

# INSPECTION REPORT

## SHILLINGTON LOWER SCHOOL

Hitchin

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109480

Headteacher: Mrs Ingrid Alsop

Reporting inspector: Julia A Elsley  
16892

Dates of inspection: 20<sup>th</sup> –22<sup>nd</sup> January 2003

Inspection number: 246913

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4-9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Greenfields Shillington Hitchin Hertfordshire
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Appropriate authority:	Bedfordshire Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Michael Harper
Date of previous inspection:	22 <sup>nd</sup> - 24 <sup>th</sup> September 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
16892	Julia Elsley	Registered inspector	Foundation Stage Education Inclusion Art and design Design and technology Music	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are children taught? How well is the school led and managed?
14083	Andy Anderson	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?
27541	John Collins	Team inspector	Special Educational Needs Mathematics Science Information and communication technology Physical education	How good are the curricular opportunities offered to pupils?
20655	Beryl Rimmer	Team inspector	English Religious education History Geography	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Shillington Lower is a small village school with 118 pupils on roll, aged from four to nine years. The school serves the surrounding area that has a mixture of owner-occupied, rented and housing association. The children come from a wide range of social backgrounds and most parents are in full-time employment. The proportion of children (13 per cent) entitled to free school meals is below the national average. The proportion (9 per cent) of pupils included on the school's register for special educational needs is also below the national average. There are two pupils with statements of special educational need. The children come from a predominantly white ethnicity background, and none speak English as an additional language. There are no travellers or refugee children currently on roll. This academic year, there has been a change in the admission policy, and children now enter school in the September of the year that they are five. On entry, their attainment covers the full ability range, but overall it is average when compared to other schools in the county. There have been many changes since the last inspection in terms of staffing and the use of the accommodation. A new headteacher was appointed in November 2001, and two teachers and a teaching assistant joined the staff 2002. There have been two new classrooms built since 2000.

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

As a result of very good leadership by the headteacher, supported by the governors, this is a school that is making good progress in improving its effectiveness. The headteacher, staff and governors have a strong commitment to raising standards and the quality of education provided. The work of all staff is valued by the headteacher. The monitoring and evaluation procedures result in a good quality of education for the pupils, most of whom are achieving well. The school offers good value for money.

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

- It provides a fully inclusive education for all its pupils and creates an excellent ethos in which they can thrive intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally.
- Very good leadership and a clear sense of direction is moving the work of the school forward.
- Overall, the management of the school is good, and the staff and governors have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
- Standards in English, mathematics, science, information computer technology, music and history and physical education are above average by the end of Year 2. Furthermore these standards continue to improve in Years 3 and 4.
- Generally, the quality of the teaching is very good.
- The school provides a broad and well-balanced curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and in Years 3 /4.
- The very good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils helps the children to exhibit very good attitudes and behaviour, supports positive relationships and is reflected in the high level of care for all children. The vast majority of parents and the local community hold the school in very high regard.

### What could be improved

- The numbers of children attaining Level 3 in reading and writing by the end of Key Stage 1.
- Opportunities for children to be more independent in recording their observations, ideas and opinions on what they have discovered.

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

### HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Good improvements have been made since the school was last inspected in 1997. The headteacher, staff and governors have conscientiously tackled the issues raised in the report. As a result, this is a school that is moving its work forward at a rapid pace under the purposeful guidance of the headteacher. Immediately following the last inspection, there was a change of school hours for Key Stage 2 pupils. Good headway has been made in developing the roles and responsibilities of the governors. The school improvement plan has very clear statements of intent and has a beneficial effect upon the work of the school. There are now firm links to the budget and the success criteria built in to evaluate the work in progress. The planned curriculum ensures that the pupils now have good opportunities to become aware of the multicultural society in which we live. Standards are high and this is because there has been a marked improvement in the teaching. The teachers' planning now has clear, precise learning objectives for both staff and pupils alike. The teachers have worked hard to improve the procedures for assessment. However, they recognise that there is still some headway to make in tracking the attainment of groups of children across all subjects in order to plan more accurately for their future learning needs.

### STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
Reading	A	A	B	B
Writing	A	A	B	A
Mathematics	B	A	B	B

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

Most children enter the Foundation Stage class with average attainment across all areas of learning, and high quality teaching enables them to make very good progress. The current cohort includes a significant proportion of the children who are working well within the age-related expectation and most are likely to exceed these early learning goals by the end of the Foundation Year.

The year-on-year results in the national tests show that attainment is well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. The 2002 results are high in comparison to those of schools with similar intake. The children are achieving the challenging targets set by the school because of the



improvements in the overall quality of the teaching and the strong commitment of the staff. Nevertheless, the proportion of children reaching Level 3 is not as high as it might be because the current assessment data is not sufficiently well focussed to indicate their subsequent needs and build upon their prior attainment.

The inspection findings show that standards are above average in the development of information computer technology skills, history and music across the whole school. At Key Stage 1, standards in physical education are above those expected of pupils of similar ages. Standards in geography, art and design, design and technology, and Religious Education are in line with age-related expectation at both key stages.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The vast majority of pupils have very good attitudes to school. They are keen and well motivated to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The overall standard of the children's behaviour is very good. All staff, parents and the pupils themselves have high expectation of behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	The pupils are learning a good range of social skills that is helping them to develop into well-rounded individuals. The relationships are very good. The children relate very well to their teachers, other adults and also to one another. They are polite and well mannered.
Attendance	Good.

There is an excellent ethos within the school, which reflects the aims and values set by the headteacher, governors and staff.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Foundation Stage	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Very good	Good	Very good

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

The teaching is consistently very good across the Foundation Stage, and at Key Stage 1 and in Years 3 and 4 it ranges from satisfactory to very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and this is a considerable improvement on the last inspection. The teachers' planning, the lesson organisation and access to resources have all improved. Significant features are the teachers' good subject knowledge, their skilful questioning techniques, and the brisk pace and quiet rigour in their presentation of lessons. The teaching of literacy is good and the skills are taught and used appropriately in other subjects. The numeracy strategy and the use of information computer technology skills are beginning to be used well to support other areas of the curriculum. The teaching in the Foundation Stage ensures that children have independent opportunities to initiate their own learning as well as adult-led activities. However, more open ended tasks and less use of science worksheets are needed at Key Stage 1, for example, to

allow the pupils to work at the higher Level 3. The assessment data recorded by the staff needs to be more sharply focussed and used more constructively to plan for groups of children of similar ability. This would help to accelerate their progress, particularly towards the higher levels. Furthermore, the approaches to assessment need to be extended to cover all subject areas. The teaching assistants and the learning support staff make an invaluable contribution to children's progress and achievements, including those with special educational needs.

### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. A broad and well-balanced curriculum reflects the national priorities for literacy and numeracy as well as the National Curriculum and the Foundation Stage of Learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The children are well supported to ensure that they make good progress in line with their capabilities.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The overall provision is very good. The cultural experiences offered to the children are good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	There is very effective care for all pupils, including those with special educational needs. However, the approaches to assessment need to be revised in order to support the planning for example, of the higher attaining pupils.

There is a good home-school partnership and most parents are fully involved in their child's learning. Recent initiatives on the part of the school ensure that they are well informed about the curriculum, events, and visitors to the school. The personal relationships between the children and adults are good. The local village community is proud of the school.

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

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership and management of the school are very good. Moreover, they are consistently improving as more people are becoming increasingly involved in broadening their roles and meeting their responsibilities.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The Governors are well informed, enthusiastic and keen to support the work of the school. They fulfil all the statutory responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good headway has been made in the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work. The priorities of the school development plan are appropriate and well implemented so that the school continues to improve.
The strategic use of	There is good use of resources because effective systems are in place

resources	to decide how the budget is spent.
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The headteacher provides clear leadership so that management continues to improve. The governors work closely with the headteacher and staff and are carefully and thoughtfully applying principles of best value in all their financial decisions. The members of staff are well qualified. A significant strength of the school team is that their expertise is shared in order to meet the demands of the curriculum and the children in their care. The accommodation has much improved and is now adequate to meet the requirements of the whole school curriculum. The levels of educational resources have improved and are now good.

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

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school</li> <li>• Standards are good and the children make good progress.</li> <li>• The headteacher and staff encourage parents to be actively involved in the life of school.</li> <li>• From an early age, the staff places a strong emphasis on helping the children to become mature and to take responsibility for their own learning and actions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The range of extra-curricular activities</li> </ul>

The inspectors' judgements support the very positive views expressed by the parents about the school. They also agree with the parents about the level of extra-curricular activities provided.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Since the last inspection there has been some variation in the performance of successive cohorts of pupils. Nevertheless, the results achieved by the pupils in the national tests in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 still remain above those of schools nationally. The results were also above average when compared with those achieved by the pupils of similar small cohorts in other schools. This is because the children are well taught and want to learn. It lays a very secure basis to be built on in years 3 and 4. There are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls, and no gender bias within the teaching. This is because the school provides a fully inclusive education for all. The good, and often very good, teaching helps both boys and girls to achieve well.
2. The school collects a good range of information about the individual pupils' performance. From the foundation class onwards there is a comprehensive record that details each child's development. The headteacher and staff make effective use of this information to set realistic targets for each cohort year-on-year. The greatest strength of the school is demonstrated by the way in which the teachers speak in a compelling way about the performance of individual pupils. However, the current system of assessment data is unmanageable. In order to challenge the pupils to a higher level, there is a need for a sharper focus on what pupils of differing levels of ability need to do next. In Key Stage 1, for example, this would help to improve standards in reading and writing at Level 3. **This is a key issue for action.**
3. The inspection findings confirm that the children start school in the reception year with levels of attainment that are in line with the age-related expectation. They settle quickly to the well-established routines of the class and gain social confidence in a wide range of situations. They are enthusiastic and eager to learn by listening carefully to adults and responding confidently to questions. They play together amicably and make the first important steps towards counting, reading and writing. This is because of the very good teaching by the adults who increase the levels of challenge for children individually across the full breadth of the Foundation Stage Curriculum. It is quite clear that a vast majority of the class are on course to reach the early learning goals by the end of the year and that a significant proportion of the children are likely to exceed these goals across all areas of learning.
4. At this point of the year, the standards at the latter stages of Key Stage 1 are above the expected national level in mathematics, reading and writing. The quality of the work in science, information computer technology skills, history, music and physical education exceeds the expected levels. In all other subjects of the National Curriculum, standards are in line with the age-related expectation.
5. In Years 3 and 4, well-focussed teaching builds steadily on these results and as a result the pupils are increasing their levels of attainment. The inspection findings show that by the end of Year 4 the vast majority of the pupils are achieving standards well above average in English and mathematics and sustaining good standards in science. The quality of the pupils' work in history, music and information computer technology skills is above the age-related expectation, and in all other subjects of the National Curriculum it matches the expected levels. This is because the teachers have placed a greater emphasis on the teaching and development of specific skills.

