

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **THE RUSSELL PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117098

Headteacher: Mr D J Peel

Reporting inspector: C D Loizou  
18645

Dates of inspection: 23 – 26 June 2003

Inspection number: 247719

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Brushwood Drive Chorleywood Rickmansworth Hertfordshire
Postcode:	WD3 5RR
Telephone number:	01923 284272
Fax number:	01923 285812
E-mail address:	admin.Russell@thegrid.org.uk
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs P Cunnings
Date of previous inspection:	2 February 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
18645	C D Loizou	Registered inspector	Science Information and communication technology French Music Physical education	How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9736	J Brasier	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22990	C B Furniss	Team inspector	Educational inclusion English Geography History Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
22113	A King	Team inspector	Foundation stage Special educational needs Mathematics Art and design Design and technology	

The inspection contractor was:

*PkR* Educational Consultants Ltd  
6 Sherman Road  
Bromley  
Kent  
BR1 3JH

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33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The Russell Primary school celebrates its 'Golden Jubilee' fiftieth year this year. It is situated in Chorleywood in Hertfordshire. The school is very popular and has established a reputation for achieving very good standards and for its musical and sporting achievements. The school is average in size compared with other primary schools and admits up to 30 pupils into its Reception class. There are 209 pupils on roll between the ages of four and eleven and they are taught in seven classes. The school also has a part-time (mornings) Nursery, which admits up to 30 three-year-old children. Nearly all of the pupils are of white heritage and all speak English as their first language. Attainment on entry is above the standards expected nationally for pupils starting Reception. Less than one per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well below the national average. Nine per cent of the pupils have special educational needs, which is below average and less than one per cent (below average) have a Statement of Special Educational Need.

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

This is a very good school with a notable number of outstanding and excellent features. The pupils achieve very well. Standards are well above average in mathematics and science and the pupils achieve high standards in English, music and physical education by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Standards in other subjects are above average, however, information and communication and technology standards, although above average, could be higher. Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school. The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher, governors and senior staff. The school provides very good value for money.

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

- The pupils achieve very well and reach well above average standards in English, mathematics and science.
- The pupils achieve well above average standards in music and physical education and standards in other subjects are above average.
- The teaching is very good and is having a positive impact on learning and standards.
- The pupils enjoy learning, showing excellent attitudes to school and their work and relationships are excellent across the school. The pupils are very well behaved.
- The leadership and management of the school are very good at all levels. The headteacher in particular, provides very effective leadership, purpose and direction for the school.
- The personal development of the pupils is very good and the school provides an excellent range of activities outside school times.
- Parents think highly of the school and make very significant contributions to their children's learning at home and in school.

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

- The use of information and communication technology to support and enhance the pupils' learning in other subjects.

*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 February 1998 and has made very good progress since then. All the key issues from the last inspection have been successfully addressed. It has improved the curriculum and the teaching, particularly for infant pupils. The school has also been successful in improving its assessment procedures including the way that teachers mark the pupils' work. Standards in English, mathematics and science have continued to improve and the school now uses good procedures to monitor how well the pupils are doing in all subjects. Consequently, schemes of work and long term plans for all subjects now guide the teachers' planning. The school's capacity and shared commitment amongst the staff for further improvement are very good.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	A	A*	A*	A
Mathematics	A	A	A	B
Science	A	B	A	C

Key	
well above average in the top 5% of schools	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

(The 'similar' in the table above refers to the percentage of free school meals and not the size of the school.)

The 2002 tests for Year 6 show that the school's results were well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. English results have been in the highest five per cent of schools nationally over the last two years and both English and mathematics results compared well with similar schools. Science standards have improved and current standards confirm this sustained improvement as they are well above average in all three subjects by the end of Year 6. Inspection evidence confirms that standards in Year 6 are currently well above those expected in all three subjects. The school's performance in national tests has kept up with the national trend of rising standards. The school's test results have exceeded its targets for both infant and junior pupils.

The performance of the pupils in the national tests for Year 2 are similarly well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers' assessments in science showed above average standards last year but more Year 2 pupils could have achieved the higher levels. Inspection evidence confirms that standards have improved and are well above average in all areas, including science. The pupils achieve very well and standards in speaking, listening, reading, writing, mathematics and science by the end of Year 2 are high enough.

The school's improved curriculum and teaching enable the pupils to achieve above average standards in all other subjects except that in music and physical education they achieve well above average standards. The pupils with special educational needs also make very good progress. There has been a good improvement in standards in subjects other than English, mathematics and science, except that standards in information and communication technology (ICT) could be higher. More needs to be done to incorporate ICT in other subjects as the pupils have the potential to achieve higher standards in ICT.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The pupils' attitudes to learning, to school and to each other are excellent. They try hard and enjoy learning, applying themselves well, often co-operating and learning from each other.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. This helps to create an orderly and positive learning environment. There were no exclusions last year.

