

## INSPECTION REPORT

### FERRARS JUNIOR SCHOOL

Luton

LEA area: Luton

Unique reference number: 109540

Headteacher: Mr K Williams

Reporting inspector: Helen Ranger  
OFSTED number: 22223

Dates of inspection: 16 – 19 September 2002

Inspection number: 246920

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school: Junior school

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 7 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Lewsey Road

Luton

Postcode: LU4 0ES

Telephone number: 01582 574933

Fax number: 01582 560518

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs C Wingrave

Date of previous inspection: January 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Helen Ranger 22223	Registered inspector	English English as an additional language Educational inclusion	How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements <b>How well are pupils taught?</b> How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
Cathy Stormonth 16472	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Jackie Cousins 22942	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Special educational needs	How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.
Ken Hobday 21372		<b>Mathematics</b> <b>History</b>	
Lynn Lowery 13805	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
John Zealander 32106	Team inspector	Music Physical education Religious education	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Ferrars Junior is a community school that is larger than the national average. There are 323 full-time pupils between the ages of 7 and 11 years. Almost half the pupils come from a wide range of ethnic minority backgrounds. About a quarter of pupils speak English as an additional language and receive extra help learning English. Twenty-seven per cent of pupils are identified with special educational needs - this is above the national average. The school is situated in an area that often presents challenging social circumstances. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average overall. However, the pupils who have joined Year 3 in the past two years have achieved better results than in previous years in the tests for 7-year-olds – their attainment on entry has been broadly average. Mobility levels are high, with more pupils joining or leaving the school than is seen in most schools. The school is part of an Education Action Zone that is due to start work on local projects this term.

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

The school gives its pupils a satisfactory education. While the oldest pupils do not reach average standards in all subjects, they make satisfactory progress in most areas as a result of sound teaching. The school is led and managed soundly and provides sufficient value for money.

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

- Pupils show positive attitudes to school, behave well and get on well together.
- There is good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils achieve well in science as a result of effective teaching.
- There is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities for pupils.
- The headteacher and staff provide good levels of day-to-day care for pupils.
- The governors support the school well and are active in its development.
- Parents have positive views of the school.

#### **What could be improved**

- The standards attained by the oldest pupils in English, mathematics, religious education and history, which are below average.
- How time is allocated to subjects to ensure that pupils receive a balanced curriculum.
- How the school monitors pupils' attainment and plans for future development.

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

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

The school was last inspected in January 1998. Since then, it has made satisfactory improvement. The school's results in the National Curriculum tests for the oldest pupils have risen in line with the national trend. There has been adequate improvement in the key areas that were identified for development. Attainment in science and geography (the weakest subjects at that time) has risen, but standards in religious education and history are not as strong now as they were then. Reading is now taught more systematically, including the use of non-fiction texts, although, in general, pupils do not apply their literacy skills enough to other subjects. The analysis and use of assessment information is now better in the 'core' subjects of English, mathematics and science, but the procedures that have been agreed in other subjects are yet to have a positive impact on pupils' attainment.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests<sup>1</sup>.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	D	C	D	C
Mathematics	C	D	D	C
Science	D	C	E	E

  

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

The overall performance of the school's 11-year-olds has been below the national average in recent years. In 2001, the results in English and mathematics were, however, close to those achieved by schools with similar intakes, although science standards dipped. The results in science improved in 2002. Over the past five years, performance in tests in this age group has improved in line with the national trend. The targets set by the school in English and mathematics were exceeded in 2002. Targets for the current year are satisfactory and based on realistic assessments of individual pupils.

Inspection findings for the current pupils are that progress is satisfactory in all age groups. By Year 6, standards remain below average in English and mathematics, but pupils' achievements are sound in relation to their attainment when they joined the school. This includes the large number with special educational needs, those for whom English is an additional language and the more capable pupils. Standards in Years 3 and 4 are average in the key areas of literacy and numeracy. In most other subjects, pupils by Year 6 attain average standards. The exceptions are in religious education and history where standards are lower than those seen in most schools and pupils' progress is unsatisfactory.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good in lessons and around the school. Satisfactory in the playground. Pupils are friendly and polite.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils form good relationships and show respect to other children and to adults. They show satisfactory gains in maturity as they get older.
Attendance	Below average. Rates are improving, but are lower than in most schools. Holidays taken by pupils during term time contribute to this and impede the continuity of pupils' learning in school.

The school is a friendly and orderly community. Pupils from a very wide range of backgrounds get on well and work well together. The occasional examples of poor behaviour by a few individuals are handled well by staff and other pupils.

<sup>1</sup> Full details of the national comparisons for 2002 are not yet available but a summary of the school's results for this year is included in the full inspection report.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory

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

Teaching is satisfactory and promotes pupils' sound progress. Teachers have clear objectives for their lessons and explain tasks well. Most lessons cater for the full range of attainment and include suitable attention to pupils with special educational needs, those whose first language is not English and to the most able pupils. The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is satisfactory and provides sound attention to the key skills of literacy and numeracy. However, at times, English lessons lack variety and fail to capture pupils' interest and in mathematics the pupils are not always sufficiently challenged by the activities provided. Lessons in history and religious education do not give enough attention to the skills needed in these subjects. A particular strength in teaching is the effective management of pupils' behaviour; this establishes a pleasant climate for learning for all the pupils. The procedures to mark work and to give feedback to pupils vary considerably in quality between classes and the good practice seen in several classes is not consistent across the school. In general, pupils get on well with each other and their teachers and concentrate on their work. They build systematically on their knowledge, skills and understanding in most lessons.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught, but the allocations of time and aspects of teachers' planning mean that some subjects are covered more thoroughly than others. An excellent range of extra activities is provided for pupils outside their lessons.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Pupils' social, emotional and learning needs are identified early and soundly supported by teachers and ancillary staff.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. The provision ensures that these pupils have access to all subjects of the curriculum and gives additional support to those at an early stage of learning English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good in all aspects. Staff plan well for pupils' personal development. The positive ethos in the school promotes an inclusive atmosphere for learning and also celebrates cultural and religious diversity.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. There are good levels of day-to-day support and care for pupils and very effective arrangements for ensuring health and safety. Pupils' academic progress is assessed satisfactorily.

The planned curriculum meets legal requirements, although the school needs to review how it allocates time to each subject and how it ensures that subjects are covered in sufficient detail and depth. The curriculum is enhanced very strongly by the range of clubs, visits and visitors and by the commitment given to these by the staff. The school enjoys the support of the vast majority of parents, but has not yet succeeded in encouraging many to be involved in a close partnership in children's learning. Recently devised assessment arrangements in several of the 'foundation' subjects are not yet having an impact on raising standards.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The headteacher manages the school soundly and has created a pleasant ethos for learning. He leads a committed team of staff who have contributed to the school's continuing development. The long-term vision and direction for the school is not communicated as clearly as short-term plans.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governors are well informed, active and supportive. They are led well by the Chair of Governors and question critically what the school does.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school increasingly analyses how well its pupils are doing in key attainment areas and takes action to improve. Subject leaders do not all monitor standards or the quality of provision effectively in their areas of responsibility – an area recognised by the school for development.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Financial planning and resources are targeted to areas of current priority, but the longer-term strategy and measures to ensure good value for money are less clearly identified.

Governors and senior staff have begun to consider how to achieve best value from resources satisfactorily, but do not yet apply rigorous enough measures to this. There are sufficient staff for a school of this size and programmes exist for their training and performance management, although detailed job descriptions are not in place. Learning resources are adequate. The accommodation is satisfactory and benefits from a large outdoor site.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff are approachable.</li> <li>• The teaching is good and there are high expectations of children.</li> <li>• Children enjoy school and behave well.</li> <li>• Children are helped to be mature and responsible.</li> <li>• The school works closely with parents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Levels of information about their children's progress.</li> <li>• The homework arrangements.</li> <li>• How the school is led and managed.</li> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

The parents of 31 pupils (10 per cent) responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and 20 parents attended the meeting with inspectors. Many more parents were spoken to during the inspection. Inspectors find that most of the aspects shown above that please the parents are at least sound. The aspects that a few parents would like to see improved are judged to be mostly satisfactory and the range of extra activities in the school is excellent.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. In the National Curriculum tests for pupils in Year 6 for 2001 (the last year for which all national comparisons are currently available), pupils' performance was below the national average in English and mathematics and well below average in science. Compared with schools with similar intakes, the results were average in English and mathematics, but well below average in science. Results over the past few years show that the school's results have improved in line with the national trend. While the results of girls and boys have differed from year to year, there have been no substantial variations from the national picture. The school has, however, identified some low achievement by girls in relation to the individual assessments carried out when they started school and is working to overcome this, especially in English and mathematics. In 2002, the school's results in English were similar to 2001, but in mathematics and science, the results improved and more pupils achieved at least Level 4, the level expected for pupils of this age. In science, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 was much improved over 2001 and a significant number of pupils with special educational needs attained average standards in this subject.
2. Inspection findings are that pupils who are now in Year 6 attain below average standards in English and mathematics and average standards in science. Standards in literacy and numeracy are below average for these oldest pupils and for those in Year 5. However, pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 attain average standards for their age in all three 'core' subjects<sup>2</sup>. While standards in science are now higher than identified by the previous inspection, the attainment of the oldest pupils in English and mathematics is not as high as it was then. However, in spite of lower than average standards in these two subjects in the upper school, pupils' achievements in all year groups remain satisfactory in relation to their attainment on joining the school, as at the time of the last inspection. In this respect, standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs, those who have English as an additional language and the most able pupils make progress at similar rates to their peers in relation to their prior attainment.
3. By Year 6, pupils' attainment is average and their achievements are sound in art and design, design and technology, geography, information and communication technology, music and physical education. Standards are below average in history and in religious education and pupils' progress over time in these two subjects is unsatisfactory and needs to be improved.

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

4. The attitudes, values and personal development of pupils in the school are good and the high standards evident at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. This has a positive effect on standards across the school.
5. Pupils' attitudes to all aspects of school life are good. Throughout the school, pupils show obvious enthusiasm when offered interesting challenges and are eager to take part in most activities. Pupils clearly enjoy carrying out investigations in science lessons. In most lessons, pupils listen quietly to the teachers and to one another, respecting others' views and co-operating well in groups. For instance, this was seen in the many lessons where pupils from the wide range of minority ethnic groups mixed well. Pupils who are learning to speak English as an additional language are keen to speak in small group sessions. The pupils' responses reflect

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<sup>2</sup> The 'core' subjects of the National Curriculum are English, mathematics and science. The 'foundation subjects' are art and design, design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology, music, physical education and religious education. In addition, schools teach religious education in line with a locally agreed syllabus.

the quality of the teaching. When the teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the subject being taught, pupils respond keenly. When questions are interesting, pupils focus well and are keen to contribute. However, pupils become inattentive in less stimulating lessons.

