

INSPECTION REPORT

ST ANDREW'S VC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Stanstead Abbots

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117407

Headteacher: Mrs Anne Myatt

Reporting inspector: Mrs Stephanie Lacey
3764

Dates of inspection: 1 – 3 July 2002

Inspection number: 245915

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:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Mill Race Stanstead Abbots Hertfordshire
Postcode:	SG12 8EZ
Telephone number:	01920 870097
Fax number:	01920 872556
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Angie Thorlin
Date of previous inspection:	23 March 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3764	Stephanie Lacey	Registered inspector	English, music, special educational needs and English as an additional language	The school's results and pupils' achievements, How well are pupils taught?
9528	Derek Bowers	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
23235	Fred Riches	Team inspector	Foundation stage	
31046	Chris Nuttall	Team inspector	Mathematics religious education and art	How well is the school led and managed?
24019	Ken Parry	Team inspector	Geography, history and information and communication technology	
30618	Paul Story	Team inspector	Science, design and technology, physical education and equal opportunities	How good are the other curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

The inspection contractor was:

PRIMARY FOCUS
22, Church View
Banbury
Oxfordshire
OX16 9NB

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	10
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	14
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	17
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	21
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	23
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	24
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	29
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	30
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	34

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Andrew's VC Primary School is an average-sized Church of England school with 226 pupils on roll aged between three and eleven. There is an even balance of boys and girls. There are 50 children in the nursery and reception classes. The remaining 176 pupils are taught in six single year group classes. Most of the pupils live in the village, with a few coming from the outskirts of Ware and Hoddesdon. Most pupils live in owner-occupied housing, with some in housing authority homes. About 15 per cent are entitled to free school meals, which is broadly average. Most of the families have their cultural roots in the British Isles, with just over eight per cent of the pupils coming from Holland, Africa, France and Korea. Most of these pupils are children of students at All Nations' College and do not stay at the school for long. Nine pupils speak English as an additional language. Just over three per cent of pupils have a travellers' background. Children's attainment on entry to the nursery and reception classes is wide-ranging, but broadly average for Hertfordshire. Thirty-five per cent of the pupils are on the school's register of special educational need, which is above average. Two pupils have a statement of special educational need.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Andrew's provides a sound education for its pupils. Christian values underpin the work of the school and these, together with the caring and encouraging leadership of the headteacher, create a happy and purposeful community. Good teaching in Years 3 to 6 ensures that pupils achieve well and reach the standards expected for their age by the time they leave the school. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Children are happy at school, behave well and get on very well with each other and the staff.
- Standards are rising and pupils in Years 3 to 6 achieve well because of good teaching.
- There is a strong Christian ethos, with a commitment to valuing and including individual pupils.
- The committed staff team work very well together.
- There is a very open relationship with parents, who value all that the school does for their children.
- The finances of the school are managed well.
- The accommodation is very good.

What could be improved

- Standards in English, mathematics and science are not high enough by the time pupils reach the end of Year 2.
- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are improving, but in some aspects are not high enough.
- The school's evaluation and analysis of its strengths and areas for development does not provide a clear enough agenda for improvement.
- The use of the information that staff have about pupils' attainment and progress is not used sufficiently to plan future work.
- The work expected of subject co-ordinators, especially in English, mathematics and science is not having sufficient impact on raising standards.

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 sound improvement since the last inspection in March 1998 in spite of challenges presented by unavoidable, extended staff absence and substantial building work. Standards had fallen in Year 2 national tests, but are now beginning to improve. In Year 6 national tests standards have improved overall in line with the national picture, with good improvement this year. Staff and governors have worked hard to address the areas for development highlighted by the last inspection. Good improvement has been made in organising younger pupils' classes and in planning for different subjects. The school has

made considerable improvement in the provision for ICT. Some improvement has been made in analysing how well the school is doing in order to plan for the future and in assessing how well pupils are achieving, with more work needed in both areas. There have been significant improvements to the buildings. The staff and governor team, enhanced by new appointments, is fully committed to St Andrew's and the school is in a sound position to move forward further.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at St Andrew's 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	C	A	D	D
mathematics	D	D	C	C
science	C	C	C	C

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

(Similar schools are those with a similar percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals. Similar school grades on this table refer to those in the 8 – 20% band.)

Standards in Year 2 and Year 6 national tests are now rising at St Andrew's. In 2001 and again this year there has been good improvement in most subjects. At this stage in the year, although schools have information about individual pupils' performance in 2002 tests, national comparative data is not yet available. In 2001, standards in Year 2 national tests were well below average in reading, writing and mathematics. They have risen this year, particularly in reading and mathematics. However, higher attaining pupils are not doing as well as they should. Standards in Year 6 national tests last year were average in mathematics and science and below average in English. Until 2001 standards in Year 6 tests had risen in line with the national trend in mathematics and science, with fluctuations in English standards. There has been significant improvement this year in all three subjects. The inspection found that most children's achievements in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 are satisfactory. However, some pupils are not moving forward as fast as they should in Year 2. By the end of Year 2 standards remain below average in reading, writing and mathematics. They are broadly average in most other subjects, with pupils doing well in swimming and religious education. They are below average in some aspects of ICT. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 achieve well and have made good progress this year. By the end of Year 6 pupils reach average standards in English and do better than this in mathematics and science. Standards are also above average in religious education, swimming and some aspects of design and technology. Standards in ICT are improving quickly, but are below average overall. Pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language make the same progress as their peers.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are happy to come to school and work hard in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils behave sensibly in lessons and at playtimes. There have been no exclusions for inappropriate behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils form very good relationships with each other and the staff.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance is close to the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Overall sound teaching in the nursery and reception classes and in Years 1 and 2 ensures that most pupils are making sound progress from entry. Pupils do particularly well in Year 1 as a consequence of strong teaching. The quality of teaching in Years 3 to 6 is consistently good and ensures that pupils achieve well. This is a similar picture to that at the time of the last inspection. Strengths in the teaching include very good relationships between staff and pupils, which set a firm foundation for learning and good planning for all subjects. In the better lessons the following were also important features: good subject knowledge, good questioning skills, high expectations for all groups of pupils, interesting tasks set and clear exposition and explanation. Common areas for development are the marking of pupils' work, consistency in way that teachers set targets for individual pupils and the use of classroom assistants in the introductory part of the lesson. In the less successful lessons there was a lack of challenge for higher attaining pupils particularly. Overall the teaching of literacy has improved since the last inspection, largely as a consequence of improved planning and further training. There is a structured approach to the teaching of literacy skills, with more scope for developing skills through subjects like history and geography. Similarly the teaching of numeracy has improved because of better planning following the introduction of the national numeracy strategy. Teachers take care to plan work carefully for all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language. Consequently these pupils make the same progress as their peers.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Sound overall. Improved planning for different subjects and a good range of interesting activities planned outside lessons.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall and good in Years 3 to 6. Pupils who need help are identified well and extra support is given, particularly for reading and writing. Classroom assistants make a significant contribution to work in this area. All statutory requirements are met.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory overall. Staff are sensitive to the particular learning needs of these pupils and give them sensitive support. Extra help is arranged for pupils at the early stages of learning English, which is very effective.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. This remains a strong area, with a shared commitment to supporting the personal development of every pupil. Good provision is made for pupils' spiritual, social and moral development. Sound provision is made for their cultural development with more scope for learning about a diversity of cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good care for pupils' health and safety. Satisfactory procedures for assessing how well pupils are doing, with more work needed on analysing assessment information.

The school has very good links with parents, who in their turn are very supportive of all that staff do for their children. The Parents' Teachers' Association works hard to raise money to support the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
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Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The strong pastoral leadership of the headteacher has enabled the staff team to work together very well. The measures taken to raise standards are improving, with more development needed in the roles of senior staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Conscientiously. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and use their expertise to help the school. The experienced chair works well in the best interests of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school is beginning to make better use of its evaluation of standards, teaching and learning to move the school forward.
The strategic use of resources	Good. This includes good financial planning, which has turned a significant deficit into a healthy reserve while raising the level of classroom support and improving the premises and grounds. The principles of best value are applied well in financial decision-making. There is a good degree of consultation about spending and close scrutiny of service contracts and purchases to ensure good value for money.

The school is well staffed by appropriately qualified teachers and classroom assistants. They are supported well by the rest of the staff team. The accommodation has been improved and is very good. Learning resources are adequate.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

82 parents returned the questionnaire seeking their views about the school and 21 attended the meeting held for them before the inspection.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All are comfortable about approaching staff with questions or problems. • All feel that the school expects their children to work hard and that behaviour is good. • 99 per cent feel that the school is well led and managed. • 97 per cent feel that the teaching is good. • 96 per cent feel that their children like school and that the school is helping their children to become mature. • 95 per cent feel that the school works closely with parents. • 90 per cent feel that their children are making good progress. 	<p>The range of activities outside lessons. (16 per cent)</p> <p>The amount of homework. (13 per cent)</p> <p>Information about their children's progress. (12 per cent)</p>

The inspection endorses most of parents' positive views about the school. It did find that the teaching in the younger pupils' classes was satisfactory overall, rather than good, and that some pupils did not make the progress that they should. It did not find any evidence to substantiate parents' concerns about activities outside lessons, homework or information about progress. There is a good range of interesting activities outside lessons. Homework set is appropriate for the age of the pupils and the quality of the written information given to parents about their children's progress is very good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1 Standards are now improving after a fall back following the last inspection. At the end of Year 2 standards are currently below average in reading and mathematics and well below average in writing. At the end of Year 6 standards are average in English and a little above average in mathematics and science. This is broadly similar to the picture at the time of the last inspection in Year 2, with improvement in Year 6.

Starting school

2 When children start school in the nursery their understanding, skills and knowledge are wide ranging. In most years, early assessments in both the nursery and reception classes indicate that they are average for Hertfordshire. They make sound progress in the Foundation Stage (the nursery and reception classes) and by the time they start in Year 1 most have reached the early learning goals¹ in all areas of learning².

Standards in national tests

Year 2

3 In the three years since the last inspection standards have been well below average in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2 national tests. This is because some pupils do not make as much progress as they should in Year 2. Higher attaining and lower attaining pupils do not move forward quickly enough. There has been some improvement this year, especially for lower attaining pupils, but not enough to match the national average.

Reasons for low attainment

4 There are a number of factors that have contributed to low standards in Year 2 over the last five years. These include:

- instability in reception staffing for about a year;
- lack of cohesion in Foundation Stage leadership & planning;
- satisfactory rather than strong teaching in Year 2;
- lack of support for pupils who are only a little behind their peers and lack of challenge for higher attaining pupils in Year 2;
- insufficient analysis of assessment data to plan for future;
- Insufficient monitoring and lack of specific support from subject co-ordinators.

Reasons for recent improvement

5 Standards have been rising since 2000 in reading and writing and since 1999 in mathematics, but not fast enough to catch up with similar improvements in other schools. The factors that have contributed to this improvement are:

- improved planning as a result of the introduction of the Foundation Stage guidance and the literacy and numeracy strategies;
- monitoring of lessons and support from local authority advisers and the headteacher;
- additional staff training;
- the introduction of a daily reading session;

¹ Early learning goals establish expectations for most children to reach by the end of the foundation stage.

² The areas of learning are: personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development.

- consistently good teaching in Year 1.

Year 6

6 Standards in Year 6 have risen steadily since the last inspection in mathematics and science. In 2001 standards were average and there has been a great improvement this year in the percentage of pupils reaching the expected level 4. Standards in English have fluctuated more. They were well above average in 2000, for example, and below average in 2001. The drop in standards in 2001 was linked to a high proportion of pupils who had identified special educational needs in the area of literacy. This year there has been some improvement and standards are likely to be broadly average.

Reasons for recent improvement

7 There are several reasons for the recent good improvement. These include:

- consistently good teaching from Years 3 to 6, following the appointment of some new staff;
- improved planning as a result of the introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies;
- extra support for Year 6 pupils, especially in literacy and numeracy;
- monitoring of work in literacy and numeracy by local authority advisers and the headteacher.

Inspection findings

The Foundation Stage

8 Children's attainment on entry to the school is wide ranging, but broadly average overall. Children of all abilities achieve satisfactorily both in the nursery and in the reception class. They reach the early learning goals by the end of their reception year and are prepared for work at the early stages of the National Curriculum. This picture broadly reflects the findings of the last inspection. The school has maintained standards in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and children's knowledge and understanding of the world. The previous inspection found children's creative and physical development above average at age five. Against the standards set in the new Foundation Stage curriculum, children are now attaining what is expected in these two areas of learning by the end of their reception year.

Years 1 and 2

English

9 In spite of recent improvement overall standards in reading are below average and well below average in writing. Most pupils are making steady progress in developing their literacy skills. There is a strong emphasis on the teaching of phonic skills and pupils consolidate what they have learnt by working through a structured reading scheme. The introduction of a daily reading session has provided more help for pupils on an individual basis. There is less emphasis on extending pupils' knowledge and understanding of authors' and illustrators' work and providing opportunities for pupils to write for a real purpose. Not enough is expected of higher attaining pupils.

Mathematics

10 Standards are improving but remain below average. Pupils make sound progress in developing their numeracy skills. The introduction of the numeracy strategy has helped teachers to plan effectively, although in Year 2 especially there is insufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils.

Science

11 Standards are below average overall. Most pupils reach the level expected for their age, but few do better. Pupils are developing an understanding of scientific concepts, but do not use these in investigations and experiments.