6. In English, there is a strong emphasis on improving the pupils' speaking and listening skills. The introductory and closing sessions to the lessons give the pupils very good opportunities to express their ideas, thoughts and opinions, and their role-play experiences include performing in front of an audience. All pupils have a thorough grounding in the use of phonics to support their reading and writing. Much time is spent on improving skills and enriching the pupil's vocabulary. The teachers are suitably targeting spelling and handwriting and overall the pupils' presentation of work is good.
7. Mathematical and science discussions and an emphasis on investigation skills are good features of the introductory and closing sessions of the lessons, and as a result the pupils make good, and often very good, progress. However, the recorded evidence shows that the higher attaining children at Key Stage 1 could achieve more if they had fewer worksheets and greater opportunities for independent responses. **This is a key issue for action.**
8. Standards in information technology (ICT) have improved since the last inspection and are fast becoming a real strength of the school. There is a well-planned programme of skill teaching, and the pupils are making rapid progress. Moreover, the school has begun to make better use of ICT across other subjects, but recognises that there is still some way to go before it is fully effective.
9. By the end of Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 4, the pupils' attainment in religious education is in line with that required by the locally agreed syllabus. All pupils are making good progress in their knowledge and understanding in both lessons and assemblies.
10. Groups of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make good progress in lessons in relation to their previous learning. They build well on their prior learning in the core subjects of English and mathematics. When taught in small groups with the close support of learning assistants, their progress is good because they are able to make the small steps in their learning more quickly. Their progress matches the targets in their individual educational programmes, (IEP's) which are incremental, clear, measurable and attainable. There are currently gifted and talented pupils in music who have been identified by the school, and plans are in hand to apply this identification process to other areas of the curriculum.
11. Taken overall, the pupils are achieving well and making good, and often very good, progress. As a result of well-planned curriculum coverage, standards are rising. This is a further improvement since the last inspection.

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

12. The vast majority of pupils have very positive attitudes to the school. They arrive promptly each morning and are keen to start the day's activities. They quickly settle down in registrations, assemblies and in class. Children of all ages consistently demonstrate very positive attitudes to their work. They are enthusiastic, motivated and eager to learn. The pupils are attentive to their teachers, willingly ask and answer questions, and freely offer their own ideas and opinions. The attendance rate at the school is well above the national average with little or no unauthorised absence. Nearly all the parents agree that their children like school.
13. Standards of behaviour throughout the school are very good. The teaching and non-teaching staff, parents and the pupils themselves have high expectations of the standards of behaviour that are acceptable in the school. The children move around the school in a quiet and orderly manner and their behaviour in the classrooms, at breaks and at lunchtime is consistently very

good. However, a tiny minority of the younger children can occasionally display inappropriate behaviour in lessons when not adequately challenged and firmly controlled. There were no signs of either bullying or isolation of individual pupils. There have been no exclusions in recent years. The parents are unanimous in their agreement that behaviour in the school is good.

14. Most pupils with special educational needs (SEN) show positive attitudes to learning. They listen well, respond to questioning and take pride in their performance. The SEN pupils receive good support in classes, which enables them to take a full part in the lessons. This encourages them to respond equally as well as other groups of pupils. Their behaviour also matches that of other pupils and they are fully accepted as members of the class. Where behaviour falls below the expected level, it is always dealt with well and does not inhibit the learning of others.
15. The relationships in the school are very good. The pupils relate very well to their teachers, to other adults and also to one another. They are polite, well mannered and very welcoming to visitors. Children of all ages work very well together in the classrooms and play happily together in the playgrounds. They collaborate well, share resources, take turns and listen to each other. Most consistently show respect for their teachers, each other and the environment. During assemblies, the pupils are respectful of the occasion, willingly join in hymn singing and bow their heads reverently during prayers.
16. The pupils' personal development is good. They are learning a good range of social skills that is helping them to develop into well-rounded individuals. In the classrooms, they willingly take responsibility for their own work, and in lessons many children were observed working independently. Outside lessons, although opportunities are limited, the older pupils willingly take on extra responsibilities, for example, operating the music during assemblies. The pupils go out of school on a wide range of educational visits and encounter an appropriate range of visitors. The school supports local and national charities and the pupils are learning to be aware of others less fortunate than themselves. All parents agree that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible.
17. The pupils' positive attitudes, their consistently very good behaviour, and the high attendance rate are **strong features of the school** and have a positive effect on their academic achievements and personal development.

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

18. The quality of the teaching has improved considerably since the previous inspection when it was described as 'sound in the vast majority of lessons with a third good'. Of the lessons observed during the present inspection, 54 per cent were either very good or excellent, 27 percent were good, and 19 percent were satisfactory. At the time of the last inspection, one in five lessons observed had weaknesses. The school has carefully and meticulously addressed this issue through a thorough, yet supportive, monitoring and evaluation programme and as a result there was no unsatisfactory teaching seen this time.
19. The overwhelming view of the vast majority of the parents is that the teaching is good. They made very favourable comments about how their children are enthused by school and frequently return home eager to share what they have learned and follow it up by doing extra homework. During the course of the inspection, it became increasingly clear that this happens because the teachers know their children well and make learning fun. For example, since the last inspection there has been a marked improvement in the provision for the children in the Foundation Stage.

The staff ensure that the children are given very good opportunities to choose their own activities and to work either indoors or outdoors as they see fit.

20. **A major factor** in the improvement of the curriculum planning and the teaching is the way that the objectives are made clear to the pupils at the start of each lesson. A greater emphasis has also been placed on the development of skills, such as those seen in music, art and design and design technology lessons. A strong feature of the teaching in a design and technology lesson, for instance, was the way in which the teacher took the children through the full process of design by building on the previous week's session. This enables the pupils to explore and experiment with a range of tools and materials to fit the purpose intended. As a result, the evaluation process in the closing session is purposeful. Similar activities in other lessons were frequently observed and covered the full breadth of the school's curriculum.
21. **A particular strength** is the way in which the teachers are developing the pupils' spoken English and listening skills through very good role-play activities in the Foundation Stage and during the introductory and closing sessions throughout Key Stage 1 and in Years 3 and 4. These activities are carefully planned and well structured to support the children's learning in all areas of the curriculum. For instance, in the foundation class the adults engaged with the children during their play with the wood blocks and when 'creating a jungle'. Their sensitive, probing questions and suggestions not only extend the children's knowledge of everyday life, grammar and subject specific vocabulary, but also encourage social development and collaborative learning. In the rest of the school, most lessons start promptly, have a brisk pace and proceed with a quiet rigour. The vast majority of the lessons, including the assemblies, are presented in an interesting, exciting and challenging way that helps the children to feel secure. For example, in history and music, the teacher's enthusiasm for the subject and inspirational teaching ensure that the pupils are very well-motivated and help to raise their self-esteem so that they become effective learners. In music, there is a very good focus on the individual child's talents when performing. The relationships between all members of the staff and the pupils are good. There is a clear and well-applied code of conduct in the majority of classes, and the children's behaviour is generally very well managed.
22. The literacy and numeracy training has enabled the teachers to become more skilful in planning the lessons. Furthermore, they use a range of different teaching methods not only in these contexts, but also across the whole curriculum. The teachers' knowledge of the subjects of the National Curriculum and the Foundation Stage is very good, and ensures confident, competent and well-focussed presentation of new concepts. At the time of the previous inspection, the higher attaining pupils were not consistently challenged in lessons. The school has worked hard at improving this aspect of its work and it is clear that they have gone some way to addressing the issue. Nevertheless, it remains an area for further improvement in raising the pupils' reading and writing skills at Key Stage 1. Although the introductory and whole class sessions reinforce the learning objectives, in some cases the work sessions are not as challenging as they might be. A further review to ensure that the planned work is adequately matched to the pupils' needs and abilities would enhance and raise standards beyond their expected level. Furthermore, a greater focus on marking of work would also support the pupils in their understanding of what they need to do to improve, for example, in mathematics. Similarly, a reduction in the number of science worksheets, for example, would give the pupils greater opportunities to record their observations, ideas and opinions. **These are all part of a key issue for action.**
23. **A significant strength** has been the decision of the headteacher and governors to increase the number of ancillary staff to support the children in the classrooms, especially those in the Foundation Stage, and for children with special educational needs. This is paying dividends in a

number of ways. In the Foundation Stage, it allows the children to feel very secure, to have more individual attention, and to make a good and secure start to school life away from home. The steps that pupils with special educational needs make are smaller than those of their classmates. Each step is usually successful because the staff present the right amount of challenge to help them improve and make progress. By asking further questions and giving useful clues, they support these pupils well. In one numeracy lesson, for example, it provided the pupils with help when they needed it and the opportunity to talk about their work. They developed in confidence as the lesson progressed and were able to play a full part in later discussions. The work of support staff is valued by all the teachers and by the parents of the pupils with special educational needs. The teachers value the answers and contributions of SEN pupils equally with those of other pupils and this raises their self-esteem and confidence.