Personal development and relationships	Very good. The pupils are independent and show maturity. Relationships are excellent. Older pupils support younger ones. The pupils enjoy helping each other and celebrating the achievements of others.
<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attendance	Well above average and rising. This is very good and there is no unauthorised absence.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teaching quality ranges between satisfactory and excellent. It has improved very well since the last inspection. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is very effective, resulting in well above average standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Reading and writing skills are very well taught and learnt. This is consistent throughout the school. Mental numeracy skills are very well taught and this helps the pupils' confidence in learning mathematics. The teaching is having a positive impact on the pupils' learning in other subjects. Music and physical education are very well taught, resulting in the pupils achieving well above average standards and learning to develop musical skills very well. Creative and performing arts skills are enhanced by the school's commitment to providing an excellent range of activities outside school hours as well as a strong emphasis on the performing and expressive arts, music and sport. More could be done to improve the pupils' ICT skills so they are better able to utilise computers and other related technology in their learning. In the Nursery and Reception classes, the teaching is very effective because it is well planned to meet the needs of all the children and teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the teaching throughout the school. Teachers use assessment well so that their planning takes account of the progress made in previous lessons. Teaching assistants provide very good and highly skilled support for the pupils identified with moderate learning difficulties or have special educational needs.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is very good. Teachers provide a very good range of practical and relevant tasks. More could be done to provide opportunities for the pupils to use ICT to support their learning. It is a rich and balanced curriculum that includes high quality music, dance and drama as well as competitive and non-competitive sports, games, gymnastics, and dance outside school hours.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The pupils receive very good support. Those with learning difficulties are identified early and make very good progress. Higher attaining pupils identified with particular aptitudes are provided with very good and effective support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is very good and is supported by an excellent range of activities in school and outside school times. Excellent provision is made for the pupils' social development. The pupils are also developing a very good understanding of life in a multi-cultural society. They are able to reflect on human feelings and emotions and develop a very good respect for themselves and for others.

How well the school cares for its pupils	There is a good level of care provided for all of the pupils. The school has good procedures to assess how well the pupils are doing. Teachers use these assessments to set realistic and measurable learning targets for the pupils to achieve.
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Parents believe that the school improves their children's personal development very well. Regular information about the curriculum and school events is provided for parents.

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

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very good leadership. The senior staff work closely with him to monitor lessons and the pupils' work. The management of the school is very well focused on improving standards and supporting all the pupils.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body provides very good and effective support. They work closely with the school and its staff and have a clear understanding of their role in managing and supporting the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is very good because the governors and staff have established clear priorities in the school improvement plan. The plan is very well conceived. It is the result of a systematic process involving audits, monitoring and evaluations of the school's performance.
The strategic use of resources	This is very good. There are clear targets which are matched to spending priorities. The school manages its finances very well, ensuring best value for money when committing resources or spending school funds.

The school's indoor and outdoor accommodation is very good. It has improved considerably, especially with the establishment of a dedicated room for ICT, a dedicated gymnasium and dance area and a refurbished swimming pool. Support staff are being deployed very effectively and make a valuable contribution to the pupils' learning. The administrative staff are very efficient and manage the smooth running of the school and its finances very well.

### 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>• Their children make good progress.</li> <li>• The teaching is good and sets high expectations.</li> <li>• They feel comfortable approaching the school.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• The school is helping their children to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• The range of activities provided outside lessons.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were no significant areas of concern raised by parents that would justify including them here.</li> </ul>

Parents think highly of the school and are particularly pleased with the way the headteacher and staff are approachable and supportive. Inspectors agree with all of the positive views expressed by parents. The parents expressed no serious concerns about the performance of the school

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Inspection evidence shows that on entry to the Nursery and Reception class the majority of children start with standards that are above those expected for their age. The very good teaching in the Nursery and Reception class ensures that the children make very good progress. All the adults who work in the Nursery and Reception class are skilled in observing and noting what each child knows, understands and can do, and plan a wide range of activities. In both the Nursery and Reception class, progress is often very good because the information gained from observing the children is used effectively to make decisions about what each child needs to learn next. This is followed through with activities that promote the skills each child needs and provides a good level of challenge. Activities always provide enough challenge so that the pupils are likely to exceed the levels expected in all areas of learning well before they start Year 1.
2. Standards at the end of Year 2 are well above those expected in English, mathematics and science. Overall, the pupils in the infant years have made very good progress in speaking, listening, reading, writing and mathematics and this is largely attributable to very good teaching by teachers and very effective support from teaching assistants, many of whom are specially trained and highly committed to the pupils and understand how they learn and what their needs are. Science standards are also well above average because the pupils are able to make sensible and intelligent predictions and using the evidence from observations or by measuring are able to form ideas and hypotheses to explain observable changes during their investigations and experiments. In all these core skills and subjects the school is making very good progress in raising standards and this is reflected in the national tests which show that standards have been rising year on year. Standards have risen significantly by the end of Year 2 since the last inspection.
3. Standards have also improved in the junior years in English, mathematics and science. English and mathematics standards show particularly good improvement because the teaching in the junior years is very good. The basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy are very well taught and national tests reflect this as they too have been rising in line with the national trend and have been very high in English. The pupils use their basic literacy and numeracy skills to very good effect and this is helping them to work to achieve well above average standards in science. The pupils are able to interpret information and use very good questioning skills to form judgements about observable changes in investigations. This was particularly effective when Year 6 pupils devised their own methods to calibrate the intensity of light when measuring changing effects in an electric circuit. Thinking skills and the forming of sensible hypotheses are very well developed aspects of the pupils' learning in most subjects. The school's targets have been met and exceeded over the last three years in national tests.
4. In both the infant and the junior classes the pupils who have special educational needs make very good progress. They are very well supported by teaching assistants, have good relationships with adults and other pupils and work hard. They are well supported in lessons and, like other pupils, reach their targets which are clearly stated and monitored very well. Teaching assistants are well deployed and the pupils' progress is being monitored very well to ensure that the pupils are provided

with necessary support in their learning, especially in the core skills of reading, writing and mathematics.

5. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are above those expected by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 but could be higher given the high standards the pupils achieve in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The pupils could make better progress. ICT is not sufficiently incorporated or linked to the work the pupils do in other subjects. The school has improved resources and teaching expertise so that more lessons involve elements of ICT across a range of subjects. However, more could be done to improve the pupils' knowledge and understanding of control technology and graphic modelling. The pupils also bring with them their own home experiences of ICT and this means that most are confident with basic skills so they have the potential to achieve high standards by the end of Year 6.
6. The pupils make good progress in religious education and achieve standards that are above those expected by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. In art and design, design and technology, geography, history and French the pupils achieve standards that are above those expected for their age by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Standards in music and physical education are well above average because there is particularly effective teaching and an excellent range of extra-curricular activities and events that enhance and support the pupils' learning. These activities extend beyond what is normally found in primary schools. Creative and expressive arts, music and the commitment to sporting achievement are at the heart of the school's ethos and practice. This has a very positive effect on the standards the pupils achieve in music, dance, drama and physical education. The school received its national 'Active Mark' in 2002 in recognition of its achievement in sport and physical education.

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

7. Attitudes and relationships are excellent and behaviour and personal development are very good. This is a very good improvement since the last inspection. Attendance is very good, as it was at the last inspection.
8. The pupils enjoy school, are very keen to start lessons and settle down to work very well. They show much enthusiasm, for instance, in a Year 5 science lesson in which the circulation of the blood was being investigated, pupils engaged in their tasks with much enjoyment and produced some good results. The pupils demonstrate their good attitudes in the friendly way they talk to visitors, the care they take of their environment, and the consideration they show for each other. The school's culture of mutual respect is reflected in the pupils' attitudes to each other. These excellent attitudes relate to the excellent relationships between teachers, teaching assistants and pupils, to the enthusiasm of teachers and support staff and their very good classroom management. In activities outside lessons pupils show enthusiastic participation and relish their involvement.
9. Behaviour is at least very good and often excellent in almost all lessons. On the playground behaviour is very good. There is excellent behaviour in assemblies. Around the school and at lunchtime in the dining hall the behaviour is very good. There have been no exclusions in recent years. Oppressive behaviour is a very infrequent occurrence. There is no racism. The pupils' behaviour and their respect for one another are having a positive effect on learning and standards.

10. Relationships are excellent. Teachers and teaching assistants know their children very well and enjoy working with them. The pupils help each other and give support. For instance, in the Nursery, the children work together in a variety of activities and there are very few disagreements or disputes.
11. There are many opportunities for the pupils to take responsibility, for example, they participate enthusiastically in the School Council. In practical lessons such as mathematics and science, they are keen to make investigations and find things out for themselves. The pupils participate enthusiastically in the many clubs and activities. They are acutely aware of the impact of their actions on others and their respect for others' feelings and beliefs are encouraged by structured discussion in 'circle time' and the emphasis on other cultures.
12. Attendance is very good and is well above the national average. Unauthorised absence is unknown. The pupils are punctual. Few pupils are taken on holiday in term-time. The school day starts on time and there is good timekeeping throughout the day. The registration system is efficient and effective. These very good attendance rates are having a positive effect on learning and the school's ability to deliver an effective curriculum.

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

13. The teaching is very good and ranges from satisfactory to excellent. A significant number of lessons, well over half, are of high quality, either very good or excellent. Since the last inspection, the teaching has made very good improvements, especially in the infant years as the last inspection identified key weaknesses. Changes to staffing and effective continuing professional development have strengthened the teaching. Teaching and support staff are highly organised and their teaching and support are having a positive impact on standards in literacy and numeracy and also in improving standards in other subjects which are above average. More could now be done to incorporate the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum. Computer-assisted learning has great potential as the pupils, although achieving above average standards, could do better in their knowledge and understanding of ICT. Teachers manage and organise their lessons very well. Specialist music and physical education teaching is excellent and is responsible for the high standards in music and physical education. Teaching assistants are deployed very well to support the pupils with learning difficulties and to manage groups of pupils in lessons during practical work.
14. The school is situated in area of the country which has traditionally found it difficult to recruit and retain staff. This has led to a turnover of teaching staff and the governors and headteacher have put in place clear policies related to teaching and learning to maintain stability and standards. This has helped to maintain and improve standards, especially in literacy and numeracy, and is having a positive impact on the pupils' learning in other subjects. The support provided for newly qualified staff and those new to the school is very good. Consequently, the quality of teaching and learning across the school is more consistent now compared with that found at the time of the last inspection. Inspection evidence shows that the proportion of good and very lessons has improved compared with those found at the time of the last inspection. There is very effective targeting of pupils, including those with special educational needs. There are good assessment procedures used by teachers in English, mathematics and science and the school is developing systems for all other subjects so that teachers are able to monitor their pupils' progress closely. More could be done to incorporate the use of computers and other related hardware into the

teaching and learning of other subjects. For example, the use of control technology, probes and peripherals to support science and design and technology or the use of graphic modelling and data handling in a range of subjects to enhance their learning further. Teachers have good knowledge of the subjects they teach, which enables them to have a clear idea of the learning outcomes of the lessons taught. These are shared with the pupils so that it is clear to the pupils what is going to be learned and what comes next.