6. In school, the pupils' behaviour is good, although there have been five exclusions in the last year. Pupils behave well in lessons and also in the dining hall. Skilful teachers patiently and effectively manage the occasional incidents of bad behaviour from all groups of pupils. Many pupils with special educational needs behave well and staff thoughtfully handle the few who misbehave. In the playground, although pupils can be boisterous, they mostly play happily with each other. There are a few comments of a racial nature during the year and these are investigated by staff. Groups of pupils in lunchtime clubs and in the playground include mixtures of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those with special educational needs. Boys and girls work and play happily together. The majority of pupils make positive comments and are encouraging to others. There are few incidents of bullying, but when they occur they are handled well by the school. Parents felt that their children know what to do to help themselves not to be bullied.
7. At the time of the last inspection, opportunities for personal study and the development of pupils' use of their initiative were limited. Now, at lunchtime, pupils are carrying out many roles which require the use of initiative. They look after younger pupils on the playground. Many Year 6 pupils are in charge of doors out to the playground and they have to decide whether pupils should be coming into the building or not. Opportunities for personal study have been developed through use of the Internet. Nearly one-third of the school attends a computer club after school where pupils have a chance to use the Internet for personal research. The library is open on a daily basis at lunchtime for pupils to select books and carry out personal study.
8. Relationships in the school are good. Most of the teachers speak positively to pupils and value all of their efforts. However, an incident occurred during the inspection where a teacher used unnecessarily negative comments to a young pupil. Not all teachers consistently apply the positive and patient ethos that is usually evident. This results in 'mixed messages' to pupils and some uncertainty in how they should respond. In general, pupils listen well to instructions and are pleased when given praise. They relate well to most adults they meet during the school day and give a friendly welcome to visitors. Pupils are polite and courteous.
9. The personal development of pupils is good. Pupils write thoughtfully about topics in English work. One pupil wrote that their wish was 'to stay with my disabled brother everywhere he goes'. Pupils reflect that the recipe for a good friend includes 'one litre of kindness, nine hundred grams of forgiveness, five hundred grams of generosity and two litres of honesty'. Pupils discuss moral issues well in literacy sessions and write arguments, for example, about whether sports day is a good thing. They are responsible for some tasks around the school and within the classroom. The Year 6 pupils wrote very mature letters to the next class about the responsibilities of being a good prefect.
10. The pupils in school respect all cultures well. Pupils write effectively about books such as 'Carrie's War'. Pupils retell famous Greek myths accurately. For instance, they write the story of 'Jason and the Golden Fleece' and 'Hercules and the Golden Apple'. Pupils write interesting responses to a 'Christmas Carol', such as 'I think Scrooge is a mean man because he doesn't like Christmas'. Although pupils answer comprehension exercises demonstrating that they clearly understand the story of Rama and Sita, the recording of religious knowledge is underdeveloped. Pupils from minority ethnic groups discuss what they are learning about their own culture and others. In most year groups, pupils use the Internet to carry out research about other faiths. Their knowledge and understanding of local history is, however, rather limited.
11. In the last year for which national comparisons are available (2000/2001), the attendance rate for the school was well below average. Attendance has improved in the last year, but is still just below the previous year's national average. Holidays taken during term times account for a

significant amount of absence, especially the small number of extended holidays taken. When pupils are taken on holiday, it hinders the continuity of their learning in school. Other reasons for absence include some genuine sickness and some special extenuating circumstances.

12. Unauthorised absence is rising and is now almost twice the national rate. The school is rigorous in trying to minimise it. It strictly records as unauthorised any absences over 10 days that are due to holiday taking. It does not accept any weak excuses for absence. Punctuality is good and most pupils arrive at school on time.

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

13. Judgements about teaching are based on evidence from the lessons seen, from looking at pupils' previous work and from talking to pupils and teachers. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and promotes the sound progress made by pupils. During the inspection, 97 per cent of lessons were at least satisfactory and just over half were good or very good. This is an improvement on the last inspection when a similar amount of good and very good teaching was seen, but 8 per cent of teaching was less than satisfactory. There has been satisfactory improvement on most of the key teaching issues identified at that time. Teaching has improved in science, geography and reading. Teachers now use assessment more effectively in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. However, assessment is not yet as effective in other subjects and, to this extent, this weakness has not been fully rectified.
14. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in most subjects, including the key areas of English and mathematics, and there are good features in many lessons. Teaching in science is good and has contributed to the rising standards in the subject. There are weaknesses in teaching in history and religious education. In these subjects, teachers fail to teach the required knowledge and skills systematically enough and, as a result, pupils' learning is unsatisfactory.
15. Teachers' subject knowledge is largely secure, although those teachers who were trained overseas are sometimes less familiar with aspects of British education than their colleagues. Teachers are less confident identifying and teaching the particular skills and understanding necessary in history and religious education and this is one of the reasons why pupils' learning in these subjects is weak.
16. Teachers' planning of lessons is satisfactory. Their objectives are clear and, in the best lessons, are shared well with pupils and checked as the lesson progresses to ensure that pupils have made progress and understand how well they have done. Teachers' work is based on the agreed programmes of work and year group teams often share their planning efficiently. This contributes to the progression in pupils' learning, although not all the planned work is covered in all subjects and this means that there are gaps in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills.
17. Activities usually cater satisfactorily for the full range of attainment in classes and a feature of the best lessons was the level of challenge and interest offered to the most able pupils. Conversely, weaker lessons failed to extend or excite pupils and the few problems seen with pupils' behaviour were often the result of a lack of engagement or interest. In a minority of lessons, pupils with special learning needs were not given work that was suited to their capabilities.
18. The school uses 'setting' arrangements to group pupils by attainment levels for mathematics. This is largely satisfactory and works very well for the least able pupils in Year 6, but, at times, there is too little variation in the level of work provided within each set and some pupils are not extended enough by the activities. The national approaches to teaching literacy and numeracy are implemented adequately. In these, the whole-class and group teaching elements are more successful than the final 'plenary' sessions – these are too often rushed and not used profitably to check or extend learning. In English, speaking, listening and drama skills do not receive as much attention as reading and writing. The quality of teaching for pupils with English as an

additional language is satisfactory. Pupils' language needs are assessed and supported in all year groups by a combination of in-class and withdrawal work. In mathematics, the investigative aspects and data handling are less well developed than other work. Key skills in science and information and communication technology are taught well, although computer skills are mainly confined to work in the specialist suite and not extended to effective classroom use. The specialist expertise of teachers and support staff is often used well, especially in music and information and communication technology.

19. Teachers' explanations are clear and enable pupils to know what to do. Teachers often use question and answer sessions effectively to establish pupils' understanding and extend their thinking. A strength in the school is the management of pupils' behaviour in most classes. Most teachers are calm, patient and positive. They set clear boundaries for their pupils and are respected as a result. In a few lessons, teachers were over-strict in their sanctions and failed to establish the pleasant atmosphere seen in most classrooms.
20. Teachers give useful oral feedback to pupils. However, the quality of written feedback and marking varies considerably. At best, it gives detailed and accurate information about how well the pupils have done and useful guidance on how they can do better, including the use of personal learning targets in some classes. At the start of one lesson, pupils were given time to read the teacher's comments and respond to them before proceeding further. In another, the work was revisited as assessment showed pupils had not fully grasped the learning. However, frequently, the marking fails to indicate where improvement is required or how success may be achieved and little reference is made to it in subsequent lessons. The methods used to record and store pupils' work also vary substantially. The use and storage of multiple worksheets and rough drafts in several classes results in a haphazard record of pupils' achievements which does not serve to motivate or encourage them.
21. The use of homework to support learning is satisfactory. Of particular note is the recent successful pilot scheme to extend the quality and range of homework in Year 4 – this has now been taken up in Year 5 and is praised by teachers, pupils and parents.
22. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Some pupils benefit from extra teaching with specialist teachers and classroom assistants. While classroom assistants are well used in the main part of the lessons, they rarely record assessments of pupils' knowledge and understanding during the introductions and endings to lessons.

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

23. The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils of all ages are provided with a broad curriculum that meets the statutory requirements for all National Curriculum subjects and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education.
24. The school places a strong emphasis on the teaching of English and mathematics. As a result, only a relatively small amount of time is spent on history, geography, art, design and technology, music and religious education. This is having a negative impact on pupils' standards, especially in history and religious education. It also means that pupils are not receiving a suitably balanced curriculum, particularly if their special educational needs mean that they receive yet more literacy or numeracy support. Last year, pupils in Year 6 were given very little time to study geography, history, art or music between January and May as they were preparing for their end of year assessment tests. This made the curriculum less varied for them and limited their attainment in these subjects. The school does not fully exploit opportunities to develop pupils' literacy skills through links with subjects such as history, geography and religious education. It has yet to review systematically whether the time spent on silent reading every day is having enough impact on improving reading standards, or whether it could be reduced or organised differently.