Other subjects

12 In most other subjects standards are average. Pupils do better in religious education. Standards in swimming are also high. In ICT pupils reach average standards in word processing and the use of the Internet but are below average in other aspects of the subject, such as modelling.

Years 3 to 6

13 In Years 3 to 6 pupils achieve well. Tracking of pupils' progress in recent years shows that pupils have made broadly satisfactory progress from Year 2 national tests. This year pupils are doing better than this and make especially good strides in Year 6 as a consequence of extra support.

English

14 Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6, with lower attaining pupils doing particularly well. Pupils are developing as readers and most are enthusiastic about reading. Pupils have a good understanding of the structure of language and use this to good advantage in their writing. More opportunities are needed to develop writing skills in other areas of the curriculum.

Mathematics

15 Standards have risen this year to slightly above average at the end of Year 6. This is because thorough attention to the development of mental and oral skills in all classes has improved pupils' speed and ability in number work. By Year 6, many pupils are confidently working with numbers.

Science

16 By the end of Year 6 pupils' knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and ideas is above average. They are not so strong in the application of this knowledge and understanding to experimental and investigational work.

Other subjects

17 Standards in most other subjects are broadly average. In design and technology pupils' making skills are well developed. Standards are high in swimming and in religious education. Standards in ICT have improved a good deal and are average in word-processing, graphics and work on the Internet. Pupils are not confident with control, modelling or the use of spreadsheets.

Higher attaining pupils' achievements

18 When children start at St Andrew's in the nursery or reception classes there are only a few in each year group whose skills, understanding and knowledge are very advanced. The school's own tracking shows that these pupils do not move forward as fast as they should between entry and the Year 2 tests. Their progress is particularly slow in the current Year 2 because of weaker teaching. In Years 3 to 6 pupils' progress accelerates and by the time that they reach Year 6 higher attaining pupils are doing much better, especially in mathematics and science.

Achievements of pupils with special educational needs

19 About half of the pupils identified as having difficulties with some aspect of learning are only a little behind their peers. In the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2, they make satisfactory progress, but many of this group have not caught up by the time they start in

Year 3. These pupils do better in Years 3 to 6 and by the time they leave the school reach average standards. Pupils with more significant problems, including those with statements of special educational need, make steady progress because of the extra support that they receive from teachers and classroom assistants. In most cases pupils make satisfactory progress towards the targets on their individual action plans.

Achievement by different groups of pupils

20 The fifteen pupils from ethnic minority groups and the five with Traveller backgrounds make similar progress to other pupils in their classes. The nine pupils who speak English as an additional language are bilingual and require no additional support. The school regularly admits pupils whose parents are studying at the local All Nations College and these pupils are well supported and quickly absorbed into the life of the school. A good example of this is shown by the two Dutch pupils in Years 4 and 5. Since entry in last September, through both their own desire to join in all the activities on offer and the school's and their families' good support, they have become increasingly fluent and are now effectively bilingual. There have been some variations in performance between boys and girls at age seven and eleven in national tests. There is no evidence that this is due to differences in the teaching of different genders but rather to differences in the composition of cohorts.

Achievements of pupils learning English as an additional language

21 These pupils make the same progress as their peers in all areas of the curriculum. They do very well in developing their use of English. Pupils who entered the school in September, for example, with no understanding of English, are now fluent.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

22 The positive picture of pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes painted by the last inspection has been maintained.

Starting school

23 Children settle quickly into the nursery. They are secure and happy in the well-organised environment and show a degree of confidence and independence in the way they choose and pursue activities. They adapt well to different situations. For example, they concentrate and follow instructions carefully when working one-to-one with an adult, as when making snails from pasta, matchsticks and play dough. In contrast, they became suitably animated and energetic when acting as Spiderman and his two dogs escaping in a speedboat, in a self-initiated piece of role-play by a trio of boys in the outdoor area.

24 Children continue to show positive attitudes in the well-resourced role-play area in the reception class, currently a pirate ship. Here, and in a number of other independent activities in the large reception classroom, children sustain interest and concentration for long periods. At the end of the activities, they know where to return the equipment and do this without fuss. They listen well in class sessions and take turns answering questions or making comments, passing 'monkey' to each other as they make a comment during 'Circle Time'³ for example. They understand the classroom rules and show respect for each other. They change independently for physical education lessons.

Pupils' attitudes and responses

25 Pupils have very good attitudes to their work in most lessons. They settle quickly and participate actively in the class discussions. Good routines are established in the nursery and reception classes and are reinforced throughout the time pupils spend at St. Andrews. The children are positive about their work and are keen to check their progress and show their achievements to others. They concentrate well throughout the lessons.

³ Circle time is when pupils and teacher work together to develop personal and social skills.

Behaviour

26 The behaviour of the pupils in lessons is good and often very good overall because teachers manage pupils well. They participate actively in agreeing the school rules and follow these well throughout the day. They are polite and friendly to each other and to all adults and can be relied upon to follow instructions and to get on with their individual tasks with the minimum of supervision. There is a very pleasant atmosphere at break times and lunchtimes with no signs of aggressive or anti-social behaviour. Visitors and adults who help in lessons or who accompany the children on school trips are impressed by the behaviour of the pupils. Staff have little need to use significant sanctions and usually a quiet word is sufficient to remind children of the expectations of good behaviour. There have been no exclusions during the past year. There is no evidence from parents, children and staff that bullying is a problem in the school. Pupils willingly speak to staff if they have any concerns and they are confident that they will be listened to and that any problems will be resolved quickly. Pupils who are identified with particular behaviour and emotional difficulties generally behave well because of the good support that they are given.

Personal Development and Relationships

27 The personal development of the pupils is very good. Staff encourage increasing responsibility and self-confidence through their classroom organisation and carefully selected tasks. The pupils respond very well to opportunities to take responsibility for their own work and resources. Throughout the year groups they take turns to assist in a variety of ways. The older pupils give significant support to staff at break times and lunchtimes, including organising activities for the younger ones and acting as mediators in the playground. The pupils get on very well with each other and with all adults. This makes a positive contribution to their learning and helps to ensure effective lunchtime arrangements.

Attendance

28 Attendance has been consistently close to or a little above the national average in recent years. Currently the attendance is above average. A very small number of pupils have significant patterns of absences and attendance is affected to some extent by holidays taken during the term. Punctuality is generally good.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

29 The quality of teaching is sound overall in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2, ensuring that most pupils make satisfactory progress in their first three or four years at school. Teaching is good in Years 3 to 6 and pupils achieve well in these classes. In lessons seen across the school six lessons out of every ten were taught well and three out of ten were satisfactory. Three very good lessons were seen and two that were less than satisfactory. The overall quality of teaching has been maintained since the last inspection.

Teaching in the Foundation Stage

30 The quality of teaching in the foundation stage is satisfactory overall, with several good features. Strengths include the quality of planning for all six areas of learning, the organisation and availability of resources, the deployment of nursery nurses and teaching assistants, and the relationships with the children. The careful planning is particularly important, as staffing includes part-time teaching and support staff. The plans ensure that all staff know the pattern of activities each week and the focal points for learning. Staff in the nursery have set up a structured pattern to the morning, which ensures a good balance of chosen and directed activities. The teacher made stimulating use of an array of water creatures to stimulate children's interest and use of descriptive language in one session observed, before sending them to various parts of the nursery to pursue the activities they had chosen on arrival that morning. Both nursery and reception classes offer a good balance of sedentary and active pursuits.

31 The two part-time reception teachers are adapting the literacy and numeracy strategies well to suit the age of the children, ensuring lessons are not too long, sharing the focus of the lesson with the children. In a literacy session and a 'Circle Time' observed, children had good opportunities to communicate, expressing themselves in full sentences. In a numeracy session, the teacher involved the class in briskly counting forward and back to and from twenty and made good use of a visual aid alongside a rhyme, taking away two sausages at a time ('pop and bang') from a frying pan. The teacher's questions required only correct one-word answers, however, missing an opportunity for children to use the language involved in subtraction, although this was the main objective of the lesson.

32 Teachers are developing assessment procedures to track children's progress through the Foundation Stage, but this aspect of the school's work requires further development. The assessments are not yet closely related to the patterns of development described in the national curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage.

Teaching in Years 1 and 2

33 Strong teaching in Year 1 means that pupils move on well, building on the firm foundation laid in the nursery and reception classes. In Year 2, while most pupils move forward steadily because of satisfactory teaching overall, almost a third do not do as well as they should because not enough is expected of them.

Teaching in Years 3 to 6

34 Teaching is consistently good in Years 3 to 6 and pupils achieve well. Sessions are well planned and interesting tasks are set. Individual teachers have particular strengths. In one art session, for example, the teacher gave pupils a rich learning experience in letting them explore the use of natural materials to make pictures in the school grounds. In another class, the displays and organisation of the room provide a very stimulating learning environment.

Teaching of literacy

35 This has improved since the last inspection because of the introduction of the literacy strategy and support given by local authority advisers and the headteacher. Planning is good and there is a good emphasis on helping pupils to learn the basic skills of reading and writing through a structured approach to learning about letter sounds, sentence construction, spelling and handwriting. Teaching about writers and their work and providing opportunities for pupils to write for a real purpose are not so consistently developed. There is more scope for teaching literacy skills through subjects like history and geography.

Teaching of numeracy

36 Teaching is satisfactory overall, with some very good and some less than satisfactory features. Planning is thorough and based on the national numeracy strategy. Teachers take care to plan tasks to meet the learning needs of different groups of pupils, but sometimes pupils are not challenged sufficiently.

Strengths in teaching

37 There are some common strengths that underpin the quality of teaching in all classes. These are:

- very good relationships;
- good planning and clear objectives for sessions.

In all classes very good relationships between staff and pupils are evident. These set a firm foundation for pupils' learning and help pupils to approach learning tasks very positively. Planning has improved since the last inspection. This is partly because of the introduction of national guidance for the Foundation Stage and the literacy and numeracy frameworks. Staff have also concentrated on identifying learning objectives and planning in more detail since the last inspection.

38 Some teachers have particular strengths and in the better lessons the following were evident:

- good subject knowledge;
- good questioning skills;
- high expectations for all groups of pupils;
- interesting tasks set;
- a good pace to the lesson so that much was achieved;
- clear exposition and explanation;
- good management of resources.

Areas for development

39 In spite of the good quality of much of the teaching, there are some common areas for improvement. These include:

- the way in which pupils' work is marked;
- consistency in way that individual target setting is used;
- use of classroom assistants in the introductory part of the lesson.

Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, usually with a tick to show that the work is correct. Sometimes positive comments are noted. Opportunities are often lost to note what a pupil needs to do to improve. In younger pupils' books there are few annotated pages to note the discussion between pupils and teacher about their work. Sometimes the teacher's handwriting is not a good model for the pupils. Staff are beginning to set individual targets for pupils in English and mathematics. There is currently inconsistency in the way in which these are recorded and the time scale for completion. Classroom assistants are generally used well in lessons, but in the introductory part of the session they are often under-used. They do not monitor and record the response of individuals, for example.

40 In some of the satisfactory and less than satisfactory lessons the following were apparent:

- pupils fussing in the changeover between the introduction and activity part of the lesson;
- a lack of challenge for higher attaining pupils particularly;
- time wasted at the beginning or during lessons;
- lack of clarity about the learning objectives for the session;
- lack of subject knowledge;
- lack of monitoring of pupils' progress during the session.

Teaching of pupils with special educational needs

41 Teachers plan work carefully for these pupils, who usually work on the same tasks as their peers. The pupils manage these because the task is modified to suit their learning needs. Often pupils are supported within the class by classroom assistants and this helps to reinforce the main objectives for the lesson. Occasionally the tasks set are not appropriate and pupils do not make sufficient progress. Teachers rarely make reference to the targets on pupils' individual education plans in their planning.

Teaching of higher attaining pupils

42 These pupils are generally better challenged in Years 3 to 6. In Year 6 especially, pupils are set for English and mathematics for some sessions and this intensive, focused teaching enables them to move forward more quickly.

Teaching of pupils learning English as an additional language

43 Pupils have specialist help when they are at the early stages of learning English. This is very effective and pupils who received this support earlier this year are now fluent English

speakers. Teachers are sensitive to the special learning needs of these pupils and take care to check that they have understood.

Teaching and learning for pupils of various backgrounds

44 The teaching of pupils from ethnic minorities, the bilingual pupils and those with Traveller backgrounds is at least of the same quality as the overall teaching, which varies from lesson to lesson. These pupils receive suitable and appropriate support as necessary to enable them to complete activities successfully. Within most classes there are similar numbers of boys and girls, although there are more boys in reception and girls in Year 1. Teachers are careful to ensure that all are encouraged to contribute regardless of ability or gender.

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

45 Overall the school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that is relevant to the needs of its pupils. It includes all the statutory subjects of the National Curriculum plus religious education and French in Years 5 and 6. Within English and mathematics lessons suitable emphasis is placed on the development of literacy and numeracy skills throughout the school. Reflecting the school's Christian ethos there is a strong emphasis on pupils' personal development. The curriculum provides equality of access and opportunity for all pupils. A good range of visits, extra curricular activities and community links enrich provision. Links to other schools and institutions support pupils' learning well and those with the Bobtail pre-school group and local secondary schools prepare them well for entry to the school or transfer to the next phase of education.