15. Teaching and learning in the Nursery and Reception classes are very good overall, the staff have a very good and secure knowledge of the curriculum for young children and how to deliver this to best effect. Basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics are taught very well and the children acquire these skills readily as a result. The staff plan lessons effectively so that the children learn at a good pace and engage in productive activities. There are high expectations for the children to do well and to behave properly. Teaching methods are very good with very effective work in creative and physical development. Consequently, the children are highly motivated and work with very good levels of interest, concentration and independence. In the Reception class, the very creative approach to learning, lends itself to developing the children's imaginative ideas. There is a good balance of group work and child initiated activities. The management of the children is very good, with extremely positive relationships and a very secure and happy learning environment. The sessions in both the Nursery and Reception classes are very well organised and the staff, including teaching assistants, are deployed very well to support the children in their learning. The staff know the children very well, and use perceptive observations to assess what the children have learned and base the next steps in their learning on what they already know and can do. There are very good levels of inclusion in the Nursery and Reception classes, all children make very good progress including those identified as having special educational needs.
16. The teaching in Years 1 and 2 is also very good. The teachers plan their lessons carefully so that pupils in all year groups have work that is matched to their capabilities. The pupils respond very well to the teaching. They listen carefully to instructions and during class discussions they offer thoughtful answers and responses. They persevere with tasks, for example, when investigating butterflies and living processes in science in Year 2 or when learning to write words that include the sound 'igh' in English in Year 1. The teaching is having a positive impact on the pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour. There are clear rules and classroom routines which provide a secure learning environment for the pupils. The introductions to lessons make it clear what is expected and the learning objectives are always shared with the pupils, for example, in mathematics lessons where counting skills are reinforced regularly at the beginning of each lesson. Better use could be made of computers to support the pupils' learning, although a very good start was made in Year 1 learning to use the language of 'logo' as an early introduction to control technology.
17. In the junior classes, the teaching is very good overall, ranging from satisfactory to excellent. The teachers prepare challenging and interesting tasks that motivate and sustain the pupils' concentration, enabling them to work hard and persevere with the tasks set. In all of the lessons seen, there was a very good structure so that time was provided for the pupils to ask questions and explain their methods, as for example, in an excellent Year 3 mathematics lesson, where the pupils explained how they use 'remainders' when dividing numbers. Thought provoking and inspirational teaching is evident in many lessons as in an excellent Year 5 English lesson, where the pupils recited poetry from Shakespeare's 'Love's Labour Lost'. History is brought

alive through drama as the junior pupils rehearse for the annual production. This year they are performing 'The Evacuees' which is inspired by the experiences of children in World War II which the pupils studied recently in the history lessons. Last year the performance of 'Blast off' and other musical and dramatic performances serve to illustrate the very high standards the pupils achieve in English, music, dance and drama. In the pupils' writing, it is clear they have been expertly taught throughout, as there is evidence of imagery and improvisation as well as characterisation and very detailed descriptive writing. Year 3 pupils are successfully designing sculptures using discussion about how an audience will appreciate stylised sculptures. In Year 4, the pupils were taught to identify social and moral issues in stories. This very good and thought provoking lesson enabled the pupils to appreciate that authors weave into their writing interesting social dilemmas such as those found in 'Stig of the Dump' where the characterisation plays an important part in determining how the reader views each character and how social and moral prejudices affect how we interpret what we read. Teachers throughout the junior years challenge the pupils to think carefully. Consequently, the pupils are able to explain the methods they use. In a very good Year 6 science lesson the pupils devised their own methods for measuring light intensity and these were used in their experiments. In Year 5, the pupils read aloud and perform using the work of Shakespeare in an excellent English lesson. Writing in workbooks and displayed around the school includes a broad range of descriptive, imaginative and narrative writing. Very effective teaching of problem solving in mathematics is helping the pupils to make good progress in their science work but the teaching is not as sharp in providing specific work for pupils of all abilities in information and communication technology compared with that seen in English, mathematics and science.

18. The teachers use good assessments to monitor the pupils' progress in most subjects and there are plans to formalise these so they are more systematic for all subjects across the school. Effective marking of the pupils' work contains helpful comments to guide the pupils. Work is usually marked up to date and is clear so that the pupils know what they have to do to improve further. There is consistency in the way teachers use assessment to monitor the pupils' progress. Teachers keep good records having tested what the pupils know and this information is used to prepare annual reports to parents about their children's progress. Individual learning targets are set for all pupils and these help to predict what levels the pupils will reach at each stage.
19. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good. Teachers are sensitive to the pupils' individual needs. They plan individual and group work carefully and they use the information gained through detailed assessment of their progress in literacy and numeracy to plan the pupils' next stage of learning. For example, pupils with special educational needs in Year 2 during an English lesson were very well supported by the teaching assistant when learning to sound out words and adding the suffix 'ing' to words. In Year 3, lower attaining pupils were fully integrated in an excellent mathematics lesson and the teacher's assessment file set out clearly what targets the pupils were aiming at when problem solving and working out multiplication and division facts as well as different ways that they will be supported in lessons.