24. The overall ethos of the school is excellent. An important aspect is the way that all members of staff work together as a team, both in lessons and around the school. Everyone has a strong commitment towards improving the quality of education provided.

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

25. The curriculum is good and meets all the requirements of the National Curriculum. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that is enhanced by the wide range of visits and visitors to school. Since the last inspection, the issue over the length of teaching time in Years 3 and 4 has been addressed and is now in line with national guidance. The overall planning of curriculum is now more closely focused on requirements of National Curriculum and the planning for the Foundation Stage curriculum takes account of the stepping stones and Early Learning Goals for children in the foundation class. These are all improvements since the last inspection. Religious education is taught following the guidance of the locally Agreed Syllabus. There are appropriate arrangements for the teaching of sex education and the dangers of drugs abuse.
26. The long and medium term curriculum planning has improved considerably since the last inspection and is regularly monitored to ensure consistency. The teachers' daily lesson planning now provides precise objectives that are made clear to the children. The subject policies have been successfully updated and there are schemes of work drawing upon either national or local authority guidance. Many themes of the religious education scheme of work are integrated well with the curriculum for personal, social and health education, which is now taught in a more focused and systematic manner. The school follows the national frameworks for literacy and numeracy. The use of literacy and number skills in other areas of the curriculum is becoming better established. For example, the pupils have opportunities for writing in various subjects, but in Key Stage 1 science work is over-reliant on the use of worksheets. This restricts the responses of all pupils, particularly the more able ones, and prevents them from recording their own views and opinions on what they have found out. **This is a key issue for action.**
27. Many lessons are characterised by a good emphasis on developing the speaking and listening skills of the pupils. This is particularly the case when the pupils with special educational needs are supported in class. They are helped by the ways in which the learning support assistants explain and expand the teachers' comments so that they are able to take a full part in the lesson. A very good example of this was seen in a Year 4 mathematics lesson. Some use of computers was evident, but this was not as strong as the use of literacy and numeracy skills. Since the last inspection, the time and emphasis given to information and communication technology has



improved the pupils' skills to a higher level, but its use in other subjects is still not as yet, firmly established throughout the school.

28. The school provides a fully inclusive education for all its pupils and creates an excellent ethos in which they can thrive intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally. This is an improvement from the last inspection and is now **a key strength of the school**. All pupils are receiving their entitlement to the full range of the National Curriculum. They have full access to extra-curricular clubs and activities and the schools' provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A number of talented pupils are developing their skills in music and the general provision for and support of gifted and talented pupils is a target for development by the school.
29. The provision for special educational needs (SEN) pupils is good. The support for all the different groups of pupils with special educational needs is wide ranging and well tailored to their different needs. The SEN pupils receive good support in class and in the small withdrawal groups for well-focused work in literacy and mathematics. They have full curriculum entitlement, including the extra-curricular clubs and activities organised by the school. The two pupils with specific statements of need are given good support to reach the targets of their individual education plans.
30. A number of parents expressed some concern at the provision for extra-curricular clubs and activities. Currently, there is only one computer club for Year 2 pupils, but other seasonal sports clubs are made available. The curriculum is extended and supported by the strong links with the community, which make a strong contribution to the pupils' learning. Local ministers take assemblies, and the school makes good use of a wide range of visitors to school, such as representative from the local police, fire and medical services, who arrange exercises on safety. Other visitors have included the Bedford Youth Theatre, a falconer, and a Zulu Dance troupe. These are very successful in extending the experiences of all the pupils. The older pupils have visited a local recycling site as part of their work in geography, and the school takes part in local events in the community, such as the village Flower Festival. The school has good links with its partner institutions. Children at the local playgroups are invited to visit prior to their transfer. Similar good relationships exist with other local primary and middle schools. Many joint sporting and musical events are held with other primary schools, and there are appropriate arrangements for the transfer of pupils to the next stage of their education.
31. Overall, the personal development of pupils is very good. **This is a key strength of the school**. The school provides many opportunities for the spiritual development of all its pupils. The themes in assemblies, such as feelings and emotions, are used well to help them explore a range of values and beliefs that affect their life and behaviour. The pupils are encouraged to reflect on issues that concern them. For example in Year 2, they are asked to describe their feelings and concerns about the life of children in Victorian times. The teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and value the contributions of all pupils to lessons. This raises the self-esteem and the respect of all pupils for the ideas and opinions of others. Conversations with pupils show that they are excited by the learning opportunities that the school provides. A Year 2 pupil, for example, spoke of how excited he gets in 'wondering what we are going to learn next', while Year 4 pupils talk about 'liking the challenge in learning mathematics'. The provision for the moral development of the pupils continues to be very good. The adults provide very good role models for the pupils in demonstrating respect, fairness and tolerance of the views of others. All the pupils are clear about the school's rules and are helped by the consistent ways they are reinforced by all the staff. The lessons in religious education encourage the pupils to consider moral dilemmas. This was evident, for example, in a lesson encouraging the pupils to consider what to do if they knew a friend had done something wrong.

Similarly, a display of the work of a former pupil working on a conservation project in Africa gives the pupils insights into moral and ethical questions about the environment.

32. The provision for the pupils' social development is now very good. This is a significant improvement from the time of the last inspection. All pupils have opportunities to exercise responsibilities in the classroom as register monitors or being responsible for tidying up after lessons. In assemblies, the Year 4 pupils help to operate the overhead projector and the music centre. The pupils are encouraged in lessons to share problems and work co-operatively to solve them. Good teamwork is promoted in games lessons. The teachers organise their lessons so that the pupils to work in pairs or small groups, and thereby learn to share, take turns fairly and take responsibility for their actions.
33. The provision for the pupils' cultural development has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Examples of the ideas and values of others are promoted through art, music, history and geography. A good display of local village 'relics' reinforces pupils' understanding of their own culture. The lessons in religious education and school assemblies show the pupils how other people worship and what they believe. New library resources and artefacts of other religions have further improved the understanding of the pupils about the language and imagery of other faiths. A visit to a mosque and links with multicultural schools in Luton and Bedford have also helped to widen their awareness of modern society.

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

34. The school provides very effective care for its pupils. The headteacher places a very high priority on pastoral care and provides excellent leadership in this aspect. All members of staff are caring, dedicated and totally committed to the welfare of the children in their charge. They are very approachable and supportive. The non-teaching staff are effectively deployed and give very good support for both teachers and pupils, particularly those children who have special educational needs. This has a positive effect on the progress these children are making and the standards they achieve. All pupils are treated as individuals and given the help and support that they need. The parents attending the pre-inspection meeting were appreciative of the good support given by all members of the staff.
35. The procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are securely in place and fully understood by all staff. Pastoral care and the arrangements for first aid to deal with minor injuries are very good. The governing body and the headteacher take their health and safety responsibilities very seriously and all the required health and safety inspections, including risk assessments, are systematically carried out and formally recorded. Conscientious teachers and teaching assistants, who are alert and vigilant, supervise the pupils very well at breaks. Experienced midday supervisors undertake lunchtime supervision conscientiously, and the standard of care is high.
36. The school has good procedures for promoting and monitoring discipline and good behaviour. They are instrumental in establishing the very high standards of behaviour that are consistently maintained throughout the school. A new draft behaviour policy is currently under review and is supplemented by a code of conduct and school and playground rules. Topics such as bullying are included in personal, social and health education (PSHE). The procedures for recording and monitoring absence are good. The registers are completed accurately, reasons for non-attendance recorded consistently, and absences rigorously followed up.

37. The class teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils extremely well and have a very good understanding of their individual personal needs.
38. In the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Years 3 and 4, appropriate systems are in place for the monitoring, evaluation, review and support of the children's academic performance and their personal development.
39. All reviews of the Individual Education Plans (IEP's) are carried out as appropriate and the support of the outside agencies such as the Speech and Hearing Support Units is sought as necessary for the children with special education needs.
40. Since the last inspection, the school has made considerable headway in improving its assessment procedures. The issue has been tackled systematically and good progress made in recording the individual child's progress. The school now makes good use of the information gained from national test results and other data in Years 3 and 4 in order to predict whole school targets at the end Years 2 and 4. Nevertheless, there is still some way to go in establishing assessment procedures in other subjects. Moreover, the current procedures for English, mathematics and science also need some modification in order to make them more manageable. The teachers recognise that improvements are needed to raise standards further in reading and writing at the end of Key Stage 1 and have targeted this as an area for further development. It would be helpful if the information gained from the individual assessments and from the marking of the work was used to identify particular groups of children and to plan appropriately for them. **This is a key issue for action.**

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

41. The home/school relationships are very good. **This is a key strength of the school.** The school enjoys the active support of the parents, most of whom are fully involved in their children's work in school and at home. For example, they fully support homework and home reading. The recently introduced home school diaries in Year 4 provide an effective way in which the parents can be involved in their children's learning. A good number of parents regularly help in the classrooms and accompany the children on out of school trips. There is an active Parents Teacher Association (PTA) that raises considerable funds for the school. The vast majority of parents expressed a very high level of satisfaction with most aspects of the school.
42. Communication between the school and home is good. The school sends out regular, informative newsletters, which now include detailed curriculum information, and frequent individual letters about specific events and activities. It publishes an attractive, comprehensive and informative prospectus. The governors hold an annual meeting with parents and publish a useful annual report. Some parents felt that they are not kept well informed about how their child is getting on, but the inspection evidence does not support these views. The parents receive an informative annual progress report that clearly indicates what the pupils can do, the progress they are making and the targets for improvement. They are offered the opportunity to attend appropriate consultation meetings to discuss their children's work and progress with their teachers. The headteacher and her staff are very welcoming and approachable at all times.
43. The school ensures that parents are involved from the outset in any plans for pupils with special educational needs (SEN). The parents know the co-ordinator for SEN and the named governor responsible. The parents' meeting expressed its support for the school's work.

