

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **TITHE FARM LOWER SCHOOL**

Houghton Regis

Bedfordshire

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109585

Headteacher: Mrs Julia Babiak

Reporting inspector: Mr David Cann  
2009

Dates of inspection: 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> October 2002

Inspection number: 246924

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	First
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Tithe Farm Road Houghton Regis Dunstable Bedfordshire
Postcode:	LU5 5JB
Telephone number:	01582 865047
Fax number:	01582 865047
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Annie Soerensen
Date of previous inspection:	24 <sup>th</sup> - 25 <sup>th</sup> March 1999

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
David Cann 20009	Registered inspector	English English as an additional language Geography History Physical education	What sort of a school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
Cathy Stormonth 16472	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Philip Martin 23262	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Design and technology Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities? Inclusion
Mark Madeley 22657	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Special educational needs Science Art Music	

The inspection contractor was:

TWA *Inspections* Ltd  
102 Bath Road  
Cheltenham  
GL53 7JX

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33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Tithe Farm Lower School is a school for pupils aged three to nine with 175 full-time pupils on roll and 20 children who attend part time in the Nursery. Most pupils live on the housing estate next to the school and several come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Pupils' attainment on entry is generally well below expectations. Currently 40 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average. Thirty-five per cent of pupils are on the school's special educational needs register, which is well above the national average, and two pupils have Statements of Special Educational Need. There are two pupils for whom English is an additional language.

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

Tithe Farm Lower School is a good school which offers pupils a secure and supportive environment for learning. It benefits from the energetic and strong leadership of the headteacher which is much appreciated by staff, pupils and parents. She and all staff work effectively to raise standards and together they provide a good quality of teaching. By Year 2 and Year 4 pupils make good progress and achieve well. In tests at Year 2, pupils' results are higher than those achieved in similar schools in writing and the same in reading and mathematics. By Year 4, pupils achieve standards in English and mathematics which are close to those achieved nationally. Overall the school provides good value for money.

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

- It promotes pupils' good progress in the key areas of literacy, especially in writing, and in numeracy;
- Very good leadership from the headteacher is improving the quality of education and helps teachers provide a good standard of teaching;
- The school provides a supportive environment in which pupils feel safe and valued through which they develop positive attitudes to school and learning;
- It gives pupils very good opportunities to develop their social awareness and responsibilities to one another as well as giving them clear guidance on moral, cultural and spiritual issues;
- Everyone works hard to make parents welcome in the school and appreciate how they can help promote their children's learning

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

- Organisation and support for pupils with special educational needs;
- Assessment procedures to help staff identify how pupils are progressing and to set precise targets for improvement;
- Pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy by extending the ways in which they can use them as they work in other subjects;
- The way the school defines development priorities to help focus attention on the immediate steps needed for improvements.

*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 March 1999 and three main areas for development were identified. The school has made good progress in addressing these requirements as well as coping with a period of unsettled staffing caused by illness and maternity leave. Standards have been raised in the main subjects of literacy and numeracy and pupils' attainment in writing has risen significantly. Increased confidence and skill among staff and the installation of a new computer suite have improved pupils' achievements in ICT. Attendance has improved and is now much closer to national expectations but the school is still striving to implement new ways to support the few families who are poor attenders. The quality of education has improved since the last inspection and the school is in a stronger position to monitor teaching and learning. The senior management team has been strengthened and is able to carry out its role of leading the school forward with greater confidence and clarity of vision. Time for co-ordinators to monitor and support colleagues is still not regularly available but the school has plans to provide this and through its improved self-analysis has the capacity to maintain its improvements.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			Similar* schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
reading	E	E	E	C
writing	E	E*	D	B
mathematics	D	E	D	C

**Key**

well above average    A  
 above average        B  
 average                C  
 below average        D  
 well below average   E  
 very low                E  
                                  \*

\* schools where there are a similar number of pupils entitled to free school meals

Pupils enter the school with well below average skills and make good progress by Year 4. Although pupils' results in Year 2 tests in 2002 were below those expected nationally, they achieved levels which were the same as or better than those attained in similar schools. In comparison with similar schools, pupils' results were above average in writing and average in reading and mathematics. By Year 4 pupils continue to progress well and they attain levels which are close to national expectations in English and mathematics. Pupils' attainments have improved significantly over the last year as the results of tests in Years 2 and 4 confirm. By the age of five, few children reach the expected levels in language, number and knowledge of the world. Nonetheless, children make good progress across the Foundation Stage, especially in social skills, which provides them with a strong base from which to move on in Years 1 to 4. Teaching has placed considerable emphasis on developing pupils' writing and has been largely effective. However, in science, pupils struggle to express their knowledge fully on paper and attain levels which are below expectations by Years 2 and 4. Pupils' use of vocabulary is often limited both in their speaking and writing and they achieve levels which are lower than expected throughout the school in speaking and listening. Support for pupils with special educational needs is well organised in groups and support classes but their progress, while satisfactory is clearly slower than for other pupils. In mathematics and science, higher attaining pupils often do not achieve as well as in other similar schools by Year 2. This reflects the limitations of the way pupils' progress is assessed. Pupils learning English as an additional language make good progress.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Positive and enthusiastic
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Generally good although there are minor incidents of friction which the school addresses quickly and supportively
Personal development and relationships	Pupils grow and flourish in the school and are conscientious in carrying out duties but they have only limited opportunities to plan and think about their work independently.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory, although attendance has improved.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

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

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection and this improvement in part reflects the more settled staffing situation of the last year. Teaching is good in literacy and numeracy lessons. There has been a successful focus on developing pupils' writing skills and the current emphasis on reading is improving pupils' interests and attainment. In numeracy, teachers set clear objectives and are good at gaining pupils' interest through appropriate tasks and oral activities. Teaching is generally good in all areas of the Foundation Stage. There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' social skills, which is appropriate to their needs. In a minority of lessons, there is a tendency for teachers to direct activities too much, rather than let pupils make their own decisions. This is also an area for development in older classes where teaching is generally good at managing pupils' behaviour and providing a clear direction and pace to learning. In most classes, classroom assistants are well deployed and their support for individual pupils is good. However, there are occasions where not enough use is made of their talents and pupils with special educational needs receive insufficient guidance. Where teaching is provided for pupils in group work, teaching and learning is of good quality. Teachers are developing more detailed ways of measuring pupils' progress, as in reading, but in other subjects assessment is not precise enough to ensure that all pupils are fully challenged.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The range of learning activities is satisfactory for all pupils with a good emphasis on their personal and social development.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	While programmes are well organised for pupils in groups, classroom support is not consistent and assessments of pupils' needs are not co-ordinated as effectively as necessary to promote maximum progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Support is satisfactory and promotes good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good personal, moral, cultural and spiritual development is enhanced by very good opportunities for pupils to extend their social awareness.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Teachers know their pupils well and provide a very supportive atmosphere in which pupils feel confident and valued. Procedures for assessment, however, are not fully agreed or implemented across the school.

The school works hard to involve parents in the life of the school and is successful in making parents feel welcome and aware of how they can help their children.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very good leadership which has helped the school to move forward well. She works well with senior management and responsibilities are shared with all staff. However, the amount of time available for co-ordinators to monitor their subjects is often limited.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors take a close interest in the school's affairs and fulfil their responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher, staff and governors have improved the way they evaluate the school's performance and are analysing results with greater insight and success.
The strategic use of resources	The school seeks value for money in all its developments but has not yet set up a system for monitoring the effectiveness of staff deployment.

Accommodation is very good and well used and learning resources are satisfactory. The number and skills of staff are good and the school is working to make full use of their potential.

## 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>• Children like school</li> <li>• Children make good progress and are expected to work hard and do their best</li> <li>• Teaching is good</li> <li>• Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular and sufficient homework</li> <li>• Closer working with parents and more information</li> <li>• The range of extra-curricular activities</li> </ul>

Inspectors noted parents' comments and agree with the positive observations. Homework is now being given more regularly and is in line with government guidelines. The quality of information parents receive is good and the school seeks to involve parents in many ways, especially through courses which have been well received. Annual school reports contain detailed information about the progress pupils have made over the year in all subjects. The range of activities outside lessons is good for a school of this type and size.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Pupils' attainments by Years 2 and 4 indicate that they make good progress. Children enter the school with low levels of skill and few attain the expected levels by the age of five. Results in Year 2 tests are still below those expected nationally but have improved significantly since the time of the last inspection. In comparison with the levels achieved in similar schools in 2002, pupils attained above average results in writing and levels in reading and mathematics which were in line with the average. By Year 4 pupils achieve levels in literacy and mathematics tests which indicate that their attainment is in line with national expectations. It is evident from these statistics and the work of current pupils that pupils are progressing well. Importantly, pupils' results in Year 2 and Year 4 tests show considerable gains since 1999. There have been strong improvements in the last year during which staffing has been much more settled. The school has set challenging targets for pupils in both Years 2 and 4, which it has reached over the last two years.
2. Children join the school with skills which are well below average. Their language is particularly poor and some do not speak clearly and have rarely held a pencil before. They know few songs and have very limited counting skills. They have played mostly with siblings, which has led to quite rough play. Their knowledge of the world around them is very limited. From this low starting point children make good progress through the Foundation Stage<sup>1</sup>. Nonetheless, as pupils enter Year 1 their attainment remains low and few have achieved the Early Learning Goals<sup>2</sup> in English and mathematics.
3. In Years 1 to 4, pupils make satisfactory progress in speaking and listening, but this is slower than the good progress which most make in reading and writing. When pupils join the school their vocabulary and range of expressions are very limited. By Year 2, most pupils are eager to speak up in class discussions, assemblies and drama lessons but their command of language develops only slowly. Lower ability pupils make sound progress but by Year 4 both their listening and speaking are still well below expectations. In reading, most pupils make good progress with regular opportunities to read both fiction and non-fiction. Pupils receive well-structured help to learn their letter sounds in Years 1 and 2. Those with learning difficulties benefit from working in small groups and progress steadily. However, the tasks which they undertake in class are not always well linked to their learning activities in withdrawal session. Pupils' writing has improved significantly over the last year at both Years 2 and 4. Pupils write for a range of purposes and employ their skills well in all subjects except science. Teaching makes good use of non-fiction material in both reading and writing and this stimulates the interest of boys. While in the past, girls have made better progress than boys, this is not evident in the achievements of current pupils. Pupils with English as an additional language are making good progress in all areas of literacy.
4. Good teaching in mathematics has improved attainment particularly at Year 4. In Year 2 tests in 2002, results were well below the national average but in line with the levels achieved in similar schools. The number of pupils attaining the expected levels is good but the proportion of pupils achieving higher levels is lower than average. There is not enough work done on problem solving to challenge higher ability pupils and opportunities for pupils to apply their learning in other subjects are limited. By the end of Year 4, most pupils are achieving levels in line with those expected for their age and many exceed them. There has been a significant improvement in results over the last two years and pupils benefit from the time spent practising and discussing mental strategies. There are

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<sup>1</sup> The Foundation Stage is the time the children spend in nursery and reception classes.