Development of the curriculum

46 The Foundation Stage curriculum is now fully in place for children in the nursery and the reception class. Termly planning is a strength, offering clear guidance to all staff. Since the last inspection the school has adopted recent national guidance as the basis of its curriculum documentation for most subjects ensuring that recent national requirements are met and addressing concerns in the last inspection report. These documents, together with the new locally agreed syllabus for religious education, provide teachers with clear guidance on the development of subject skills and outlines of suitable content. They also ensure a balanced allocation of time to each subject within year groups, addressing concern in the last report over the limited time given to design and technology throughout the school and science in Years 1 and 2.

47 The school has begun to adapt this guidance to the needs of its pupils and has already worked closely with the local education authority adviser for science on that area of the curriculum. In music a commercial scheme is providing good support and in art the school has already developed its own approach, which is effective. As teachers draw on these documents to plan for their own classes the school will need to maintain a clear overview to ensure continuity and progression in learning and the sequential development of skills as pupils move through the school.

48 Skills learnt in one subject are often consolidated as they are practised informally in others. For example, artistic skills and experience of materials are often used to ensure well-finished products in design and technology and research skills often used to support work in science, history and geography. ICT skills are used to record data in science and to research other subjects but the use of ICT to support work in other subjects is not yet a consistent or planned feature of work in all classes.

49 The curriculum is enriched and broadened by the teaching of French by a native speaker in Years 5 and 6 and instrumental tuition that includes teaching the recorder to all pupils. The

introduction of a daily session, in all classes, of adult-supported reading is a recent initiative to address identified concerns over pupils' development of reading skills. There is a strong emphasis on the use of practical activities to support learning and good use is made of the local environs and well-maintained grounds to support and extend work in a range of subjects.

50 The governing body is kept informed of developments in the subject and the curriculum as a whole by regular reports to its curriculum subcommittee. Through regular visits to their assigned classes governors gain experience of these at first hand.

Strategies for teaching numeracy and literacy

51 Teachers make sound use of the detailed guidance in the national literacy and numeracy strategies when planning the curriculum for English and mathematics. Both strategies provide good support for teachers in planning work for pupils of different abilities. The school rightly places strong emphasis in its allocation of teaching time to raising pupils' understanding and skills in these subjects. Recently the school has introduced an additional daily session of adult guided reading to address an identified weakness in standards. This is well supported by parent helpers who are well briefed in their role and has raised the profile of this important area. The newly adopted 'Abacus' scheme is providing a good basis for work in mathematics and the school now needs to consider how it can best be used to cater for more able pupils.

52 Skills in both these areas are consolidated as they are used in other subjects to access and accomplish tasks but their development is not yet a planned feature of teaching across the curriculum and they are not systematically or consistently developed. Numeracy skills are reinforced when pupils accurately record results in science or measure in design and technology but the employment of these skills currently varies from class to class.

Equal opportunities

53 The school shows an equally good commitment to equal opportunities in its curricular provision as it does in other areas of its work. Booster classes for numeracy and literacy together with the intensive programmes of 'Springboard' mathematics and additional literacy are being used to raise standards and improve pupils' access to the curriculum. Ability grouping for some of the work in English and mathematics lessons helps cater for pupils of different abilities. In all other lessons pupils largely complete the same task. Whilst the open-ended nature of most of these provides opportunities for pupils of all abilities, a more focused and structured approach would maximise the benefit for pupils of different abilities, particularly those at either end of the spectrum in subjects other than mathematics and English. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum, as do those from minority ethnic groups and those for whom English is an additional language. All pupils have open access to sport and out of class activities.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs

54 Sound overall provision is made for these pupils. They work on the same curriculum as their peers, often with extra adult help. There is a small amount of withdrawal of small groups to work on specially designed literacy programmes. In Year 6, pupils are set for some literacy and numeracy sessions and pupils with special educational needs work in a small group with the special needs co-ordinator at these times.

Activities outside lessons

55 Conscientious staff give freely of their time to provide a good range of additional activities outside lesson times that extend and develop pupils' skills well. These have included clubs for netball, football, athletics, cricket, choir, library and swimming. Parents often assist with these and two parents provide cycling proficiency training for Y6 pupils. Visits are similarly

well used to support work in lessons and extend pupils' learning and have included pond dipping for science, the National Gallery for Art, and Hertford museum and castle for history.

Community links

56 The school makes good use of community links to support learning. The local vicar and her assistant are regular visitors involved in the provision of religious education and collective worship. Through their school link, Ware football club provides regular games coaching and a local artist's year in residence culminated in a display of transient art on the Village green and the display of pupils' work in a local gallery. Students training for missionary work at All Nations College are regular visitors to the school and a local arts fund biannually sponsors a theatre visit.

Links with partner institutions

57 Beneficial links exist with local secondary schools. Teachers and students from these schools often visit to work with pupils. Recent examples include practical drama work led by Year 10 pupils, the opportunity for pupils to use laptops, and language support for specific pupils. Students from these schools also regularly complete work experience placements. There are good links with the local primary school and 'Bobtails' playgroup. Although there are local primary cluster groups this is not as supportive an arrangement as it might be, as the school sits on the geographical edge of two groups of different compositions. The school makes effective use of the opportunities available.

Transfer arrangements

58 Well-developed procedures are in place to ensure smooth transition for pupils at all stages of their education. A well-established programme of visits to the school by children and their parents, home visits by school staff prior to admission and good links with the Bobtail pre-school group ensure children enjoy a smooth entry to school. Prior to transfer Year 6 pupils will have enjoyed a programme of visits, information is exchanged and teachers will have visited to ensure the process is a smooth one.

Provision for pupils' personal development

59 Overall the provision for pupils' personal development is good. This is an area of the school's life that has been maintained well since the last inspection. In addition to the many opportunities provided in religious education lessons, and in daily assemblies, there are regular opportunities for pupils to discuss social and moral issues, within 'circle time', for example.

Personal, social and health education

60 The school makes good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education continuing, as it did at the time of the last inspection, to see it as a central part of its work and preparing pupils for the next stages of learning. Work on sex, drugs and health education is well covered within pupils' work on science and supported by outside agencies. Circle time is well used to gain insight into pupils' views, develop their social awareness and understanding and explore and address conflicts. The school has a co-ordinator for the subject and preparatory work with staff and pupils for the introduction of a school council has begun. Annual residential visits, this year to the Isle of Wight, are arranged for Years 5 and 6, and Year 4 recently spent a night under canvas at Cuffley Camp. All provide good opportunities for, and enrichment of, pupils' personal and social development.

Effective spiritual development

61 The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual development. Collective worship provides a conducive atmosphere in which regular opportunities to listen to music and stories successfully help pupils to explore and think further about ideas and beliefs. A good example of this was an assembly led by the headteacher, who encouraged pupils to reflect on the

story of the 'Rainbow people' and how we can all learn about living and working together by thinking about the problems these people encountered. Pupils in this assembly enjoyed participating and sang enthusiastically about giving love to one another in the appropriate hymn 'Magic Penny'. Other opportunities for reflection are planned in religious education lessons. In a Year 3 lesson, for example, the pupils, having recently visited the local church, enjoyed discussing the purpose of many of the objects they had seen, whilst expressing amazement at the use of the font during baptisms. In a mathematics lesson, Year 6 pupils expressed equal amazement as they discovered how the use of digital roots enabled people to check their answers long before the use of calculating machines. Their teacher expressed her own excitement about the same topic by telling them how marvellous she thought the concept was when she first learned about it! Teachers regularly enable pupils to respond positively to the beauty of the world around them, to its colours and variety. In their art work, Year 4 pupils produce detailed observational drawings after looking closely at part of an animal's skull through a viewfinder. The completed drawings reflected each pupil's individual interpretation of what they saw.

Provision for moral and social development

62 Provision for moral and social development is also good. This is underpinned by a clear behaviour policy known to all staff. The school's policy is made clear to parents in the school brochure. The good personal, social and health education programme sets a firm foundation for pupils to learn about moral and social issues. Teachers regularly help the pupils to understand the difference between right and wrong. Pupils are involved in setting their own rules at the beginning of each school year and these reflect the good provision made by the school for moral and social development. There are many opportunities for pupils to interact both in lessons and socially outside the classroom. At lunchtime older pupils often sit with younger pupils clearly enjoying their company and conversation as they enjoy their meal. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to take responsibility. All act as monitors within the classroom, returning the register and giving out books. Older pupils act as play leaders and assist in assemblies, using the overhead projector to ensure all runs smoothly. Staff, including the two lunchtime play leaders, provide good role models for pupils and the respect pupils have for one another and the adults is demonstrated daily in the way in which everyone is valued.

Cultural development

63 Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils are taught about the culture of other countries through subjects such as geography, history and art. Pupils are also taught about Islam, Sikhism, Judaism and Hindu traditions and cultures through their religious education lessons. The school makes use of opportunities in the locality, particularly the church, for educational visits and receives ready support from the local vicar. Visits to museums and art galleries are also regularly planned to enable pupils to experience and appreciate other cultural traditions and ideas. Year 2 pupils, for example, visited the National Gallery during the inspection week to study the work of the artist Titian. The school has a diverse cultural intake, particularly from the local All Nations College. More could be planned to explore the traditions and cultures of pupils from these different backgrounds. Whilst these pupils are very well integrated within the school, there are few opportunities to celebrate the differences and similarities in cultures.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

64 The school's provision for the care of its pupils is a strength which has been maintained well since the last inspection. The strong relationships and vigilance of the staff help to create an environment in which the pupils feel contented, safe and secure. They confidently ask staff for help with their learning and any personal matters.

65 The school offers good care and guidance for children starting school. Links with the adjacent playgroup and additional private nursery afternoon sessions mean that nursery staff know and meet the needs of all of the children very well.

Policies and practice

66 There are good, comprehensive policies and procedures in place to manage behaviour, attendance, bullying, child protection and key aspects of health and safety. Staff are always briefed well and hold regular discussions on these aspects in staff meetings. The pupils are managed consistently and effectively in lessons and at break times. The staff share information well to ensure that all are briefed about any potential problems which might affect work or play.

Child protection

67 The member of staff with responsibility for child protection receives regular training and briefs all other staff to ensure that they are familiar with the agreed procedures. When the need arises the school works closely with the local social, health and welfare agencies.

Improving attendance

68 Good attendance has a high profile in the school and this is frequently stressed to parents. Absences are monitored daily and staff seek prompt explanations of any absences. Registers are marked properly and any significant patterns of absences or lateness are taken up with parents at an early stage. The school works closely with the education welfare officer. Punctuality has improved since the introduction of the reading sessions at the beginning of the day.

Health and safety procedures

69 Governors and staff are very active in monitoring health and safety and security. The comprehensive policy and procedures are supplemented by good guidance on handling illness, accidents, medicines, drugs and alcohol abuse. Staff and governors do regular, thorough inspections and safety audits. Any findings are recorded and prompt action taken. All staff are vigilant in classrooms and at lunchtime and break time. Lunchtime staff are well briefed and alert and they take good care of the pupils.

Monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development

70 Good progress in personal development is a key feature of the school's provision for its pupils. The very good notes on personal and social development in the annual reports are the result of close monitoring by staff throughout the year. Many intermediate individual targets set by the teachers relate to aspects of personal development. Records of personal development are maintained for all pupils and details are shared well with parents through the comprehensive section in the annual report. Specific issues are identified and dealt with on a more personal and immediate level.

Assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic progress

Progress since the last inspection

71 The last inspection identified significant weaknesses in the school's arrangements for assessment. This resulted in a key issue concerned with establishing one system for assessment throughout the school. There have been good improvements in English and mathematics to address this issue and similar arrangements are being introduced in science. However, in other subjects there are no formal procedures for checking the progress and attainment of pupils. The school recognises that much remains to be done in order to provide teachers with the level of detail they require if they are to make effective use of assessment information when planning the curriculum and setting targets.

Current assessment arrangements

72 Arrangements for assessment are currently satisfactory in English, mathematics and science with improvement planned for other subjects. In addition to the statutory tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, annual tests have also been introduced in Years 3, 4 and 5. These include reading, writing, spelling and mathematics. New procedures are about to be introduced in science for these years. In other subjects there are no formal assessment procedures to track pupils' progress as they move through the school. As a result, class teachers and subject co-ordinators do not have a clear enough picture of the full range of attainment across the age group in these subjects.

73 Teachers have a clear picture of pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science in the short term and use the information gathered to plan the next step in learning. As part of their weekly planning process teachers carefully define the learning objectives for each subject. This is a useful strategy that helps to provide a clear focus for teaching and learning. It also enables teachers to quickly identify those pupils who meet, exceed or do not meet those objectives. This information is usefully recorded on the reverse of teachers' planning sheets for English, mathematics and science, and is monitored regularly by the headteacher. However, there is no agreed system for collating these judgements to provide a simple overview. This considerably restricts its usefulness in consistently challenging all groups of pupils.

Using assessment information as a basis for planning

74 Through these initiatives the school is gathering a considerable amount of information about its pupils that grows into a detailed picture of their strengths and weaknesses. The use of this information as a basis for planning is currently too limited and this aspect of assessment is unsatisfactory. This is partly due to a lack of clarity and shared understanding of the purposes of assessment and its vital role in raising standards.