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

20. The school provides a good, broad and well-balanced curriculum for its pupils and there are schemes of work in place for all subjects of the National Curriculum. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been very well implemented throughout the school. Music and physical education are outstanding and strong aspects of the school's work. Personal, social, health and citizenship education are very good and the school makes effective use of outside agencies to support a sensitive programme of sex education, health education and drugs awareness. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also very good. English and science are very well taught and the curriculum for mathematics is good. The curriculum in other subjects is good, although information and communication technology is not used as effectively as it might be to support learning in other subjects.
21. The curriculum for the youngest children in the school is good overall. The staff plan the children's learning very effectively using the nationally recommended guidelines. The curriculum is well balanced and broad and covers the six areas of learning well. There is a good range of activities for the children to choose in their play, both indoors and outside. The outdoor areas, especially in the Reception class, have been developed and improved with additional resources. The teaching staff in both classes intend to continue the development of resources, the outdoor areas and their use, and to raise the profile of the Nursery and Reception areas within the school, by promoting an awareness of the importance of learning through play. There is a very good partnership with parents and carers, who are welcomed in the classes as helpers and have very good involvement in their children's learning. Opportunities for the children to take work home to share with their parents are good and books are taken home regularly to promote early reading skills.
22. The pupils identified with special educational needs achieve very well alongside their peers. Their progress is monitored carefully and shows the very good progress they make in their learning. The pupils' needs are generally concerned with skills in literacy and communication, with some having more profound difficulties. They are very well supported in their learning, for example, pupils with specific difficulties are given every opportunity to develop their skills in other areas of the curriculum where they have special talent such as music. This very good progress is due to the good provision in the school and very good support provided for the pupils by teachers and teaching assistants. All the pupils are encouraged to support their peers who have special educational needs. Many of the teaching assistants have had training in behaviour management and how to support the pupils in their learning if they find being co-operative more difficult. The teaching and support staff also have very good classroom management control and are very good role models.
23. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and they are all expected to be active participants in the full and enriched curriculum that the school offers. The pupils have individual education plans which have clear, measurable targets for what the pupils are to achieve. Sometimes these targets are not as specific as they might be and refer to targets as broad aspects of learning, such as behaviour. However, teaching assistants are very well briefed on the individual education plans and support the pupils very well to enable them to succeed. The school does not have a register for gifted and talented pupils at present, but the school is very aware of its talented pupils. Teachers know the pupils very well and

identify those who have particular talents or aptitudes then provide work or extra provision to meet their specific needs and abilities.

24. The contribution made by extra-curricular activities to the pupils' learning is excellent. A very wide range of sporting activities includes netball, cricket, basketball, football, tag rugby, swimming, gymnastics and athletics and pupils have many opportunities to play with and compete against other schools. The broad range of musical activities includes recorders, wind, percussion, brass and strings. There is a school orchestra and an assembly band and pupils have many opportunities to play and perform for audiences that include pupils and teachers, parents and members of the local community. A number of pupils from the school took part in the Schools Prom Praise at the Royal Albert Hall. Other clubs involve French, computers, art, display and modelling and the school is keen to further extend provision, especially for younger pupils, and has introduced short tennis and multi-sports which are enhanced by specialised coaching. Many teachers and parents are involved in running these activities. In addition to all this there is an extensive programme of visits and visitors to further enrich the pupils' experience. These include residential trips for Years 4, 5 and 6, trips to theatres and from theatre groups, museums and art galleries and field studies in the local area. Year 6 pupils recently visited Normandy in northern France.
25. The school has excellent relationships with partner institutions, which greatly benefit the pupils. Strong ties with St Clement Dane's Language College mean that there are quite often students at the school on work experience. The University of Hertfordshire send students on teaching practice and members of Russell School staff are trained mentors. Staff at the school take a lead in liaising with other schools within the local education authority cluster and these have led to joint staff training sessions, which are beneficial to all. Links with the community are also excellent, with the school being used for an array of activities including computer training for the elderly through the University of the Third Age. Chiltern Pumas run a basketball club, the Saracens Rugby Football Club promote reading as well as sports; the Fullerians help with rugby, as do two parents who are qualified swimming coaches. The school is also part of the Three Rivers Tennis partnership. The Parents' Association annual fireworks display hosts around a thousand people from the local community. The school involves pupils in planning a programme to support local, national and international charities each year.
26. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall, due to very good awareness and input to promote this aspect of the pupils' learning. It has been improved since the previous inspection. Spiritual development is now good, it was previously judged as satisfactory; there were good quality assemblies and collective worship and these helped the pupils to reflect on what is right and wrong. Assemblies are enhanced by the school's musical ensembles and school orchestra. Assemblies provide opportunities for the pupils to engage in periods of quiet reflection and contemplation. The statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship are being met. The pupils visit churches locally; the school is used as a church by one group and members of the church attend assemblies. Special days are held in the school to develop an awareness of spirituality, for example through art and design, music, and the creative and expressive arts, such as drama productions and musical workshops like 'Drum Day'. During an excellent Year 5 English lesson, the pupils were absorbed by their introduction to Shakespeare's 'Love's Labour Lost'. They enjoyed drafting their own poems in Shakespearean prose and the lessons provided spiritually uplifting moments as the pupils looked on in awe as pupils recited their poems. The school celebrates and displays the pupils' achievements, boosts their self-confidence and self-esteem, and is committed towards the pupils' development

through physical education and sport, creative and expressive art and drama, music and dance.

27. The provision for moral development is very good. In assemblies, stories with a moral message support this aspect of the school's work. For instance, that honesty, trust and being of good character are important in society. There are very clear expectations for behaviour within a clear policy and very good reinforcement of appropriate behaviour in assemblies. Any issues which the pupils may have, or which the staff feel need addressing, are dealt with very effectively at 'circle' time and through the programme for personal, social and health education. There are extremely positive attitudes and enthusiasm for school, which mean the pupils are receptive to moral messages, and aware of how their attitudes and behaviour impact on others. There are 'golden rules' for behaviour and these are emphasised very well, alongside personal development, for example in Year 2, through religious education when the pupils were taught to respect the beliefs of others. There is a very good range of educational visits, and parents are very aware of these aspects of the school's provision and the positive impact which enables their children to become mature and responsible.
28. The provision for social development is excellent; this aspect is a strong feature of the school and there are frequent opportunities for the pupils to co-operate in their work. Relationships are excellent and the pupils behave with very good mutual respect, understanding and politeness. They are very aware of each other's feelings, are genuinely interested when they speak to their peers and adults in the school. They have very good skills in social graces and behave very well in and around the school. The School Council, which has been formed fairly recently, is working appropriately to build the pupils' sense of responsibility. At present members of the council are selected rather than elected and there are different representatives from each class. All classes in the school have many opportunities to be involved in social events and situations. For example, Year 5 enjoyed their time when they visited Marchant Hill, and a trip to the local Pizza Express was very well received when the pupils made their own pizzas. The Year 6 visit to France supports both their development of the French language and their cultural understanding. The excellent community links in the school made a considerable contribution to this aspect of the pupils' development. The staff and pupils are very committed to the school. A large number of pupils participate together in fun activities, dramatic productions, sporting activities and musical ensembles.
29. The provision for cultural development is very good overall. At the last inspection, fine art, the expressive and creative arts and music were very positive aspects of the school and made a positive contribution to the pupils' development. This was enhanced by a very good range of extra-curricular activities. Aspects of culture continue to play an important part in the life of the school and are emphasised in music, and through art and the work of different artists. The school is very aware of the need to recognise and acknowledge a variety of cultures and traditions, and also to reflect and celebrate the wealth and diversity of cultures in modern society. For example, in design and technology work, different cultures are considered when making musical instruments and analysing how these are made. The pupils use their own experiences and their study of literacy to enhance their cultural development. Year 4 pupils have had an interesting study about India, which included looking at different styles of traditional dress. The Jewish faith is studied; the pupils have had very good experiences in trying different types of food traditionally eaten at festivals and many festivals and customs are acknowledged, such as Divali and Hanukkah.