<sup>2</sup> The Early Learning Goals are the standards most five year olds are expected to achieve prior to joining Year 1.

- no marked differences between the performance of boys and girls currently. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress in relation to their prior attainment.
5. In science, test scores at Year 2 have been rising over the last few years and in 2002 the number of pupils reaching the expected level was in line with the national average. Current pupils are not attaining such high levels and this reflects their lack of written skills. By Year 4, pupils' achievements were in line with those found nationally in 2002. However, the current Year 4 has many pupils with limited English skills or short attention spans, and their limited skills have an adverse effect on their attainment. Pupils with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress but they need tasks which are simplified to help them follow and these are not always available to them. The two pupils with English as an additional language have a satisfactory command of English and make good progress. The school's analysis shows no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.
  6. Pupils attain the expected levels in information and communication technology by Years 2 and 4, which represents an improvement on the levels achieved at the time of the last inspection. The use of the new computer suite and the increasing confidence of teachers have been key factors in raising standards. The school has adopted the government's guidelines which help to ensure that pupils acquire all the expected skills, including an understanding of control and modelling which were lacking previously. Attainment is satisfactory in religious education, art, geography, history, music and physical education but no judgement could be made in design and technology.
  7. Nearly one third of the pupils are identified as having, or are being monitored for, special educational needs. Most of them attain levels which are well below those expected for pupils of their age nationally. There are pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4, for instance, who are unable to read simple texts or identify and write the numbers from 1 to 10. They can, and often do, succeed in subjects such as art, physical education and computing, where literacy and numeracy skills are not so important. Whilst their attainment in most cases is very low they are making steady progress towards the targets set for them in their individual education plans. During specific support programmes, such as Toe to Toe, they make good progress. They practise reading on a regular basis and are beginning to learn skills which also support their spelling. In class, however, they do not always make satisfactory progress. Teachers often set the same task for the whole class and this can be beyond the literacy skills of some less able pupils. During literacy and numeracy lessons, pupils are not always well supported by classroom assistants and there is rarely additional support for Year 4 pupils during afternoon sessions.

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

8. The attitudes, values and personal development of pupils are good and have improved since the last inspection. These qualities have a positive effect on standards across the school and the quality of school life. Parents strongly agreed in their questionnaire about how much their children liked school.
9. Pupils' attitudes are good and throughout the school pupils show obvious enthusiasm when offered interesting challenges and are eager to take part in most of the activities offered. Children's personal development is fostered well in the Foundation Stage. They learn to choose activities independently and start to sustain concentration and persevere at tasks. They quickly learn what is acceptable and what is not acceptable in school. In Years 1 – 4, pupils respond keenly especially where teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the subject being taught. Challenging questions help pupils to focus well and show their enthusiasm by a sea of hands up. This was seen in a literacy lesson on alphabetical order and rhyming where good questioning and humour maintained pupils' attention and active participation. When expectations are realistic and pupils are given

work that offers a good match to their ability they work hard and show pride in their achievements.

10. Behaviour in the classroom is usually good. Although pupils' concentration spans are often short, teachers skilfully employ strategies that sustain pupil motivation well and keep interest levels up. They also manage the occasional behavioural incidents well. Pupils with special educational needs usually behave well and staff manage the few who misbehave in a positive and helpful way. In the dining room, behaviour is very good and is well managed by lunchtime staff. In assemblies, pupils show reverence by listening carefully and respectfully and they sing joyfully with gusto. In the playground most play happily but a small number of pupils make a big impact when they are boisterous, engage in arguments or rough play. There are some occasional comments of a racial nature made to ethnic minority pupils. These cause irritation to these pupils but they comment that they ignore them and do not become upset. However, normally boys and girls work and play happily together. There is evidence of some small scale bullying but as soon as it is reported, it is dealt with well. When asked, pupils automatically said that they would 'report and not react' to bullies and this is commendable.
11. Relationships in the school are good and teachers speak positively to pupils and value their efforts. The atmosphere in most classrooms is happy and relaxed. Pupils listen well to their teachers, follow instructions and enjoy praise for good work and effort. Pupils are usually friendly, helpful and courteous.
12. The personal development of pupils is satisfactory overall. The school has a climate where pupils can grow and flourish and where respect for others is encouraged and the majority of pupils are aware of the feelings of others. In an outstanding personal, social and health education lesson, pupils came to their own sensible conclusion that it is so much easier and better to be kind to others instead of making others feel bad in an anti-bullying session. Pupils' writing and poetry shows how they reflected on aspects of their lives and valued their own and others talents and differences. Pupils discussed World War II thoughtfully in history when they vividly imagined life in the blackouts – 'it must have been like living in a cupboard with the door closed', said one pupil.
13. Pupils are very keen to help with a range of daily routines and they carry out many jobs willingly and conscientiously that help with the smooth running of the school day. The door monitors supervise playtime use of the toilets, for instance. There is a well-established school council which pupils feel gives them a 'voice' in the school. The new school council shop is a pupil initiative that pupils are very pleased about. Elections of House Captains were seen during the inspection. These were wholly democratic and an example of good citizenship as older pupils ensured 100 per cent turn-out in the voting. Assemblies produce a sense of community where the whole school is on the same wavelength. Pupils said they really enjoy assemblies and thought they learned some strong messages about goodness and a better understanding of why they should be kind to others. The teamwork in sport, concerts and high quality school productions have helped to extend personal development significantly. Parents confirmed that the singing and acting in the summer production of 'Robbie and Julie' were amazingly good.
14. The weakness in personal development is the lack of opportunities for pupils to become more independent learners. Pupils do not have many chances to think for themselves and show initiative, to develop their own ideas and acquire better research skills. Many lessons were tightly controlled and restricted pupils' freedom to choose, to observe, to question and to investigate their learning.
15. In the year for which national comparisons are available (2000/2001), the attendance rate is unsatisfactory. Although attendance has improved in the last year, it still remains below the previous year's national average. The rate of unauthorised absence has improved and

is broadly in line with the national level. Holiday taking during term time accounts for a significant amount of absence, and hinder the continuity of pupils' learning in school. Other reasons for absence are genuine illness, special extenuating circumstances and the number of transient pupils who leave and do not let the school know about their whereabouts. This makes absence figures worse because these pupils have to remain on roll for some time before they can officially be removed.

16. Most pupils arrive at school on time. A small number of families are persistently late but most school days have a prompt and punctual start.
17. Pupils with special educational needs are very well behaved and keen to take part in the special programmes provided by the school. They concentrate well and work diligently. The older pupils know that the improvement of their basic skills is important if they are to succeed in class lessons, though younger pupils are less aware of this. In class pupils find concentration over long periods difficult and are inclined to become distracted, particularly those who have specific targets connected with their behaviour. Teachers help pupils to achieve these targets by praising any small improvements. Generally, the pupils respond well, making an effort to conform to accepted classroom behaviour.

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

18. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school and has improved since the last inspection in 1999 when it was judged to be sound. The teaching of English and mathematics is good and is having a positive impact on pupils' attainment. Pupils' achievements are also improving as a result of the more settled pattern of teaching which current staff provide.
19. Teachers plan their lessons effectively in accordance with the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. They follow government guidelines in other subjects and the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. With mixed aged pupils in several classes, teachers plan together effectively and are successful in matching the learning of pupils of the same age who are in different classes. They identify specific learning objectives in lessons which they share with their pupils. This gives a clear focus to the lesson and enables pupils to know what they are trying to achieve. In most lessons teachers discuss with pupils how well they have learned but this is not consistent in all classes. Teachers note the effectiveness of lessons on their planning but do not always include their assessment of pupils' progress in this evaluation.
20. Teachers are conscious of the need to assess pupils' progress objectively and are working towards agreed systems in literacy, numeracy and science. However, at present, they have only established a coherent programme in reading. The school has agreed clear guidelines for measuring how pupils develop their skills in writing but teachers are not yet using these in full. In mathematics and science the situation is similar. Thus teachers are not always defining precisely how pupils might improve their work and the setting of targets was not clear at the beginning of the school year. In addition, teachers do not always reflect the agreed targets in their marking of pupils' work. Marking is encouraging and work is often discussed with younger pupils to help them understand what is good and what needs improving. However, at the time of inspection teachers had not agreed and recorded targets for the new academic year and communicated them to pupils. There is limited use of National Curriculum levels in both marked work and the work kept in pupils' records.
21. Teaching is generally good in all areas of the Foundation Stage, which is an improvement on the last inspection. Teachers provide children with a rich range of learning experiences and opportunities. All staff provide good role models for their children, speaking clearly and consistently encouraging their thoughtfulness to one another. Teachers lead certain

key activities themselves and they do so well because they focus on important vocabulary as well as knowledge and skills. They deploy learning support assistants appropriately to lead other related activities, promote discussion and the learning of new vocabulary. There is always enough choice for the children, whether it is 'which bread to choose for a sandwich' or 'which large play apparatus to use'. Occasionally tasks are a little too teacher directed and opportunities are sometimes missed to promote mathematical concepts and vocabulary. Teachers and support assistants are not always fully involved in the children's outdoor play.

22. Teachers know pupils well and use a good range of teaching strategies to capture and hold their interest. Where pupils are sitting on the carpet and listening to instruction, teachers are often good at stimulating their attention and involvement by good questioning. In a Year 3 lesson on defining words, pupils responded with great interest to the challenge of matching the dictionary definitions and also suggested words which rhymed. In Years 1/2 geography, pupils contributed well in thinking about who might work in different shops which they had seen on a visit. There is good use of drama and role play in literacy, history and religious education which helps to stimulate pupils active participation and use of language. However, in setting tasks, teachers are not always as careful to match these to the different needs of pupils. Teachers do not always identify ways in which the more able pupils can be challenged to apply and extend their skills in mathematics and science.
23. Teachers generally make good use of classroom assistants and work closely with them in planning and assessing pupils' progress. They ensure that assistants know what is required of them and what the learning objectives are in lessons. However, a significant number of lessons were observed in which assistants did not play an active role during whole class sessions. This permitted some pupils with special needs to take only a passive interest and in Year 4 history and science lessons, pupils became inattentive and distracted others.
24. Teachers use homework effectively to consolidate and extend the work covered in school, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Spellings and tables are regularly learnt and tested. In Year 4, pupils' work in ICT was commended and shared with the class to indicate what could be achieved. Pupils' reading diaries indicate that while the majority are helped at home there are a significant number who do not regularly read to family members.
25. Pupils with special education needs are supported well in individual and group activities but do not always receive enough help in class. The special programmes are taught well usually by trained learning support assistants. These assistants are very well prepared, knowledgeable, patient and yet also firm with the pupils, so that no time is lost. The support given in classes is not as good, partly because there are more pupils with special needs than there are available support assistants. Teachers are aware of the needs of these pupils and support behavioural targets quite well, often through good use of praise. Mostly, teachers use support assistants well to help these pupils to attempt the class task and sometimes organise 'buddies' to support them too. However, tasks are not always well adapted to help meet the individual learning needs of these pupils. Lower ability pupils struggled with literacy tasks which did not fully challenge more able pupils.