The Foundation Stage

75 Soon after pupils first enter the school they are carefully assessed to identify particular strengths and weaknesses. The information is used to form groups and to plan teaching programmes. It also helps with the early identification of pupils with learning difficulties. Staff use day-to-day observation tick sheets in the nursery and have introduced a series of assessment booklets for use in the current year. Teachers are not fully aware of how the school's baseline compares with local authority averages, however. They do not make sufficient use of assessment information to set targets, in order to gauge the success of the support or challenge they offer.

Years 1 to 6

76 The headteacher analyses the national test results at the end of Year 6. This information is shared with colleagues with the intention of improving the quality of teaching and learning and has contributed successfully to the improvement in mathematics and science. There is no similar analysis of pupils' performance in Year 2 national tests and as a result, subject co-ordinators do not have a sufficiently clear view of standards throughout the school. Teachers meet together to discuss the results of annual tests and their own informal and ongoing assessments in order to plan work for the future. There is some discussion about the attainment levels of pupils in different classes, for example, although teachers do not meet regularly enough to compare samples of work and to discuss their judgements in order to ensure a consistent approach in all classes. Teachers are beginning to use assessment information to set individual pupil targets in English and mathematics. These are shared and reviewed with parents but are set for the year and are too broad to provide a sharp enough focus for teaching and learning in the short term. Teachers are not yet identifying areas of the National Curriculum where individuals are underachieving, or areas where they do well. The school has plans to install a computerised system for tracking pupils' progress as they move through the school. However, this will not be sufficient in itself to provide a reliable and

manageable framework for monitoring and supporting pupils' progress in each of the National Curriculum subjects.

Support for pupils with special educational needs

77 The progress of these pupils is tracked carefully and support is provided for them in class, particularly in English and mathematics. The class teachers are responsible for drawing up the individual education plans for those pupils who need them. These are clear and reviewed regularly. Pupils with statements of special educational need are also supported well and all statutory requirements related to their statements are met.

Support for pupils learning English as an additional language

78 The school makes appropriate arrangements to support pupils learning English as an additional language. When pupils are at the early stages of learning English, for example, local authority support is arranged, which is very effective.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

79 The strong partnership with parents has been maintained well since the last inspection.

Parents' views of the school

80 Parents are overwhelmingly satisfied with the work of the school. They are happy with the progress made by their children and with their behaviour and personal development in school. The parents feel that the school is well managed, that teaching is good and they would feel comfortable about approaching staff to seek information or discuss any concerns. The evidence during the inspection supports these positive views, although finding that the teaching was sound, rather than good, in younger pupils' classes, and that some pupils did not make the progress that they should. The partnership with parents is strong.

81 In the pre-inspection questionnaires a number of parents were less satisfied with some aspects of school life. A few parents were dissatisfied with the homework set for their children. However, the inspectors found that each term the school gives clear details to parents of homework requirements and that sufficient work is set and marked regularly. Some parents were dissatisfied with the extra-curricular activities. This concern is not borne out by the evidence. There is a good range of sports and cultural clubs which pupils enjoy.

Information provided for parents

82 The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are of good quality. They are informative and well presented. The frequent newsletters are friendly and welcoming and cover all important aspects of the school year. These include information on the termly topics and homework requirements. Good guidance is given on listening to reading.

83 A number of parents wish to receive more information on their children's progress. The inspection evidence contradicts this view because the annual reports are of high quality. These cover personal development and all subjects of the curriculum in good detail. In addition to the clear description of the work covered and the progress made the school has devised a scale of achievement with easily interpreted descriptions. In addition, the staff are very welcoming and there are ample opportunities throughout the year for parents to talk to them.

The impact of parents' involvement in the work of the school

84 Staff in the nursery ensure close links with parents as children start school. The daily opportunity to come into the nursery and plan some of the children's activities together with them is a very good way of involving parents in a partnership with the school.

85 A small number of parents help regularly in lessons. Many also take the opportunity to read with their own children or with groups of children in the specially timetabled sessions at the beginning of the day. Parents have put considerable work into making toys of high quality for the story sacks in the nursery. Most parents are actively involved in supporting their children's learning at home, particularly with reading and topic work.

86 The PTA is very active and the events and fund-raising activities are well supported. Through the Association the parents have made very substantial contributions to enhance resources and improve the premises and play areas.

Partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs

87 There is a good partnership with the parents of pupils who have special educational needs. Parents are kept well informed at parent-teacher consultation evenings and are welcomed into school at other times to discuss their children's progress. They are invited to reviews of the progress that their children have made towards their individual targets and most attend these meetings.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

88 '*Only our best is good enough*' is the mission statement proudly displayed around the school and on all its documentation. All who work in the school aim to aspire to this ideal and the headteacher seeks to promote this daily as she interacts with the pupils and staff.

Improvement since the last inspection

89 Overall the school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. This is commendable in the face of the many challenges that have faced the school in the intervening period. All staff were affected by the serious illness of two colleagues and, as a result, staff morale was lower for a time. The school also went through a period of extensive building work, which meant that the headteacher was heavily involved in managing the necessary disruptions. In spite of this standards have been broadly maintained and the areas highlighted for improvement by the last inspection have been largely addressed, with more work needed on development planning and the use of assessment.

Headteacher's pastoral care and vision

90 The headteacher has a clear pastoral vision for the school and she has successfully created an ethos that reflects this vision. She is committed to the school aims, which centre on the development of good relationships and everyone working together harmoniously to achieve these aims. The headteacher has developed a good staff team who share her vision and, with the governors, has maintained the very positive ethos noted at the time of the last inspection. The constructive climate for learning ensures that the school is a very happy place in which the attitudes of pupils and the relationships are particularly good. The team spirit is very good and involves all who work in the school. The headteacher has good interpersonal skills and she values pupils, staff, governors and parents.

Leadership by senior staff

91 The deputy head has a good working relationship with the headteacher and she is involved in and supports decisions made concerning the school's development. All teaching staff have specific subject responsibilities in addition to their teaching commitments and they are equally supportive of the headteacher as they are of one another. The co-ordinator for religious education shows particularly good leadership of her subject, having clear knowledge of strengths and weaknesses and aspiring to raise standards. However, the role of some subject co-ordinators is not as effective as it could be. This is because the part they play in helping to bring about improvements in the provision and the achievement of pupils is at an early stage of development. Some training has taken place to enable subject co-ordinators to understand their role more clearly. However, this has not, as yet, had time to be fully

implemented. Monitoring of standards in most subjects is at an early stage and the fact that there is little assessment information for subjects, other than English, mathematics and science, limits the effectiveness of the subject co-ordinators. In particular, it means that co-ordinators cannot readily identify some of the strengths and weaknesses within their subject. Therefore, they are unable to address them. The English, mathematics and science co-ordinators do not at the moment make sufficient use of assessment data to plan for improvement. Currently, they do not have sufficient time to monitor planning and pupils' work.

92 Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are unsatisfactory at present. The nursery and reception buildings are separate from the main building and no one working with the youngest children has a management responsibility. The headteacher is nominally the co-ordinator, as previous arrangements to combine Years 1 and 2 and Foundation Stage co-ordination under one 'Early Years' umbrella had to be abandoned. Discussions with staff confirm that too much is left to the discretion of the individual teachers and the school acknowledges that there is a need for somebody with a management role to take a lead. This is particularly clear in the context of developing effective assessment procedures and of helping Foundation Stage staff see their roles as part of the whole school staff team.

Leadership and management of work with pupils who have special educational needs

93 The headteacher has responsibility for the area of special educational needs and manages this well. Her priority has been to increase staffing levels in order to provide more adult support. This has been effective. Records are kept centrally, with copies of individual education plans in classrooms, and the headteacher has a clear picture of the progress made by individual pupils. At the moment there is no long-term tracking sheet to clearly indicate pupils' progress over time. The governors with responsibility for special educational needs in recent years are very effective. They are fully informed about the school's work in this area by the headteacher and brief other governors in the regular governors' meetings. They are fully involved in evaluating the current provision and planning for the future. The school has made good progress in adapting its work to comply with new statutory regulations and all statutory requirements are met.

The promotion of equal opportunities

94 The school's aim to provide equality of opportunity in an inclusive setting is well reflected in its work and the care it takes of its pupils. It is careful to ensure that pupils, including those from other backgrounds or for whom English is not the first language, transferring into the school during the year are well supported and quickly assimilated. Where individual circumstances create a specific need the school is quick to respond in a supportive manner, whether in building bridges with the families from Traveller backgrounds or gaining LEA support to develop the English of Dutch pupils.

Strategic planning

95 Despite the considerable strengths in pastoral care and financial planning, overall leadership and management are only satisfactory. This is because improvement in the school's work is limited by a lack of focus in some important areas. The school has worked hard to improve arrangements for the monitoring of teaching and learning since the last inspection and satisfactory arrangements for monitoring teaching and assessing how well pupils are doing are now in place. However, the information gained from this is not used sufficiently to plan for improvement. This was raised at the time of the last inspection and, whilst some progress has been made in planning for improvement, it is still an area that needs to be linked more closely to raising pupils' attainment. Priorities for development are clearly identified in the current plan, but some key areas for improvement have been omitted. Subject co-ordinators produce their own action plans to complement the school improvement plan, but these are vague and do not clearly show what needs to be done to push standards higher. The headteacher recognises the areas requiring further development and is already seeking ways of improving strategic planning.

Governing body

96 The governing body undertakes its work well and all governors are committed and conscientious. The chair has a particularly good working relationship with the headteacher and they meet weekly to discuss general issues and to provide valuable support for one another. Committees are well established and, through these, the governors fulfil all statutory requirements. Governors have improved their understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, the weaknesses in analysing assessment and monitoring information mean governors do not receive comprehensive enough information about the quality of teaching, learning and attainment to help them to fully evaluate the work of the school. Although governors are involved in the development of the school improvement plan they do not, as yet, have a clear understanding of strategic planning with regard to raising standards.

Financial planning

97 Financial planning is good and matches the school's priorities. Annual planning over the past five years has been very skilful so that a significant deficit has been turned into a healthy reserve. (This reserve is a little above government guidelines because the school needs to provide a cushion to offset a drop in income as a consequence of fluctuations in pupil admissions from families at All Nations College.) This has been achieved while raising the level of classroom support, improving the premises and grounds substantially and building educational resources to a satisfactory level. Any new initiatives, particularly in staffing and longer-term development of the premises, take account of future costs and viability.

98 The principles of best value are applied well in financial decision-making. There is a good degree of consultation between staff and governors. Parents are consulted on priorities for fund-raising and they make substantial contributions to important areas of school development. The managers are energetic in seeking and combining funding from different sources imaginatively to improve facilities. Close scrutiny of service contracts and regular review help to ensure good value for money in purchases of goods, services and contracts. The school currently makes limited use of comparative information.

99 The staff manage and control expenditure well. The good records and procedures were confirmed in the recent auditors' report. The administration provides very good support for all staff, pupils, parents and governors. Good routines and procedures help to ensure that the school runs very smoothly. Effective use is made of new technology to aid administration.

100 Taking into account the average levels of attainment on entry and socio-economic circumstances of the pupils together with the satisfactory progress, standards of attainment and teaching and the very good personal development of the pupils, the school is giving satisfactory value for money.

Staffing

101 The school has a good number of qualified teachers to meet the needs of all pupils and cover the full requirements of the National Curriculum. There is a good blend of experienced and long-serving staff who, with more recently appointed colleagues, form a committed and hardworking team. Providing opportunities for older pupils to learn French makes good use of one teacher's particular skills. Teachers and pupils are well supported by a good number of well-trained and effective classroom assistants. They make a considerable contribution to the work of the school and in particular to the sound progress made by pupils with special educational needs. Playtime supervisors organise a wide range of play activities at lunchtimes and this adds enormously to pupils' enjoyment of school as well as encouraging their social interaction. The efficient administrative staff, meals' supervisors, caretaker and cleaners are valued team members and make important contributions to the smooth running of the school.

102 Teachers and classroom assistants attend a wide range of courses as part of the school's development programme. All have received computer training and some have undertaken further training of their own. This is helping to sustain the improvements in ICT that have taken place since the last inspection. New members of staff, including newly qualified teachers, are effectively supported by the very good induction procedures and the caring atmosphere promoted by the headteacher. As a result they settle quickly and successfully into their new roles. Statutory requirements for performance management are fully met.

Accommodation

103 Significant efforts have been made to rectify the weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection and both the indoor and outdoor accommodation provided by the school are now very good. Improvements include new and partitioned classrooms, a well-stocked library, a computer suite and disabled access. In addition, all classrooms have been refurbished. The generous support of parents and a local charitable trust provided a substantial proportion of the funding for these projects. In particular, the noise and distractions arising from the old open plan design are no longer a problem and teaching of ICT skills can be undertaken in an effective learning environment. Both the old and the new buildings are maintained and decorated to a high standard and the caretaker plays an important role in this. All of these contribute to the spacious, light and airy conditions found in most areas of the school.

104 Although occupying a steeply sloping site the grounds have been carefully terraced and landscaped to ensure that the quality of education is not compromised. As a result there are quite extensive level areas of tarmac and grass that are used well for teaching and recreational purposes. Good use is made of the swimming pool both in lesson time and outside normal school hours to form an effective link with the local community.