25. Long-term planning of the curriculum has improved since the last inspection. It is now based on national guidance and ensures all the National Curriculum requirements are taught, even if it is only at a superficial level in some subjects. The school has satisfactorily implemented the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies. In the case of the Numeracy Strategy, maximum effectiveness has not yet been achieved. Work is not always as closely matched to the needs of individual pupils as it might be and pupils often make little progress in learning in the plenary session that concludes each lesson. In literacy, while the daily 'literacy hours' are soundly planned, there is too little consideration of whether the time devoted to these lessons is appropriate, given the other English lessons that are timetabled.
26. The school has improved the provision for teaching the investigative and practical aspects of several subjects, particularly in science, geography and design and technology. In science, this is having a very positive impact upon the standards attained. In geography, it is ensuring that pupils are able to recall what they have learned. In mathematics, however, the planning for pupils to apply their number skills to investigative and experience problem-solving is not as strong as other aspects of the curriculum.
27. There is satisfactory provision for personal, social and health education. These aspects are taught in all classes and include sex and drugs education. However, there is no agreed programme of work which offers teachers guidance when they are planning lessons. This is something the school realises is a weakness and plans are in place to produce an appropriate scheme of work. The school is already developing pupils' citizenship skills through the School Council, visits to the Town Hall and the Houses of Parliament, and by receiving the mayor at the school.
28. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The school is aware of the individual needs of pupils and is identifying them at earlier stages than it did previously. Many pupils with already identified special needs transfer to the school because of its good reputation. Once aware of the needs of individual pupils, the school provides sufficient support to enable them to make progress. The individual education plans written for these pupils clearly identify what needs should be supported and the strategies that will be used. However, not all teachers who teach pupils with special educational needs have a copy of their individual educational plans. Those written for pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need cover all aspects requiring development noted on the Statement. Where they are felt to be beneficial, the school sets up extra activities for them. The Statements are regularly reviewed with parents and pupils are now invited to join these meetings. The new national Code of Practice has been satisfactorily introduced and the teachers are now assessing pupils under the revised categories.
29. The provision for pupils who have English as an additional language is satisfactory. Teachers and support staff get to know these pupils well as individuals and target individual support where it is most needed, either by in-class support or by withdrawal groups. If pupils arrive in the school with virtually no understanding of English, the flexibility of the school's approach enables them to receive urgent and individual attention so that they can take part in lessons as soon as possible. The school can call on specialist resources and advice from the local authority's support and translation services, but is currently unable to offer any bilingual teaching.
30. An excellent range of extra-curricular activities is offered to the pupils. Large numbers of pupils take advantage of these activities and the range is so broad that there is something to interest everyone. Activities take place before and after school, during lunchtimes and on Saturday mornings. Staff willingly give their time and enthusiasm to run these activities. Opportunities are provided for pupils to take part in competitive sports. These include football, netball, gymnastics, athletics, cross-country running and 'kwik cricket'. There is a good range of musical tuition at different levels of difficulty. Pupils can have recorder, string, woodwind, brass and percussion lessons. In addition, there is a school choir and orchestra. Large numbers of

pupils join the computer club which operates on four evenings each week after school. During the lunchtimes, pupils can join in indoor and outdoor games, outdoor chess, and quiet indoor activities including drawing, colouring and sewing. All the pupils have the chance to go on a residential visit to Dell Farm. This enables them to take part in a range of outdoor and adventurous activities and develops their social skills. The school also provides many opportunities to take part in visits to places of educational interest. Last year, these included Verulamium, RAF Hendon and the Science Museum. Visitors to the school have included a theatre company, a recycling bus, gospel singers, an historian who ran a Tudor day, a Black African Dance Group and a Caribbean author.

31. The school has established good links with the local community. Pupils visit local senior citizens at harvest time and at Christmas. They take part in the local community Festival of Lights Parade at Diwali and work with local people to produce the large-scale decorations used in the parade. They visit the local Christian church and take part in 'Safety Squad' activities. There are good and improving links with the feeder infant school and the two schools share curriculum and pupil information effectively. Links with the receiving secondary school are limited at present, although they are good for those pupils who have special educational needs. The new headteacher from the secondary school has already made promising moves to work more closely with Ferrars School.
32. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision within the school is good. This maintains the position found at the last inspection in most aspects and marks an improvement in the provision for spiritual development. The school ensures that the personal development of pupils is well provided for.
33. Effective opportunities are provided for spiritual development in assemblies and collective worship as well as in lessons. Pupils are asked to reflect about themselves and others. For instance, a teacher asked pupils to 'think about what makes you special to other people'. The choice of hymns encourages pupils to explore uplifting songs. English lessons and group discussion sessions give pupils the chance to reflect about many topics, including their proudest moments. Weekly writing lessons develop pupils' creativity effectively. Older pupils are asked to imagine what it is like to be a star or be caught in a storm. Many pieces of artwork also promote creativity such as when pupils design fabric wall hangings. In history projects, the school offers opportunities for pupils to understand what it was like to live in Roman and Tudor times. Pupils spend whole days dressed in costume and carrying out activities from previous eras. Staff value all pupils equally as individuals and work hard to make them feel special, including those from minority ethnic groups and those who are learning to speak English as an additional language. The self-esteem of more able pupils and those with special educational needs is nurtured throughout the school.
34. There is good provision for moral development. A whole-school approach to moral development ensures that pupils are handled by principled and thoughtful staff. A good behaviour code for lessons, the dining hall and the playground is printed in every pupil's school diary. This means that all pupils are aware of the way that they should behave. If they do misbehave, there are well-organised strategies to correct this. A detention room is used at lunchtime to reduce pupils' free time and offers them time and support to reconsider their behaviour. Assemblies offer pupils good opportunities to learn about moral messages such as the importance of making an effort to work hard. Effective literacy lessons discuss and record moral debates - for instance, whether the school should have monitors in classes.
35. The school offers good provision for social development. The excellent range of extra activities allows pupils to learn to socialise well. All pupils are fully included in all activities and care is taken to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are able to participate. Group work in science and art lessons give regular chances for pupils to work co-operatively. This was seen in a science lesson where pupils were encouraged to investigate how much air is in materials and discuss their observations with their group. Mixed gender teams in physical education

lessons enable individuals to learn to work with both boys and girls. Teachers encourage representatives from all year groups and pupils from different minority ethnic groups to become members of the school council. A 'lonely bench' in the playground enables pupils to show others that they need friends in a non-aggressive way. The staff encourage pupils to assist anybody sitting on the 'lonely bench' to join in a game. Pupils are expected to be polite to visitors and open doors to adults and demonstrated this well during the inspection.

36. Many subjects and school activities offer pupils good opportunities to learn about a range of cultures. History, art, music and English provide the best experiences for pupils to understand British culture. In literacy lessons, teachers explore texts from a rich variety of authors. History lessons teach pupils about past events such as during the Roman and Anglo-Saxon times. Other cultures are investigated using books, visits and the Internet. For instance, a trip to a local synagogue allowed pupils to learn about *kippahs*, the *Torah* and *tallith* items. Projects on the Ancient Greeks and Egyptians mean that pupils explore cultures from other countries. School productions enable pupils to enjoy rich musical experiences at harvest festival, Christmas and the leavers' service.

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

37. As at the time of the last inspection, the school takes good care of pupils and this helps to improve the effectiveness of the teaching and learning. Most staff have good relationships with pupils and pupils are confident in approaching their teachers or other adults in the school. This helps pupils feel safe and secure. Occasionally, over-strict or harsh treatment of pupils by staff does not support this comfortable atmosphere. The school gives a high priority to a good range of procedures to encourage good attendance, good behaviour and to safeguard pupils' welfare. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting expressed their confidence in this aspect of the school's work.
38. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. Registers are consistently maintained and all absences are efficiently followed up. The school takes all reasonable steps to improve attendance. A new Education Welfare Officer has only been assigned very recently and had not started work with the school at the time of the inspection. The previous lack of this service has meant that visits to the homes of pupils with the worst attendance were not possible to encourage parents to meet their legal obligation to send their children to school. Despite the school's pleas to give education the greater priority, many parents take their children on holiday during term time. A small number take extended holidays and, when this happens, pupils' education is seriously disrupted.
39. Procedures for monitoring and promoting behaviour are generally good. The 'assertive discipline' approach to improving behaviour is practised, but it is not consistently applied by all staff. Although behaviour management of pupils is a strength in most of the teaching, one teacher was heard shouting and using unnecessary threats to pupils and this is unsatisfactory. Pupils are very familiar with school rules and with the high expectations for behaviour and most behave well. The procedures for eliminating any oppressive behaviour are good. When any bullying is reported, it is investigated and action is taken in a joint approach with parents to stop it. The low levels of racist incidents are recorded and the school ensures that the pupils involved are counselled and monitored further to prevent reoccurrence. A new policy is shortly to be drawn up for racial equality which will bring together the strands from the current equal opportunities policy, anti-racist policy and the racial incident recording policy.
40. The school cares well for pupils with special educational needs. Many pupils who have not settled in other schools feel welcome and integrate happily into this school. Group discussion sessions are used well to develop pupils with special needs and support those with Statements emotionally and socially.

41. The arrangements for child protection and children who are fostered are good and meet all the statutory requirements. The 'designated person' is planning to undertake some new training to update herself and the school on new legislation and procedures. When pupils are sick or injured, they receive a high level of care and attention. Many staff have first aid qualifications and this is commendable. Pupils with medical conditions are well known and catered for. The management of health and safety is outstanding. All the routine checking systems for fire and electrical safety and the more general risk assessments are carried out at the right frequency. The record keeping is meticulous. The security arrangements are also good.
42. Much of the monitoring of pupils' personal development is satisfactory and is informal, promoted by teachers who sustain good relationships with pupils. Most teachers are able to support pupils individually, give them good advice for improving attitudes and social skills and encourage a good work ethic.
43. The school's procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory. The use of assessment was a key issue for improvement in the last inspection and the school has put in place some actions to address this. These include opportunities for teachers to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding in English, mathematics and science through regular half-termly tests and assessments. The school has also devised a set of assessment check sheets for most of the foundation subjects, although these are relatively new and not yet having an impact on the standards attained by pupils. They are based on the nationally recommended units of work and enable teachers to make, record and annotate judgements on pupils' learning. The school has no formal assessment record for religious education and information and communication technology.
44. The assessment co-ordinator has established and is updating a system that will track the progress of all pupils through the school, using computer programs to help with this. The system is based on assessments in the core subjects made at the age of seven and the additional assessments that the teachers use across the school. The school uses this information to inform curriculum planning more accurately and to target additional help to pupils who need it. Teachers evaluate and moderate the work of pupils in core subjects. Assessment is used well to identify and set individual educational plans for pupils with special educational needs.

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

45. The partnership with parents is not as strong as it was at the last inspection. This is mostly because many parents do not respond to the efforts made by the school to involve them in its work and in their children's learning. The response to the parents' questionnaire prior to the inspection was very low, but, during the inspection, many more parents were spoken to and their views were gauged. In this way, a more representative sample of parents' views was found and these were mostly positive. Parents are happy with most aspects of the school and feel that the teaching is good, the school expects children to work hard and parents feel comfortable about approaching the school if they have questions or problems.
46. Parents had some slight disagreement about homework and about the quality of information they receive about their children's work. These were investigated and it was found that the arrangements for homework are satisfactory. The homework diaries have some clear guidance on the type and amount of homework that is expected for each year group and give good advice on how parents can help and support their children at home. Homework is regularly set and forms an important part of learning, particularly in mathematics and English. The inspection finds that the quality of information that parents receive is good. There are termly consultations and attendance is high. Staff are available every day to deal with any more immediate issues and parents take advantage of this opportunity. The annual reports on pupils' progress are not as strong as other aspects of information. The reporting of progress for core subjects is good, but pupils' difficulties are rarely identified and advice for improvement is not always given. The

reporting of progress for other subjects is often unsatisfactory, especially for art, design and technology and religious education, where there is not enough information on attainment and progress. Many of the comments in the reports are about coverage and enjoyment, rather than letting parents know what new knowledge, skills and understanding their children have acquired. Letters are sent out with details of curricular planning a term ahead to let parents know what pupils are learning and this is valuable. Other letters are good and keep parents informed about school activities and news.