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

26. As in the previous inspection, the school provides a curriculum that soundly covers all the required subjects of the National Curriculum and uses the locally agreed syllabus of education for religious education. There has been an improvement in that the planned curriculum covers those aspects of information and communications technology that were missing at the last inspection. The school fully meets the requirements for a regular act of collective worship.
27. There is good provision for personal, social and health education which includes sex education. The school is well on the way to completing new guidelines for teaching which are already having a positive impact. Pupils learn about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and drugs through taking part in activities both at school and when visiting outside events such as the 'Life Bus' and 'Hazard Alley'. The elections for house captains and the activities of the school's council help pupils to increase their understanding of society and their roles within it.
28. The school has successfully introduced the national initiatives for teaching literacy and numeracy. Literacy and numeracy lessons take place as required in all classes, although the time allocated to numeracy lessons is sometimes a little short. These help pupils to reach the expected standards in English and mathematics by the time they leave school at the age of nine. These strategies provide useful guidelines for teachers' planning and help to ensure that lessons build on what pupils already know. They also help to ensure that pupils in the same year but different classes have similar lessons. The school is using government recommended guidelines for teaching in the other National Curriculum subjects.
29. The curriculum provided for pupils under five is satisfactory in both Nursery and Reception. The school uses the national guidelines for the Foundation Stage and the content is well balanced to introduce pupils to all area of learning. There is strong emphasis on social development which is very relevant to the children, many of whom come to school with few experiences of sharing and playing with others.
30. All pupils have equal opportunities to benefit from the curriculum. There are very few pupils for whom English is an additional language and they are making similar progress to their classmates.
31. The school offers the whole curriculum to pupils with special educational needs as well as providing a comprehensive range of 'basic literacy' support programmes. These programmes, often linked to reading, writing and number, are helping these pupils to achieve the targets in their individual education plans. Both inside and outside lessons the collective approach by all staff to behaviour management helps those pupils with specific behaviour targets to concentrate better and work sensibly with the other pupils.
32. Pupils have a satisfactory range of opportunities to visit areas of interest that enhance their quality of learning. Years 1 and 2 pupils visited the local church and shopping precinct which stimulated learning in a range of subjects. Pupils also visited the Science Museum and used this as a starting point for a number of activities in writing, science and geography.
33. The school provides a good range of clubs and activities outside normal lesson time. This includes sporting activities such as football and netball clubs, and teams take part in sporting activities with other schools. There is a thriving choir and some pupils play in an orchestra at the middle school. Other clubs have recently included a cookery and computer clubs. A few pupils take part in a French club at another local school. These

clubs make a very useful contribution to the personal and social development of those pupils who take part. A breakfast club provides some pupils with a good start to the day.

34. There are good links with the local community and the middle school that most pupils transfer to after Year 4. Visitors including firefighters, the school nurse and the police make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. The wide range of liaison activities and sharing of information with the middle school make a positive contribution to pupils' education and ease their transfer to this school. There are good links with local colleges of higher and further education and students from these provide useful support for teachers as they themselves gain valuable experience of teaching and childcare.
35. The provision for the spiritual development of pupils is good. This is a similar picture to that reported at the time of the previous inspection. In religious education lessons, pupils learn about Christianity and have good opportunities to learn about other faiths, for example Judaism. Assemblies make a positive contribution to spiritual development. A class led an assembly during which they showed paintings they had done which expressed different feelings. Personal, social and health education is becoming increasingly useful in encouraging children to reflect on their own experiences and feelings. Pupils think about choices that they have to make in their daily lives, and in one excellent lesson carefully considered the causes and effects of bullying. Pupils are given good opportunities in lessons to think about their own experiences and feelings. Year 2 pupils write poems and booklets about themselves. Sometimes the children are moved by what they see and learn in lessons, for example when learning that moving air is a force by watching bubbles. Pupils learn to consider others when supporting charities, particularly those that support children, for example Children in Need and the NSPCC.
36. The school's provision for pupils' moral development is good, as it was at the previous inspection. Pupils know how they are expected to behave and what will happen if they don't. Teachers work hard but unobtrusively to ensure that they are followed. Pupils learn the difference between right and wrong during everyday school life through the good examples provided by all staff. Teachers are careful to explain to pupils who have misbehaved the consequences of their actions, and to 'think through' their misdemeanours. Consequently, issues are usually quickly resolved.
37. The provision for pupils' social development is very good. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when provision was judged good. Pupils work together well in lessons when required. There is a good range of activities outside lesson times that make a positive contribution to pupils' social development. These activities make a good contribution to pupils' awareness of their place in the school community and include music performances and participation in sporting events with other schools. In a number of lessons, such as science and information and communications technology, pupils work well together in small groups. This also helps them to develop a much-needed range of social skills. Pupils learn about social responsibility through participation in elections for house-captains. This is done through a process of selection and voting. The school always invites a returning officer who is also an elected representative such as a Member of Parliament or councillor. There is also a democratically elected school's council. This meets regularly, discusses areas of concern and looks after its own budget. These activities help to provide pupils with an awareness and understanding of citizenship.
38. The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. As well as learning about Christianity and Judaism in religious education lessons, pupils learn about some of the values and traditions of other faiths and cultures through religious education, displays and assemblies. The school's assembly calendar recognises festivals from different religions, including Christianity as well as some from other religions, for example Eid and Diwali. The school also celebrates other important festivals such as Burns' Night



and the Queen's Golden Jubilee. These activities provide pupils with a good insight into the events and festivals celebrated in this country. Pupils learn about their own and European culture through lessons such as history and art. There is a range of musical activities and workshops and an Indian dance group has recently visited the school. Pupils have been involved in producing mosaics for the local shopping centre. There are displays representing work that draws on other cultures, for example clay masks in a Maori style and Australian Aboriginal art.

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

39. The school continues to take good care of pupils, which helps to improve the effectiveness of the teaching and learning. Most staff have good relationships with pupils and pupils are confident in their approaches to their teachers or other adults in the school. This helps pupils feel safe and secure. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting expressed their confidence in this aspect of the school's work.
40. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory. Registers are consistently maintained using attendance software and all absences are followed up. The school has had some difficulties with the main computer for monitoring attendance and this has hampered the school's ability to analyse and improve attendance and punctuality in the past few months. The 'glitches' have been resolved and the school currently has good knowledge of all attendance difficulties and is taking action to improve attendance with some moderate success. The first day response to absence for targeted families is not taking place. The recent appointments of an education welfare assistant and family support worker are already enabling the school to arrange home visits and urge parents to meet their legal obligations to send their children to school. Despite good efforts by the school to discourage holiday taking, many parents ignore this advice and disrupt their children's learning.
41. Procedures for monitoring and promoting behaviour are generally good. Rewards and sanctions are used well to encourage good work, good effort and good behaviour. Pupils are very familiar with the school and their own class rules and 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 taken to stop it. The school does not meet the statutory requirement to have a racial equality policy and does not record or monitor the low level of racist incidents.
42. The arrangements for child protection and for supporting children who are fostered are very good and meet all the statutory requirements. The designated staff are well trained and there are clear procedures to ensure all that all staff and voluntary helpers are well briefed on procedures. The school is vigilant and any suspicions are carefully monitored. When pupils are sick or injured they receive a high level of care and attention. The welfare resources and facilities are good. Pupils with medical conditions are known and well catered for. There are some weaknesses in the management of health and safety and the policy is not fully in place. The school has been notified of the issues raised by the inspection.
43. Assessment of pupils' academic progress is an area which the school is developing across literacy, numeracy and science. There is a good policy in place but as yet it is not fully implemented. The school uses a range of tests, such as national tests in Years 2, 3 and 4 and reading tests, to measure pupils' attainment and analyses them to get a measure of their progress. This work is fairly loose at present, for instance this year's scores have not been fully interpreted and targets for teachers and pupils have not been set. The school does not yet analyse the effect on test results of pupil mobility or the very high numbers of pupils with special education needs. The school has assessment procedures for children when they join the school but they are not based on the Early Learning Goals and this

makes it hard to measure pupils' progress in the first two years of school. This is the second year in which targets are being set for pupils. There is some confusion between targets in reports and targets in 'pupil profiles'. Neither of these targets is sufficiently well known to individual pupils. Whilst assessment in English and mathematics are satisfactory most other subjects assess pupils' progress informally. Progress on assessment is targeted on the school's development plan for this school year and the school has introduced procedures which it is implementing and evaluating.

44. Much of the monitoring of pupils' personal development is satisfactory but informal, promoted by teachers who sustain good relationships with pupils. Most teachers are able to support pupils and give them good advice for improving attitudes and social skills and encourage a good work ethic. The personal, social and health education programme helps to extend the personal development of pupils well. The school goes out of its way to know pupils and their families and tries to offer help and support when it is appropriate. The breakfast club, catch up programmes and the additional needs mentoring for more fragile pupils and for those who are at risk of exclusion are thoughtfully provided and are good.
45. Assessment of pupils with special educational needs is sound. The procedures are well known by staff, who identify well pupils who may have physical, learning or behavioural difficulties. At the correct time outside agencies are involved and the school responds well to their recommendations. Once a pupil is identified, appropriate targets are set within the pupils' individual education plans and these are reviewed half termly. This is not always sufficiently frequent for some pupils who have relatively low level targets and receive very intensive, daily support. Discussion between support staff, particularly for the nurture group, is good but information on progress made in support sessions does not feedback into teachers' lesson planning well enough.