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

30. Pastoral care and welfare is a major strength of the school. The monitoring of the pupils' academic performance and personal development is very good, as is the educational support and guidance given to the pupils. This is a good improvement since the last inspection.
31. The school is a safe environment with all the expected safety measures in place. Safety inspections are undertaken regularly. All the staff are trained in first aid. Fire drills are held regularly, Internet safety is provided and external visits are carefully planned and supervised after risk assessments have been carried out. Child protection procedures are good. The nominated person, only recently appointed and yet to be trained, is supported by the headteacher, who has had much experience of child protection issues. He has good contacts and knows the local procedures.
32. Procedures for the promotion of attendance are very good. Rewards are given for high attendance and homes are telephoned if no message has been received about a pupil's absence. The headteacher's recipe for good attendance is 'Happy children, happy teachers and happy parents.' This is having a positive impact on attendance and punctuality.
33. Procedures for promoting good behaviour are very good. They rely on high expectations, clear rules consistently applied, each class taking responsibility for its own rules, an emphasis on praise, rewarding the positive, and a clear understanding of mutual respect and addressing the needs of others. The staff are excellent role models for the pupils, both in their relationships with them and with each other. Newly arrived teachers are supported by mentors and practical demonstrations until their classroom management matches the school's requirements. If problems arise with a few pupils the advice of an education psychologist has been found to be useful.
34. There are no special procedures for eliminating oppressive behaviour, but there is a strong belief that behaviour management and moral and social education will achieve what is wanted. The headteacher has an assembly on the topic of bullying every term.
35. There are excellent procedures for supporting pupils' personal development. Support comes from teachers' close observation of the progress of their children and their very keen interest in seeing them succeed. Teachers and support staff talk enthusiastically about their pupils and provide effective support for those who need special support in lessons.
36. The procedures for assessing and monitoring the pupils' attainment and progress are good overall. There are very good procedures in English, mathematics and science and improving procedures in other subjects. End-of-year tests are given to the pupils in Years 3 to 5, along with national testing at the end of Years 2 and 6. This information is used very well to monitor how well the pupils are progressing. Procedures are satisfactory in other subjects because teachers know their pupils well and assess effectively on a day-to-day basis. There is, though, a lack of consistency in some foundation subjects (subjects other than English, mathematics and science) in assessing and recording what pupils know and can do so that progress can be monitored. This has been recognised by the school and teachers have been trialling a system in physical education, which, if successful, will be adapted for use across the curriculum. Group targets are used very effectively in English and mathematics to help focus on skills needing improvement. The use of assessment data to help

teachers plan for the future is good. It is particularly good in English and mathematics. Extra support given to pupils in English and mathematics through the use of this information helps to maintain the continuing high standards.

37. The school has good procedures to monitor and track the pupils' academic progress. It is very good in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, where all assessment data, including results in the national tests, are very well analysed and the information gained is used to improve standards and implement strategies to target underachievement. Assessment procedures in the Nursery and Reception classes are very good, well maintained and used very well to inform teachers' planning. Teachers and support staff in both the Nursery and Reception classes use their assessments to plan work that builds on what the children already know and can do and this ensures very good achievement.
38. The pupils identified as having special educational needs are very well integrated and the school has effective procedures to quickly identify pupils who have difficulties with the curriculum or need special help. The staff raise initial concerns swiftly, deal with these in conjunction with the parents' and carers' involvement and address any issues rapidly. Plans to offer support for the pupils' learning, social skills and independence are used effectively and, because of this, many concerns are resolved and the pupils no longer need the same level of support. Pupils are placed on the school's register for special educational needs, regular reviews take place and outside agencies are contacted to provide the necessary specialist help, support and guidance. This advice and guidance are used very well in the school by staff and teaching assistants to ensure the pupils receive the correct support in their learning. Assessment procedures overall are very good.