Learning resources

105 Learning resources are satisfactory overall and effectively support all areas of the curriculum. In some subjects there have been considerable improvements recently. For example, the range of books, artefacts and other materials to support teaching and learning in religious education is now excellent. These resources make a significant contribution to the above average standards seen in the subject. In addition, standards are rising in ICT as all pupils now have weekly opportunities to improve their skills in the new computer room. Resources in all subjects are well organised and easily accessible.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

106 In order to build on the strengths of the school, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 2 by:
 - challenging higher attaining pupils more effectively;
 - using assessment and target setting more systematically to help pupils to move forward;
 - monitoring the teaching and learning in these subjects from the nursery to Year 2 in order to identify areas needing development;
 - establishing team leaders for the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2.

- Raise standards in ICT by:
 - developing an accurate and manageable assessment system;
 - ensuring regular monitoring of provision;
 - providing opportunities for pupils to develop skills in all aspects of ICT;
 - continuing to develop the use of ICT, including classroom computers, to consolidate and extend learning in all subjects.

- Improve the cycle of monitoring, analysis and evaluation in order to improve the school further by:
 - establishing a clear cycle of monitoring, analysis and review;
 - focusing on a limited number of 'improvement' issues;
 - linking teachers' performance objectives to the 'improvement' issues;
 - improving the subject action plans;
 - establishing a 'maintenance' plan to run alongside the 'improvement' plan.

- Analyse the assessment information gathered about pupils' progress and attainment more rigorously in order to plan the next step in learning by:
 - ensuring that teachers are confident in 'levelling' pupils' work regularly;
 - training English, mathematics and science co-ordinators to undertake detailed analysis of statutory and school based tests in order to tease out areas needing attention;
 - improving the tracking of year groups in order to analyse progress of different groups of pupils and help in target setting;
 - using individual target setting more systematically to challenge pupils and raise their attainment.

- Redefine the roles of subject co-ordinators in English., mathematics and science so that they are trained and confident to support staff to raise standards by:
 - enabling them to have the time to monitor planning teaching and learning systematically;
 - having an overview of pupils' progress through evaluation of assessment materials (see above).

The headteacher, staff and governors might consider the following minor issues for improvement for inclusion in their action plan:

- The marking of pupils' work.
- The deployment of classroom assistants in the introductory part of the lesson.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	42
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	44

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	3	24	13	1	1	0
Percentage	0%	7%	57%	31%	2%	2%	0%

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than 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)	12	202
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	31

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	3	78

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	9

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	12	17	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	7	8	10
	Girls	10	11	14
	Total	17	19	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	59 (66)	66 (52)	83 (76)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	8	10	9
	Girls	11	12	10
	Total	19	22	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	66 (66)	76 (72)	66 (62)
	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
	2001	12	12	24

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	7	12
	Girls	10	9	11
	Total	16	16	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	67 (84)	67 (58)	96 (81)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	4	6	6
	Girls	9	9	9
	Total	13	15	15
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	54 (71)	63 (71)	63 (61)
	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	1
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	165
Any other minority ethnic group	6

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25
Average class size	29

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	139

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	32.5
Number of pupils per FTE adult	8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

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

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Financial information

Financial year	2001 - 2002
	£
Total income	528,926
Total expenditure	530762
Expenditure per pupil	2,481
Balance brought forward from previous year	47,739
Balance carried forward to next year	45,903

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	214
Number of questionnaires returned	82

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	72	24	2	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	55	34	9	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	55	45	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	37	48	10	2	4
The teaching is good.	59	39	0	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	49	40	10	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	30	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	37	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	56	39	4	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	71	28	0	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	43	1	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	38	13	1	11

Percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest whole number and may therefore not total exactly 100

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

107 The foundation stage provision consists of part-time morning sessions in the nursery for up to 26 children and full-time provision in the reception class. Additional part-time afternoon sessions are provided privately on the same premises. Almost all children have previously attended the adjacent playgroup. Their levels of physical, emotional, social and intellectual development on entry to the nursery are broadly in line with those expected for three-year-olds. Helped by secure routines and careful planning in both nursery and reception classes, children make satisfactory progress in all six areas of learning. Most achieve the early learning goals by the end of the reception year and are ready to start work on the early stages of the National Curriculum.

108 Overall, the school has maintained similar standards to those found by the previous inspection, although standards were then above average in creative and physical development, whereas standards in all areas of learning are currently average. The new Foundation Stage curriculum is fully implemented, with thorough planning procedures ensuring that the part-time teachers in the reception class offer continuity and balance each week. Resources are satisfactory in both the nursery and the reception class. Staff provide children with an appropriate range of activities designed around the nationally recommended curriculum. Activities offer a satisfactory balance of directed and chosen activities.

109 Teachers maintain good day-to-day links with parents. A particularly successful feature in the nursery is the initial planning session, where parents accompany their children into the rooms and help them with their initial planning choices.

110 The nursery teacher makes an initial 'baseline' assessment of children's attainment on entry and a second 'baseline' assessment is made at the start of the reception year. Satisfactory records of children's progress are maintained, but the day-to-day observation and recording of children's learning and the use of observational assessment to track their progress against agreed targets are areas for development. The school is trialling assessment booklets, but statements in these do not all correspond helpfully with those describing stepping-stones towards the early learning goals.

111 The school's arrangements for the leadership and management of the foundation stage are currently unsatisfactory. The school has maintained satisfactory teaching and developed a sound curriculum, but the nursery and reception teachers are not working sufficiently closely with teachers across the school, especially in Years 1 and 2, to agree expectations for each child. The headteacher is currently acting as an interim co-ordinator, but the procedures for checking whether children are doing as well as they should are underdeveloped. Discussions with Foundation Stage teachers show little appreciation of any shared responsibility beyond the end of the reception year.

Personal, social and emotional development

112 The teaching of this area of learning is satisfactory in both the nursery and reception classes, with all children reaching the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. Children are familiar with daily routines and organisation. They listen well to the teacher, nursery nurse or assistant during directed group or class times. They settle well to chosen activities in the nursery, concentrating well and staying at their chosen tasks. In the reception class, children have less choice of activity, but they concentrate well independently at activities provided for each group in turn. A particularly successful example of this was children's participation in role-play on a pirate ship. This was successful because the staff had created a number of imaginative props and suggestions for play in this setting. The

day's menu of fish stew, boiled turtle and ship's biscuits was displayed, sea and sky were formed by deft use of materials and a series of labels denoted the captain's cabin, galley, helm and deck. As a result, children readily became pirates, with one as captain giving orders and another mopping the deck for example. Through such activities and through more structured opportunities, as during 'Circle Times', children develop positive and co-operative relationships with adults and peers. Most enjoy expressing their opinions and listen to each other's ideas and feelings respectfully, passing a smile around the class circle, for instance, and making a positive comment about a child chosen to sit in the middle. Children change independently for formal physical education activities and manage their personal hygiene confidently. Staff make children's learning experiences enjoyable. They are patient and build children's self-esteem through regular praise and encouragement.

Communication, language and literacy

113 Teaching in this area of learning is satisfactory overall and has some good features. Almost all children attain the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. Teachers use a combination of strategies in teaching children about written language and phonics. In a nursery lesson, for example, the teacher involved children in listening to initial letter sounds and then writing letter-shapes in the air with their forefinger. In the reception class there are regular daily book times. Home-school reading diaries are used regularly as an aid to parents supporting their children's early enjoyment of reading learning at home. The reception classroom has a comfortable area for children to spread out books and use cushions for looking at books, but the book collection is not attractively displayed and there are no posters encouraging a love of books and authors. Teachers use software on computers in both nursery and reception rooms to help children enjoy listening to stories and to develop their knowledge of phonics.

114 Children in the nursery still tend to talk across each other in their enthusiasm to respond and the teacher manages this situation sensitively, helping them take turns to speak and listen. In the reception class, children have learned to take turns and listen well to each other in circle time. Most think of original comments when asked to voice an opinion, but a small minority still find it difficult to think of their own ideas and repeat those they have heard. Staff in both nursery and reception classes create opportunities for children to communicate with each other in a range of group and class situations, including role-play situations and outdoor imaginative play activities.

115 Teachers regularly share books with children. In the nursery and reception classes, teachers make good use of big books to ask questions and develop children's confidence in explaining their ideas. In the nursery, most children understand that the words on each page link with the pictures as they turn the pages one by one. All recognise their name and most identify individual letters and the initial sounds they make. In the reception class, most children read simple stories from the reading scheme books, but a few children still recognise only a few well-known words. Most form letters well as they practise handwriting and many are beginning to use writing to record, for example writing a sentence about the pirate ship with the teacher's support. They are beginning to learn some simple spelling and rhyming patterns.

Mathematical development

116 Teaching in this area of learning is satisfactory. Children make sound progress in their learning and almost all reach the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. The nursery teacher and support staff organise attractive resources well so that they are readily available for the children to use. A class book and some play dough buns reflect the children's enjoyment of number rhymes such as '*Five currant buns in a baker's shop*' and a giant abacus is an example of the use of stimulating mathematical equipment. Resources for water and sand play in both the nursery and reception, and in the outdoor area, give children plenty of opportunity to develop an early understanding of measuring volume and

capacity by filling, emptying and counting containers. Children in the nursery print with boxes to make circles, squares and rectangles on their '*shape ship*'. In the reception class, children measure the growth of their bean plants and the shapes in their pirate ship include pentagons, triangles and semicircles. '*Beautiful butterflies*', made by painting and folding give children early experience of symmetry. Lesson plans show teachers focusing on the need for children to learn mathematical language. In the nursery, during a pairing game, children counted their cards and used '*more*', '*less*' and '*the same as*'. Children enjoy singing number rhymes daily in both nursery and reception. Children in the reception class count together up to 20 and back to zero. Most children recognise numbers to ten. During the inspection, teachers gave children little opportunity to talk about their mathematical understanding, requiring just correct answers rather than explanations.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

117 Teaching and learning in this area are satisfactory. Children attain the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. Teachers give children a range of experiences to help give them early knowledge about the world around them. They choose topics such as mini-beasts and pirates that will capture the interest of young children. They organise activities successfully, so that there is a balance of sitting, listening and discussion, alongside a variety of more physically active pursuits. Only occasionally do children sit a little too long as a class or group, becoming fidgety as a result. Children learn to observe carefully, handling snails, prawns, mussels and crabs delicately in a nursery session, as they talked with their teacher, improving their vocabulary to describe the look, feel and smell of the creatures. Children in the reception class tend their beans, knowing that water is necessary to help plants grow. They develop early design and technology skills, making boats out of cereal boxes, kitchen roll cylinders and sellotape. Photographs also show children involved in cooking. Teachers give children understanding of the wider locality through visits, such as that to a farm, to see lambs and pigs. A display shows fire fighters visiting to show the fire engine and staff have used this imaginatively to turn the role-play area into a fire station with fire engine. Another display of car numbers in the nursery shows children's interest in letters and numbers developing from close observation and experience of one of the dad's Mercedes. These visits and visitors are clearly offering very good stimuli to staff and children, with imaginative work in language and mathematics developing alongside children's knowledge and understanding about these aspects of the world. Children develop early ICT skills satisfactorily as they confidently manipulate a mouse to click on icons, making choices during the use of computer programs, for example when listening to animated stories in the nursery.

Creative development

118 Teaching in this area of learning is satisfactory, with some stimulating ideas in teachers' planning for role-play and strengths in singing. Children reach the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. The fire station in the nursery and the pirate ship in the reception class are current examples of imaginative provision of role-play opportunities by the staff, which have resulted in children enjoying acting out their dramas in these settings. Displays throughout the nursery include examples of creative printing, painting and collage. Decorated sea creatures suspended on threads in tanks made from boxes and prints made with wheels against a background of tyre tracks made by cycling over the paper show teachers and children working together to create pleasing finished articles. During the inspection, children made snails, painting a piece of pasta and attaching this to play dough and two matchsticks. The results are effective, but the creativity is almost all the adult's. A few paintings show children's individual use of paint. There is room for more of this work and less of the adult-supported activity. In the reception class, a striking display of pastel work on black paper shows children using this medium very well, as they include a hidden creature, after the manner of Dutch painters hundreds of years ago. In music, children enjoy singing with their teachers, who lead them confidently in numbers rhymes and a range of songs, sometimes accompanied on guitar. Children clearly benefit from their teachers' confidence and subject

knowledge, varying the dynamics, for example, in the reception class as they sing their pirate song.

Physical development

119 Teaching in this area of learning is satisfactory and children attain the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. Children have many opportunities to develop their physical co-ordination through various aspects of the curriculum. They use a variety of hand tools, such as saw and hammer under supervision on an outdoor workbench, as well as pencils, crayons, scissors and a range of malleable materials, ensuring sound progress in the development of their manual dexterity. The well-organised, secure outside play area for nursery and reception children, combined with a good variety of play equipment for use on both hard and grassy surfaces, makes a good contribution to children's physical co-ordination as well as providing a stimulating set of opportunities for creative play. Reception children also have regular access to indoor physical education activities in the hall. During their hall time, reception children follow instructions very well and note how their heart rate increases as they complete energetic warm-up activities. In the lesson observed, teaching was good and children improved their skills at throwing and catching a ball as a result of their teacher's good management, clear instructions and high expectations.

Strengths

- *teachers' planning;*
- *relationships between staff and children;*
- *the use of visits and visitors;*
- *the accessibility of resources, particularly in the nursery;*
- *the balance of indoor and outdoor, sedentary and active, chosen and directed activities in the nursery;*
- *links with parents in the nursery.*

Areas for improvement

- *leadership and management of the Foundation Stage;*
- *assessment procedures and their use.*

ENGLISH

120 Standards are below average in reading at the end of Year 2 and well below average in writing. They are rising after a fall back in the years following the last inspection but are not as high as they were four years ago. Standards are broadly average at the end of Year 6, with pupils doing better in reading than writing. They are the same as they were four years ago, with some fluctuation in between.