44. A significant number of parents expressed the view that the school did not provide a sufficient range of activities outside lessons. The inspection team agrees with these parents, as there is currently only a computer club in operation.

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

45. The very good leadership is a **key strength of the school**. The overall management is good. Since the last inspection, there have been considerable improvements, and the school is well placed to continue to build on its many strengths. The purposeful guidance of the headteacher has ensured that the staff and governors have a clear understanding of the areas for improvement and they are successfully tackling them with effective plans of action.
46. The headteacher gives a very strong direction to the work of the school. She has been successful in creating a strong sense of teamwork amongst the staff and governors. Her expectations of the staff, governors and pupils are high, and she is the driving force within the school. As a result, the parents have very positive views on the way that the school is moving forward and hold it in very high regard. All the people who work at the school know what is expected of them and work hard to fulfil their duties. Their work is monitored well by the headteacher and through discussion with her staff she is able to build on the existing strengths and identify areas for improvement. She also monitors the teaching regularly and records areas for further development and the need for additional staff training. As a result, there has been a significant improvement in the quality of the teaching since the last inspection, though some aspects still need attention. For example, the management of a tiny group of children, who at times can disrupt the flow of a lesson. The governors have an appropriate policy for performance management so that the school can monitor its work and improve through a self-evaluation process.
47. The school has a good range of appropriately qualified and experienced teachers, teaching assistants, learning support assistants for children with special educational needs, administrative staff, lunch-time supervisors and a site manager, who work very closely as a team. The governors have appointed a full-time teaching assistant and mid-day supervisor to support the children in the Foundation Stage. They are highly valued members of the teaching team and attend training to keep their skills up to date. The induction procedures are good and are efficiently and effectively managed to support any newly qualified teachers in their work. The school handbook sets out clear guidance for all staff.
48. The subject co-ordinators take their roles and responsibilities seriously and play an effective part in school improvement. Much of their work is still in its infancy, but none-the-less their high level of commitment and determination to succeed are ensuring that all children have a broad experience and a well-planned coverage of the Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum.
49. The governing body is also highly committed to its work and fulfils its statutory responsibilities well. The governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement and are well informed about its day-to-day operation. The recently formed sub-committees are very active and as a consequence are gaining a very clear insight into the governor roles and responsibilities. They take these duties very seriously and they present a report about the work of each committee to the governing body as a whole. The governors receive detailed reports from the headteacher that help to inform their decisions and keep them up to date on a variety of issues. They include the analysis of the school's national test results, its own target setting, its staffing needs and the accommodation provision for children with physical needs. The reports clearly set out the problems, how they might be addressed, and

what might be required in the future. The staff are now beginning to present reports on the Foundation Stage and the various curriculum subjects, which are helping the governors to support and monitor the writing of the school action plan. Each governor makes visits to the school and has a specific brief that is made known to the staff beforehand. They can then report back to either the full governing body or a sub-committee, for example, on teaching and learning, finance, resources and accommodation needs. As a result, the governors now have a good strategic view of the school's provision and an effective overview of its work. This is another improvement since the previous inspection.

50. The governors exercise good oversight of the school's financial arrangements and are effective in making use of the available resources. A large sum of money was left in the school's budget at the end of the financial year 2001-2002. This has now been well spent on increasing the level of resources to support the teaching and learning as well as for staffing needs and the use of the accommodation. A small amount of money has been suitably set aside for contingencies. Specific grants are well used for their intended purposes, for example, the library and information and communication technology. The school action plan now clearly includes the costing of identified improvements, so that the spending decisions are well-defined, for example the current target to improve writing and the development of the Foundation Stage. It also defines the non-curricular priorities such as the outdoor provision, and the access arrangements for children with physical needs.
51. In recent months, a good start has been made on the introduction of the principles of best value. The staff and governors compare the cost of various items, for example, a new scheme to enable the classroom teacher to teach music. The governors consider carefully the potential effect on standards before authorising major expenditure like the new computer suite and the library. They also take account of the views of others when identifying their spending priorities. They did this, for example, when discussing the need to cut down some trees and extend the Foundation Stage outdoor area. The day-to-day administration is very efficient, and there are systems in place to ensure that financial information is readily at hand. The school has had an audit of its accountancy procedures, and the recommended action has been taken efficiently and effectively. The school now provides good value for money.
52. The leadership and the management of special educational needs are good. The co-ordinator knows the pupils and their parents well and discusses needs, support and progress regularly with both staff and parents. The records are well maintained and updated regularly so that she has a good oversight of the pupils' achievements and progress. The support staff for pupils with special educational needs, are valued members of the team. They are used very effectively across the school and work closely with the class teachers to support the pupils' learning. The governing body makes good financial provision for the children with special educational needs. The governor with special responsibility for the children with special educational needs takes a strong interest in their progress.
53. The school's use of technology is sound, and the staff are beginning to appreciate its potential to help them further with their work. The staff has had training and is well placed to explore this avenue further. Since the previous inspection, the school has improved its resources for each subject; they are kept in good condition and the pupils have easy access to them. The resources for the Foundation Stage are just adequate, but more are needed to improve the quality of the outdoor provision and meet the full requirements of the Foundation Stage curriculum.

54. The accommodation has had significant improvements since the previous inspection and is very well managed. The work already completed has had a beneficial influence upon the provision and the quality of education provided by the school. The grounds are very well cared for.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

- Increase the numbers of children attaining Level 3 in reading and writing at the end of Key Stage 1 by ensuring that the use of assessment information is more closely matched to the future learning needs of the different groups of pupils. Paragraphs 2, 22, 71, 79, 87, 92, 105
- Provide the opportunity for children to be more independent in recording their observations, ideas and opinions by reducing the number of worksheets they are required to complete, particularly in science at Key Stage 1. Paragraphs 7, 22, 26, 88

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	26
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	11

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	13	7	5	0	0	0
Percentage	4%	50%	27%	19%	0%	0%	0%

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	118
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	9

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

<b>Special educational needs</b>	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	10

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

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

### Attendance

<b>Authorised absence</b>	%
School data	96.4
National comparative data	94.1

<b>Unauthorised absence</b>	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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



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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	14	11	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	13	14
	Girls	11	11	11
	Total	25	24	25
Percentage of pupils At NC level 2 or above	School	100 (100)	96 (100)	100 (100)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	14	14
	Girls	11	11	11
	Total	25	25	25
Percentage of pupils At NC level 2 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

***Ethnic background of pupils***

**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	100	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

*The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

***Teachers and classes***

***Financial information***

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	5.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19:1
Average class size	23

**Education support staff: YR – Y4**

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	122

Financial year	2002/3
	£
Total income	296879
Total expenditure	317374
Expenditure per pupil	2696
Balance brought forward from previous year	24210
Balance carried forward to next year	3715

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## *Results of the survey of parents and carers*

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	118
Number of questionnaires returned	55

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	62	35	2	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	51	44	2	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	42	53	0	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	44	9	2	9
The teaching is good.	53	44	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	56	15	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	75	18	2	2	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	35	0	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	25	60	9	0	5
The school is well led and managed.	62	35	0	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	51	44	0	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	9	35	33	11	13

## **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**

55. The school makes good provision for the children in the Foundation Stage. The admissions policy was changed in September 2002 to allow children to enter school in the year that they are five. However, some parents decided to leave their child in the playgroup and out of the twenty-four children in the class seven joined the school in January 2003. Overall, the attainment of the children on entry is average when compared to children of similar ages. There are no children within this cohort who have been identified either as having special educational needs or with English as an additional language.
56. The children, including those who have only been in school for two weeks, have settled quickly into the routines and are making very good progress in all areas of learning because of the very good teaching. As a result, all children are on course to achieve the expected early learning goals set out in the Foundation Stage curriculum guidelines. By the time they enter Year 1, many are likely to exceed these goals across all the areas of learning. This should be taken as implicit in all the subsequent sections of the report to avoid unnecessary repetition.

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

57. Most of the children are confident and enjoy coming to school. They part from their parents first thing in the morning very happily. This is because the staff are welcoming, show a very caring and sensitive approach towards them and maintain good relationships with their parents. As a result, the children have made a very positive start to school life. Most of those who have been in school since September have established firm relationships with the adults and work harmoniously with other children. The newest pupils have begun to make friends and to communicate as they work together. This was evident, for example, when they were building a tower with the wood blocks or attaching themselves to a group working at a number game on the computer. They are learning to listen to each other, take turns, share fairly and accept the code of conduct within the class environment. This is because the staff provide firm and consistent role models. They explain the rules patiently and praise the children when they are polite and helpful to one another. Consequently, the children know what is expected of them and are able to express their feelings in an appropriate way. The good support provided by staff ensures that there are no significant differences between the responses of boys and girls.
58. The emphasis on the children's personal, social and emotional development is good. **A strong feature** is the consistent way in which the adults provide the opportunity for the children to make independent decisions when planning and carrying out their own work during the 'free-flow' play activities in either indoors or outside. This helps the children to make choices, take the initiative, select the resources independently and develop personal tastes and preferences. The children, particularly those who have been in school longer, are able to pursue their self-initiated activities over extended periods of time. This could be seen, for example, when they were working collaboratively with recycled materials to make trees for the animals to go on their jungle scene. It was the idea of one child and led to an extended activity involving at least eight other children. This shows that the children are well motivated and eager to participate in activities to extend their learning.