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

39. There is a very good partnership between parents and the school. The partnership has developed well since the last inspection. Parents have very high opinions of the school. Forty-five per cent of the responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire are in the 'strongly agree' column, compared with twenty-five per cent at the last inspection. Parents particularly approve of the range of activities outside lessons, the approachability of the school, the high standard of teaching and the teachers' high expectations.
40. The quality of information provided for parents is very good. There are regular newsletters. The prospectus is informative and well presented. The Annual Report by the governors covers the legal requirements, but could do more to promote the school's achievements to the local community and parents. School reports have very good descriptions about what has been achieved. Information about attainment in terms of National Curriculum levels is provided. There are good targets for improvement, but sparse advice to parents on how they can help their children. Every term a report card is issued for each pupil, reporting the effort made in English, mathematics, science and other subjects. There is also information on behaviour and awards. This is an innovation in response to a questionnaire to parents, and has been well received. Almost all parents attend the two consultation evenings on progress. There is also a 'meet the teacher' evening at the start of the Autumn term and an open afternoon when parents are invited to see the school at work. There are special information evenings about residential trips and national tests. Curriculum and other information are provided termly for each year group with a personal message from the class teacher. Many helpful booklets are provided by the school.

41. The school is very approachable, teachers being available informally at the end of the school day and parents being made to feel welcome when they come into school. The information provided to parents is inclusive in that the school ensures that separated parents are both mailed with information.
42. The contribution of parents to children's learning at school and at home is very good. They ensure good attendance, take their holidays out of term-time, support and encourage homework and research on projects. Many come into school to help with cookery, reading, displays and all kinds of other activities. Parents who are professionally trained swimming instructors take swimming lessons. Others help with computing. A parent who is a sculptor is currently producing large wooden animal sculptures of a very high quality to enhance the appearance of the school and this forms part of the school's Golden Jubilee celebrations. Parents support the school's many sporting fixtures and attend Summer musicals, Christmas productions and music workshops. The Parents' Association raises substantial finances for the school.

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

43. The headteacher provides very effective leadership. The management of the school is very good and is supported by a team of senior staff who, together with the headteacher, monitor the work that teachers and pupils do very effectively across the school. Standards have risen year-on-year by the end of Year 6 and this is reflected in the national test results. The headteacher sets high expectations and has worked very hard to maintain staffing stability in an area where the high housing costs make it difficult to recruit and retain teachers. The personal dedication of the headteacher, governors and staff is having a positive impact on all aspects of the school's work. Governors and staff have been successful in ensuring that there have been very good improvements to the quality of teaching and learning in most subjects. The school's capacity to succeed and raise standards further is very good.
44. The headteacher and staff are much respected by the pupils, parents, staff and governors. The senior management team focus and steer the work of the school to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Raising standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science has been the main focus for development. With very good improvements to the curriculum and assessment procedures since the last inspection, as well as much improved teaching, particularly in the infant classes, the impact of very effective leadership and management has had a direct bearing on the sustained improvement in standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 since the last inspection. All the staff and adults who have day-to-day contact with the pupils reflect the school's stated aims well. They work well together and they are committed to providing the best for all the pupils.
45. The headteacher and senior staff have a good grasp and understanding of how to measure and improve standards. They assess how well the pupils are doing in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. This enables them to measure the impact that the curriculum, planning and teaching have on standards. Curriculum co-ordinators monitor teachers' planning as well as pupils' work to assess how well the pupils are doing. Improvements are now needed to raise standards further in information and communication technology as the pupils have the potential to achieve higher standards in the same way they do in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The leadership and management of the Nursery and Reception children are good, the staff work very well together as a team in each

class. They have worked hard to create good links and liaison to ensure continuity and progression between the Nursery and Reception years.

46. The special educational needs co-ordinator has experience of teaching pupils with special educational needs and is very involved in monitoring and tracking pupils' progress. The school uses money allocated to special educational needs very well, with a specific budget, and learning resources are generally good. The findings from the previous inspection judged the provision for pupils with special educational needs as good. This is still the case and pupils are now making very good progress in all year groups, which is good improvement since the last inspection.
47. The governors have set appropriately challenging performance targets to help them monitor how well the school is doing and, together with the headteacher, there are very good links with governors to enable them to take direct action. There are good and effective procedures to help and support new staff. The governors are knowledgeable and experienced and very committed to the needs of the school and its pupils. They provide good support and help the headteacher to manage the school. Formal and effective monitoring procedures ensure that governors are kept well informed by the headteacher and senior staff and, as a result, they have good understanding of the school's needs, strengths and weaknesses. The governors visit the school and receive regular reports from the headteacher. Many governors regularly visit the school and work closely with the headteacher and staff. The governors' annual report to parents is thorough and well presented. The school development plan is used effectively to steer the work of the school. The school makes good use of ICT to manage and support the school's organisation and administration, this now needs to be extended further so that the pupils utilise the potential of the much improved resources to support their learning across the curriculum.
48. Resources have improved considerably since the improvement to outdoor areas in the Nursery and Reception areas and the introduction of the information and communication technology suite. Very good improvements have been made to the school's internal and external areas with the introduction of the jubilee garden, outdoor amphitheatre and school library and music room. The swimming pool and excellent dance and gymnastics hall provide facilities that are normally beyond the means of most primary schools.
49. The school has a very good number of well-qualified teaching and support staff. There is an appropriate balance of experience and expertise and all staff are encouraged to develop their own skills through ongoing training. Support staff are valued as key players in the school's work. There is a well-developed commitment on the part of all members of staff to improvement. Administrative staff are very efficient and ensure that the school runs smoothly. They are available to parents and ensure that visitors are made welcome. The day-to-day financial management of the school is highly effective and efficient. Financial management is very good. The governing body delegates the day-to-day running of the budget to the headteacher and finance officer. They keep a close eye on how it is spent and are involved in agreeing priorities for future spending. The headteacher targets spending carefully and, with the very capable support of the school's administrative staff, ensures that finances run smoothly. The governors have a good understanding of cost effectiveness and apply very good principles to determine value for money when committing the school's funds.