Improvement since the last inspection

121 Most pupils are making satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2, with pupils doing particularly well in Year 1. Higher attaining pupils especially are not moving forward as fast as they should in Year 2 because they are not sufficiently challenged. In Years 3 to 6 pupils are achieving well and have made good progress this year. There have been improvements in the way in which English is taught since the last inspection and these are beginning to have an impact on standards, especially in Years 3 to 6.

122 The main reasons for the improvement are:

- improved planning as a consequence of the introduction of the national literacy strategy;
- the appointment of talented staff;
- extra support for lower attaining pupils through the Early Literacy Support (ELS) and Additional Literacy Strategy (ALS) programmes;
- 'booster' classes for Year 6 pupils;

- increased levels of classroom assistant support;
- the introduction of a twenty-minute daily reading session;
- improved resources, most notably enhanced book provision.

Speaking and listening

123 Pupils make sound progress overall in developing their speaking and listening skills and most reach the standards expected for their age. In lessons most pupils listen carefully to their teacher. Teachers use a range of strategies to help pupils practise and consolidate their speaking and listening skills. Often there are good opportunities for pupils to speak in front of a large group in the introduction to lessons, when teachers frequently engage pupils in a question-and-answer session. Sometimes, too, pupils are asked to work in pairs or small groups and at these times consolidate their negotiation skills. At the moment there is no systematic, long-term plan to outline skills development or set out when different activities might be planned. Currently, interesting activities are planned in both literacy and other subjects, such as role play, 'hot seating' and debate, but these are chosen to complement work in other areas, rather than being linked to a progressive development of speaking and listening skills.

Reading

124 In Years 1 and 2, pupils are using their understanding of how words and sentences are put together to help them to tackle difficult words. They 'sound out' words, for example, split words up and use the context of the sentence. Most read fluently within their capabilities. Pupils work through a structured reading scheme and this helps them to develop skills systematically. However their knowledge and understanding of a wide range of good quality books, writers and illustrators is more limited as a result. The introduction this year of a twenty-minute reading session at the beginning of the day has provided more individual support. This is beginning to have an impact on standards and previously lower attaining pupils are now doing better. Higher attaining pupils are not moving ahead as fast as they should because they are not always sufficiently challenged. In Years 3 to 6 pupils use their reading skills well across the curriculum. As they move up the school they come off the reading scheme and select books from a range of fiction in the library. Most of the pupils enjoy reading. Rooms are small from Years 4 to 6, with no space for class reading areas. This limits the opportunity for teachers to display collections of books or focus pupils' attention to the work of particular authors. The library is well organised, with good quality furnishings that help to create a very pleasant environment for research. Pupils from Year 1 upwards are confident in finding information from books using the contents and index pages. All pupils are encouraged to take books home to share with their parents and carers and those who are well supported in this way make faster progress overall.

Writing

125 Pupils' achievement and progress follows a very similar pattern to that in reading. Pupils are taught spelling, punctuation and handwriting skills within the structure of the literacy sessions. Most apply these well in their independent writing. There is a reasonable balance between 'work sheet' activities and independent writing. However, across the school opportunities are lost to develop pupils' writing skills in a systematic way through work in other subject areas. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to write for real purpose, although there is some work of good quality, such as the Year 5 topic books, displayed in the hall.

Teaching

126 In the sessions seen the quality of teaching ranged from satisfactory to very good. Most of the teaching was good, ensuring that pupils achieved well in the sessions seen. Planning is consistently thorough, with good attention to the development of skills. In the better lessons, teachers developed the work on the learning objectives in a lively and interesting way. This was so in the very good lesson, where younger pupils worked on making

sentences, and pupils moved forward very quickly as a result. Generally there is insufficient use of good quality texts as a basis for the work, which would provide pupils with good models of high quality writing. In most sessions the pace was good, with teachers moving pupils on quickly. By contrast, a less effective lesson started late, with no sense of urgency, so that pupils made only satisfactory gains in their learning. There are some inconsistencies in the way that teachers use the setting of individual targets for pupils. This is potentially confusing for parents and also makes it more difficult to monitor progress from year to year.

127 Pupils with special educational needs are supported well. Often the classroom assistant works with a small group and provides encouragement and help when it is needed. This enables these pupils to work on similar tasks to their peers. They make good progress with this support.

Leadership and management

128 There are some strengths in this area. The experienced subject manager enhances the work in English by arranging interesting and exciting events to complement the day-to-day work. Writers, such as Fred Sedgwick, have visited the school, for example, to work with staff and pupils. Last year the older pupils worked on Shakespeare's 'Cymbeline', winning acclamation for their fine performance. There are also book clubs organised to enable pupils to develop their own libraries. However the co-ordinator has not got a clear picture of standards and provision through the school because her monitoring opportunities are limited. Assessment information is now quite extensive for most year groups, but there is insufficient analysis of this in order to plan for the future.

Strengths:

- *improved planning;*
- *'special' events;*
- *The new library;*
- *Support of classroom assistants.*

Areas for improvement:

- *planning for the development of speaking and listening;*
- *use and display of work of high quality authors;*
- *links with other subjects;*
- *more attention to writing for a purpose;*
- *consistency in target setting;*
- *role of subject co-ordinator.*

MATHEMATICS

129 Inspection findings indicate that currently standards remain a little above the national average at age eleven and below the national average at age seven. This shows improving standards since the last inspection. This is particularly so at the end of Year 6, where standards are higher than when the school was last inspected. Standards at the end of Year 2 have been maintained, although they are not as high as they should be.

Improvement since the last inspection

130 Pupils, including those with special educational needs, are making satisfactory progress overall in Years 1 and 2, moving ahead particularly well in Year 1. They achieve well and make good progress in Years 3 to 6. There are several factors contributing to the improvements including:

- improved planning following the introduction of the national numeracy strategy;
- improved mental and oral sessions;
- effective use of new resources;

- extra support for Year 6 pupils in 'booster' classes.

Mental and oral skills

131 Thorough attention to the development of mental and oral skills in all classes has improved pupils' speed and ability in number work. Teachers use resources effectively at the start of numeracy lessons, for example number fans that pupils use to display answers to questions. The use of counting sticks to help pupils to count on and back is also well developed. For example, in a Year 6 lesson; the pupils rapidly counted in units of one and a half by concentrating on the divisions on the counting stick used by their teacher to maintain a brisk pace. In most, but not all classes, important mathematical vocabulary is shared and displayed on whiteboards to encourage pupils in their understanding. Pupils are encouraged to explain how they work out answers. One Year 1 pupil clearly understood why his class of 27 pupils had number cards up to 31 as he explained that the four adults in the classroom also had cards and $27 + 4$ makes 31. By Year 6, pupils use a variety of strategies to multiply one two-digit number by another and a pupil in a Year 3 class used the strategy of partitioning numbers when adding 36 to 43. She recorded the sum as $(30 + 40) + (6 + 3)$ to reach a correct total of 79. Pupils enjoy these sessions, particularly when they work to a tight time limit.

Understanding of number

132 As they move through the school, pupils continue to build effectively on their knowledge and skills, particularly in their number work. By Year 6, many pupils are confidently working with numbers. Most have acquired a range of strategies to add, subtract, multiply and divide and show an increasing understanding of the relationships between these operations. They communicate their knowledge effectively, organising their work well and showing a good knowledge of mathematical language. In the Year 6 lesson observed, pupils discover how to reduce a number to its digital root and are fascinated to discover how people used this concept to check their calculations long before calculating aids were invented. Learning in this lesson was enhanced for lower attaining pupils by the use of a computer program to help work on addition and subtraction. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 work with fractions and decimals, learning about equivalent fractions and how to order decimals on a number line. In Year 3 pupils develop different strategies to help them to work out addition problems and in Year 1 pupils play money games to consolidate their ability to add and subtract numbers to 20.

Problem solving and investigative work

133 In all year groups, generally, pupils' ability to use and apply their mathematical knowledge and understanding to problem solving and investigative work is currently underdeveloped. Standards in this aspect are not as high as they could be, although tasks that attempt to improve this are regularly set for homework for older pupils. Pupils enjoy their mathematical work and are keen to succeed.

Teaching

134 Teaching throughout the school is satisfactory overall. It includes some very good teaching, but one lesson that was poor. Teaching of junior classes is stronger than in the infants although a very good lesson was observed in Year 1. In the good lessons, teachers have made mathematics interesting and practical for pupils by sharing their enthusiasm with them. As a result, pupils respond enthusiastically and work hard. In the Year 1 class, the teacher challenged her young pupils to beat the egg timer while ordering number cards up to 31. The pupils showed determination and excitement and thoroughly enjoyed meeting, and exceeding, the challenge. Their teacher showed equal delight! Pupils behave well, concentrate on what teachers explain and organise themselves for work quickly and quietly.

135 Teachers' planning is thorough and based on the National Framework for Numeracy. Many teachers make clear what pupils are to learn at the start of each session so that all

understand its purpose. The focus is then returned to at the end of the lesson to ensure pupils have understood what they have been taught. Although teachers plan different tasks for the ability groups within their class, this does not always successfully address individual needs. A weakness in the teacher's subject knowledge in one lesson resulted in confusion for pupils and incorrect mathematical information being taught. Planning for this lesson was correct, but the teacher's own understanding of the concept being taught was insecure. Teachers are making good links with other subjects, especially science and ICT.

136 Assessment procedures are in place, although these are not yet used fully to identify priorities or individual needs. Marking is variable and whilst it often praises pupils' efforts, it does not always tell pupils what they have achieved or what they can do to improve. Some links with other curriculum areas have been developed, but this is an area requiring further work, particularly the use of ICT to support pupils' learning. Teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations, in some classes, of what their pupils might achieve and there is a lack of challenge for some higher attaining pupils.

137 The subject manager has only been co-ordinating the subject since September. She has made a good start on identifying areas for development and has great enthusiasm for the subject. She has successfully started to monitor progress in the subject and is well aware of what action needs to take place to further increase standards.

Strengths:

- *use of mental and oral sessions improving pupils' ability to use different strategies;*
- *teachers' planning is clear and detailed with appropriate learning objectives;*
- *pupils' enthusiasm for the subject;*
- *effective use of resources to aid learning.*

Areas for improvement:

- *pupils' ability to use and apply their number skills to problem-solving and investigative work;*
- *clearer links with other areas of the curriculum, particularly the use of ICT to support learning;*
- *the challenge for higher attaining pupils.*

SCIENCE

138 Standards attained by eleven-year-olds have shown steady improvement since the last inspection with an increasing proportion achieving higher levels. Last year's test results were average in comparison with the national picture. This year's are likely to be above. Standards achieved by seven-year-olds are more varied. Teachers' assessments last year placed them well below average nationally and average in the number achieving the higher level. This year's assessments show nearly all achieving the expected level with very few reaching level three.

139 Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by their teachers, other adults or their peers in accessing tasks. Pupils for whom English is an additional language and those from ethnic minority groups are fully able to understand and undertake the tasks set. All groups, including boys and girls, achieve similarly. Teacher assessments of both seven and eleven-year-olds show that whilst pupils make good gains in their scientific knowledge, their understanding and ability to apply this to investigations and observations is more limited. Analysis of their work confirms this.

Pupils' attainment

140 By seven, pupils are beginning to record the results of their investigations on charts and diagrams but there are too few examples of pupils using what they already know to predict

what might happen or explain why it does. In recalling their attempt to assess the effects of different surfaces on the distance travelled by a toy car, Year 2 pupils could not suggest how a 'fair' test had been achieved or offer reasoned explanations for the different outcomes. They know the names of the major parts of plants and how simple circuits are made but have not progressed beyond this.

141 Eleven-year-olds use the correct terminology in their explanations, have good recall of a wide range of scientific knowledge across the areas that they have studied, and draw well on this in response to questions. They understand 'fair testing' but are less secure in considering and evaluating evidence. They know the names of the major organs of the body and their functions, recognise the elements of a healthy diet and are aware of the implications of lifestyle choices on their bodies. In their well-researched group presentations on the effects of drugs, alcohol, loud music, solvents and sunlight on the human body, they draw on and extend this knowledge. This provides a good, planned link to pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) development.

142 Teachers encourage pupils to make close observations, research information and make good use of the locality to support work in the subject. Year 4 pupils had already observed pond creatures during an overnight stay at Cuffley Camp. In the lesson they identified the creatures and began to think about where they lived and how this affected their movements.

143 As pupils progress through Years 3 to 6 they continue to record the outcomes of their investigations in charts, tables and diagrams and there is an increasing use of graphs to display data. Sometimes they record temperature in centigrade or measure in centimetres but measurement is not a sufficiently common feature of their work. By Year 6 pupils are beginning to use ICT to display findings but its use to support work in the subject is not sufficiently developed.

144 Progress varies between key stages. Results show that pupils in Key Stage 2 make greater progress than in Key Stage 1 and analysis of pupils' work confirms this. It is largely due to inconsistencies in approach caused by lack of a clear overview of each key stage. The use of worksheets often provides little challenge for the more able or support for those who need it. Their use varies between classes. It was at its best when the teacher had prepared sheets that supported pupils with limited literacy skills. Over-reliance in some classes on commercial worksheets does not extend pupils' knowledge or understanding. Marking is variable and rarely indicates to pupils how they might improve or how well they are doing. Presentation is also variable and many pupils clearly find difficulty writing neatly on unlined paper.