59. When preparing for a physical education session in the hall, most children confidently change their clothes quickly and quietly without the support of the adult. Those that need help receive appropriate guidance from an adult. This encourages them to be independent, raises their self-esteem and gives them a sense of pride in their achievement. All of the children can manage their own personal hygiene.

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

60. A major focus of the school's work is on fostering and extending the children's spoken English and listening skills. As a result of very good teaching, the children are eager to hear what the staff say and are well motivated to learn new things. For example, they wanted to share a book on owls after a visitor had shown them some of these birds earlier in the day. In this way, the children are beginning to learn the difference between a story and information text. Most of them remembered much of what had been said, and could talk quite animatedly of what they saw the owls do. The teacher helped them to put this experience into a mathematical perspective when she said one of the owls weighed the equivalent of two bags of sugar. By their exclamation and facial expression it was clear that the children understood the significance of this information. The teacher asked questions that challenged the children to think about, for example, what the owl eats, when it sleeps and where it lives. One child remembered that carnivorous means that it 'eats meat'. There are good opportunities for the children to listen to stories both in the adult-led activities and during the 'free-flow' activity time. As a result, the children are learning to speak clearly, and to ask questions of each other and adults with confidence and interest. The process is enriching their vocabulary and extending their knowledge.
61. The planned aims of the literacy sessions are clear and precise, the learning points are highlighted very well, enabling all children to understand the teachers' explanation. The assessments of what the children know and can do are meticulously recorded. The staff sit with the children to share books and stories. As a result, books have become a source of pleasure and the children are acquiring a growing understanding of the written word. They also listen to stories on the computer and some children were observed sitting in a group sharing a story. Adults read the stories with good expression, pitch and pace that captivate the children's imagination. Most of the children that have been in school a term have already begun to read some words and can recall a story fairly confidently. They know the author of a book and that a story has a beginning and an end. They can identify the main character, recall and sequence the events in the correct order. They are keen to offer observations and comments about the illustrations in the book, for instance, 'It's a long, big cat'.
62. The early writing skills are being appropriately developed in small adult-led groups to ensure that the children receive good individual attention. This is good practice. The children are taught the correct pencil grip, the formation of letters and how to space them. Consequently, they pay careful attention to their handwriting when writing their names and making other recordings. A small minority of the children can write simple words because they have had good experiences of mark making on large boards with chalks as using pencils and paper. In this way, the children have learned that various marks, letters and words convey meaning.

### **Mathematical development**

63. The children are making a very positive start in learning about number through the purposeful use of matching, sorting and counting games in a range of contexts. In the whole class activity, the children remain well focussed and involved in counting forwards and backwards in small

steps with the numerals 1-10 because the session is well timed to match their attention span. Most are confident in counting in ones and twos, and the higher attaining children in steps of three and four. All can correctly recognise and name the numerals 1-10. In the small group activities, the adults emphasise the language used by relating it to the practical activity so that it is more meaningful to the children. For example, the teacher explained that 'hop on two, will make it a bigger number'. When playing a dice game with an adult, another group was moving the counters along a trail using the numerals one to six from one dice. The challenge was then increased by using two dice and adding the numbers together. This purposeful, practical approach helps the children to acquire the required knowledge of mathematics and the related vocabulary in a natural creative and interesting context. This happens not only in these specific tasks, but also in other role-play activities. Most children can recognise different shapes, such as circle, triangle, square and rectangle and can recognise the difference between long and short, for example, when comparing pieces of dry spaghetti. The sessions are well planned and prepared, and the adult's on-going individual assessments are good. The children are enthusiastic and keen to succeed.

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

64. Good provision and access to resources enable the children to increase their knowledge and understanding of the world in which they live. The good planned provision over the course of the year in the foundation class enables the children to have a wide range of opportunities to acquire historical, geographical and scientific knowledge appropriate to their age. In one activity, the children watched dry pasta change from a hard to soft texture after they put it into water. This aroused great curiosity and much interest, and many children broke off from other activities to have a closer look at what was happening. The fact that the water was completely absorbed into the pasta by the end of the session provoked a real discovery. Throughout the session their attention was well focussed on the task and their enthusiasm for learning high. Outside the children were using cardboard boxes to create role-play areas and at one point they had draped a box over the fence and a log to make a ramp. They then sent small cars down the ramp to discover which was the fastest. This caused great excitement. A significant feature of the work at present is the use of wood blocks. Many of the children take a pride in their ability to explore and balance thoughtfully and logically a range of shapes on top of each other. Other children respect their efforts and are careful not to knock into the buildings when in this area.
65. Many of the children have good computer skills when they first start school. In school they have regular access to the computers to support their learning. They work together and help each other to follow the on-screen instructions and carry out the tasks well. All the children understand the term 'mouse' and know how to access a program. They have the equipment to enable them to print off their work, but at present the computer link-up is not functioning so the children would go to the school's computer suite if need be.

### **Physical development**

66. The children's physical skills are being appropriately developed. They are making very good progress in their control of large and fine movements and using a range of equipment with increasing skill. They handle tools and manage construction equipment, paying due regard to the need for safety. Plans are well in hand to provide larger outdoors equipment as and when funds allow. It is very sparse at present and inadequate to meet the needs of the children. Most children enjoy setting themselves challenges and show pleasure in their achievements, for example, when finding good, safe working spaces in the hall. In these lessons, the children exhibit a high level of concentration on their movements and decision-making. They know that

the heartbeat is affected when they exercise because 'It makes it go bump, bump, bump'. All children fully involve themselves in the activity including those who have only been in school two weeks.



## Creative development

67. The opportunities for the development of children's creative abilities are good. The children make very good progress because the adults use the indoor and outdoor environments to provide a range of creative activities and experiences. Most children like to draw and paint, and through some of the adult-led activities they are beginning to understand about colour mixing, printing and the different textures that can be created with paint and pastels. The children are also using books as a stimulus for drawing; for example, one pupil with an excellent eye for detail, size and colour drew a tiger to go into their 'jungle'. The children are confident at cutting, sticking and using malleable materials, such as play dough. There are good opportunities for role-play, many of which are child-initiated and then positively reinforced and extended by the skilful interaction of the adults. The staff recognises that many of these creative skills are now becoming firmly established and that the children are independently expressing their own thoughts, ideas and emotions well.
68. No musical activities were observed during the inspection, but the teacher's planning indicates that there are opportunities for music making on a weekly basis. A few musical instruments are accessible should the children wish to make music either in the indoor or outdoor environment. There are also opportunities for the children to listen to recorded music as well as tapes of stories.
69. All members of the staff team have a strong commitment to continuing their improvement of the curriculum and the assessment procedures and since the last inspection much work has been done to bring about this good provision. There is a good emphasis on the use of structured play to support learning. Parents and other visitors are welcomed and given opportunities to become involved in order to promote a greater understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and support the children's learning.

## ENGLISH

70. By the end of Year 2, standards of attainment in English are above the national average and higher still at the end of Year 4. At this point, they are well above the levels usually found for the age group.
71. The test results for 2002 show that the vast majority of seven-year-olds reached the expected standards in reading and writing with even the least able pupils reaching standards in line with those attained by most pupils nationally. This represents a considerable achievement for the school. A more focussed approach to reading and creative writing is beginning to address the needs of the higher attaining pupils, but, there is still some way to go in raising the numbers of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 by the end of the Key Stage 1. **This is a key issue for action.**
72. At both key stages, the pupils' speaking and listening skills are of a very high standard. There is an atmosphere of concentration and industry in which pupils listen with close attention to adults and to one another. They also listen attentively to the lively, interesting introductions to lessons in other subjects, such as history, science and religious education. By the end of Year 4, they have a good command of Standard English, speaking in articulate and complex sentences and phrases. They have frequent opportunities to express their own views and opinions and do so with increasing confidence, assurance and fluency. They respond to teachers' and other adults' good questioning, with relevant and thoughtful comments and take part in discussions with

enthusiasm. For example, Year 1 pupils use descriptive words to good effect in a science lesson about materials and their properties and in a Year 4 religious education lesson about conscience; the pupils use imaginative, colourful language.

73. Standards of reading are above average by the end of Year 2 and well above average in Year 4. The pupils have many opportunities to read, both individually, in groups and from class books. The majority of pupils are competent readers by the end of Year 2, including the least able pupils who receive good levels of support. Most of them read their reading books with ease, and can tackle unfamiliar words by using their knowledge of sounds. The most able read dialogue expressively and are confident to read aloud from a class book or their own writing. They improve in fluency and expression and make good progress. The pupils enjoy reading and are keen to move on to the next title in the colour-coded reading scheme. By the end of Year 4, they read an appropriate range of books, including poetry and non-fiction, and express their preferences well. One girl, for instance is currently enjoying 'Alice through the Looking Glass.' However, the pupils know only a limited number of authors and have at present few opportunities to develop library skills. This is because the library is an area that is currently being re-sited within the school.
74. Standards of writing are above average by the end of Year 2 and well above average in Year 4. There is systematic teaching of basic skills and the pupils soon adopt a good style of cursive writing with even, well formed letters. Through a wide range of work, the pupils gain a secure knowledge of the structure of a sentence and the most able begin to produce more complex sentences by the use of connectives, such as 'then' and 'but'. They write increasingly longer narratives and develop their use of punctuation, including speech marks, with good levels of understanding. Their enthusiasm for descriptive language is evident in their writing, and they relish opportunities to think of words and phrases. In a very good lesson in Year 2, for example, the pupils were very keen to make lists of words connected with day and night and develop these into phrases and stories. They make particularly good progress in expressive, imaginative writing because tasks are well matched to pupils' levels of understanding.
75. As a result of very good teaching, the pupils achieve well. They make very good progress in adding to their knowledge of punctuation and sentence and story structure. They attain standards well above those expected by the end of Year 4. In Year 3, pupils make sure their stories have a beginning, a middle and an end and are eager to re-tell familiar tales, such as 'Cinderella', in some detail. The teachers provide good writing models and clear frameworks for pupils to follow so they know what they have to do. The pupils build effectively on this constructive guidance to reinforce and consolidate their learning of the basic skills in reading and writing. They use good openings to their stories and enjoy using descriptive words phrases within a given story and. By the end of Year 4, the pupils are very good at selecting and using descriptive words and phrases, and know how to capture a reader's interest by lively beginnings to stories. When recounting their own experiences, the most able pupils write freely and confidently with good expression.
76. Standards of spelling are above average. The pupils make good attempts at difficult words by using their developing phonetic knowledge. One pupil, for example, wrote that 'a egal swopt' and another that she had 'desidid'. Through systematic learning of progressively more difficult spellings, the pupils understand the rules and achieve success in weekly tests. However, frequent mistakes, such as 'gerl, 'sor' and 'whent' remain mostly uncorrected and the errors continue throughout the pupils' work.