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

46. The partnership with parents continues to strengthen and many of the parents who were spoken to during the inspection expressed their appreciation at the welcoming and family atmosphere the headteacher has created since her arrival. Parents are very positive and 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.
47. Parents had some slight disagreements about homework, extra-curricular activities and about the quality of information they receive about their children's work. These issues were investigated and it was found that the arrangements for homework are good. The homework arrangements were clarified recently and a homework timetable has been set that is firmly in place. Homework is regularly given, meets the government's guidelines and forms an important part of learning particularly in mathematics and English. The range of activities outside lessons is good for a lower school. The quality of information parents receive is good. Annual school reports are good and contain some high quality, detailed information about the progress pupils have made over the year in all subjects. Weaknesses are identified and the advice for improvement is good. Targets set for the least able are very specific and good but targets for the most able are often general and not always useful. Parents expressed some dissatisfaction with the current consultation arrangements and requested a spring term meeting which the school plans to implement next year. The day-to-day communications are good and newsletters and other letters are a good way of keeping parents fully in touch with news and events. The governors' annual report to parents and the school prospectus contain all the required information but are written using some educational jargon that some parents may find hard to understand.

48. The school welcomes parents to help and get involved in the work of the school but is not always rewarded by parental contributions. Parents of nursery pupils were pleased at the induction arrangements which were tailored to parents' preferences to exchange information and parents are closely involved in the build up to full time education. Parents come into school each day to settle their children and can see what the curriculum focus is and what their children are doing. Some parents show a reluctance to get involved and do not like attending meetings and more formal occasions. The Parent and Teacher Association is mainly run by a dedicated few parents who provide the school with very useful fundraising activities and a busy and enjoyable social life. The popular bonfire party was being arranged during the inspection. The association was recently awarded substantial funds for some impressive outdoor nursery equipment and the new swimming pool cover. Other funds have paid for some computer software and some classroom luxuries like the new TV and video and the cooker for the nursery. These boost learning and improve the quality of some curricular provision.
49. The school is inventive and is always thinking of new ways to get parents more involved. Parents have their own room for a wide range of parental activities. The school helpfully offered classes in information technology, imaginative play and numeracy. These helped parents to understand more clearly how their children are taught and the school has plans to run further courses in the near future. Some families who are being supported by the inclusion project are encouraged to get involved in the parenting forum activities available locally. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is satisfactory overall.
50. Parents are keen to support their children when they are performing in school productions, special assemblies, sports activities and concerts. More than 30 parents and grandparents supported the class assembly during the inspection and enjoyed refreshments afterwards. Parents were really impressed with the recent school production of 'Robbie and Julie' when pupils performed to a full hall. Not many parents volunteer to help regularly in the classroom but when other needs arise, like help with school trips and sporting fixtures, parents do this willingly. The three parents trained in the reading partnership help and support 12 pupils currently. There is clear evidence that this helps to accelerate the reading progress for those targeted pupils. More training is planned shortly. The contribution of parents to children's learning is satisfactory.
51. The school liaises well with parents of pupils with special educational needs. They are quickly made aware of possible difficulties, asked to contribute to discussions, kept abreast of developments and fully involved in the review process.
52. Parents are welcomed into the nursery and reception classes and are partners in their child's learning. Effective home visits are made prior to any child starting school. These help children settle quicker into school routines. Despite the inspection being early in the school year there were no tearful scenes when parents departed at registration time.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

53. The headteacher provides strong leadership for the school and has a clear vision of what she wants the school to achieve. She is highly respected by staff, parents and pupils for her whole-hearted commitment to the school and to providing a high quality education for the pupils. She has worked very hard to maintain improvements in the school's performance through a period of staff change and ill health. In the past year, the continuity of staffing has improved, which has made a major contribution to raising pupils' attainment. The school has made important progress but is aware that consistent practices still need to be established in developing aspects of planning and assessment. The school has made good progress in addressing the recommendations from the last report and has appropriate targets for continuing the programme of raising standards.
54. Development planning has improved over the last five years and is well supported by the school's financial resources. Governors and staff are well informed and play an active part both in contributing to the creation of the annual plan and in monitoring its effectiveness. The school's plan for development is comprehensive and clearly helpful to the staff and governors. However, it contains duplications and inaccuracies and some of the targets and criteria for measuring progress are unclear. The plan contains a good long-term vision of what the school wants to achieve but does not focus concisely enough on the immediate priorities for action. It is a large document which takes much time to create and maintain and is not a handy and effective aid for mapping and promoting improvements in specific areas such as assessment.
55. The management of the curriculum is satisfactory but changes in personnel have required the reassignment of roles. The school has placed an understandable emphasis on developing literacy and numeracy skills and has done this effectively with strong co-ordination contributing to raising standards. The headteacher and co-ordinators monitor planning but there have been only limited opportunities for them to visit lessons and support colleagues in the classroom during the past nine months. She has a good insight into teachers' strengths and has taken opportunities to work with those who need support. Good use is made of local education authority advisers to help identify areas for development. In the Foundation Stage and science, monitoring has not been sufficient and the school has rightly set a timetable to extend support.
56. Governors take a close interest in the school's affairs and evaluate the school's performance carefully. They have continued to improve their involvement and impact on the school, as noted in the last report. Governors meet regularly and have a well-organised committee structure which is effective in monitoring the school's finances, premises and curriculum. The chair of governors is a regular visitor to the school and maintains close contact with the headteacher which helps her to keep up to date on the school's welfare. She has made an important personal contribution to improving links with parents through her own high profile and weekly surgery in which parents have been able to raise any problems. Governors have been particularly effective in monitoring the curriculum through visits to classrooms and discussions with co-ordinators and their reports to the governors are perceptive and accurate. Governors have been conscientious in attending training courses and are beginning to evaluate their own performance with insight.
57. Both the special educational needs coordinator and governor who monitors special educational needs are very new appointments. They are both undergoing training to help them meet the new demands in assessing and improving support for the many pupils on the register. They have a broad picture of how the school is supporting pupils and how much this is costing. Teachers and support assistants provide observations and records which help management to make a sound assessment and adapt the way staff are

deployed. However, the school does not yet analyse information on the progress of individual pupils in order to try to quantify the effectiveness of the support provided.

58. Currently, administration of the school and its finances is effective. The school applies good value principles in its spending and in agreeing contracts. Governors maintain a close check on finances and plan spending well to support school developments. The school makes good use of the headteacher's success in identifying and obtaining grants for initiatives such as funding extra teachers, support workers and extra curricular activities. The one area which the school is not yet evaluating closely enough is the effectiveness of how it deploys assistant staff in support classes. The school makes appropriate use of new technology in general and financial administration.
59. The pupils benefit from a staff of well-trained and experienced teachers and learning support assistants who support one another and are unified by the headteacher into a purposeful team. Their areas of expertise suitably cover the curriculum and the age range of the school and their extra-curricular interests complement each other well to provide a good range of activities outside of lesson times. The school has provided particularly good support for a teacher joining the school from overseas. The site agent is a valuable, willing and flexible member of staff who is very involved in school life. He also coaches the very successful soccer team in his spare time.
60. Everyone benefits from the extensive accommodation the school has available, although the management is aware of the heavy cost implication of using the whole building. Classrooms are plentiful and the suite of rooms for younger children provides plentiful space for them to move freely from one activity to another. Not only are there many specialist rooms, such as a beautifully presented library, a new computer suite and two large halls - one for physical education and one equipped with a stage, curtains and lighting - for the pupils, there are also rooms for parents and the community to use. Outside the pupils have access to very large playing fields, which are also used for area sports events, playgrounds, a swimming pool and well resourced, fenced off play areas for the youngest children.
61. Teaching resources are adequate across the whole curriculum. They are good for the youngest children, who have access to a wide range of construction equipment, puzzles, games and large play apparatus, including a climbing frame. Whilst English and mathematics have sufficient resources other subjects, such as science, art and design and technology, are continuing to build up their resources as the school changes the organisation of the curriculum following the change from mixed age classes to mostly single age classes. This means that new equipment is being purchased prior to starting a new topic.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

62. In order to improve the good standards in the school, the governors, headteacher and staff should:
- improve the progress of pupils with special educational needs by:
    - providing more structured support to these pupils in class;
    - creating a better link between pupils' learning in class and the activities which they carry out in withdrawal groups;
    - reviewing individual education plans more frequently;  
*(Paragraphs 3, 23, 25, 45, 57, 83, 96)*
  - improve assessment procedures to help staff identify and record precisely how well pupils are developing skills in literacy, numeracy and science and link these to setting individual targets for pupils;  
*(Paragraphs 20, 43, 67, 91, 109, 113, 117, 124, 129, 137)*
  - raise pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy by:
    - extending pupils' spoken and written vocabulary, especially in science;
    - developing pupils' use of numeracy in subjects like science and design technology and in using information and communication technology to develop their learning;  
*(Paragraphs 3-4, 83, 85, 91, 93, 124)*
  - simplify the way the school defines development priorities to help focus attention on the immediate steps needed for improvements.  
*(Paragraphs 54-55, 100, 105)*
63. In addition, governors should continue to promote pupils' attendance in all ways possible.  
*(Paragraphs 40, 15)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	37
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	28

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	2	5	17	13	0	0	0
Percentage	5	14	46	35	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	21	188
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/a	75

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2	63

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	27

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.5
National comparative data	5.6

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	25	12	37

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	20	20
	Girls	10	11	11
	Total	27	31	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	75	83	84
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20	20	22
	Girls	11	11	11
	Total	31	31	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	84	84	89
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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



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

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

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

<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
166	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
3	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
5	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR-Y4**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.9
Average class size	29

#### **Education support staff: YR-Y4**

Total number of education support staff	10.5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	198

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20
Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	50
Number of pupils per FTE adult	7

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001-2002
	£
Total income	616,059
Total expenditure	628,469
Expenditure per pupil	3,111
Balance brought forward from previous year	18,642
Balance carried forward to next year	6,232

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	12
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
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 44%**

Number of questionnaires sent out	189
Number of questionnaires returned	83

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	24	0	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	65	33	1	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	59	37	2	2	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	44	34	15	3	4
The teaching is good.	67	31	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	50	35	11	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	30	5	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	31	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	50	36	13	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	55	29	6	4	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	62	29	6	2	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	41	36	10	4	9

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

64. Children join the nursery in the term after they are three. Most spend one year in the nursery but a few who are born early in the school year could have five terms of nursery education. Children transfer to the reception class in the September of the year in which they will be five. September to December birthdays start full time immediately with the others attending part time initially and gradually becoming full time. All the children come from the surrounding area and most have had little or no organised pre-school experience.
65. The school assesses pupils initially in the nursery, and their attainment is very low. Children have very limited spoken vocabularies, counting skills are weak and many cannot hold a paint brush and use it. When they leave reception class the majority have not achieved the targets in the key aspects of English, mathematics, personal development and knowledge and understanding of the world, though many do in physical and creative development. This represents good progress over the two years. Pupils who have had five terms in the nursery are making more progress than their younger classmates. Some pupils have already been identified as having special educational needs, often on medical grounds. These pupils are fully integrated into the classes and make good progress towards their targets because, with current low numbers in both classes, adults can give them a great deal of individual attention.
66. The accommodation and resources for Foundation Stage are very good. Each class uses two classrooms, which gives them plenty of space to separate the messy activities like sand and water from the quieter activities like the role-play areas. Equipment is plentiful in both classes and it is used frequently and well to promote learning. The outside area for the nursery is very good with hard and grass sections, facilities for pupils to use sand and digging areas, a small house and climbing equipment. There are a sufficient number of toys to allow sharing but also to promote movement and skills like tricycle riding. The reception play area is large but is awaiting further development until after a new Neighbourhood Nursery is built on adjacent land.
67. The teachers are currently developing a method of recording children's attainment and progress. They closely observe children, record the reaching of certain skills or knowledge, and use a form of initial assessment. Some of the day-to-day assessment is relatively informal and does not influence planning sufficiently. This means that teaching is not properly linked to the children's needs. There is still some work to do to make assessment useful and to ensure that records are relevant and manageable.