145 Pupils enjoy the hands-on activities and are very enthusiastic about their science lessons. They work very well with partners or in groups. They take turns, listen to one another, organise themselves quickly and use equipment carefully. Safety issues are well recognised and they handle water creatures appropriately and with minimal disruption before returning them to a suitable environment.

Teaching

146 In the three lessons seen in Years 3 to 6, teaching was consistently good. Teachers plan and prepare their lessons well, taking good account of what pupils already know and building on this to extend their understanding. Practical activities and well-chosen resources excite and maintain their interest. In Year 3 pupils use their knowledge of materials to predict whether the samples are transparent, translucent or opaque, before testing their predictions with a torch and darkened box. In this lesson and the others, good questioning is well used to challenge and extend pupils' thinking. Good questioning, clear explanations and correct use of terminology show teachers have a good understanding of the chosen topics. The open nature of the tasks allows pupils of all abilities to work at their own level. It is particularly successful where pupils are grouped by ability. In a Year 6 lesson, class teacher input and

modified research materials supported less able pupils well in preparing their presentations and the more able were well challenged by more advanced data.

Improvements since the last inspection

147 Since the last inspection adoption of recent national guidance as the basis for planning in the subject provides teachers with clear guidance on coverage and expectations for each year group. The new arrangements for assessment, closely linked to this through the learning objectives, will ensure that a systematic picture of pupils' progress and achievement is developed. Following good support and guidance from the LEA adviser the subject is now well placed to move forward. In order to achieve this the school will need to consider the role the co-ordinator is to play and ensure that regular monitoring of provision provides an informed view of strengths and areas for development.

148 Resources have been improved and the topic boxes are well maintained and easily accessible. They have been supplemented by donations from the PTA and Glaxo, with recent additions including a computer-linked microscope. Outside areas are actively well managed to provide a range of habitats and include a securely fenced pond area. Visits and visitors are used to extend and enrich the curriculum and have included a visiting planetarium and a local science and technology support team who worked with Year 2.

Strengths

- *improved results at Year 6;*
- *practical activities and use of school grounds and environs;*
- *improved resources;*
- *adoption of national guidance as basis for planning;*
- *introduction of new procedures for assessment.*

Areas for development

- *challenge for higher attainers in Year 2;*
- *opportunities to use and apply scientific knowledge;*
- *monitoring of the subject;*
- *role of the co-ordinator.*

ART AND DESIGN

149 The provision in this subject is not as strong as it was at the time of the last inspection. Fewer opportunities to develop art skills are timetabled. Overall, pupils, including those with special educational needs, currently achieve satisfactory standards, but are not reaching the high standards identified at the time of the last inspection. However, some good examples of work were observed during the inspection and pupils in Years 4 and 5 demonstrated standards that are above average for their age.

150 Three lessons were observed during the inspection. Judgements are also based on pupils' work and teachers' planning. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 undertake a range of work with different media. Work on display shows Year 1 pupils take their pencils '*for a walk*' then fill the spaces created with a variety of different materials including paper and fabrics. The finished product showed good detail for pupils of this age and they talked enthusiastically about their efforts. Pupils in Year 2 visited the National Gallery to focus on the work of Titian. Teachers used the visit to carry out work in geography and art, making good curriculum links to improve the pupils' awareness of different artists' styles. Although the visit provided good inspiration and first-hand experience for the pupils, the follow-up work was not of a high standard.

151 In Year 5, pupils linked work in religious education by looking at aspects of the Creation Story as inspiration for silk painting. This work was of high quality and pupils talked

enthusiastically about their designs and how they had learnt to mix light and dark colours to achieve the effect they wanted on their paintings. Year 4 pupils used a viewfinder to create a frame for sections of pictures taken during a visit to Cuffley. They successfully used charcoal, chalks and paint to interpret their own picture of the vision within their frames. Standards in this lesson were also above the expected level for the age of pupils. In Year 3, pupils collected objects from the grounds of the school in preparation to create sculptures following some work about Andy Goldsworthy. The pupils enjoyed their work and demonstrated good independence and ability to work collaboratively in pairs.

152 Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some good features. The majority of teachers are enthusiastic about the subject and work hard to provide pupils with a wide range of experiences. The school maintains a reasonable supply of resources including clay, paint and a range of media. The use of sketchbooks as an opportunity for pupils to develop and explore ideas is underused. The subject gives some support to pupils' cultural development by providing opportunities to investigate the work of famous artists, although the traditions from different cultures are not so well developed through art. There is no formal assessment of art and design and, therefore, there is no way of identifying the progress pupils make or where improvement might be needed. The co-ordinator's role in monitoring standards and supporting staff is underdeveloped.

Strengths:

- *use of visits and visitors to provide stimulus for pupils' work;*
- *study of different artists and the styles they develop;*
- *standards achieved in some year groups.*

Areas for improvement:

- *use of sketchbooks to develop and explore ideas;*
- *role of the subject co-ordinator.*

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

153 During the inspection only one lesson was timetabled. Evidence is therefore also drawn from work on display, talking to pupils and teachers and viewing planning. From this it is evident that throughout the school pupils' making skills are often above those expected for their age, although their designing skills are less developed. This is an improvement from the time of the last inspection, when standards were below average. The subject is now taught in short blocks of time to ensure maximum benefit in terms of continuity and skills development. The introduction of a more balanced scheme of work based largely on recent national guidance has ensured coverage of all aspects, including food technology, and more opportunities for pupils to work with a range of materials and techniques. There are few opportunities for the design of mechanisms that make use of hydraulics, motors or electrical circuits and insufficient use of ICT within the subject.

154 There is no significant difference in achievement between different groups of pupils. Boys and girls, those with special educational needs, those for whom English is an additional language and those from ethnic minority groups all do equally well.

155 In work displayed in Key Stage 1 younger pupils had competently and carefully constructed their own three-dimensional works having observed the sculpture on the village green and examples of Henry Moore's work. Older pupils had tested the capacity of their paper rafts with marbles and the effects of shape on paddleboat models. They explained that they had not developed the designs further, suggested improvements or made modified versions.

156 Year 6 pupils showed good recall of activities completed in other year groups and explained how they had completed the design and construction of chairs, bridges and shelters, which they had recorded in a report format. They had made good use of the Internet to find out about geodesic design before constructing a class dome using ribs of rolled newspaper. Activities such as this and the use of nets in Year 3 to create Easter egg cartons make good links to work in mathematics, although this is not consistently developed.

157 In the lesson seen in Year 5, a group of pupils made a moving toy using a concertina mechanism constructed from lolly sticks, card and paper fasteners. In preparation they had looked at examples of moving toys and experimented with trial mechanisms. They were aware of safety considerations as they carefully cut strips of card and wood. Pupils understood the need for care to avoid splintering the wood as they punched holes for fasteners and to avoid colours running as they decorated their toys. Resources were well prepared and the activity well planned and introduced.

158 Pupils use well-developed artistic skills and all work shows well-refined joining, cutting and finishing techniques. In Year 4, model armchairs and settees displayed in the classroom had been constructed with carefully tailored upholstery and neatly finished cushions. However, it is clear from all the examples seen and talking to pupils and teachers that designing skills are not as advanced. Although pupils often suggest or incorporate improvements as they work, the formal recording and evaluation of design is not yet an established feature of work in the subject. It is this lack of reflection and refinement within the design process that frequently leads to the production of very similar objects decorated in a variety of ways or almost identical artefacts. Whilst this may improve making skills, particularly in textile work, it does not advance understanding of the design process.

159 The subject is currently being overseen by the headteacher, who regularly views planning and observes work outcomes. However, there are currently no formal procedures for assessing and recording pupils' progress, for regularly monitoring the quality of teaching and learning or to identify areas requiring development.

Strengths

- *quality of finish in products made;*
- *artistic skills and knowledge of materials.*

Areas for development

- *greater focus on the process of designing and evaluation;*
- *monitoring of the subject;*
- *assessment procedures;*
- *use of ICT in the subject;*
- *design of mechanisms.*

GEOGRAPHY

160 In Year 2 and Year 6 standards in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in geography are in line with standards expected for their age. These standards have been maintained since the last inspection. A significant improvement during this period is the whole school plan that allocates topics for study to each age group. These are based on the national guidelines for geography adopted by the school to support teachers in their planning. It ensures that pupils cover a balanced geography curriculum and develop subject skills in a structured and systematic manner as they move through the school. As a result, pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily.

161 From the earliest stages, teachers begin to promote a sense of place through the study of the school site and its location in the village. Pupils identify geographical features and

begin to express their own views, for example 'too much traffic goes through the village'. This is broadened in Year 2 to include comparisons between life in England and family life in a rural village in Mexico. In discussion, pupils are uncertain about the nature of geography as a subject but clearly recall their work on the imaginary island of Struay. They demonstrate their early map-work skills to locate and recognise features such as the post office, a farm, the jetty, mountains and the sea. They are keenly interested in their work and talk about it readily.

162 In Year 3, pupils make good progress in the acquisition of geography skills as a result of the teacher's interesting range of tasks and approaches. They learn about the major climate zones of the world, use appropriate temperature and rainfall vocabulary and identify these locations on a world map. Current work in Year 4 is based on a successful residential visit to Cuffley that has clearly had a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning. Similarly, pupils' work in Year 5 is based on their recent residential experience in the Isle of Wight. Although they continue to make satisfactory progress in Year 6, further and more rapid gains are hindered by the number of worksheet activities that often do not offer a suitable challenge to all pupils.

163 Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. In the lessons seen it ranged from unsatisfactory to good. A particular strength is the quality of teachers' planning. It is based firmly on the school's adopted scheme of work and ensures that teachers have a clear view of what pupils are expected to learn in each lesson. In the most successful lesson, pupils in Year 1 were introduced effectively to fieldwork techniques. The teacher's careful questioning and her use of a good range of photographs promoted an enthusiastic response from pupils as she explained clearly the purposes of carrying out a traffic survey. In Year 4, the teacher used her good subject knowledge effectively to involve pupils actively in their learning. Initially in a successful brainstorming session they attempted to answer the question, 'Is all water usable?' This was followed up well with a practical exploration of how water can be cleaned and purified. In a less effective lesson, noise levels caused lapses in concentration and as the teacher did not check their work as it progressed pupils failed to make progress or consolidate their learning.

164 The recently appointed co-ordinator has good specialist knowledge of geography and has begun the ongoing process of improving and updating learning resources. In common with other subjects the role of the co-ordinator is currently underdeveloped. There are no formal assessment procedures, so it is difficult for teachers to identify the next steps in learning accurately enough to move pupils on at the right pace.

Strengths:

- *teachers' planning based on the consistent implementation of the adopted planning framework;*
- *interesting tasks and activities.*

Areas for development;

- *the role of the subject co-ordinator;*
- *assessment.*

HISTORY

165 During the inspection only one history lesson was seen. Judgements therefore are based on samples of pupils' earlier work provided by the school, teachers' plans and other documents and discussions with teachers and pupils. This evidence shows that standards attained by most pupils in both Year 2 and Year 6 are in line with those expected for their age. There is no difference in the attainment of boys and girls and most pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily. Improvements since the last

inspection include the adoption of national guidelines to support teachers' planning and to ensure the progressive development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. As a result, they make satisfactory progress in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding in all areas of history. They are introduced to a variety of sources of information including artefacts, books and pictures and the Internet and CD-ROMs to encourage them to ask and answer questions about the past.

166 In Year 1 these questions relate to familiar objects and events. These include old and new toys and holidays then and now; discussions begin to promote an awareness of differences between the past and present. Educational visits to places of interest, such as the Museum of Childhood at Bethnal Green, enhance the quality of pupils' learning. They go on to acquire knowledge about people and events in the more distant past in Year 2, and by listening to stories they begin to appreciate the difference between fact and fiction. This was evident in a discussion with pupils about the topics they have studied. For example, they talked enthusiastically and showed good recall of the Fire of London. They demonstrated appropriate knowledge and understanding of the passing of time by using the classroom timeline to sequence the event in relation to current work on Ancient Egypt.

167 In Year 3 pupils make more rapid gains in their learning arising from the teacher's good knowledge of the subject and her sharp focus on developing the specific study skills of history. They begin to understand that the past may be divided into periods and begin to think about the impact of the Roman invasion on this country. In their study of the Tudors in Year 4 pupils' learning is brought to life with a visit to Hertford Museum and Castle. It is also enhanced by effective links with other subjects, as for example with design and technology when they design and make pomanders. In Year 5 pupils' research skills are effectively promoted through their work on Victorian England, in which they investigate census information for Stanstead Abbots. The topic also allows them to practise extended writing in support of their literacy skills. In other classes, however, teachers frequently miss opportunities to develop pupils' free writing within history. Often they rely too heavily on worksheets. This also limits pupils' independence. By the time they are in Year 6 pupils use dates and relevant historical vocabulary. They work from a variety of sources to describe the main characteristics of society in Ancient Greece. They re-present historical information in a variety of ways including individual books which they bind for themselves. The books are well organised and the work is neatly presented.