47. The parents of children with special educational needs have opportunities to see individual educational plans at parents' evenings and meetings to review the school's provision. However, they do not always sign individual educational plans and they too rarely receive a copy to take away.
48. The school welcomes parents to help and get involved in its work, but is not always rewarded by parental contributions. Some parents show a reluctance to get involved and do not like attending meetings and more formal occasions. The 'Friends of Ferrars' association has no current parents on the committee and is mainly run by staff to provide the school with fundraising activities and a social life. The school is inventive and is always thinking of new ways to get parents more involved. It has just launched a 'parent mail' service where school letters are sent out on the Internet as well as by 'pupil post.' It has helpfully offered classes in information and communication technology, literacy and behaviour management, and includes crèche facilities. This enabled parents to take part and they confirmed some positive outcomes, reporting that they understood more clearly how their children are taught and how they can help more. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is satisfactory overall.
49. Parents are keen to support their children when they are performing in school productions, special assemblies, sports activities and concerts. Parents were very impressed with the recent Year 6 leavers' assembly when pupils sang, danced and read poems to a full assembly hall. Not many parents volunteer to help regularly in the classroom, but when other needs arise, such as help with swimming and school trips, they do this willingly. The contribution of parents to children's learning is satisfactory.

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

50. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher, staff and governors have succeeded in establishing the school as a welcoming place where pupils are given a caring and secure place to learn. The headteacher is well respected by the parents and pupils. There are good relationships within the staff team. The school has a positive ethos that is evident in its policies and practice. It has secured satisfactory improvements in pupils' performance over the past few years.
51. Areas of responsibility are delegated sensibly; the senior staff are experienced and know the school well. Day-to-day management is good. However, the vision for the future development of the school and how this will be realised are less clear. Senior staff monitor pupils' overall performance in key areas through test results and other indicators. They check teachers' curriculum planning. However, many subject leaders are not rigorous in monitoring how well the school is doing and what it needs to do to improve. This is currently a weakness in how the school is led and managed. Subject leaders take few opportunities to look critically at the standards of pupils' work across the school or to attend lessons to evaluate the quality of teaching. They do not sufficiently use the outcomes of lessons or a scrutiny of teachers' planning to evaluate the quality of teaching. Time allocations and coverage of the National Curriculum are not checked critically enough. It is recognised by this inspection that this is an area that the school has identified for improvement.
52. The governing body is led well by the Chair of Governors. There is an appropriate committee structure. Governors meet regularly and the Chair of Governors in particular visits often; she is

well informed and is supported effectively by the Vice-Chair. Governors are active and supportive. They are aware of the main strengths and weaknesses of the school and question its standards and results critically. They ensure that the school meets its legal requirements.

53. The school's written development plans give satisfactory consideration to the current needs of the school and act well as a working document. However, it is unclear how initiatives are prioritised and some of the criteria for monitoring and judging success are rather vague. There are few explicit references to goals that relate to pupil attainment or systematic action planning in subjects. Other than for the review of its written policies, the current plan does not indicate strategic plans for a period longer than this school year.
54. The headteacher copes well with the administrative demands on his time. He is supported in this by an able deputy head. He feels that recent local and national grants and initiatives have contributed positively to the school's development, especially in numeracy, where the school has received valued support from local authority consultants. While seeing the benefit in school of larger grants, the uncertain timescale and amount of paperwork required to secure smaller grants detract from their effectiveness. He also feels that a barrier to efficient school improvement is the need to produce identical or very similar information for more than one agency, for example, the duplication of paperwork needed by local and national officers.
55. The school manages educational inclusion soundly. The leadership and management of special educational needs are satisfactory. The co-ordinator and governor work closely together to assess the individual academic and emotional needs of pupils. Monitoring and evaluation of these pupils are carried out satisfactorily through reviews of individual education plans. The co-ordinator also monitors carefully the success that this group has in achieving average levels in the Year 6 national tests. However, the co-ordinator and governor do not monitor whether parents have received or signed a copy of their children's individual educational plans. Systems to support pupils with English as an additional language are adequate. Information is transferred for pupils moving from the infant school and is used to ease transition. The co-ordinator monitors pupils' progress in learning English and manages the available teaching support. There is a co-ordinator responsible for the most able pupils who has started to identify the particular needs of this group and provide appropriate activities for them. The school is rigorous in monitoring the academic success of pupils according to their ethnic background, although it does not look overall at how well pupils do whose first language is not English.
56. Financial planning is satisfactory. The school links its budget well to the current year's plans for development, making adequate money available to fund staff training and resources. It does not predict further to enable it to formulate spending and budget plans beyond the present school year. The principles of 'best value' are understood and beginning to be implemented. For instance, a number of tenders are obtained if expensive purchases are planned. However, the effects of spending decisions are insufficiently monitored to assess their impact on standards. The school does not compare the proportions of its income spent on particular budget headings, for example, with those of similar or neighbouring schools. As a result, it has been unaware in past years that unusual proportions of the budget have been allocated to some areas. However, plans for the current financial year reflect national averages more closely. Although additional grants are spent appropriately, the effectiveness of spending decisions is rarely investigated. For example, the effect on standards of grants for special educational needs is not evaluated.
57. Financial procedures and administration are very good. Experienced staff make effective use of computer technology to manage all funds efficiently. The most recent auditor's report found no major areas of weakness and the school has addressed all the minor recommendations made. The good level of administrative and clerical staff enables financial administration to be carried out with minimal distraction by the finance officer. Meanwhile, other staff admirably handle

administrative and secretarial tasks, leaving the headteacher and teaching staff free to focus on teaching and learning.

58. There is an adequate number of teaching staff with the skills to teach all subjects in the school's programme. Most are experienced and well qualified, but some teachers appointed recently were trained overseas and have limited knowledge of British education. The induction procedures for these teachers are very good. The support they are given is dependent upon their individual needs and they are briefed thoroughly on all aspects of their role. The school welcomes a small number of students on initial teacher training placements. There is potential to increase this number because of the good quality of many of the school's experienced teachers. Performance management systems are mostly well established, but job descriptions are either out-of-date or non-existent. Learning support staff are usefully included in the system of performance management. They are well trained, committed and knowledgeable and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. As well as keeping the school in very good physical shape, the site agent fulfils the role of information and communication technology technician. This sensible arrangement frees teachers from worries about whether the computers will work when they come to use them. The school also employs a librarian to enable the well-equipped library to be used as much as possible. Pupils use the library regularly at lunchtimes and after school, but rarely for individual work during the school day, due partly to difficulties of access and security considerations.
59. There are adequate resources to enable teachers to cover all areas of the school's curriculum. The library is very well stocked with up-to-date books and well organised, but some of the multiple copies of non-fiction books for class use are outdated. There are not enough religious education resources to enable a whole year group to study a topic at the same time. The school has a good number of computers, with enough in the computer suite for each pupil in the class, as well as others in classrooms.
60. The accommodation is satisfactory overall and does not currently impose any limitations on the curriculum, although the many stairs would make access for those with some types of disability very difficult. Most of the classrooms are of a satisfactory size and there are additional teaching areas for learning support.
61. The grounds are large and attractive and the school uses the outdoor accommodation for learning well. There is, however, a constant battle with vandals. They have, for example, damaged the pond and it is currently fenced off for safety. The main school buildings are showing signs of age and the outdoor decoration is shabby in places. The site agent is very enterprising and makes the tight maintenance budget go further by doing many jobs himself. The school effectively prioritises the most-needed maintenance and carries these jobs out first to ensure pupils' comfort and safety.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

62. To build on the school's strengths, raise standards and improve the quality of provision, the headteacher, staff and the governing body should:

- raise standards in Years 5 and 6 in English and mathematics by:
  - ensuring that lessons in English use time efficiently and engage pupils' interest;
  - ensuring that lessons in mathematics challenge the full range of pupils and cater for practical, investigative and problem-solving activities;
  - sharing the good practice in marking, target-setting and feedback to pupils so that pupils in all classes are more aware of how well they are doing and how they may improve;
  - ensuring that work is recorded and stored in ways that encourage pupils to take pride in their work and enable them to maintain a record of how well they have done;

*(paragraphs 1, 2, 18, 20, 25-26, 63-86)*

- raise standards in religious education and history in all year groups by:
  - reviewing how time is allocated to these subjects to ensure that the planned curriculum can be covered;
  - ensuring that pupils are progressively taught the necessary skills in each subject;
  - agreeing and implementing the best methods for recording pupils' achievements and assessing their progress;

*(paragraphs 3, 14-15, 20, 24, 111-114, 132-137)*

- ensure a balanced curriculum for pupils by reviewing the time allocated to each subject and determining how the available time may be used most efficiently to cover the planned work;

*(paragraphs 24, 98, 100-101, 107, 131)*

- improve the way that the school plans to raise standards and set its priorities for development by:
  - enabling all subject leaders to monitor standards and teaching more effectively;
  - ensuring that the written development plans include both the long-term vision for improvement and sufficient detail of short-term initiatives.