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

68. Teachers have promoted this aspect very well. The children are making good progress from a low starting point. The children generally behave well in both classes, though a few still show signs of aggression. They are keen to learn and take part in the activities on offer as well as to develop their own 'games' in the role-play area or outside. Sharing is not yet a strong feature in either class mainly because children come to school believing 'might is right'. This was seen in a nursery activity on sorting when one boy grabbed all the yellow cars from another boy. Children are beginning to develop independence but many wait to be directed by adults. There is not enough emphasis on this aspect in planning so resources are not prepared in advance to increase children's opportunity to make choices. Registration is a welcoming time when teachers have time to chat with parents and children leave their parents with confidence and from a very young age. Despite all this good work by the teachers the majority of children leave the Foundation Stage without having fully achieved the targets in this aspect.

## Communication, language and literacy

69. Children's communication skills are very low when they enter the nursery. Despite good teaching and good progress among the children, most will not reach the expected levels by the end of reception class. Teaching places a strong emphasis on learning letter sounds and shapes to promote both reading and writing skills. Activities are also well planned to develop children's ability to communicate fully with others. Nursery children are encouraged to speak clearly and listen carefully. Teachers look for appropriate responses during directed sessions like sorting by colour. A question and answer session is an important part of the early morning routine. In reception children are expected to respond using sentences or phrases rather than one word answers and the quality of their responses is improving. Children were expected to pay close attention during a mathematics session so that they would know what group they were in.
70. Teachers focus on children's names and the letters contained. At the beginning of the day nursery children find their own name, usually by locating the first letter. In reception children write their own name by copying from a card, which they first have to locate. Children share books together well and recall the basic facts about them but some have no books at home nor do they go to the district library very often. Higher attainers sometimes quote passages verbatim, like the giant's words from 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. Teachers are good at raising children's interest in books. In nursery the teacher successfully involves children in telling the story as they read a book together. In reception there is a lively book corner which is a wonderful place in which children play and read quietly. Most children hold the book correctly, turn the pages in the correct way and can identify the title and author.
71. Learning the shapes which make up our alphabet and the sounds the letters make are given high priority. Teachers speak clearly with the correct emphasis on the first letter or sound of a word. Sheets of extra practice are also available in the 'office' role-play area and children pop in and select one at will. They get their name card to write their name and even correct it themselves! There are very good opportunities for children to experiment with writing in the reception role-play areas. One wrote a shopping list whilst in the home corner and another completed a party invitation.

## Mathematical development

72. Initially children have little awareness of number or other mathematical concepts and their knowledge of songs and rhymes is also very weak. Teachers present a good range of well-planned activities to develop children's counting skills and their understanding of ideas like 'more than' or 'less than'. Children make satisfactory progress but by the end of reception many do not reach the expected levels of knowledge and understanding. Children cheerfully join in with singing number songs or help create displays like 'Five little speckled frogs'. They learn to sort objects by colour and other characteristics. The nursery teacher taught this aspect very well when teaching about 'red' and 'not red'. She queried many of the children's correct responses and got them to try to justify their choice. The children loved the game and knew they were right but found it difficult to explain why. A whole class activity in reception on length was less successful because it tried to teach too much too quickly. Children understood the difference between long and short but were confused by ideas such as 'longer and shorter' and 'longest'. The teacher concentrated on the simpler aspects and children progressed well through activities such as snake building, making long mouse-tails and train tracks.
73. The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy in reception is demanding for most of these children at this stage of the school year. They do not have the concentration to maintain attention for a prolonged session. Teaching is therefore introducing them to

mental activities and singing, and incorporating mathematical concepts and vocabulary into everyday situations, as in counting all the children present at registration.

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

74. Nearly all children enter the nursery with a very limited knowledge of the world in which they live. Through the two classes they all make good progress because of the rich range of learning opportunities they are presented with. However, most children do not reach the expected levels for this aspect by the age of five. Children explore sensory experiences very well in the nursery. There is a very well prepared display of items which children can look through (such as kaleidoscopes), taste (red berries), feel (books with patches to touch), hear and smell. Children love to play with this display and chat merrily about what their senses tell them. They use the computer with limited understanding of how to control it after only four weeks in school. In reception children are much more confident with technology. They listen to a tape on a tape recorder, use the mouse to play on the computer and handle and control programmable models with great care. Teaching is good at setting precise targets for children to achieve encouraging the use of correct vocabulary, 'Can you get it to stop on leaf number 6 now?' Children know a saw is useful for cutting wood but not so good for jelly. They wonder at making jelly and how the cubes melt before their eyes. The next day they see it 'set' virtually solid. Some find it hard to understand how it goes back to liquid again even after 20 pairs of hands have stirred it.

### **Creative development**

75. The children are not good at playing imaginatively when they join the nursery but over the two years they are provided with ample opportunity to use their imaginations and experiment with their senses. By the end of reception most children are reaching the targets for this area. The very good displays in the nursery give children a good start. They experiment with the instruments to see what sounds can be made, taste 'red' fruit, feel jelly and smell everything. They talk excitedly about their discoveries. Painting and colouring activities are available in both rooms nearly everyday and the children love to draw 'for their mum', whilst model making is done at least weekly. Singing features in many activities and the children are learning a growing repertoire and join in cheerfully. Teachers have good subject knowledge in this area and know how to support children's learning through a very good range of activities, appropriate support, especially for pupils with special educational needs and sensible interventions to query understanding and to inject vocabulary.
76. The 'home corner' role-play areas in both classes are well equipped and stimulate children's imaginative play. They chat away on the telephone learning the convention of this type of conversation, write notes and party invitations or invite the teacher to tea. The nursery, however, did not provide enough different environments at the time of the inspection although different areas are introduced later in the year.

### **Physical development**

77. Children arrive at school able to walk and run quite well but many cannot skip or jump well and are unable to pick up and put down small objects with accuracy. Teachers offer a very good range of activities to children and they make good progress towards the early learning goals. Most attain the expected levels although they many have weak control of tools like pencils and scissors.
78. Teachers arrange high quality activities, which promote children's learning of how their body works and how to control their movements. In outdoor play children are encouraged to use equipment whilst being considerate of others and sharing when appropriate. Nursery children used the climbing apparatus well to explore 'under' and 'over' and one

child showed that she could crawl through the big barrel. Adults tend to 'stand to one side' during these sessions and do not improve children's learning by more active involvement. In reception children learned to 'tiptoe', move quickly and move like a giant as well as recalling body shapes. Whilst they moved in a variety of ways with a good awareness of those around them they have yet to learn to use the available space fully.

79. There are many opportunities for children to develop experience of using a variety of tools. This is a high priority for the children because they come to school with little experience. Children use play dough with a good range of cutters and shapes and they develop confidence well in both classes. All children are learning to use pencils and crayons and those in reception learn letter shapes and are starting to write their own names but their control is often slow to develop. Children also use tools like a hammer and saw under supervision, a computer mouse, spoons for jelly stirring and glue spreaders for joining with increasing accuracy.

## ENGLISH

80. Pupils attain standards which are below those expected for their age by Year 2 but they achieve levels which are in line with those attained in similar schools. By Year 4, pupils attain levels which are close to the national expectations and show a good level of achievement. Many pupils start in Reception with very limited skills and they make good progress as they advance through the school. Results in tests have improved significantly since the last inspection especially in the last year during which staffing arrangements have been more settled.
81. In 2002, pupils in Year 2 attained levels in the end of year tests which were well below the national average in reading and below average in writing. In comparison with the results achieved in similar schools, however, pupils achieved results in reading which were in line and results in writing which were above average. The attainment of boys and girls showed no significant difference in the last tests. Higher attaining pupils achieved good results which were well above those attained in similar schools, especially in writing and the majority of pupils progressed well. Lower ability pupils and those on the special educational needs register made satisfactory progress but more slowly than other pupils.
82. By the time pupils reach Year 4 they attain levels in reading close to those expected, which indicates good progress. Their attainment in writing is also close to the nationally expected levels and reflects improved teaching of the basic skills. Pupils' speaking and listening is close to the levels expected although the range of the vocabulary which they use is often limited and lower ability pupils lack fluency and confidence.
83. Speaking and listening skills are low when pupils enter Year 1 and continue to lag behind their other literacy skills for many pupils as they progress through the school. On entry to Year 1 pupils' skills are below those expected in all aspects of language. They are particularly limited in their speaking skills and many have only a short concentration span when they listen to instructions and conversations. By Year 2 pupils make good progress benefiting from opportunities to speak in assemblies as well as drama lessons and activities. They speak with more confidence and project their voices well when guided to do so. Higher ability pupils contribute well to discussions in class and explain their ideas with the expected level of fluency. They adapt their expressions to suit different listeners and provide detailed descriptions of the things they enjoy in books. By Year 3 pupils describe their feelings and reactions to problems such as bullying and all participate well. They listened closely to one another and took turns in making their observations. They spoke and listened very attentively in a well structured history lesson talking to visitors who had lived during World War II. In Year 4, average pupils express themselves at the expected levels and more able pupils are fluent. They listen well and take turns to speak in discussions on food technology and in history. There are, however, many pupils with

special educational needs who find it difficult to concentrate for long periods, and some of them disrupt discussions when they lose interest. They do not express themselves easily and do not have enough structured opportunities to develop their vocabulary and define their ideas. Their progress is sound but not as fast as their more able classmates.

