however, in other lessons, pupils' efforts are frustrated when the lesson runs out of time and they have to stop.

124. The co-ordinator for music has only recently accepted the responsibility and therefore has yet to develop her role through appropriate training. However, she knows the subject's needs, and has introduced a good commercial scheme of work which covers the needs of specialist and non-specialist teachers, and provides good supporting material. She acknowledges the need to produce new programmes of study, incorporating the scheme. She has conducted an audit of the subject's stock of instruments, which is satisfactory but requires to be increased, as some instruments are in need of repair. A small group of pupils receive additional recorder tuition, but there is no choir.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

125. Where physical education activities were seen, pupils in Years 2 and 6 were attaining standards broadly similar to those expected for pupils of a similar age, and progress was generally satisfactory. This reflects the findings of the previous inspection. Adequate time is devoted to the subject during the week. The co-ordinator is a very good role model as a teacher, although there are few opportunities for her to observe and share her teaching skills formally with other staff. She has used her good knowledge of the subject to draw up planning for all aspects of the subject, so that skills are progressively built up over time. She has also devised assessment checklists for each area, with the exception of dance. Pupils benefit from having an outdoor swimming pool on the school site, and this is well used during the second half of the summer term. The school reports that very few pupils are unable to swim 25 metres by the time they leave the school. Staff give extra time to teaching at lunchtimes to make sure that as many pupils as possible are able to swim this distance. Necessary first aid training for staff has been recently updated. Resources are good overall, although the school is aware that those for dance need further attention. After-school sports clubs and climbing apparatus in use at playtimes make valuable contributions to pupils' experience.

126. During games lessons in Year 2, the majority of pupils were able to throw medium-sized balls accurately to a partner, and nearly all could catch the ball. Generally, pupils have good levels of control and use of space when moving at speed. They were less skilful in controlling the ball with their feet, and balls were 'dribbled' with varying levels of success. Racquet skills were developing and all pupils were able to hit a beanbag, although only a very few were hitting accurately for their partner to catch. In another games lesson for Year 6 pupils, forced into the hall because of rain, pupils focused on developing their fielding skills when playing rounders. All had completed earlier skills practice. Within the limited space, pupils showed sound levels of control and accurate response. They subsequently commented generally on the quality of their skills and how they could be improved.

127. Teaching and learning were at least satisfactory, and in one gymnastics lesson in Year 4, with the co-ordinator, teaching was very good. Over time, a climate had been created where routines were well established and understood, and time is therefore used to good effect. There were clear reminders about the purpose of activities, and the expectation that pupils achieved their very best was high. As a result, there was the minimum of fuss and not a moment was wasted. Significantly, where direct teaching occurred, it focused on specific ways in which performance could be improved. Good incidental learning took place as a result of watching the best examples of skill and technique, although the lesson ended before there could be a full evaluation of achievement and a sharing of ideas on how to

improve. Pupils' achievement was enhanced by their enjoyment, enthusiasm and hard work. A paucity of opportunities for evaluation and for pupils to model good performance was a common weakness of teaching seen during the inspection, and the school is aware that this area of the subject needs further development.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

128. The standards of pupils currently in Year 2 match the expectations of the new locally Agreed Syllabus, while the standards of the Year 6 pupils are below the expectations. Standards in Year 6 are lower than those reported at the last inspection. Overall, all pupils make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 1, but this is not replicated at Key Stage 2, particularly in Year 6, where there is too little teaching time each week to explore topics in enough depth.

129. Year 2 pupils describe religious ideas and events, such as Christmas and the Last Supper, and they have a satisfactory knowledge of some religions. For example, they describe worshipping in a mosque and church. A visit to the local church allows them to give personal responses about their experiences and feelings. So, too, does the opportunity to identify other people who are important to them. In Year 6, pupils do not achieve well enough because they are not able to consistently explore in enough depth the religions they are studying. For example, in their work on Christianity, pupils give limited explanation of the significance of the beliefs and events of Christianity. Pupils wrote accurate, detailed accounts of the Christian Easter story but did not explain their significance. Although pupils wrote about an assembly they had attended on the theme of light, they did not interpret the symbolism of light in sufficient depth. In work of a higher standard, pupils explained the meaning of Sikh symbols, and compared the Sikh naming ceremony with baptism. Some classes have books in which to record their religious education work, while others do not.

130. Evidence from lessons and pupils' work shows the overall quality of teaching and learning to be satisfactory at Key Stage 1. Although individual lessons were well taught during the inspection, the limited amount of time available over a longer period means that overall the quality of teaching and learning at Key Stage 2 is unsatisfactory.

131. Common strengths of the good teaching seen during the inspection were found in the sharing of learning objectives with pupils and in the effective management of classes, so that pupils felt secure and were willing to contribute to lessons. Strengths in individual lessons included the use of simple dramatic presentations, devised by pupils to explore the meaning of the parable of the Good Samaritan in practical ways. In one lesson, a good link was made with pupils' work in literacy, as they used a text effectively for a comprehension activity about Hindu worship. Questions were used very skilfully in another lesson to help pupils develop their understanding of 'ultimate questions', and in another a variety of activities was carefully planned to enable all pupils to achieve well. There were good opportunities for pupils to use their speaking and listening skills, and they all responded sensitively to others in the class. In all the lessons seen, there were good levels of challenge for all the pupils. Those with special educational needs (SEN) were well supported in a lesson in Year 2 by the teaching assistant. Her diligence and hard work enabled the pupils to write some simple sentences about themselves.

132. At the time of the previous inspection, there was no co-ordinator for religious education. Since then, a co-ordinator has been appointed, but she has no opportunities for monitoring the quality of education provided in this subject. A new policy for religious education has been written, and the school has adopted the new locally Agreed Syllabus and scheme of work, though the scheme has yet to be adapted to meet the needs of the pupils. However, the school has allocated only half of the time to the teaching of religious education that the Agreed Syllabus recommends, and this is a key factor in reducing pupils' standards of attainment in the subject. There is a sound system for assessing pupils' progress at the end of each unit of work, but this is not yet used consistently by all teachers or used sufficiently to inform planning.