*(paragraphs 51, 53, 56, 86, 93, 99, 110, 114, 120, 137)*

Other issues that should be considered by the school:

- the lower than average attendance rates *(paragraphs 11, 12, 38)*;
- implementing the agreed procedures for assessing the foundation subjects *(paragraphs 43, 98, 104, 110, 114)*;
- encouraging pupils to apply their skills in information and communication technology in the classroom *(paragraphs 18, 72, 83, 94, 103, 115, 121)*;
- continuing to encourage parents to work more closely in partnership with the school in their children's learning *(paragraphs 45, 48)*.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	60
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	37

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	0	9	23	26	2	0	0
Percentage	0	15	38	43	3	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	323
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	72
<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	87
<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	76
<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	30
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	28

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence: 2000/2001

	%
School data	6.8
National comparative data	5.6

#### Unauthorised absence: 2000/2001

	%
School data	0.7
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 2 (Year 6)**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	39	46	85

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	31	32	38
	Girls	30	30	34
	Total	61	62	72
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	72 (71)	73 (65)	85 (76)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	21	28	31
	Girls	28	26	31
	Total	49	54	62
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	58 (56)	64 (62)	73 (70)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>	<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
White – British	176	2	0
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	17	2	0
Mixed – White and Black African	14	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	23	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	43	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	18	1	0
Black or Black British – African	6	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	4	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	5	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	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***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23
Average class size	27

#### **Education support staff: Y3 – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	239

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001/2
	£
Total income	783,085
Total expenditure	762,735
Expenditure per pupil	2,361
Balance brought forward from previous year	30,044
Balance carried forward to next year	50,394

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years (FTE)	3.6
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.6
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

**Questionnaire return rate: 10 per cent**

Number of questionnaires sent out	323
Number of questionnaires returned	31

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	29	0	6	0
My child is making good progress in school.	48	42	3	6	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	55	35	0	6	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	42	42	10	6	0
The teaching is good.	52	45	0	3	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	52	32	6	10	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	68	29	0	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	65	32	0	3	0
The school works closely with parents.	50	40	7	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	45	42	10	3	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	53	37	3	7	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	45	13	0	6

*Figures may not total 100 per cent owing to rounding or because not all parents felt able to answer all the questions.*

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

**ENGLISH**

63. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests for pupils in Year 6, the school's performance was below the national average, but close to the average for schools with similar intakes. The main reason that results were below the national average was that fewer pupils attained Level 5 than in most schools. In 2002, the school's results were similar to those it achieved in 2001.
64. Inspection findings are that current standards in English are below average by Year 6, although they are better than this in relation to pupils' ages in all aspects of English in the lower half of the school. The standards achieved by the oldest pupils are not as high as reported by the previous inspection. However, pupils continue to make satisfactory progress overall in relation to their attainment on joining the school. Since the last inspection, the school has acted appropriately to improve pupils' reading skills, which were identified as a weakness. It has also taken satisfactory action to improve attainment in writing. While standards remain below average in Year 6, there has been an improvement in line with the national trend over the past few years. Until two years ago, pupils' attainment at the age of seven was below or well below average; it is now improving and pupils in Years 3 and 4 have entered the school with more typical standards of attainment. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English is similar to their peers. The school has evidence that girls in general do not achieve as well as boys and has put sound measures in place to encourage the girls' progress.
65. Progress in speaking and listening skills is satisfactory. In Years 3 and 4, pupils are attentive listeners and clear speakers. They show by their responses that they have listened carefully and have taken other opinions into account, although pupils in Year 3 are less confident and forthcoming in discussions than those in Year 4. In Years 5 and 6, pupils have less well-developed skills for their age. They show a more restricted vocabulary than expected and few are beginning to use the conventions of Standard English in more formal situations. Pupils in all age groups make sound progress in reading, but here again, standards are not as strong in the upper school. Pupils in all years enjoy reading and read a wide range of fiction and non-fiction texts with reasonable accuracy. However, the older pupils do not identify key ideas or 'read between the lines' as well as they should for their age. Many parents support their children's reading progress well by ensuring that books are read regularly at home. Most pupils have good library skills as a result of their frequent use of the school's good facilities.
66. In writing, pupils make sound progress. Standards of handwriting and presentation are good throughout the school, but at times pupils are more concerned to produce tidy work than to record their ideas in sufficient detail. Spelling standards are satisfactory in Years 3 and 4, but not as strong in Years 5 and 6. By Year 6, pupils understand how to structure imaginative and factual accounts satisfactorily and use conventions such as paragraphs correctly, but they too rarely use lively and imaginative language or write at length.
67. At present, the oldest pupils' literacy skills do not support their work in other subjects well enough. Cross-curricular links are not exploited sufficiently and the amount of written recording in subjects such as geography, history and religious education is low.
68. Pupils with special learning needs and with English as an additional language are generally supported satisfactorily by their teachers and ancillary staff. Most lessons are planned to take account of the particular needs of these groups. Pupils who are at the early stages of speaking English are given useful extra help at times by being withdrawn to prepare the texts the whole class will use, prior to the class lesson. This enables them to take a fuller part in the lesson.

69. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The most successful features of the teaching are:
- clear objectives for lessons and effective explanations by teachers;
  - good management of pupils' behaviour and pleasant relationships that create a productive working atmosphere;
  - regular and informative marking of pupils' work in several classes that enables pupils to assess how well they have done and how they need to improve;
  - effective use of the extensive library facilities.
70. Weaker features are:
- a lack of excitement and challenge in some lessons, partly due to the choice of texts and overuse of textbooks that do not enthuse pupils;
  - too much stress on the appearance of pupils' work at the expense of its overall quality;
  - cursory marking in books that does not inform or encourage pupils;
  - the practice in some classes of frequently completing work on loose papers that are not stored in a way that promotes pupils' pride in their finished work or enables them to see their progress clearly over time.
71. There is a useful project to identify and support the most able pupils. At intervals, these pupils are withdrawn from their classes to take part in extended and challenging activities.
72. Computer skills are used satisfactorily by pupils to word-process their work or to prepare it for display, often during sessions in the computer suite. Effective use was made during the inspection of a new interactive whiteboard for the teacher and pupils to edit a piece of writing. Computers are underused as a regular classroom tool for procedures such as drafting.
73. The management of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator monitors the planning and work in all classes. Assessment of pupils through tests and their class work is increasingly used to analyse where strengths and weaknesses exist and to plan for further development. The school allocates a high proportion of time to English. This reflects the priority it places on this key area, but the use of time is not being monitored critically enough to check that standards are being raised sufficiently as a result. During the inspection, many pupils spent over half of some days on literacy activities, often with a substantial writing component; this had the effect of reducing the time available to other subjects and resulted in pupils' loss of enthusiasm. Resources are good and the use of the library has improved since the last inspection. There remain, however, some old or poor quality books in classrooms. This contrasts with the many good quality books stored in the library that are underused.

## **MATHEMATICS**

74. By Year 6, pupils' standards of attainment are below average. In 2001, the results of the National Curriculum tests in Year 6 were below the national average, but were average when compared with similar schools. Results improved in 2002, although boys' results were superior to those of girls. Evidence from the inspection indicates that standards in the current Year 6 are lower and that results in 2003 are likely to be more similar to those of 2001. Under-achievement by girls continues to be a feature and a focus for improvement in the school; for example, the lowest set in Year 6 consists mostly of girls. However, the proportion of pupils in all three years achieving, or expected to achieve, the higher Level 5 is close to the national average.
75. At the previous inspection, standards were judged to be in line with the national average. However, most of the current Year 6 pupils entered the school in Year 3 with a below average understanding of mathematics. They have been joined by pupils transferring from other schools, the majority of whom are weak in the subject. Consequently, current standards of attainment represent a satisfactory level of achievement for these particular pupils. Pupils now in Years 3 and 4 have better levels of understanding and are on course to achieve at least average results by Year 6. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has resulted in well-structured lessons that ensure that pupils' skills are developed progressively.

76. However, there are a number of factors that prevent higher standards being achieved. These include:
- insufficient attention to parts of the programme of study, notably handling data and elements of using and applying mathematics;
  - the provision of the same work for all pupils in the set, so that some pupils complete work which is too easy for them;
  - variations in the quality of teaching, particularly in teachers' ability to use all parts of the numeracy lesson to maximum effect;
  - an excessive concentration in Year 6 on revision and practice for national tests, instead of moving on to work at a higher level.
77. The school has begun to identify pupils with special educational needs in mathematics and to make appropriate provision to address these needs. This is enabling these pupils to make satisfactory progress overall, although those currently in Year 6 make good progress. This is because the year group is divided into four sets based on ability, rather than the three sets seen in other year groups. The set containing the lowest attaining pupils is smaller. This allows more individual attention and is very well taught. Throughout the school, there is good support for pupils with English as an additional language. Well-trained classroom assistants work alongside pupils and ensure they are fully included in all activities. As a result, these pupils progress at least as well as their peers.
78. Pupils make sound progress through the school in their ability to manipulate numbers, but standards are below average in Year 6. Most Year 6 pupils know all the multiplication facts up to 10 times 10. They multiply and divide whole numbers by 10, 100 and 1000 and add and subtract decimals. Most are beginning to understand percentages and know the most common equivalents in fractions and decimals. Higher attaining pupils tackle long multiplication with confidence and successfully calculate, for instance, 90 per cent of 180, but have no experience of co-ordinates other than in the first quadrant. Pupils in the lower sets multiply a tens and units number by a single digit and understand simpler fractions.
79. Year 6 pupils are less adept at using and applying their skills in numeracy. Most identify successfully the operation required to work out an answer. Only rarely do they check their answers by using an inverse operation. Strategies for tackling problems are not well established and pupils do not, as a rule, estimate their final answer by approximation before they calculate. They lack experience in carrying out mathematical investigations. Much work apart from that in number is carried out on printed worksheets with a pre-determined recording format. Consequently, pupils find it difficult to record their results independently, for example, when recording which calculator keys have been used to arrive at a given number.
80. Standards in shape, space and measures are at the expected levels for this stage in Year 6. Pupils understand rotational and reflective symmetry and reflect a given shape about an axis of symmetry. They construct angles and estimate irregular areas in square centimetres with accuracy. Lower attaining pupils know the names of most two-dimensional shapes and describe some of their characteristics, whereas higher attaining pupils define these shapes more precisely. The work on handling data is not as well advanced, as a result of an under-emphasis on this aspect of mathematics. Although some pupils have a limited understanding of the language of probability, few have progressed to the construction and interpretation of a wide enough range of graphs.
81. The overall standard of teaching is satisfactory and a significant proportion is good or very good. One unsatisfactory lesson was observed during the inspection. There has been a slight decline in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection, when over two-thirds of lessons were good. A feature of almost all teaching is the good management and control of pupils, one positive outcome of the very good relationships that most teachers have established with their pupils.