84. Although pupils make good progress in reading, their attainment is low by the end of Year 2 but in line with the expected levels by the end of Year 4. Many pupils start in Year 1 with a very limited knowledge of letter shapes and sounds. In spite of daily repetition, games and reinforcement work, they often struggle to identify the initial letter sounds in words like 'p' for 'pig'. Throughout the school, pupils are given daily opportunities to read in class and teachers and class assistants support pupils well, hearing them read regularly. Most pupils say they like reading and enjoy books and take books home regularly to read with parents. There are significant numbers of pupils, however, who are not given support and encouragement to read at home as the home-school reading records show. Average and above average Year 2 pupils read well and discuss books with enthusiasm. They describe their favourite authors and know the difference between fiction and non-fiction. However, there is a high number of weaker readers in Year 2 who, in spite of support at school, make slow progress. In Year 3, standards are still below average over all but standards improve in Year 4. Pupils talk about using the library and encyclopaedia for research. Only books from the reading scheme are recorded on the reading records and higher attaining pupils are sometimes held back by following the reading scheme when they need more challenging material. However, in Year 4, pupils have a wider choice of books and boys in particular benefit from a range of non-fiction. The school has increased its supply of reading books and pupils' progress is being monitored much more rigorously and recorded in a standardised format in all classes. This is helping teachers to define exactly the skills and problems which pupils have and to take the correct steps to address them.
85. Over the last year, pupils' attainment in writing has improved considerably across the school as a more settled team of teachers has developed pupils' use of literacy skills in a number of subjects. Extended writing in geography and religious education has helped pupils become more confident in expressing themselves but pupils have relatively limited opportunities to write in science or to write using word processors. Most Year 1 pupils write their news in short recognisable phrases and their handwriting is generally well formed. However, a significant number have very limited skills and still only copy writing inaccurately. By the end of Year 2, the majority of pupils write in sentences and develop a satisfactory command of punctuation, using full stops and capitals. Their handwriting is still printed but neatly formed. They use only a limited vocabulary and the range of writing subjects is often restricted although pupils do well when sequencing events and writing descriptions of the Great Fire. By Year 4 pupils are learning to structure their stories, use a wider range of complex sentences and some have an understanding of paragraphing their work. In writing a complaints letter, pupils adopt more formal language and in descriptive writing they include adjectives to add interest: '*Cinderella was having a wonderful time until the clock began to strike*'. Higher attaining pupils incorporate speech marks correctly and attempt spelling well. Overall spelling has improved significantly as the results of tests at Years 2 and 4 indicate. Greater emphasis on learning spellings and regular reinforcement of rules has helped to raise pupils' attainment. Nonetheless, pupils do not use word banks and books as a matter of course to help them with their writing and the word books available for them were of limited value.
86. The quality of teaching is good overall with particularly good class management. In all lessons, teachers share objectives with pupils and refer to them during and at the end of the lesson to help pupils focus and consider how they are progressing. Planning is generally good and well linked across the different classes to ensure that all pupils follow the same programme where it is appropriate. The quality and use of assessment are being improved especially in reading but teachers do not yet follow a common system for assessing writing. The monitoring of speaking and listening skills is also underdeveloped



and teachers do not always place enough emphasis on reinforcing new vocabulary either orally or in displays. Lower ability pupils and those on the special educational needs register are withdrawn for good sessions which focus on their individual needs. However, in some classes all pupils attempt the same task and there is not enough support for pupils who have learning difficulties.

87. The co-ordinator has recently been appointed and has already had a strong impact on raising standards. She has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to maintain improvements. She has not had time to observe and support other teachers although she has monitored planning and pupils' work and discussed their attainment and progress with colleagues.

## **MATHEMATICS**

88. Pupils' attainment in Year 2 is below the level achieved nationally but they make good progress. By the time they leave school at the end of Year 4, they reach standards that are similar to those reached by pupils of this age nationally and their progress is good.
89. In Year 2 tests in 2002, results showed that attainment was well below the national average but in line with the levels achieved in similar schools. The number of pupils attaining the expected levels is higher than those in similar schools but the proportion of pupils achieving higher levels is lower than average. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 and 4 because of the good quality of teaching. By the end of Year 4, most pupils are achieving the levels expected nationally. There has been a good degree of improvement since the previous inspection with particularly strong increases in pupils attaining higher levels. Pupils start Year 1 with standards that are well below average for their age and they clearly progress well as they advance through the school. There are no marked differences between the performance of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress in relation to their prior attainment. Those pupils for whom English is an additional language make similar progress to their classmates.
90. The quality of teaching is good and the quality of learning reflects this. Pupils make good progress overall. Teachers have a good understanding of what needs to be taught and how to engage pupils' interest. They plan lessons with clear and achievable objectives. Teachers share these objectives with the class so that they know the direction the lesson is taking; this enhances pupils' progress. They structure the lessons well and provide introductions that help to set the scene for pupils' own work. In a Year 1 lesson, the teacher discussed what day it was and used pictures of the seasons to discuss the order of events. This helped to remind a significant number of pupils what day it actually was and by repeating the days of the week, helped them to remember that order. This led effectively to sequencing pictures of events. Pupils made good progress when doing this. In a Year 4 lesson, the teacher led pupils through finding totals of pairs of numbers by doubling, then different strategies for finding the total of two pairs of numbers. The teacher involved all pupils and encouraged them to explain their answers. This helped them to make good progress in mental arithmetic. These activities led very well into finding perimeters of rectangles, when pupils had to use the techniques they had just practised, as well as measuring the rectangles' sides. Consequently, they made good progress in mental addition, measuring using centimetres and metres and in finding perimeters. Another key feature of the good teaching is the good, and sometimes very good, relationships between teachers and pupils. Pupils in a mixed Years 2 and 3 class made good progress in using mental strategies when adding two numbers because they were motivated by the effective support they received. During the lesson, the teachers and the classroom assistant were encouraging, smiling and relaxed. This had a good impact on pupils' learning. They tried hard and enjoyed their activities. These relationships are an important part of

teachers' very good management of pupils' behaviour. In a Year 3 lesson, the teacher kept pupils well motivated through games, challenges and active participation. Consequently, they made good progress.

91. During the inspection, teachers planned work that matched pupils' needs adapting it to the abilities of different groups within the class. However, an examination of pupils' work shows that this does not always happen. Consequently, higher attaining pupils do not always make enough progress in mathematics especially in Years 1 and 2. There is not enough work done on problem solving, and opportunities are limited for pupils to extend their learning in using and applying their knowledge in practical activities in science and technology work. Opportunities for pupils to apply their learning in geography, history or through information and communication technology are also not specifically planned and were not evident in their work. Teachers keep pupils' work marked up to date but do not make enough comments about what each child needs to do to improve. In some cases where this is done, the pupils are not sure what the comment says.
92. Pupils' good responses and positive attitudes are key factors in their progress. They usually behave well, partly because of very good management by teachers and the brisk pace of lessons, as well as their own wish to succeed. Pupils listen carefully to teachers and take part in whole-class activities, for example when finding doubles while playing a game of number bingo. Their attitudes and behaviour help to ensure that they keep on task and complete reasonable amounts of work during lessons. Teachers deal with isolated instances of misbehaviour promptly and with good humour, so that these incidents do not have a negative impact on pupils' learning.
93. The subject is soundly led. The subject leader has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve standards. The school has recently agreed methods for measuring attainment and progress but these have not yet been fully implemented. The current procedures do not give enough guidance on individuals' strengths and areas for development, nor do they provide enough information that can be used in planning work. This means that higher attaining pupils are sometimes insufficiently challenged. The school successfully implements the National Numeracy Strategy, which has had a positive impact on pupils' skills in number. Teachers have a good understanding of how the strategy can be implemented and use the lesson structure to good advantage in keeping pupils interested and involved. This has a positive impact on their learning. Work in mathematics is supported by teachers' use of a commercial scheme that helps extend pupils' range of mathematical experiences. In a few cases, teachers use information and communications technology in lessons, for example creating pictograms of favourite pets. However, this use is at an early stage of development and, in general, teachers do not make enough use of the technology when teaching mathematics. A positive initiative has been the provision of a Family Numeracy course for a group of parents, run by the headteacher and an adult education teacher. The school feels that this has increased these parents' ability to support their children in numeracy.

## SCIENCE

94. Assessments of pupils' attainment at Year 2 have been rising over the last few years and in 2002 the number of pupils reaching the expected level was in line with the national average. There were fewer higher attaining pupils and the school believes, and inspection evidence bears this out, that this is connected with the lack of challenge in the arrangement of the topics covered. Pupils learned about materials, how magnets 'work', different sources of light and what makes night and day. The work was very similar for pupils of all ability levels and often consisted of work sheets. The school's analysis shows no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.
95. Pupils' work in Year 4 in 2002 indicates that they achieved standards in line with those found nationally. Pupils have learned the facts about germination of seeds, electricity and how things can be kept warm or cold but have not fully developed the concepts of formulating an experiment or recording the results, both of which are key parts of science.
96. Current pupils in Year 2 have weaknesses in their literacy skills. They are not as good as last year's class and this is also true of Year 4, where more than one third of the class have special needs. Whilst both groups of pupils have made generally good progress since joining Year 1, their overall standard by the end of this year is likely to be below the national average. Pupils with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress but their limited English skills and short attention spans mean that they need much support. Teachers do not indicate in their planning how they will simplify tasks for these pupils. The school provides a good level of individual support for younger pupils in science but does not do so currently for pupils in Year 4. The two pupils with English as an additional language have a satisfactory command of English and make good progress.
97. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory with some good aspects. Teachers introduce lessons well, share what will be learned and explain the activities to the pupils, though occasionally the explanations take too long. Activities are sometimes too directed by the teacher. This means that pupils do not get enough opportunity to predict what will happen or to develop their own experiments. In a Year 1 lesson the teacher encouraged pupils to consider the difference between running with a windmill and standing still and why this was. Pupils' answers demonstrated that their spoken English was weak and that their scientific vocabulary needed a great deal more work. Resources are used well and the pupils are delighted to work with them, handling everything with great care. Occasionally in Year 2 they get over excited and misuse equipment. However, they are very keen to learn and work hard at the activities. Recording is generally done on work sheets, which give pupils little scope to practise their English skills. The written work that all pupils did on night and day was very similar and indicates that the teacher told them what to write and how to write it. The school agrees that pupils' recording skills are limited by their English skills. Teachers' marking of work is accurate but is limited to ticks and the occasional written comment. They do not guide pupils to the next stage of their learning by setting targets.
98. Teaching in Years 3 and 4 is good. The concepts of a fair test and of making predictions about what might happen are taught well, as they were when Year 3 predicted what will happen to the tooth in the sugary drink. The 'fair test' idea is used often and pupils are becoming more rigorous in its application, as when considering the amount of toothpaste on each brush. Teachers use probing questions well to find out what pupils know or have learned, including those with special educational needs. They rightly attach great importance to the use of the correct vocabulary and encourage the pupils to use it too. Two good examples of this are 'series' and 'parallel' circuits when working with electricity last year and 'canine', 'incisor' and 'molar' during a Year 4 lesson on teeth.