77. The pupils take great pride in the presentation of their written work and their handwriting is of an exceptionally high standard.
78. Since the last inspection the long term planning has improved. This is because it is firmly based on the objectives of the National Literacy Strategy. The plans are clear and precise and the learning intentions are clearly highlighted. As a result overtime, the pupils achieve well throughout the school, adding to their language skills effectively in all areas of the curriculum. The teachers effectively establish and consolidate learning and encourage good use of lively, rich vocabulary. During introductions and discussions, they have high expectations and value the pupils' contributions. Most teachers model handwriting very well, providing a very good example for pupils to follow. In the best lessons, the written tasks are matched to the pupils' needs and abilities and give more able pupils opportunities for independent writing. However, the teaching does not always recognise when pupils are ready to move on to the next, more challenging stage. The daily reading records show how often the pupils read, but do little to help them to improve their independent skills. The marking of their work is positive and encouraging, and results in confident and reasonably fluent writing. However, it misses opportunities to improve or rectify repeated errors of grammar and spelling. It rarely shows the pupils how they can further improve their writing.
79. Although various assessments of the pupils' attainment in reading, writing and spelling are made, they are not yet taken into account sufficiently when planning the next programme of work, particularly for the most able pupils. Consequently the pupils are not building sufficiently on what they already know and understand to move to higher levels by the end of Key Stage 1. A better analysis and use of assessment information would help to match the work more closely to the needs of different groups of pupils. **This is a key issue for further action.**
80. The literacy co-ordinator has developed clear and comprehensive policy documents. She has gained the commitment of the teachers, teaching assistants and the learning support staff to continue to improve attainment in literacy.

## MATHEMATICS

81. The current inspection evidence and a scrutiny of the pupils' previous work show that the school is well placed to maintain above average standards by the end of Year 2 and higher still by the end of Year 4. The evidence from the lessons observed shows that the majority of the pupils in both year groups are already attaining the levels expected of them, and given the good progress seen in lessons, the high standards of the last inspection are likely to be maintained.
82. Much of this is due to better teaching, which has improved since the last inspection. The overall quality of the teaching now is good, and some is very good. This is due not only to good systematic teaching of number facts, rules and procedures, but also to the way in which the teachers check the pupils' understanding before moving them on to the next stage of work. All lessons started with particularly good sessions on mental calculations, often taken, at a brisk and challenging pace that enthused the pupils to learn. They were helped by the teachers' good framing of questions so that all groups of the pupils were able to make a contribution to the lesson. This was particularly evident in a year 4 lesson on recording addition of H T U numbers. The teacher checked that the pupils' previous learning was secure by giving them opportunities to explain how they had worked things out. The work of a group of less able pupils was very well supported by a teaching assistant who gave them help when they needed it and the opportunity to talk about their work. They developed in confidence as the lesson progressed and were able to play a full part in later discussions. In each lesson seen, very good

emphasis was given to the correct use of vocabulary and methods of recording so that the pupils were clear about what they were learning. This knowledge was then used well in the main activities so that by the end of the lesson, all groups of the pupils had consolidated well their knowledge and understanding of the recording of addition.

83. Scrutiny of previous work shows that by the end of Year 2 most pupils understand addition and subtraction operations. The more able pupils are beginning to correctly sequence numbers up to 100 and they make use of their knowledge of the number pairs to 20 in other calculations. All groups of pupils can recognise and correctly name simple 2-D shapes, such as circle, square, rectangle and triangle. Most are able to measure accurately in centimetres and solve money problems using coins up to 50p. The majority of pupils are already achieving the level expected of them and many are beginning to achieve beyond this level.
84. This good progress is carried on in Years 3 and 4. Most pupils are able to recognise and use negative numbers, for example, in recording temperatures. They tackle number problems in a variety of ways, making good use of their previous learning of tables. The less able groups and those pupils with special educational needs often follow the same range of work as others, but receive good support in small groups so that they are able to progress at least as well as others in the class.
85. In the previous report, the teaching was judged to be satisfactory, but many lessons had a low level of challenge and the pace of learning for more able groups of pupils was slow. This is no longer the case. The teaching is now good overall and some very good teaching was seen. The lessons were characterised by a good pace and challenge. The teachers' careful planning is based on the objectives of the National Numeracy Strategy and ensures that all groups of pupils are able to take an effective part in lessons and learn well. These are all improvements since the last inspection. The learning is good because the teacher ensures that the objectives of the lesson are clearly understood by all pupils, and by referring back to them at intervals during the lesson the pupils remain focused on their activities and achieve well. A notable feature of lessons is the good use made of support staff to help pupils with special educational needs and less able groups. These support staff are well briefed, know the pupils well and help to develop their confidence so that in the closing sessions of the lessons they are just as eager to show their learning as other groups. Their responses are valued as much as any other group of pupils and this develops their sense of self-respect. The better lessons are characterised by teachers making very good use of their subject knowledge to match the right question to the levels of abilities of their pupils so that they can contribute to the lesson
86. Most pupils respond well to the learning environment created by their teachers. They are enthusiastic, eager to show their knowledge and greatly enjoy the mathematical 'games' that are such a feature of many lessons. When required to work in either small groups or pairs, they co-operate and share resources fairly. This all generates a good pace in the learning and the majority of the pupils work hard. This was evident, for instance, in a Year 4 lesson where the pupils were challenged to explore alternative ways of recording addition of H T U numbers. Subsequent discussions with the pupils showed that they enjoyed 'the challenge' in working things out in mathematics.
87. The leadership and management of the subject are now good. This is a great improvement since the last inspection when it was criticised as being weak. The teachers' planning is monitored regularly and samples of the pupils' work are scrutinised. The school has also started to make positive use of the pupils' numeracy skills in other areas of the curriculum. The teaching has been observed across the school and there is more systematic assessment of the

pupils' attainment. However, the school needs to make better use of this data in defining what it is that different groups of pupils need to do next in order to improve. The further development of this aspect of the subject **remains an area of development for the school.**

## SCIENCE

88. The evidence from this inspection suggests that by the end of Years 2 and 4 most pupils will be attaining above average standards. This matches the findings of the previous report. The school has maintained its standards because the teaching continues to be good overall, the planning has improved and the assessment and monitoring of the teaching and learning in the subject has developed satisfactorily. Across the school, the pupils' investigative skills are developed well, but their recording of observations could be improved. The pupils need greater scope to record in their own format their ideas and opinions on what they have discovered. The work of the pupils in Key Stage 1 in particular continues to be over-reliant on the use of worksheets. **This still remains an area of improvement for the school.**
89. Discussions with the pupils show that they enjoy science. A Year 2 pupil, for example, commented 'I get really excited by science because I never know what I'm going to learn next!' This interest and enthusiasm was very evident in the lesson on materials seen in Year 1. This was a good lesson because the teacher presented well-planned and well-resourced activities that enabled all groups of pupils to have direct experience of exploring the properties of a wide range of materials. The less able pupils and those with special educational needs were well supported and able to play a full part in the lesson. A scrutiny of the previous work of Year 2 pupils shows that they can use simple equipment to explore the effects of heat on different materials. The more able pupils can say whether or not these changes might be reversed and all groups of pupils are able to construct a simple circuit to light a bulb.
90. The development of pupils' knowledge in science is continued in Years 3 and 4. In a Year 3 lesson, the majority of the pupils showed a secure understanding of the effects of healthy eating and could identify and sort a range of foods into different groups. They recorded their observations in the form of pictures and diagrams as well as simple tables. A scrutiny of the work of Year 4 pupils shows that they can classify materials as solids or liquids and know how to separate them when mixed together. The more able pupils have an understanding of 'fair testing' and all groups of pupils have identified the dangers of electricity in the home. By the end of Year 4, they have used computers to plot a graph of the different temperatures around the school. However, more opportunities like this would enhance the use of computers and numeracy skills in investigations.
91. In the lessons seen, the teaching was good. The records show that the lessons are well planned, the teachers have a clear idea of what they want the pupils to learn and this is conveyed to pupils at the start of the lesson so that they are aware need to do. The overwhelming majority of the pupils respond with interest and enthusiasm to the activities planned for them. They share resources fairly and take turns so that the lessons have a good pace and challenge. There is good, often very good, support for less able groups of pupils and those with special educational needs; it enables all these groups to play a full part in all aspects of the lesson. Their contributions are just as valued as those of other members of the class, and they take great pride in their achievements.
92. A scrutiny of teachers' planning shows that the subject now benefits from the support of national guidance. The co-ordinator has monitored the teaching and learning through classroom observations and by looking at the work of pupils across the school. A new system of assessment of the attainment of all pupils has been developed, but the teachers need to make better use of this data to plan precisely what it is that different groups of pupils need to do next in order to improve. **This is an area of development for the school.**