82. The quality of the oral or mental work that begins each lesson varies, but is mostly good. In better lessons, the rapid pace of lively games or activities encourages pupils to think and respond quickly. Pupils are often completely engrossed in these activities and behaviour is usually exemplary. For example, a game played in a Year 4 set provided practice in adding three digits at speed, but also led groups of pupils to consider strategy as they decided whether to 'bank' their score or to continue with another turn and risk losing their 'winnings'. In a Year 5 set, pupils competed to try to multiply numbers by 10 more speedily than the current champion. Every pupil was totally absorbed in the activity. Occasionally, these initial activities are too easy, or the oral session is omitted completely in favour of further attention to previous work. In these situations, there is little to interest or extend pupils who have already mastered the work.
83. The main part of the lesson is usually well taught. Teachers demonstrate their good subject knowledge as they teach new skills or model new processes clearly, using correct vocabulary which pupils quickly master. They ensure that pupils understand expectations relating to work and behaviour. As a result, pupils enjoy their lessons and there are few interruptions to the learning process. Some teachers are aware that individual pupils prefer to learn in different ways and vary their teaching strategies accordingly. For example, in a Year 6 set, the teacher used a wide variety of methods to teach multiplication tables. The most significant weakness is that, in most sets, all pupils receive exactly the same work, at least initially. Most teachers do not provide varying starting points for pupils based on the knowledge of their individual level of attainment derived from assessment and marking. Faced with work that does not challenge them, pupils tend to chatter or work slowly without enthusiasm and so fail to move on to more demanding work. The potential of information and communication technology to provide tailor-made work for pupils with particular difficulties or for those capable of faster progress is underused. Teachers do not use the National Numeracy Strategy materials flexibly enough. For example, they do not extract work designed for the next age group to present to their higher attaining pupils. These features of teaching depress the proportion of pupils likely to attain the higher Level 5 by Year 6.
84. The final plenary session is often the weakest part of the lesson. Sometimes the teacher runs out of time and misses out this important part of the lesson. Where it consists of working on sums that most pupils have already done correctly, there is little or no progress in learning, especially if pupils are not attentive. In the better lessons, pupils' learning is extended, either through essential clarification or by introducing new material where the teacher is confident that pupils' understanding is secure. For example, a Year 5 lesson ended with a game with two dice in which pupils were asked at one point to square 12 and multiply the result by 11. Those who successfully worked this out felt a real sense of achievement.
85. Teachers ensure that pupils present their work well, but an emphasis on high quality presentation sometimes leads them to concentrate on surface features instead of mathematical content when marking. Just occasionally, marking is negative and provides no encouragement to pupils. By contrast, in one of the Year 6 sets, some very good practice was noted where pupils were given time to read comments written by the teacher which indicated their strengths and areas for future development.
86. The subject leader for mathematics is experienced and enthusiastic. Systems of classroom observation are well established, but there is insufficient attention to the monitoring of pupils' learning by examining their completed work. Because of this, the subject leader, who teaches pupils in Years 3 and 4, has insufficient knowledge of standards in Years 5 and 6. He is aware that there is not enough investigational work to help pupils apply their skills and to increase the relevance of their work. There is scope to increase opportunities for pupils to practise their numeracy skills in other subject areas and to increase the profile of mathematics in most classrooms.

## SCIENCE

87. The results of the 2001 National Curriculum tests for Year 6 were well below average. This was due partly to an above average number of pupils with special educational needs. Over one-third of the year group had considerable special educational needs. Also, a significant number of pupils joined the school late and did not benefit from four years in the school. When compared to similar schools, results were well below average. The number of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 grades was well below average. Boys and girls do not attain significantly different standards. The older pupils entered the school with below average knowledge and understanding of science. However, the majority of pupils made good progress and achieved average or better standards by Year 6. Most pupils are included well in lessons. A significant number of pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve average standards. Pupils in Year 6 make good progress in learning how to draw conclusions and carry out investigations as well as in their knowledge of facts. This is due to teachers' effective use of the school's scheme of work and their good subject knowledge.
88. Standards of science are improving in the school. The results of the National Curriculum tests in 2002 showed a significant improvement on the previous year. A very high percentage of pupils achieved Level 4. Nearly half the pupils gained the higher Level 5 grade. Inspection findings confirm that standards are now average in Year 6 due to effective teaching and an increased emphasis on pupils using scientific vocabulary. Standards at average grades are as high as could reasonably be expected when so many pupils who attend this school have special educational needs. Pupils apply their understanding and investigate a good range of areas that are carefully planned to challenge pupils of different abilities. For instance, in one good lesson, Year 5 pupils learned about how to carry out investigations as well as developing knowledge about soil types. The teacher consistently reinforced key vocabulary and the need to make this a fair test. Most pupils in Years 5 and 6 have a satisfactory grasp of scientific knowledge and understanding in all aspects of science. They usually explain their thinking using the correct scientific vocabulary. There are few pupils who are in the early stages of learning to speak English and so many of them achieve well, reaching average standards.
89. By Year 6, pupils use scientific facts satisfactorily to predict and plan investigations and practical tasks. More able and average pupils write good predictions giving reasons. However, pupils with special educational needs do not give reasons for their predictions. By Year 6, pupils plan and carry out investigations for themselves. They draw thoughtful conclusions, often using scientific reasoning. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of life and living processes are average. More able pupils label the inner parts of the ear well. Pupils use keys to identify animal types accurately. Less able pupils draw the life cycle of a frog satisfactorily. A significant strength of pupils' knowledge and understanding is in materials. More able pupils make good records of their results of materials that will dissolve in water. Less able pupils describe with words and diagrams how to separate sand from water. Most pupils know that water undergoes reversible changes when it freezes. More able pupils explain what an irreversible change is and give examples. Pupils' understanding of physical processes is average. More able pupils write good predictions about whether sound will travel through certain materials. Concave and convex mirrors are well explained through writing and diagrams. Pupils with special educational needs draw satisfactory diagrams of how light travels from an object to the eye, but their use of scientific vocabulary is rather limited.
90. The quality of teaching is good. The best teaching in the school incorporates many of the following qualities:
- well-planned lessons;
  - effective revision of the previous lessons' content;
  - teachers' good subject knowledge;
  - effective use of practical resources;
  - good behaviour management;
  - effective learning methods and the use of open-ended questioning.

91. In a good lesson seen in Year 6, the teacher skilfully revised previous learning about evaporation. Open-ended questioning was used effectively so that pupils learned to consider their findings about previous experiments. Time was used effectively because pupils were told how long they had to complete a task. This means that pupils learn to work quickly in a set time. Good teacher subject knowledge advanced pupils' understanding of reversible and irreversible changes. Throughout the school, teachers' effective management skills mean that pupils enjoy science and concentrate on tasks. Pupils co-operate well with others in groups and are keen to take part in practical investigative activities because of the teachers' enthusiasm for the subject.
92. There are weaker features of teaching, namely:
- marking in pupils' books is often very brief and does not tell pupils what they have done well or explain to them how they could improve their work;
  - short paired discussion times are not planned to give pupils opportunities to discuss their scientific understanding and assist pupils who are learning to speak English to practise using key vocabulary;
  - the ends of lessons do not often give pupils time to reflect orally on their personal gains in knowledge or understanding;
  - a few teachers do not produce separate worksheets that would support pupils with special educational needs, but expect them to work at activities that are aimed at average levels of attainment.
93. The subject is led and managed well. The co-ordinator has been effective in raising standards and is responsible for the significant improvements since the last inspection. Improvements include the purchase of a new programme of work to supplement the national guidance and the development of a centralised resources area. Assessments are now carried out at the end of each unit of work and this is good. The investigations undertaken by pupils are now relevant to what they need to learn. Year 6 tests are analysed to see if boys or girls are falling behind in the attainment. However, the co-ordinator rarely monitors the quality of teaching in lessons, or examines pupils' books to check standards or provides staff with a method of tracking pupils' progress over time.
94. Literacy is satisfactorily used to record pupils' ideas and conclusions on paper. For instance, Year 5 pupils effectively explained in writing what happens when air vibrates in a bottle. Numeracy is also used satisfactorily to measure scientific findings. Pupils in Year 4 learn how to read a force meter and measure the length of bones in the body. Information and communication technology is underused to support this subject. There are no temperature or sound sensors in the school. Although computers are used to record measurements, there are many missed opportunities to teach science through information and communication technology. There are good opportunities for pupils to reflect and develop spiritually. This occurs when pupils carefully consider what they have learned and when they write conclusions to their experiments.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

95. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection and remain satisfactory. Teachers' knowledge of the subject has improved. Long-term planning is now based on recent national and local guidance. It ensures pupils experience all the elements in the National Curriculum.
96. By Year 6, pupils have acquired an appropriate range of skills. They have used a range of media, including paint, pastels, chalk, charcoal, pencils, fabric paints and dyes, clay and paper. Year 3 pupils learn how to make printing blocks out of polystyrene in order to produce interesting two-colour repeating patterns. They also learn different paper-folding techniques, such as curling and frilling, and they produce fabric collage. Pupils quickly acquire the skill of colour mixing with paint and pastels and they do this competently. Year 5 pupils use tonal variation in order to give their drawings a three dimensional effect. Pupils are given opportunities to use computers to carry out research. Year 5 pupils carried out research on the Bayeux Tapestry and used the information to work in groups and produce their own versions, each of which had its own story to tell. This work involved good levels of creativity and imaginative choice of materials to produce the desired effect. Pupils are familiar with the work of a broad and interesting range of artists. Particularly good examples of this were seen during the inspection. Year 4 pupils studied the illustrations of Anthony Browne in children's books. They identified surreal aspects in his pictures. They combined this with work on common idioms, for example, 'It's raining cats and dogs', to produce their own surreal pictures. Year 6 pupils carried out a detailed examination of Breughel's painting, 'Children's Games'. They very carefully observed how Breughel showed movement in the children and used the information to enable them to accurately represent movement in their own drawings.
97. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are fully involved in these lessons. They often receive extra help from teachers and support assistants and benefit from the paired and group work that is a strong feature of the teaching in this subject.
98. Overall, the quality of teaching across the school is satisfactory and there are examples of good and very good teaching. Teachers plan an interesting range of activities that the pupils enjoy. As a result, they try hard and behave well. Teachers provide competent demonstrations of new skills and techniques. This enables the pupils to acquire an appropriate range of skills. However, the limited amount of time spent overall on art in this school means that they have insufficient opportunities to refine these skills and their work does not reflect their full potential in all classes. Pupils are expected to use sketchbooks and they show progress over time. However, more thought needs to be put into how they are used if they are to be fully effective. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and are clear about what the learning outcome should be. Teachers are well organised and ensure pupils have access to a good range of resources. Assessment is a weakness at present. The co-ordinator realises this and has written a sensible strategy for assessment. It now needs to be put into practice. Whenever possible, teachers plan opportunities for pupils to use computers and digital cameras to support their work. They also try to relate the work in art to that in other subjects. There are some good examples of work related to history, English and physical education.
99. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and provides helpful guidance and support for colleagues. She is not allocated time to monitor the planning and teaching across the school more formally and this adversely affects her effectiveness.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

100. Pupils attain standards by Year 6 that are similar to those of pupils of the same age nationally. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils acquire a suitably broad range of practical skills and techniques. They understand the design process. However, the limited amount of time spent on design and technology means that pupils cannot achieve a high quality finish on their models.