99. Pupils enjoyed their lessons on teeth, used the computer sensibly and accurately and co-operated well with their partners during the activity on 'How many teeth have you got?' There are very positive relationships between teachers and pupils and a sense of fun pervades in Year 3, especially when 'Miss' uses the disclosing tablet and her mouth goes bright pink! Usually everyone does the same task. This does not present the most able with sufficient challenge, as in work on circuits where pupils could have been stimulated by making a circuit with two switches. It also does not give the less able a decent chance to succeed because the language is often too difficult for them. Again teachers' marking does not give pupils sufficient idea of how they can improve.
100. The school has not focused significant resources on the subject while it has had other important priorities to meet. This, coupled with the fact that the co-ordinator has many other posts of responsibility, has meant that science has not had the same attention and thus standards have fallen since the last inspection. The co-ordinator has a sound action plan to improve the provision for the subject but needs the time to implement it fully. The school also plans to review the current two-year programme of topics, particularly in Years 3 and 4, in order to challenge the higher attaining pupils.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

101. Because of the school's timetable it was only possible to observe one lesson during the inspection and judgements are therefore based on discussions with the co-ordinator and observation of the displays in classrooms and corridors around the school.
102. Quality displays show that teachers have presented pupils' work thoughtfully and that pupils are proud of their work. This helps to raise pupils' self-esteem and gives everyone standards to aim for. The work shows that pupils use a good range of media in both two and three dimensions and indicates that standards by the age of seven are broadly in line with those expected nationally. This represents good progress through Years 1 and 2 because pupils enter Year 1 with limited skills, despite two good years in nursery and reception. Standards in Years 3 and 4 are sound and pupils are reaching the nationally expected standards. Their portraits of kings and queens show good detail, with the positions of the main features being correct. Pupils with special needs make progress similar to their classmates for two main reasons: tasks are given orally and pupils are supported by those around them. Those with limited concentration find it easier to focus on this type of practical task.
103. The one lesson observed was of a high standard. The teacher had prepared an interesting range of activities which were integrated into a religious education lesson. She gave a good explanation of what to do and rounded up the lesson by revisiting what the pupils had learned. The pupils' response was very positive, indeed every pupil spoken to enjoyed art lessons. They showed good skill in the use of chalks and very careful use of printing inks. At the same time two pupils were using a computer program to draw a similar picture of a church.
104. The subject plays a positive role in pupils' personal development. They are learning about different styles of painting such as the work of Monet, as well as from different cultures like the Aboriginal stick paintings in Year 4 and the Maori masks made by Years 1 and 2. The school is starting to make use of computers within art. The 'Mr Men' pictures in Year 2 and the excellent pictures in the style of Mondrian in Year 4 are a positive start.
105. The co-ordinator has made a positive start to her new post. The portfolio of pupils' work is a major step forward although it has not been shared with colleagues yet. She has monitored teachers' planning, the work the pupils do and checked available resources. The action plan is over-ambitious and quite loosely worded.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

106. Only one design and technology lesson was seen during the inspection. Judgements are based on a scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers' planning and information from the subjects' co-ordinator.
107. It is not possible to make judgements on standards of attainment in Years 2 and 4 because there were not enough examples of their work available at this early point of the school year. Nor is it possible to make judgements in teaching because no design and technology lessons for Years 1 and 2 were seen during the inspection. However, examples of work, such as the wrapping paper created by Year 4 pupils, 'Joseph's Coats' made in Years 1 and 2, discussions with the subject co-ordinator and the school's use of government recommended guidelines for teaching show that provision is satisfactory.
108. Year 4 pupils reached sound standards in a food technology lesson. They made good progress in this lesson because of good teaching. The teacher built well on work that pupils have already done on tasting bread and sandwich fillings to teach about safety and hygiene procedures in food preparation. She used the available support well, with one group learning safe cooker procedures whilst boiling eggs. The lesson was well prepared and actively engaged the pupils. This meant that they were interested and careful to follow the hygiene principles they were learning. They made good progress in understanding these procedures and were able to explain reasons for, for example, tying hair back and washing hands, and why saucepan handles should be turned inwards. At the same time, they increased their understanding of why sandwiches are made in certain ways because the cucumber and tomato fell through the bread in a sandwich made without a spread.
109. The school has adopted the government's recommended guidelines for the subject and planning shows that these guidelines are now central to the teaching of design and technology throughout the school. However, the school has not yet developed effective procedures for measuring and recording what pupils have learned.

## GEOGRAPHY

110. Only one lesson took place and was observed during the inspection. Judgements are based on looking at pupils' work in books and on display, and by talking to staff and pupils. Standards by Year 2 and Year 4 are in line with national expectations. There was no judgement made on standards in the last inspection. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress in their learning. The school has focused strongly on raising standards in literacy and numeracy, which has limited the time allocated to raising standards in geography. However, the school has made good use of national subject guidance to improve the coverage of all the required aspects. It is improving resources such as those relating to other countries, the local area and weather. Teaching makes good use of the local environment to extend pupils' knowledge of the immediate locality.
111. Years 1 and 2 pupils develop their early mapping skills soundly by making a sketch map of the route which they took on a recent local visit to a shopping complex. In tasks which were well matched to their abilities, pupils recorded the key places which they passed, the main buildings of the complex or constructed a three-dimensional model of the buildings. They have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the local area and talk about features such as different shops, the people who work there and the services which the shops provide. Pupils have limited vocabulary and experience and some define a chemist's as not a 'usual shop' but cannot explain what it offers. Similarly, others describe a hairdresser's as a 'haircut shop. It cuts your hair'. The class teacher maintains pupils' interest very well in discussing and looking at pictures taken with the digital camera on the

excursion. Pupils' listening skills are satisfactory but their speaking skills are below those expected for their age. Pupils demonstrate satisfactory literacy skills in writing linked to the subject. Year 2 pupils write letters to a 'grannie' living on an imaginary Scottish island in which they make good comparisons between the different locations especially regarding the weather and people they might meet.

112. By Year 4 pupils extend their knowledge of maps and symbols in looking at invaders in history and where they made their homes. They track the routes taken by Romans and Vikings and the roads and townships they made. In conversation, pupils have a sound knowledge of the reasons why settlers came. They know why they chose places to build their townships with available water and easy communications. They describe how settlements have developed and the impact this has had on the environment. Pupils also learned about Japan during the summer term in studies linked to the World Cup. Pupils copied notes rather than developed their own but did learn some of the differences between Japan and the UK in respect of weather, towns and buildings. Pupils have a basic understanding of UK locations but as yet an imprecise notion of comparative distances between places.
113. There was not enough evidence to give a judgement on the quality of teaching. An analysis of pupils' work and talking to teachers and pupils indicate that both teaching and learning are sound. Curriculum planning has strengthened the links between geography and subjects such as literacy and history but there is still work to be done to extend numeracy skills through the subject. The co-ordinator is new to the role but has begun to monitor planning and improve resources. She is conscious of the need to incorporate greater use of information and communication technology in pupils' learning. Teachers keep weekly records of the work covered annotated by a basic evaluation of teaching effectiveness. However, procedures to assess pupils' work and monitor and evaluate teaching and learning have not been established. As a result, the school cannot identify the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning.

## HISTORY

114. Pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations by Years 2 and 4. During the inspection, three lessons took place in Years 3 and 4 and were observed. No overall judgements can be made about teaching but the evidence from the inspection indicates that pupils make sound progress. No judgement was made in the last inspection. Pupils have a good idea of elementary chronology by Year 2 as a result of studying what their parents and grandparents had as toys and the way people lived 20 and 40 years ago. By Year 4, pupils have some insight into the different sources of evidence and have satisfactorily covered the range of topics expected in the National Curriculum.
115. By Year 2, pupils have a satisfactory understanding of how their own lives have changed since they started school. They compare the toys which they played with as a baby and those they like now. They also learn about people, events and clothes associated with different historical characters like Samuel Pepys and Florence Nightingale. They have a satisfactory appreciation of why people acted as they did in the past. They know the fire of London spread rapidly because houses were made of wood and they understand that hygiene in hospitals has improved from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century when hospitals were '*dirty and disgusting*'.
116. By Year 4 pupils have acquired a satisfactory knowledge of British, world and local history. Teaching follows the national guidelines and introduces pupils to the expected range of skills. In their books, pupils demonstrate a sound understanding of invaders and settlers in studies which are well linked to geography. They develop a satisfactory understanding of chronology in creating a time-line of events. During the inspection, pupils were studying the World War II and most had a good knowledge of the key events. Pupils in Year 3 were

fascinated by first hand accounts of the 'black outs' and retained a wealth of knowledge from speaking to grandparents and visitors. Pupils in Year 4 were less attentive to a taped account although they settled and were interested in the story as it developed. In these lessons, higher and average attainers made good progress overall and reflected this with good questioning and recall of details. In Year 3, lower ability pupils were well supported by a classroom assistant who helped them prepare questions and note them down. As a result they made good progress. In Year 4, lower ability pupils needed more focussed guidance on what to listen to in a taped account of an air raid and as a result found it difficult to answer questions afterwards.

117. Teaching is good. Teachers use well planned methods of making history come alive through the use of tapes, videos and visitors. Pupils learn to identify a variety of sources of information and know how to research in books using the index and contents. They have limited access to ICT but this is under development. Teachers' development of pupils' literacy skills in the subject vary considerably. Few written accounts were evident in their books but there were many shared and copied notes. In discussion sessions, however, pupils were given a good stimulus to speaking and listening which makes a valuable contribution to their learning. Assessment is informal and does not regularly record the skills which pupils need to acquire.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

118. By the time pupils reach Year 2 and Year 4, standards of attainment are similar to those expected nationally at these stages. Pupils make sound progress, which represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection when pupils were not making enough progress.
119. The quality of teaching is sound throughout the school with some good elements. This results in a satisfactory quality of learning for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. The use of the new computer suite and the increasing confidence of teachers have been key factors in reaching this standard. The school has adopted the government's guidelines for teaching the subject. This also helps to ensure that teachers cover the required skills and understanding, including the control and modelling aspects that were lacking at the time of the last inspection.
120. Because of the quality of teaching, pupils make sound progress. Teachers plan lessons carefully and their lessons successfully match the requirements of the pupils with what needs to be taught. Teachers share the purpose of the lessons with the pupils which helps all to understand what needs to be done so they stay focused during the activities. Teachers have a good understanding and knowledge of the programs they are using and the skills they are teaching. This means that their introductions are purposeful and to the point, although the school still suffers from the lack of a suitably large demonstration screen. With only a small monitor to observe, not all pupils can see clearly enough and this sometimes means that they need a good deal of support at the beginning of group activities. In a mixed Years 2 and 3 lesson, pupils effectively used a painting program to create 'Mr Men' pictures using line and colour. The teacher knew the program well and so could point out its important aspects as well as using and reinforcing the appropriate vocabulary, such as 'fill' and 'brush'. She explained clearly how to achieve effects such as changing line thickness or colour. However, when the pupils began their own work, a few were a little unsure because they had not followed the demonstration closely enough. However, there was a good level of adult support in the classroom, and these pupils were soon put on the right track. Other pupils have produced colourful and attractive wrapping paper using similar programs.