## ART AND DESIGN AND DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

93. Standards are in line with that expected of pupils by the end of Years 2 and 4. This matches the findings of the last inspection, but since then a significant improvement has been made in the development of skills. As a result, the pupils make good progress because of the good and very good teaching. The teachers clearly identify in their planning what the pupils should know and be able to achieve by the end of a session. This successfully builds on their prior learning. No art and design lessons were seen at Key Stage 1, but the planning indicates that in the autumn term there was good emphasis on the development and experimentation using a wide range of materials, tools and equipment. The pupils work with clay, collage, and a range of colour washes, tints and tones when painting faces. **A significant strength** is the use of art and design to support other areas of the curriculum, for example, geography.
94. The Year 3 pupils have used printing techniques to make repeated patterns that linked to some good mathematics work and also supported the development of their information computer skills.
95. In their art and design lessons this term, the Year 4 pupils are learning about colour wheels and texture, and studying colour mixing in depth. In the lesson seen, the pupils selected a base colour and mixed in different shades of the same colour to good effect. They have also worked with chalks and charcoal to create winter scenes using the work of Lowry as a stimulus for their own work. They have used complementary colours in a wide range of media to create different textures in the style of Van Gogh, Monet, Constable and Arcimbold. The children can talk about landscapes and how to create perspective well. Art is used well to support topic work throughout the school. For example, a visit to All Saints Church inspired the older pupils to sketch the different windows and to draw some of the gargoyles before using Modroc to make their own.
96. In design and technology, the youngest pupils have made paper puppets and 'pop-up' Christmas cards, and in food technology have become increasingly aware of the importance of safety and hygiene, for example, when making sweets. They have explored ways of using different types of paper by folding, ripping, tearing, cutting and snipping. Good links have been made to extend speaking and listening skills, for example, when using their puppets to produce a play and present it to the rest of the school. In the Year 2 lesson seen, the pupils had a good opportunity to experiment with joining techniques. They had to find a variety of ways in which to join a head to a body, arms and legs using a range of equipment. This was an effective lesson in which the pupils made very good progress because the task was challenging and exciting and built on their previous learning. The very good teaching enabled the pupils to explore the different tools and equipment to make individual choices. The resources had been well prepared, the instructions were clear and the teacher's questions were probing. For instance, she asked, 'What must you do if you want the head to move up and down or from side to side? How do arms move? What method of joining to do you need to use for the feet?' This approach captured the pupils' interest, enthusiasm and willingness to experiment without fear of failure, thereby allowing them to be creative and inventive. Their levels of concentration were high and the end result was that they had successful outcomes that they were able to share with each other. Without exception, all the pupils in the class were able to join the parts of a doll, an owl or a bat, by using competently a range of tape, folded card, split pins, tags and different lengths of string.
97. No lessons were seen in Years 3 and 4. However, the evidence of last term's work indicates that the pupils' skills were extended through work linked to their history projects. For instance,

the pupils designed Celtic broaches, Roman Chariots and draughts boards. Following a visit to the Elstow Recycling Centre, the pupils worked in pairs to design their own Eco-house. Ideas about the siting of a windmill to generate electricity, solar panels, gutters to collect rainwater and the use of grass for insulation purposes are but a few that show creativity and a clear understanding of ecology. The designs are well planned and thought through, and the pupils' evaluation as to how they could have improved their designs were appropriate.

98. The teachers are well organised, and the resources are well prepared. The planning has improved since the last inspection to ensure that good attention is given to the progression of skills. The assessment of the pupil's work is in its early stages of development, but a positive start has been made in developing a portfolio of good work and informal comments on individual children's progress. This is an area that the school recognises as needing further development. It would be helpful, for example, if each piece of work in the portfolio were annotated with the reason for its inclusion. This would help the teachers in their future planning and provision.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

99. Standards are well in line with age-related expectation in Years 2 and 4. Since the previous inspection, there have been improvements to the planning of the work and the quality of the teaching. The teachers now identify more precisely the skills that the pupils are expected to learn and their teaching is good, enabling the pupils to make good progress.
100. An examination of the pupils' books and the teachers' planning, and discussions with the children and staff show that the pupils have a good understanding of physical and human processes. They have a particularly good awareness of how people affect their environment. There are strong links to other areas of the curriculum, for example, when the pupils in Year 4 design posters to discourage people from polluting the country's rivers and streams. They consider the benefits of recycling materials and answer questions about how they can save electricity. These older pupils reach high levels of knowledge and understanding of environmental change when they debate the benefits and drawbacks of building a superstore on farmland. They respond well to a range of geographical questions and communicate their findings in a variety of imaginative ways, including independent writing, tables and charts, sometimes using the computer.
101. The pupils also develop their skills effectively during work on rivers. They use their atlases to identify eight major rivers in the British Isles and use appropriate geographical terminology, such as 'meander', 'tributary' and 'source'. The Year 3 pupils are familiar with different climatic zones and the terms 'polar', 'temperate' and 'tropical'. They describe and contrast features of different localities with good levels of understanding.
102. In Years 1 and 2, the pupils develop their geographical skills appropriately when they discuss how they travel to school and make graphs to record their findings. They use appropriate vocabulary and fieldwork skills as they place photographs and drawings of their own homes on a large-scale map of the local area. In this way, they gain important knowledge of their immediate environment.
103. The teaching is good overall, and there is some very good practice in Key Stage 2. All teachers plan well-structured lessons with good use of resources. In the best teaching, there is an interesting and stimulating variety of activities to motivate the pupils well. In the one lesson seen at Key Stage 2, for instance, the pupils added significantly to their knowledge and understanding of weather conditions around the world and their effect on human activity. The teacher's skilful



questioning revealed how much the pupils remembered from the previous lessons and then reinforced their learning about climatic zones. As travel agents, they were required to select the most appropriate holiday destination for their clients. In small groups, they took into account the weather, transport, available amenities, clothing requirements and client needs in a purposeful and enjoyable activity. The pupils argued with some passion the case for their chosen holiday destination and were able to justify their choices with thoughtful observations. Their very good achievement was a result of the teacher's good support and challenge for the different levels of ability within the class, her high expectations of behaviour and the stimulating nature of the task.

104. The curriculum is well organised, providing good guidelines for planning an interesting variety of activities leading to good opportunities for learning. There has been an improvement in the planning since the last inspection, and the pupils build progressively on their geographical skills from year to year. The process is now well established and provides good guidance for teachers and a good framework for the pupils' learning. The school makes very good use of its grounds and the immediate area to develop the pupils' knowledge of places.
105. Since the last inspection, assessment procedures have been built into the school's termly planning. However, they are not yet sufficiently well established to have had an effect on the pupils' learning. The teachers are mostly aware of the pupils' capabilities, but there was little evidence of the work being sufficiently matched to the different levels of ability. **This is part of a key issue for action.**

## HISTORY

106. The headteacher's outstanding knowledge and enthusiasm for history are evident throughout the school. In displays around the school, during assemblies and in many other areas of the curriculum her inspirational leadership shines through. **History is one of the school's strengths.** Standards during the last inspection were judged to be in line with those expected nationally. Since then, the subject's high profile and a well-organised programme of work have led to pupils reaching standards beyond the expected level at the end of end of Years 2 and 4. There has also been a very good improvement in the quality of the teachers' planning, with more attention being given to the skills that the pupils need to make good progress.
107. By the end of Year 4, the pupils have used effectively a wide variety of ways to communicate their findings about the past. An examination of the work in their books shows that they complete tables to make comparisons between historical periods, use computer skills for research, construct timelines and write imaginative narratives and letters. In lessons they have good opportunities to carry out lively discussions. They have a good understanding of chronology. They progress from sequencing their daily events in Year 1 to placing particular groups confidently and accurately on a timeline, for example, the Celts, Anglo Saxons, Tudors and Victorians.
108. They have a good knowledge and understanding of famous people, significant events and how ordinary people lived their lives a long time ago. The younger pupils make thoughtful and valid comparisons between their own lives today and those of people in the past. They imagine what it would feel like to be working down the mines or being made to sweep chimneys. In one very good lesson, the pupils learned facts about the life of Florence Nightingale and at the same time, gained insights into Victorian attitudes and values. They share their own recent experiences of hospitals through discussion and use books, videos, role play and pictures to compare Victorian hospitals with those of today. In a Key Stage 2 lesson, an excellent presentation of ancient

writing added greater depth to the older pupils' learning about the Anglo Saxons. They recalled the work of monks in Celtic times and worked very hard to reproduce versal capitals.