101. Pupils learn a broad range of skills as they move through the school. They quickly learn the importance of producing alternative designs before deciding on the best one to make. They develop their drawing skills, so that by Year 6, they can draw designs which are labelled, include measurements and show the side, front and top views of the item they intend to make. However, time constraints mean these drawings are often rushed and lack precision. Pupils have the chance to become familiar with the use of an appropriate range of materials. These include food, fabrics, wood, card and clay. As they move through the school they have more opportunities to make their own decisions about the best materials to use for the job. Pupils carry out research to help them produce better designs. A good example of this was seen in Year 3, where pupils used the Internet to research totem poles. They then used the information to design and make their own versions, depicting people and activities in their school. Pupils learn how to use cams and pneumatics to create movement. They apply this knowledge to make moving monsters and 'pop out' toys. Pupils become more competent and knowledgeable as they move through the school. However, the limited amount of time spent on the subject means that pupils do not have the chance to refine their skills and achieve high quality results. Pupils successfully learn new skills and techniques, but often have insufficient time to finish their models. They find this frustrating. The pupils' work is often linked to ongoing work in other subjects and this aids the continuity of their learning. A good example of this is the torches made by Year 4 pupils that required them to apply scientific knowledge about circuits.
102. Pupils with special educational needs and with English as an additional language are fully integrated throughout the school. They regularly receive effective extra help from support assistants. Teachers frequently group pupils so they help and learn from each other. As a result, all pupils are able to achieve success.
103. Teachers include opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. They pay appropriate attention to the spelling and use of technical vocabulary. Pupils develop their speaking and listening skills in discussions about the success of their work, the problems they encountered and in suggesting how it could be improved. They frequently write lists of the materials needed and write descriptions of how they made their models. Pupils have to measure accurately, such as when weighing ingredients to make biscuits and when deciding where to cut or join their materials. Pupils make frequent use of computers to carry out research, but the school needs to update its resources so that they can use computers to control their models, as they were able to do before the new computers were installed. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to develop this aspect of the pupils' work, but has not yet received the funding needed to make the necessary purchases of compatible software.
104. It was not possible to observe the teaching of design and technology during the inspection owing to the way the school allocates its units of work across the year. The following judgements are based upon the examination of pupils' past work, teachers' planning and discussions with the co-ordinator and Year 6 pupils. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers clearly understand the design process and plan an interesting range of activities. Consequently, pupils enjoy the lessons and talk enthusiastically about their work. They base their lessons on recent national guidance. This ensures that all the requirements of the National Curriculum are met. Whenever possible, activities are linked to ongoing work in other subjects. Good opportunities are provided for pupils' social development as much of the work is done in pairs or small groups. A sensible assessment strategy has recently been agreed, but it is not yet being used. It, therefore, does not provide information that ensures that teachers consistently plan to develop the pupils' prior knowledge and skills. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to begin to use the assessment scheme and the information it provides more systematically. Teachers make good use of the time allocated to the teaching of design and technology, but this is currently insufficient to allow pupils to achieve the standards of which they are capable.

105. The co-ordinator has a good understanding of the subject. He has organised in-service training in all the areas teachers found most difficult. As a result, teachers are now much more confident in the teaching of the subject and provide more challenging activities for the pupils.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

106. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress. By the end of Year 6, they achieve standards similar to those of pupils of the same age nationally. This is a significant improvement on standards at the time of the last inspection, when attainment was below the national expectation. Pupils' written work remains a relative weakness, but the school has successfully introduced teaching strategies which enable pupils to recall what they have learned. As a result, Year 6 pupils clearly demonstrate that they are far more knowledgeable than their written work suggests.
107. In Years 3 and 4, pupils increase their knowledge of locations and develop their mapping skills. Holiday locations are clearly identified on a map of the British Isles and features of the local area are identified on Ordnance Survey maps. Pupils have a secure understanding of compass directions and understand how grid references can help to locate places on maps quickly. They have the chance to put these skills to use practically in the school's own orienteering course and when they visit Dell Farm in Years 5 and 6. Pupils learn about the different climatic regions in the world and know that temperatures are hottest near the equator and coldest near the poles. They begin to make comparisons between their own locality and other places. They talk confidently about the similarities and differences between Aldbury (a village they have visited) and Luton. They are beginning to suggest advantages and disadvantages of living in each place, but they lack confidence with this. Year 5 pupils have a secure understanding of the features of rivers and know why they are important to us. After a very good geography lesson during the inspection, pupils of all abilities could explain what 'erosion', 'transportation' and 'deposition' meant. Year 6 pupils know how mountain ranges are formed and can locate them on a world map. They can use computers to find out what life is like in these mountains. A good range of activities ensures that pupils acquire new skills and knowledge at an appropriate rate. However, the limited amount of time given to the teaching of geography in the school severely restricts pupils' attainment in written work. Their writing is at a superficial level and does not represent what they actually know. The co-ordinator has already recognised this as a weakness and is intending to address the issue. However, her ability to do this is limited by the time currently allocated to geography and by the extent to which the cross-curricular uses of literacy are considered in the school as a whole.
108. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are able to make appropriate progress and take part in all activities. They regularly receive extra help from learning support assistants and other pupils are quick to offer help and advice when they are working in pairs and small groups. The curriculum is practically based and this ensures that it is interesting and easy to understand.
109. The teaching of geography has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. During the inspection, there were no unsatisfactory lessons and half the lessons were good or very good. Teachers plan their lessons carefully using recent national guidance. This ensures that all the requirements of the National Curriculum are taught, although time limitations significantly reduce the depth at which topics are covered. Teachers have successfully addressed the issues in the last inspection. Teaching now includes an interesting range of activities, many of which are practical. As a result, pupils really enjoy their lessons and can remember what they have done and learned. Very good examples of this were observed during the inspection. Year 6 pupils used sheets of fabric to see how mountain ridges are formed when the Earth's plates move together. Year 5 pupils poured water onto a piece of drainpipe containing sand. This showed them how and where the sand was eroded and where it was deposited. It also stimulated some good discussion about the effects of different rates of flow in the water and the steepness of the slope. Teachers provide opportunities to watch videos and

to take part in field trips. This brings the subject to life for them and makes it more interesting. Pupils also have regular access to the library and computers to carry out research, thus developing their literacy and information and communication technology skills. Using graphs, carrying out surveys and measuring temperatures and distances helps pupils to develop their numeracy skills.

110. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and enthusiastic and provides good day-to-day support to colleagues. She has a realistic action plan for the development of the subject and is clear about what needs to be improved. She has written a practical assessment scheme, but it is not yet being used. She has no opportunity to monitor other teachers' lessons and does not yet check teachers' lesson plans or the quality of pupils' work. This is restricting her ability to improve the subject. Nevertheless, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

## **HISTORY**

111. Standards attained by the oldest pupils are below the level expected by the end of Year 6. Pupils make unsatisfactory progress through the school. Those with special educational needs and English as an additional language receive little additional support in this subject and so also make unsatisfactory progress. The principal reason that standards are not as good as they were at the time of the previous inspection is that a very low proportion of teaching time is devoted to the subject. This permits only a superficial treatment of a limited number of topics and makes it difficult to create links between them. There is insufficient attention to the progressive development of historical skills.
112. Pupils in Year 3 differentiate successfully between statements of fact and opinion. They know some facts about Romans and Anglo-Saxons, but often confuse the two. Pupils in Year 4 know, for example, about Henry VIII's six wives and higher attaining pupils have some understanding of the reasons for his multiple marriages. They are beginning to understand that contemporary portraits may not be entirely accurate and why. However, their knowledge of the Tudor period is confined almost entirely to kings and queens to the exclusion of other important individuals and events. Year 5 pupils contrast features of Victorian life with modern times, but do not understand the changes which occurred during the Victorian years. Pupils in Year 6 lack a chronological framework upon which to place the periods of history they have studied. Thus, some place the Romans after the Anglo-Saxons or the Tudors after the Victorians. They are not familiar with primary and secondary sources of evidence or the need for corroboration between sources, but appreciate that some types of evidence are less valid than others. They have little understanding of cause and effect in historical events. Despite a requirement in the National Curriculum to do so, pupils have not carried out a study of an aspect of local history.
113. Only a single lesson in history was observed during the inspection. This was well taught, but was insufficient to judge the overall quality of teaching throughout the school. However, pupils' work was examined and indicated some weaknesses in teaching. Teachers' expectations about the quality of pupils' work are too low. Worksheets demanding minimal levels of skill and understanding to complete, often carefully coloured, form most of the sparse output. The importance of the subject is not enhanced in some classes by the practice of using the same exercise book or work folder for three or four subjects. However, there have been some positive developments in teaching that have addressed some of the deficiencies noted at the previous inspection. Through drama and role-play, pupils have the opportunity to develop empathy with historical personalities and ordinary citizens of the past. They are encouraged to talk about their lives and circumstances through the process of 'hot-seating'. Inevitably these activities have left less time for writing. The school policy indicates that part of the time allocation for extended writing can be used to undertake writing in history, but there is little evidence of this happening. However, information and communication technology is used well to provide opportunities for research in the subject.