121. A Year 3 teacher faced similar challenges during the introduction to a word processing lesson where pupils learned to use the computer to edit a passage. The teacher made sure that the class knew the purposes of the lesson and had completed some preparatory work with printed text. She had prepared the lesson well, including loading the text into the program so that pupils did not have to waste time typing it in themselves. She explained the lesson using appropriate vocabulary and detailing how to use the editing tools. However, not all pupils could see the demonstration clearly enough, but they were also well supported. The teacher rounded off the lesson well by encouraging a discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of using information and communications technology in this way.
122. The quality of teaching helps to meet, develop and utilise pupils' positive attitudes to learning. All pupils are interested and work well together, discussing their work and sharing activities. Rarely, one member of a pair will be too helpful and take over the activity when the other is unsure. This means that progress slows for that pupil for a short time. Occasionally, pupils will become a little too noisy in their discussions, but respond quickly and amenably to the request for quietness.
123. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 use computers effectively to change the appearance of text when they turn a conventionally written poem into one with shaped and coloured words that enhance its appearance and meaning. They enter instructions into a computer program to move an on-screen turtle in certain directions. Other examples of work around the school, such as pictures in the style of Kandinsky, underline the sound progress that pupils are making.
124. Teachers are increasingly confident in using and teaching information and communications technology. Most have taken part in training aimed at developing their understanding of how to use the technology in teaching. They are beginning to use information and communications technology effectively in teaching and learning in other subjects. A class took photographs, using a digital camera, of a local church. During an art lesson, the teacher used these photographs well to stimulate work on line and pattern. One activity involved pupils using their skills with the painting program to produce a picture of the church. Another teacher had produced an assessment worksheet that checked pupils' knowledge of Jewish artefacts. However, the use of information and communications technology is not yet firmly planned into other subjects, and not enough work is yet done consistently to support literacy and numeracy. The school has recognised this and has plans to redress this balance. Another positive factor is the good leadership provided by the subject co-ordinator. She has been instrumental in guiding the development of the subject and helping to raise standards since the previous inspection. One of these developments is to devise a way of finding out and recording what pupils have learned so that this information can be used to guide teaching and planning.

## **MUSIC**

125. Music has a high profile in the school and has much improved over the last five years, thanks mainly to the tireless work of the co-ordinator. She leads by example in that she is a very good music teacher herself but she also uses her musical writing skills, the choir and the instrument tuition lessons to show pupils what joy can be gained from music. Thus, pupils of all ages want to sing, play and perform and do so with confidence. Staff are also now more confident to teach the subject and recognise that, when needed, support is at hand.
126. There is little recorded work in music so judgements are based on two lesson observations, singing in assembly, instrument tuition and a review of the school's most recent productions. Pupils enter Year 1 having learned a range of songs and experienced making sounds with instruments and other play items. Pupils make good progress and by



seven years of age are meeting the expected standards. They are taught well by teachers, who are guided by a published scheme which covers the requirements for this age group. In Year 1 the teacher challenged her pupils to re-enact a story which they had created earlier about an owl. They then repeated the story using instruments to represent the main characters. Pupils were not given a lot of freedom to develop their own ideas but they sang and played well, recorded their efforts and were asked to criticise it in order to improve it next time. They were very keen to take part, played their instruments in the correct way and with good control. Their lack of previous experience of criticising their own work and their very limited language skills inhibited the final part of the lesson but one pupil departed the classroom saying, 'That was great, Miss. When can we do it again?'

127. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 and 4 and are on course to meet the national standard by the age of 11 years. They continue to perform very confidently in assembly and in school musicals. Singing is of a high standard with the pupils showing good control and clear diction. The Year 3 lesson observed was of a very high standard. The teacher demonstrated excellent subject knowledge by adapting a difficult 'clapping' task to the ability of her pupils by breaking it down into tiny parts and then building it back up in to the 'whole'. The pupils knew the value of the basic notes and clapped out the different rhythms well. They were confident to clap sequentially and in the round. Their singing was beautiful. Pupils with special education needs were able to join in this practical lesson and make steady progress by observing the teacher and their friends and copying their rhythms, as did the pupil identified as having English as an additional language.
128. Instrument tuition is of a high standard but relatively new to the current group of pupils. The violinists and cellists practise hard and perform in assemblies. The choir is of good quality and the shows are of a particularly high standard. The good range of music experienced in lessons and all of these additional aspects of music contribute positively to pupils' personal development.
129. The school makes insufficient use of ICT in this subject and lacks some of the resources, such as keyboards, to undertake such work. The co-ordinator does not monitor teaching and learning sufficiently closely and only a loose and informal assessment system is in place.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

130. Only two dance lessons took place during the inspection and were observed. The standards which pupils demonstrated in the lessons seen were in line with those expected from pupils of their age. Pupils participate enthusiastically in the many sports activities provided both in class and in out of school clubs. There was no judgement on standards at the last inspection.
131. The school has good facilities indoors and outdoors to teach all games, gymnastic and dance skills as well as giving swimming instruction to pupils in the summer. Records indicate that pupils attain the expected levels in games and swimming but no judgement can be made about gymnastics. Year 1 pupils moved to music with good attention to instructions from their class teacher and a recorded tape. They used the available space well and adapted their walking, arm and body positions to imitate creatures of the seaside. Pupils' attention is limited but the class teacher's skilful reinforcement and change of pace maintained their interest and concentration. Pupils generally worked as individuals and spent little time closely observing one another to learn how to improve their performances. In Year 4 pupils followed detailed instructions from the class teacher and a tape to develop their awareness of Indian dance customs. This followed on a recent demonstration by a visiting dancer and pupils strove hard to capture the intricacy of hand and head movements expected of them. The teacher and classroom assistant provided good role models and led the session well ensuring the happy and willing participation of all pupils.

Most pupils attained good results and sequenced the movements well in time to the music. All listened closely to the explanations of what was expected but their speaking was not developed. There were not enough opportunities for pupils to observe one another and comment or suggest improvements. Pupils were not encouraged to evaluate their performances and those of others.

132. The school's programme of study covers all the required elements of the subject. The headteacher is coordinating the subject for the interim. She has carried out an audit of resources and planning but has not yet had time to observe teaching formally. Teachers use national guidance and commercial schemes, and further support is scheduled with the help of secondary school staff. Resources are good and well used. Pupils' experience of games is much enhanced by the out of school clubs and sporting activities which the school organises well. Pupils participate keenly in football, netball, Kwik Cricket and gymnastics. This has a positive impact on pupils' social skills as well as their sporting attainment. The school organises inter-school matches and athletic competitions as well as taking part in local sporting events which are much enjoyed by pupils.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

133. By Year 2, pupils reach standards of attainment similar to those expected for their age. Similarly, in Year 4 they achieve the levels expected. This reflects the judgements made at the time of the previous inspection.
134. The quality of teaching is good overall. Pupils start Year 1 with little understanding of religion and belief. Many do not know what their own religion is and lack any understanding of belief. However, through good teaching, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress in their understanding. By the time they leave school after Year 4, pupils know that the main religion of this country is Christianity and that the Bible contains details of Jesus' life and teaching. They know some stories from the Bible and that they have meanings which are important in their lives. Teachers plan lessons based on the Bedfordshire Agreed Syllabus for religious education. They make these relevant to pupils' lives. Pupils learn that there are meanings behind ceremonies that they are familiar with. Year 1 pupils contributed to a display of photographs that show important celebrations they have experienced, ranging from weddings to parties. Teachers plan effective lessons that build on pupils' understanding. These help them to realise that these celebrations have a purpose. Pupils learned the story of Jesus' first miracle at the wedding in Cana. The teachers used good methods, telling the story first, and then using role-play so that the children could act it out. Many were amazed to see the clear water that they themselves poured into an earthenware jug had turned into 'wine' when it was poured into glasses! This, and the ensuing discussion, helped to ensure that the pupils made good progress. Because the pupils were actively engaged, they were interested, keen to start and complete their tasks.
135. Teachers in the Years 3 and 4 maintain this interest. Pupils make sound progress as they extend their knowledge and look more deeply into religious practices and consider the meanings of belief. One teacher used her good subject knowledge, coupled with replica artefacts, to extend Year 4's knowledge and understanding of Judaism and the celebration of Bar- and Bat-Mitzvah as the beginning of a time of increased responsibility. The lesson was well structured and used a recorded television programme as a satisfactory introduction. The lesson came to life when one pupil was dressed in the way a boy taking part in a Bar-Mitzvah celebration is dressed, and the meanings and purposes of the different religious artefacts were discussed. The lesson was interesting and held pupils' attention well, enabling them to make good progress and encouraging them to persevere at their written work. However, the teacher missed opportunities to discuss the ways that pupils could take increasing responsibilities in their own lives, even though these opportunities were planned into the pupils' work. The teacher used information and

communications technology effectively in producing a worksheet on which pupils had to match the name of an artefact with a picture of that item.

136. An examination of pupils' work from the previous year confirms that teachers are meeting the requirements of the agreed syllabus in teaching about Christianity and some of the other major world faiths. These include Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. Pupils learn that there are common elements of these faiths, such as the importance of water in religious ritual. The school's assembly calendar shows that Christian festivals, such as Harvest festival, are celebrated. Celebrations from other religions, such as Eid and Diwali, are also recognised. In this way, the subject makes a positive contribution to pupils' cultural, as well as spiritual, development.
137. The newly appointed coordinator has begun the process of ensuring that the agreed syllabus is taught in a way that ensures pupils learn ideas and information in an appropriate way. At the moment, there are no effective systems for recording what pupils know and understand, so there is a lack of information that would be useful in planning work for groups and individuals. Resources are adequate for what is being taught now, but there is a shortage of printed materials and artefacts for teaching about other major world religions.