109. The pupils show very good skills in their historical enquiries. They regularly use the Internet for research. For example, the older pupils are challenged to find out more about Anglo Saxon beliefs and the younger pupils download photographs of Queen Victoria and her family. As part of their homework, they were asked to establish the facts behind the stories of Louis Braille and Florence Nightingale. The pupils are keen to ask and answer questions, and can talk animatedly about evidence of Roman remains following a successful visit by an archaeologist. They refer to 'excavating for historical evidence', showing a good understanding of historical sources. Inspired by stories of Beowulf, they look forward in eager anticipation to their next lesson.
110. For many pupils, history is a favourite subject and this is reflected in the considerable volume of work produced in each year group. They show tremendous curiosity and interest in finding out about the past and speak of 'learning something new every week' One group delights in sharing a Victorian scrapbook, containing a family photograph of a pupil's great, great grandmother.
111. The teaching is generally good and provides a wide range of fascinating activities, photographs, videos and artefacts, including local archaeological finds, which bring the past effectively to life for pupils. As a result of the teachers' good planning, the pupils are adding significantly to their learning from week to week. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

112. By the end of Year 2 and Year 4, standards are above those expected nationally for pupils of a similar age. This is an improvement from the last inspection. It has been brought about by a number of factors. The school has made good use of its funds to provide computer resources for all age groups and makes good use of the part-time technician to support the teaching and learning in information and communication technology (ICT). The subject has a higher profile than previously across the school through the strong leadership and management of the co-ordinator and headteacher. The planning for the subject now makes use of national guidance and all teachers have positive attitudes to ICT and are more skilled and confident users. These are all advances since the last inspection.
113. All groups of pupils are confident users of computers. For example, in a Year 4 lesson on reorganising a piece of text, the pupils used the correct vocabulary to talk about what they were trying to do. They were able to use effectively the cut, copy and paste tools. This was because the tasks were clearly explained and demonstrated by the staff at the start of the lesson, and then very well supported throughout. The more able pupils were set to work with other groups of pupils so that all were fully involved in the lesson. In both the lessons seen, this process was also helped greatly by the ways in which all pupils shared resources and took turns fairly allowing all to practice their skills. A scrutiny of their previous work shows that pupils in Year 1 can position clip art pictures by using the mouse to drag and drop them. They can also add simple sentences with correct punctuation using the keyboard. By the end of Year 2, all the required areas of the curriculum have been successfully covered.
114. This work is then built upon in Years 3 and 4. For example, the Year 3 pupils have used their ICT skills in designing covers for their topics in history and geography and can resize and reposition clip art pictures. The Year 4 pupils have designed their own wrapping paper by using a repeating tile pattern. The average-attaining and more able pupils can save and retrieve their

work independently. They are able to correct their errors with a minimum of supervision and assistance from the teacher and can reflect on their work to see how it might be improved.

115. The teaching seen was led by the co-ordinator with good support from the teaching assistants. All staff have completed national training for the use of computers and are now more confident and competent in the range of programs being used. A scrutiny of the teachers' plans shows that the school is addressing all the required aspects of the National Curriculum for ICT with a clear programme for the development of skills.
116. The leadership and management of the subject are good and the co-ordinator has worked hard to raise the profile of the subject across the school. She has supported her colleagues and expanded resources, such as CD-ROM's for research purposes, a digital camera and various software programs that are appropriate for the ages and abilities of the pupils. The school has adopted a nationally approved scheme of work to support the teaching and learning in the subject. This is leading to the more systematic development of skills across the school. The teachers' plans and the pupils' work are scrutinised, and the school has recently adopted an Internet safety policy. There are appropriate targets for the future development of the subject. For example, a good system of assessing the pupils' attainment and progress is being tried out this year. The school has made a positive start in the use of computers to support the teaching and learning across other areas of the curriculum, but recognises that there is still some way to go before it is fully in place.

## MUSIC

117. Standards are above those found in other schools by the end of Year 4, and match those found at the time of the previous inspection. By the end of Key Stage 1, they have improved significantly and are now above the level expected nationally. This is because of the very good subject knowledge and skilled music teaching of the music co-ordinator, who is released from her class to take the lessons, and the individual tuition teachers who visit the school weekly. As a result, the majority of pupils make very good progress in developing their musical skills in singing and instrumental playing. **Music is a strong feature of the school.**
118. The older pupils attain very good standards in their individual instrumental playing. Similarly, the class recorder sessions at the beginning of each lesson are high quality. The lessons provide the pupils with a very good foundation in the basic rudiments of music, a good understanding of musical learning and mastery of their instrument because the individual instrumental tuition and the class teaching are very skilfully done. The children record in their homework books the tasks they are to practice at home on the recorder, violin or 'cello.
119. The quality of the singing in assemblies is very good because in the music lessons there is a good emphasis on basic skills, such as posture, breathing, diction, basic rhythmic pattern and dynamics. Good attention is also given to the melody contour and to pitch accuracy when tackling the intervals between notes. The songs are well chosen to ensure that the pitch range meets the needs of all the children. Almost all pupils sing and play instruments enthusiastically and show a positive attitude towards music. Their behaviour is good in the lessons taken by the specialist music teachers because they enjoy these sessions and are keen to participate. In all cases, the lessons are well constructed to ensure that the pupils understand the aims and that each session builds on the previous week's experience. In one lesson observed, the children sang songs with a firm control over rhythm and duration, and confidently followed the agreed signs and symbols on graphic scores when conducted by the adult. This was a well-planned lesson, following a published scheme of work on the computer. However, whilst the teacher

was engaged in finding the text on the computer, a tiny number of pupils became distracted. At times they disrupted the flow of the lesson, but not sufficiently to impinge on the overall progress of the other children. In lessons and during assemblies, the pupils have good opportunities to listen to a wide range of music, including some from non-European countries. They have time to listen to music as they come into assembly, to learn something about the composer and the character of the piece. Occasionally, at the end of assembly the pupils listen again to the music and reflect on the context of the assembly before moving out of the hall. This is very good practice. However, the provision of more non-European musical instruments would further strengthen the music curriculum.

120. Music has a high priority in the school and this has enabled the music co-ordinator to initiate developments and improve the quality of the provision. She recognises that the next stage is to extend the other teachers' knowledge and musical skills, thereby enabling them to take their own classes with increasing confidence. She has been very active in moving the school's music forward and has provided a wealth of opportunities for the pupils to perform in and out of school hours under her direction.
121. The local village community and parents hold the musical performances of the children in very high regard.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

122. By the end of Year 2, standards are above those found in other schools and in line with that expected by the end of Year 4. This is similar to the position found at the time of the last inspection. **Physical education is a strength of the school at Key Stage 1.**
123. As they move through the school, the majority of pupils make good progress in developing a range of skills and movements typical for their ages. The new planning for the subjects is enabling the teachers to focus on the progressive development of a range of skills and ensure continuity from year group to year group.
124. During the inspection, only lessons in dance and gymnastics were seen. However, discussion with the co-ordinator, other teachers and pupils, and a scrutiny of teachers' planning show that all the requirements of the National Curriculum are met. The school makes good use of its grassed playing field, the school hall and playground to enable all groups of pupils to participate in indoor and outdoor team games, athletics and gymnastics and to respond to music through dance and movement. All pupils benefit from the small on-site swimming pool and the written evidence suggests that standards in swimming by the end of Year 4 are above average.
125. The teaching seen was good overall, and one very good lesson was observed in Key Stage 1. In each lesson, the teachers showed a satisfactory subject knowledge, which they used well to guide pupils to improve their performance. They generated enthusiasm and interest by the skilful use of praise. As pupils were commended and encouraged, they increased in confidence and were willing to experiment and improve. The pupils generally respond well to physical education and the majority listen well and follow instructions. The teachers are careful to give guidance without it becoming over directive, so that the pupils not only follow given patterns of movement, but also experiment for themselves. The teachers are quick to reinforce safety in setting out and putting away apparatus by asking 'How many people carry a mat?' and 'How do we carry a bench?' All pupils are able to move about the hall safely with good awareness of their space and that of others. They show the same care and attention when using both small and large apparatus.

126. The subject is led enthusiastically by the co-ordinator who has re-organised resources and supported her colleagues. This has contributed well to the maintenance of above average standards.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

127. The school has a well-established programme for religious education, accurately reflecting the main requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The daily assemblies make a significant, additional contribution to the pupils' knowledge and understanding. The pupils make good progress and by the end of Years 2 and 4, they reach standards in line with the requirements.
128. By the end of Year 2, the pupils have a suitable knowledge of Christianity and can name the major festivals of Christmas and Easter. They are re-introduced to familiar Bible stories of the Creation and Noah's Ark, for example, and good planning links these stories appropriately to their learning about the seasons and environmental issues. The pupils consider the personal attributes of themselves and their friends, awarding certificates to 'special' people in their lives. They begin to grow in awareness of other faiths when they compare a Christian and a Sikh wedding and gain a secure foundation for future learning.
129. By the end of Year 4, the pupils have reinforced their knowledge of both the Old and the New Testaments. They know the importance of special books in religion and develop a strong understanding and respect for the Bible through artefacts and well-chosen stories, such as the life of Mary Jones. During the inspection, this was effectively reinforced by the presentation of a very old, large copy of the Bible during an assembly. When comparing this with the Jewish Torah, the pupils' responses show a real understanding of their significance to both Christians and Jews. During a well-structured programme of lessons, the pupils gain appropriate knowledge of the main features of Judaism and record their learning about special ceremonies, clothing, food and the importance of buildings, such as the synagogue and mosque. However, their recording is done on somewhat restrictive work sheets with little or no opportunity for their own extended writing. However, discussions with pupils and observations of their responses during assemblies show that they have absorbed details about the Torah, synagogue and Ark of the Covenant, and have a real interest in and understanding of the beliefs of others.
130. Through good discussion, the pupils successfully extend their knowledge of religion and its importance in the world. They examine incidents in their own lives and are beginning to draw inferences and conclusions about the motives and reasons for peoples' actions. Within the theme 'Choices', for example, the older pupils reinforce their knowledge of Jesus' disciples and learn to consider difficult moral dilemmas. The teacher's very good story telling skills contribute effectively to their progress in learning how religion affects people's daily lives. The pupils are confident in expressing their views and sharing their feelings, knowing they will be listened to and valued during a discussion about right and wrong. They make thoughtful and pertinent observations, based on their own experiences, showing high levels of involvement. They understand that making the right choice is often very difficult and a religious belief helps individuals in that process.
131. The teaching is good overall. It successfully provides the pupils with a sound knowledge base and good opportunities to question, reflect and make judgements about religious and moral issues.