114. The arrangements for the co-ordination of history are unsatisfactory. The subject leader has insufficient time to monitor teaching or pupils' work and so is unable to gain knowledge of the subject's strengths and weaknesses. An appropriate and simple form of assessment has been prepared, but not yet introduced throughout the school. The school's programme is enhanced by 'living historians', visiting actors in the role of people of the past and by occasional visits to places of interest, such as the Roman settlement of Verulamium. There are ample books of good quality in the library, together with a more limited quantity of artefacts and pictures. These form a good basis for pupils to use to develop their research skills, with the potential to extend understanding beyond basic facts to a consideration of people's motives and the consequences of events.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

115. Standards in information and communication technology for Year 6 meet national expectations. At the time of last inspection, standards were above national expectations. Although it appears that standards have declined, this is not the case. The school continued to teach one hour of information and communication technology each week in the computer suite. However, when it upgraded its computers, it could not afford to buy all the programs it required to maintain above average standards. Also, the new National Curriculum introduced in 2001 called for schools to ask more of their pupils to achieve average standards. The school has only recently been able to use the Internet and few pupils have been able to develop expertise in using it at this stage. Standards of skills are high enough. However, the application of information and communication technology in other subjects is limited. Boys and girls achieve similar standards.
116. The standards in Year 6 meet national expectations. Pupils use word processing and images satisfactorily to enhance work for a variety of audiences. Most Year 6 pupils effectively add images and digital photographs to texts such as those about Dell Farm. The majority of pupils change fonts and the colour of text satisfactorily. Less able pupils design and made certificates of friendship importing images and adding text. Pupils create, amend and use databases satisfactorily. They entered data and created a satisfactory bar graph which compared pupils' heights in Year 6. A significant strength of pupils' knowledge and understanding is in the use of spreadsheets. Pupils create and use spreadsheets to organise data well – for instance about football match scores over 10 weeks. The more able and average Year 6 pupils use functions and formulae to total football scores automatically. Less able pupils and those with special educational needs need assistance to use computer functions and formulae. Year 5 pupils created spreadsheets to calculate the total holiday cost. Pupils satisfactorily program and control a screen 'turtle' to make it move in a variety of ways across the screen. Pupils use the Internet satisfactorily to research topics. They paste text and images from websites, having located the site for themselves. Only a few pupils know how to e-mail using the Internet. Some pupils with special educational needs work at average levels due to the effective use of resources.
117. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have established effective teaching methods to develop basic skills in the subject by using the computer suite for at least one hour a week. The most effective teaching includes many of the following features:
- good revision of previous work;
  - the effective management skills of teachers;
  - good use of class teaching in the computer suite;
  - effective use of classroom assistants and the specialist technician in the middle part of lessons;
  - high expectations of pupils to carry out complex computer operations.
118. Teachers' high level of understanding on how to use image and text mean that pupils learn well how to combine the two techniques. Effective use of classroom assistants and the technician allows pupils with special educational needs to make satisfactory progress in their learning. Good behaviour management skills ensure that pupils concentrate well on activities and behave

well. Pupils work well with others, including those from minority ethnic groups due to the teachers' high expectations of behaviour. The majority of pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning because basic skills are satisfactorily taught. Most pupils are effectively included in lessons as a result of teachers' organisational skills and their expectations of pupils.

119. There are weaker features in the quality of teaching, in particular:
- few opportunities for pupils to evaluate their knowledge and understanding at the end of lessons;
  - no specific challenge for more able pupils in teachers' planning;
  - rather limited use of classroom assistants in introductions and the endings of lessons to record pupils' knowledge and understanding.
120. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed. The co-ordinator has worked hard to update the computers in use and the provision within the school. During the last inspection, it was noted that computers in the library were underused so the school moved them into classrooms to make them more accessible. Teachers still find it hard to use computers while they are trying to teach other subjects. Satisfactory improvements since the last inspection include the adoption of the national scheme of work, new computers and the use of the Internet for research and revision. Nationally funded training for teachers has been effective in developing their knowledge and understanding of spreadsheets. The co-ordinator does not regularly monitor the standards of pupils' work directly or evaluate how well pupils are applying their skills to other areas of the curriculum.
121. Lessons are satisfactorily used to develop pupils' writing and reading skills. Pupils often word-process writing that they have handwritten in draft, although they too rarely use a computer for the first draft. There are opportunities for pupils to improve their reading skills when they scan and research information on the Internet. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to learn about a range of cultures when they research different faiths on the Internet. Numeracy is satisfactorily used to interpret graphs and data, as when pupils learn how to measure amounts of liquids accurately in millilitres. The use of information and communication technology in other subjects is underdeveloped due to the fact the school does not have software for all subjects. The school has only just obtained programs to teach pupils about music and art. There are rather limited resources to support computer work in design and technology, religious education and geography. There are no sensors to enable pupils to measure aspects of science such as temperature. At present, there are few opportunities for pupils to learn about history through programs that simulate life in the past. While the suite is a good resource, the television screen used to demonstrate how to use the programs is too small for pupils at the back of the room to see clearly. The school has recently purchased an interactive whiteboard for classroom use and this is a positive move for future development.

## **MUSIC**

122. The attainment of pupils in Year 6 is in line with that expected nationally, but not as high as at the time of the previous inspection when more specialist teaching took place. The co-ordinator has introduced a new programme of work and most teachers now take their own class for music. In the lessons seen, where the teachers showed most enthusiasm, pupils made good progress in their learning. The curriculum is enhanced for a minority of pupils by peripatetic teachers who offer a range of instrumental teaching. In addition, some teachers teach guitar, singing and recorder to groups of pupils.
123. By the age of 11, most pupils sing tunefully and with feeling. They sing in two or more parts and use diction and dynamics effectively to produce a lively performance. They have good knowledge of technical terms such as 'ostinato' and 'pulse' and can talk about some of the characteristics of different styles and types of music. They experience music from a wide range of cultures and compose and perform their own music using both tuned and untuned

percussion. They are also able to explain variation in the style and purpose of contrasting pieces of music.

124. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In the best lessons seen during the inspection:
- well structured planning enabled pupils to build on their prior learning and extend their understanding and experience;
  - the pace and challenge enabled pupils to practise and develop their skills;
  - teachers shared their enthusiasm for the subject and treated mistakes in a positive manner;
  - teachers used their expertise with voice or instruments effectively;
  - effective links were made with literacy development by ensuring that pupils understood and reflected the true meaning of words in their performances;
  - pupils were given time to comment on how well they did and how they could improve.
125. In weaker lessons:
- teachers were less enthusiastic;
  - lessons moved at a slower pace and the main objective was not developed well enough;
  - pupils' behaviour was not managed efficiently with the result that pupils wasted valuable learning time.
126. The management of the subject is good. The co-ordinator supports her colleagues well and provides a good lead with her expertise. She has suitable plans for the subject's further development.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

127. Standards by Year 6 are in line with those expected nationally and pupils achieve satisfactorily, including the more able, those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Swimming is taught to all year groups, though some pupils opt out for cultural or religious reasons. Almost all pupils can confidently swim at least 25 metres (the National Curriculum requirement) by the age of 11 years. The curriculum is enriched well by a large number of sports clubs and teams for which teachers take responsibility and to which they devote a great deal of their time
128. The school's programme for physical education covers all aspects and requirements of the National Curriculum and the commitment demonstrated by staff to the subject is high. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with good teaching observed in several lessons seen. Teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject and are confident in their presentation. They produce good planning with clear objectives and a logical development of skills. As a result, pupils know exactly what they are expected to learn. Pupils understand the effect of exercise on their bodies and are aware of the need to warm up before strenuous activities and to cool down afterwards. Teachers' expectations of the pupils are high. Members of staff change into appropriate clothing for lessons and they provide good demonstrations for pupils. The pace of lessons is brisk and good use is made of resources, including a wide range of games equipment. The school has a large hall, a large, level playground and two playing fields. There is convenient access to a local swimming pool.
129. In the best lessons seen, teachers communicated instructions to pupils precisely. Teachers demonstrated games skills or expressive arm and body movements clearly and made good use of praise and encouragement. In a Year 6 lesson, for example, the teacher demonstrated effectively how to add facial expression to the body movements in a dance lesson and highlighted good responses for others to see. Teachers often use pupils to demonstrate skills and movements and this has the effect of reinforcing good practice. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to discuss the quality of their work or the work of others and to suggest how they might improve. This is an area the school is aiming to develop.

130. As a result of enthusiastic teaching and commitment, pupils' attitudes to physical education are good. Effective behaviour strategies used by teachers throughout the school ensure that pupils generally behave very well and put effort into the tasks set. Pupils follow instructions well and obey the safety rules. They work sensibly in pairs and co-operate well. Mixed gender pairings and groups are the norm. Pupils in Year 3 worked well in mixed pairs, for example, to develop a sequence of curls and stretches. As the result of good teaching, pupils in Year 6 worked well to develop a gymnastics routine that they would refine further in subsequent lessons.
131. The subject is promoted well by the co-ordinator who is extremely enthusiastic. This enthusiasm has spread to other staff who take responsibility for the teams that the school enters in a range of sports. The co-ordinator has compiled a wealth of resources for teachers to use, including coaching cards for many aspects of games. There is only a limited amount of time allocated to the subject, mainly in afternoon sessions, as numeracy and literacy occupy most of the morning. This arrangement is restricting the use of the hall for physical education and alternative arrangements for outdoor activities when the weather is bad. The school has not fully maintained the higher than average standards identified by the last inspection. However, the good leadership demonstrated by the co-ordinator and the commitment of staff mean that it is now well placed to improve standards.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

132. The standards achieved in religious education by Year 6 are below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. The school has not maintained the above average standards reported by the last inspection.
133. By Year 6, the majority of pupils have gained some knowledge of the main features of Christianity and of other major religions of the world. Pupils have an awareness of some of the similarities and differences between the religions but at a superficial level. They know that prayer is meaningful in the lives of people of different faiths. They know that there are specific customs in different religions and can compare practices, such as baptism, which mark stages of commitment to believers' faith. They recognise the significance of holy books such as The Bible and The Torah and know the main features of Judaism, including the importance of the Ten Commandments. Their understanding of the significance of different festivals, such as Christmas and Easter, is not secure and they are not able to apply their knowledge of religious beliefs to the moral issues in the world. Pupils recall facts without being able to show understanding of the significance. For example, when asked to name some of the Christian festivals, pupils in Year 6 offered 'Pancake day', but were not sure if it is a Christian festival and could not recall its significance to the Christian calendar.
134. Progress is unsatisfactory over time. Pupils learn *about* religion as well as learning *from* religion in considering the meaning of life. However, much of the syllabus is taught through discussion and pupils make oral responses without recording them. This results in a loss of impact, the lack of a written record of work to aid pupils' memory and understanding, and too few links with literacy work. There was an attractive display of artefacts and writing following computer work visiting a 'virtual' synagogue, but most of the written work seen in pupils' portfolios comprises of worksheets, completed to a less high standard than work in other subjects.
135. While the teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory, evidence from pupils' previous work and from discussions with the oldest pupils indicates that teaching and learning are unsatisfactory over time. The strengths in the lessons seen were:
- teachers' high expectations of what pupils can do;
  - a good pace to lessons that maintained pupils' interest;
  - the establishment of a quiet and purposeful atmosphere that encouraged discussion;
  - teachers' secure subject knowledge;
  - good management of behaviour that led to pupils listening well.

136. The weaker features of lessons were:

- not enough development of the essential elements and key objectives of the syllabus;
- too few opportunities for pupils to reflect on the meaning and significance of a theme.

137. The subject is managed by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable co-ordinator, but she does not have opportunities to observe teaching and learning at first hand and the school too rarely checks the overall standards of pupils' work. The curriculum is enhanced by the visits made to places of religious significance, for example the local Hindu temple, and by visitors to the school, including a representative of the Anglican Church. There is a good collection and range of resources, including sacred books, and effective use is made of local artefact loan services.