168 The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, as it was in the one lesson seen. The teacher successfully shared both her good knowledge of the period and her own collection of artefacts with pupils and this helped to motivate them. As a result pupils were enthusiastic learners, eager to ask and answer historical questions. Teachers plan their lessons well. They make good use of the adopted scheme of work to define what they expect pupils to learn and think carefully about a variety of tasks to interest pupils. However, as there are no formal procedures for assessing pupils' progress against the requirements of the National Curriculum they do not identify what is required in order to move pupils on by ensuring that all groups of pupils are suitably challenged.

169 Management of the subject is currently satisfactory. The recently appointed co-ordinator is committed and knowledgeable and will be able to draw on her successes in religious education as a model for developing provision for history. She has already formed a clear view of what needs to be done although the co-ordinator's role within the management structure of the school is underdeveloped.

Strengths:

- *consistent implementation of the adopted scheme of work;*
- *teachers' planning which identifies precisely what they expect pupils to learn;*
- *interesting tasks and activities.*

Areas for development:

- *the role of the subject co-ordinator;*
- *assessment.*

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

170 Standards in word-processing, graphics, accessing the Internet and using e-mail are in line with those expected for pupils' ages throughout the school. However, pupils have few opportunities to develop their skills in other aspects of ICT, such as spreadsheets, control and some aspects of modelling. Overall, therefore, standards are below average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. There is no difference in the achievement of boys and girls or of other groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs.

171 At the time of the last inspection considerable weaknesses were identified. These included a lack of teachers' knowledge and understanding and insufficient computers to develop pupils' skills. Expectations have increased significantly since then. Teachers have responded positively and standards are rising. A new computer suite has been opened and resources have been updated and improved. As a result of effective staff training, teachers and classroom assistants have greater confidence and expertise. They use the new resources to good effect and reflect very positive attitudes to the subject and a high commitment to raising standards.

172 From an early age, pupils learn how to operate computers. They learn to use the mouse and keyboard and acquire a range of basic skills. In Years 1 and 2, teachers link computer use to other subjects. For example in mathematics, Year 1 pupils explore pairs of numbers that add up to ten and are introduced to early graph work. In science they sequence pictures of plant growth and name the main parts of the human body. These experiences familiarise them with the basic commands required to access a variety of programs. In Year 2 they are provided with a wide range of experiences, including word-processing, data handling and control, but these are not covered in sufficient depth to promote more rapid development of skills.

173 In Years 3 and 4 pupils make satisfactory gains in their learning. Year 3 pupils combine text and graphics, using different font sizes, styles and colour for emphasis and effect. They are introduced to e-mail and word-process letters to their American pen friends. In Year 4 they develop their data-handling skills by surveying the number of boys and girls in each class and presenting their findings in the form of pie graphs, block graphs and charts. However, there is little evidence of pupils questioning or interpreting their results in order to extend their understanding. Using a graphics program they explore different ways of assembling pictures using repeating patterns. They experiment with tiling and tessellation, reflection and symmetry, which helps to reinforce their mathematical understanding.

174 The improved curriculum provision enables older pupils to work together in finding things out and developing their ideas. In Year 5, for example, most pupils worked successfully in pairs constructing arguments to persuade others to take a holiday on the Isle of Wight. By the end of Year 6, pupils are clearly aware of the importance of ICT in their lives when gathering information in a range of subjects. Because of the gaps in their earlier experiences these pupils are in a 'catch-up' situation and with good teaching are achieving well. During the inspection, pupils in Year 6 were researching the life of John Lennon. They used a variety of search engines and gained a good understanding of the wealth of information available on the Internet. They are highly motivated by the new developments in the subject and discuss their work enthusiastically.

175 Throughout the school, the quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. In Years 1 and 2 it is satisfactory and in Years 3 to 6 it is good. The strengths are to be seen in the direct teaching and reinforcement of skills taking place in the weekly timetabled sessions in the computer suite. These are based on the good planning that is evident in all teachers' work, firmly rooted in the adopted national guidance. It provides a clear structure for lessons and for the systematic development of basic skills as pupils move through the school. In a successful lesson in Year 3, the teacher demonstrated her secure knowledge of the subject by amending her plans in response to unforeseen technical difficulties. As a result she was able to ensure that the pace and continuity of pupils' learning was not interrupted. In Year 6 also, the teacher's expertise was evident from the outset. It allowed her to set and maintain a brisk pace and to respond confidently to pupils' contributions. She took advantage of the opportunity to encourage pupils to consider aspects of the life of John Lennon and others that contribute to their positions as both positive and negative role models. Pupils responded well to these mature demands, which made a big impact on their moral development.

176 The subject is well led by an experienced teacher who sets a good example for her colleagues in her commitment to improve her own expertise, although there have been few opportunities for direct observation of teaching and learning. She is developing a clear view of what is needed in order to raise standards. These include continuing to improve resources and teachers' expertise in those areas of the curriculum that are not being covered in sufficient depth. There are currently no formal procedures for assessing pupils' progress that are aimed at matching work more accurately to their individual needs. As a result teachers do not consistently evaluate their progress sufficiently well to form the basis of their planning or to enable pupils to be involved in setting targets for their own attainment. The school is well placed to make further progress.

Strengths:

- *teachers' commitment to improving their own expertise and raising pupils' standards;*
- *good subject leadership;*
- *the well-equipped computer suite;*
- *pupils' enthusiasm for learning.*

Areas for development:

- *developing an accurate and manageable assessment system;*
- *ensuring regular monitoring of provision;*
- *providing opportunities for pupils to develop skills in all aspects of ICT;*
- *continuing to develop the use of ICT, including classroom computers, to consolidate and extend learning in all subjects.*

MUSIC

177 Only two music sessions were seen during the inspection. Based on these and the quality of singing in assemblies, pupils' attainment in singing and performing is in line with standards expected for their age. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

178 There has been good improvement in the school's provision for music. The new co-ordinator is an accomplished musician and takes all classes for music at some point during the year. All pupils from Year 1 to Year 5 now learn the recorder for one of the three terms. There is now a dedicated music room, which is well equipped, used both by the music specialist and class teachers. Finally, the school has adopted two published planning frameworks to use as a basis for teachers' planning. Assessment ideas are incorporated into these plans. These improvements have yet to impact on planning.

179 In the lessons seen pupils in Year 5 and 6 were practising songs from 'Oliver' for the school concert. Most sang confidently and in tune. They showed awareness of breathing, dynamics, phrasing and pitch control. Most enjoyed the songs, especially 'Oom pah pah', with girls generally performing better than boys. Pupils achieved well in these sessions because the teacher had clear objectives for the work, good subject knowledge and expertise and because she demonstrated effectively.

180 In addition to the assembly seen, pupils from reception to Year 6 also gathered together for a singing practice. In this pupils practised assembly songs. They sang tunefully and responded well to the teacher's instructions about holding notes on at the end of lines and breathing at the right place in order to make the words flow.

181 Teaching was good in the lessons seen, which were taken by the music specialist, and ensured that pupils moved forward well. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement about the quality of teaching in lessons taken by the class teacher.

182 In addition to class music lessons, provision is enhanced by instrumental tuition for some pupils. At the moment about a quarter of the pupils in Years 3 to 6 learn to play either the piano or violin. Christmas concerts and performances and participation in the local music festival also provide opportunities for pupils to perform in public. A choir meets for part of the year. The timetable is arranged so that pupils do not have a music session every week and recorder tuition is for one term a year only. The school is not yet monitoring pupils' attainment to see if the gaps in provision have any impact on skills development.

Strengths:

- *expertise of music co-ordinator;*
- *opportunities for all to learn the recorder;*
- *music room.*

Areas for development:

- *implementation of new planning and assessment framework;*
- *timetabling of music sessions.*

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

183 Overall standards in physical education are average, as they were at the time of the last inspection. Some pupils perform beyond these and overall standards in swimming are above those expected nationally. The full range of physical education activities is planned including, for older pupils, athletics and outdoor adventurous activities. Most pupils make good progress, including those with special educational needs, those learning English as an additional language and those from ethnic minority groups. There is no difference in performance between boys and girls.

184 Year 6 pupils learn to bowl, field and bat accurately by practising the skills in small groups. They show increasing accuracy as they place the ball between the fielders then apply this tactic well to a small games session. Some go well beyond this showing good style in their strokes and greater accuracy in their bowling and placement of the ball. Their attention and interest is well maintained by the brisk pace of the activities. This is a common feature of all the lessons seen and was an important factor in the swimming sessions seen in the school's outdoor pool, where despite the cold weather all pupils participated fully with evident enjoyment in the activities.

185 The school rightly places strong emphasis on water safety. Good use is made of the school's outdoor pool both during and after the school day. Year 1 pupils show high levels of confidence in the water as, using floats, they practise and improve their leg action. All

manage to swim at least a few strokes and almost half are able to swim one width with the aid of a float. Pupils in Year 4 show increasing confidence and ability with most happy to swim with their faces in the water and manage a width of front crawl. Older pupils have regular sessions at a local swimming pool. By Year 6 the vast majority achieve at least the nationally expected standard in swimming and many go well beyond this in distance, water skills and safety.

186 In all lessons there is good attention to safety, with pupils suitably attired and staff setting a good example. Even very young pupils quickly, with minimal fuss and assistance, dry themselves and change after swimming. Teachers quickly curtailed swimming lessons when they felt pupils were getting cold and before they became disheartened.

187 Teaching is good overall. Teachers carefully plan and prepare their lessons to ensure a suitably challenging and extending range of activities. Their clear explanations and coaching of individual pupils to improve their swimming strokes, breathing, batting or bowling shows good understanding of the finer points of skills development. However, pupils are not always given sufficient opportunity to reflect on their own performance, compare it with others and work to improve.

188 Specialist tuition by Ware Football Club supports the subject well and additional opportunities provided for older pupils include kayaking at a local water sports centre, the local swimming baths and annual residential visits. Skills learnt in lessons are well extended and employed in the good range of after-school clubs and competitive sports that include cross country, netball, rounders, swimming, cricket and football. The enthusiastic co-ordinator is well supported by her colleagues in this provision and all have worked hard to achieve such good overall coverage.

189 Recent national guidance forms the basis of planning in the subject, supplemented by commercial schemes. The newly purchased games scheme provides good support for non-specialists. In the past there have been opportunities for the co-ordinator to work alongside colleagues but there are currently no formal arrangements for monitoring the subject. Arrangements for assessing and recording pupils' achievements are undeveloped and the school does not have a clear view of standards in the subject. Good use is made of the spacious, well-maintained grounds and the good range of resources. The school is investigating, with the local authority, the renewal of the flooring in the hall to create a pleasanter surface for floor work.

Strengths:

- *swimming provision;*
- *range of activities both in and out of lessons and staff commitment to this;*
- *good use made of school grounds and facilities;*
- *good planning and preparation of lessons.*

Areas for development:

- *encouraging pupils to evaluate their own performance;*
- *monitoring of the subject;*
- *procedures for assessment.*

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

190 By the end of Years 2 and 6, pupils reach standards above those expected for their age. This is similar to the standards seen at the last inspection. The achievement of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, is good. The provision meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus and the school bases its planning on this.

191 Only two lessons were observed during the inspection so judgements are also based on scrutiny of work, teachers' planning and discussions with pupils and teachers. The quality of teaching observed was good. This is an improvement on the last inspection, where some of the teaching was satisfactory. There is good teamwork between the teachers and the support staff. For example, in a Year 1 lesson where pupils were acting out the story of the wise man building his house on rocks, the support assistant joined in and encouraged individual pupils in their efforts. Teachers explain new concepts well, which helps pupils to understand the significance of many aspects of religion. Year 3 pupils, following their visit to the local church, were very enthusiastic as their teacher explained the use of various objects seen in the church such as the pulpit and font. The pupils in this lesson gained important knowledge to extend their understanding of Christianity. Teachers make good use of artefacts and the school now has an extensive range to support the different religions studied in addition to Christianity.

192 The curriculum is enriched by visits to places of worship, and local clergy from various denominations visit the school, talk to the pupils and lead some of the assemblies. Good cross-curricular links are established. This was seen when Year 5 pupils used the Creation Story as a stimulus for their silk paintings in art. The attainment target for pupils to learn *about* religions is particularly strong and they gain good insights into the beliefs and practices of a different religion in each year group. Christianity is covered particularly well and pupils have very good understanding and knowledge of the Christian faith. Learning *from* religion is not as well developed. There are too few planned opportunities for pupils to respond and apply their own questions to other people's values.

193 Currently most lessons require pupils to complete written work either to reinforce the learning or to extend it. This often detracts from the enthusiasm pupils have shown in discussion and the school is beginning to develop other ways of recording pupils' work to overcome this.

194 The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The co-ordinator, although only in post just over a year, has had a marked effect on the provision for religious education within the school. She is well qualified, having specialised in the subject at university. Already she has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses and has completely revised the planning so that her colleagues are clear about what to teach and how to deliver effective lessons. All teachers are now more committed to the subject and they have been inspired by the co-ordinator's leadership. Topic boxes for the various religions studied are well organised, easily accessible and full of artefacts, posters, worksheets and other teacher resources. Her commitment to improving the subject and consequently the pupils' learning are very good.

Strengths:

- *leadership ensures clear direction with a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses;*
- *high quality resources appropriate to the aspects being studied;*
- *learning about different religions with very good knowledge and understanding of Christianity.*

Areas for improvement:

- *different ways to record pupils' views and learning;*
- *further develop learning **from** different religions with planned opportunities for pupils to respond and apply their own questions.*