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

50. In order to build on the very good education provided by the school, the governing body, headteacher and staff should:

- **Improve the way information and communication technology is used to support the pupils' learning in other subjects by:**
  - incorporating in teachers' planning more opportunities for the pupils to use computers and other related technology resources;
  - utilising more fully the potential of information and communication technology to raise standards further;
  - providing more opportunities for the pupils to use control technology, graphic modelling and data handling.

(Paragraphs: 5, 13, 14, 16, 17, 20, 45, 47, 65, 69, 76, 80, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	47
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	20

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	23	18	2	0	0	0
Percentage	9	49	38	4	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 more than two percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	13	208
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	19

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

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

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.6

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0

National comparative data	5.4
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National comparative data	0.5
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*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	11	21	32

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	11	11
	Girls	20	21	21
	Total	31	32	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	11	11
	Girls	21	21	20
	Total	32	32	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	97 (100)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	16	14	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	14	16
	Girls	14	13	14
	Total	28	27	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	93 (93)	90 (80)	100 (97)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	15	16
	Girls	14	14	14
	Total	28	29	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	93 (87)	97 (23)	100 (93)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

**Ethnic background of pupils****Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	184	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	6	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 – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26
Average class size	29.7

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

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	116

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	36
Number of pupils per FTE adult	13

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## **Financial information**

Financial year	2002/2003
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	£
Total income	543,803
Total expenditure	574,260
Expenditure per pupil	2,633
Balance brought forward from previous year	36,614
Balance carried forward to next year	6,157

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	221
Number of questionnaires returned	107

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	60	35	4	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	36	53	6	2	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	36	58	5	1	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	52	8	5	1
The teaching is good.	42	46	7	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	57	6	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	30	2	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	46	45	7	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	27	51	16	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	38	49	8	2	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	43	3	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	74	24	0	0	2

### Other issues raised by parents

The parents say they choose the school because it provides a positive and supportive environment for their children. Many believe that this is a very good school where the staff work hard to provide a wide range of interesting activities and opportunities for all the pupils.

## **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**

51. The standards the children achieve by the time they leave the Reception class are very good, they come into school with attainment which is above average and due to the very good progress they make, many children are likely to exceed the expected standards in all areas of the curriculum for this age group. Teaching and learning are very good across the whole curriculum in both classes. The children are admitted to Nursery twice yearly and transfer at two points in the school year to the Reception class. Most children have attended a playgroup, pre-school or day nursery before they start in the Nursery. The Reception class is accommodated in the main school building, it has an outdoor area, which has undergone some improvements recently, but is still to be developed fully. The Nursery is in a self-contained unit, also with an outdoor area situated at the other end of the school. The staff work very hard to ensure they keep each other informed, but the separate accommodation presents problems for them, making communication, and sharing resources and staff expertise more difficult. The overall education provision for children in the Nursery and Reception classes is very good.

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

52. The excellent relationships, attitudes and enthusiasm which the children have for school all contribute very positively towards their personal, social and emotional development. They are learning to be confident, are very secure in their learning environment and any anxieties are dealt with promptly. In both the Reception class and Nursery they are happy and contented, apply themselves very industriously to their tasks, with very good levels of concentration, perseverance and creative effort. They are self-assured and confident. The staff and other adults such as parents who often volunteer their time to help, respond very positively to the children and support them effectively in their learning. The staff present such good role-models so that the children are always polite, considerate and sensitive to the needs of others around them. Behaviour management is very good and the children respond very positively as a result. The children are active participants in tidying up and keeping their classrooms organised after their play. There are very good opportunities for the children to consider a variety of cultures and beliefs, for example acknowledging the festival of Divali. There has been good progress in this area of learning since the last inspection.

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

53. The children come into the school with above average skills in communication, language and literacy. The staff build very well on these skills, teaching basic principles of forming letters, recognising sounds within words and listening attentively very well. There are very good opportunities for the children to share books with adults, either in large or small groups, or individually. As their skills develop they are given increasingly complex text to share, and their skills in reading develop very quickly. They have a good knowledge of the sounds in words, and by the time they are in the Reception class can use this knowledge very well to write their own account of their experiences. Their skills in writing emerge very quickly, as the staff provide a very good range of activities to promote this work. For instance, there are writing areas in both the Nursery and Reception classes and in the imaginative role

play areas there are also small pads, pencils and pieces of paper for the children to make symbols and 'take notes'. Small booklets are also used very well for the children to write stories about what they are learning. For example, based on information and stories about butterflies and caterpillars, the children made very good attempts to write about what they knew. Role-play areas within the classes are very imaginatively presented, the staff make resources when these are not available, and the range of equipment is used very well. Some resources although serviceable are showing signs of wear. There has been very good progress in this area of learning since the last inspection.

### **Mathematical development**

54. The children in the Nursery are learning to count and compare numbers and have good opportunities and support to consider small and large numbers of objects. They have very good experiences in solving simple practical problems. For instance, the pulley system in the sand pit provides excellent opportunities to work things out. In the Reception class the imaginative and creative approach to learning is also used to very good effect to teach mathematical ideas. For example, building on creative work on butterflies, the children had very good opportunities to explore and re-create patterns from nature, such as repeating sequences and symmetrical patterns. There is a very wide range of mathematical experiences for the children in the Reception class, on pattern making, number operations and good reinforcement of mathematical vocabulary, such as directional and positional language. There has been very good progress in this area of learning since the last inspection.

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

55. Through their study of mini-beasts the children are learning about caterpillars and changes in nature. For example, they know that living things need certain conditions to live and tend their plants and small insects carefully. Photographic evidence shows the children enjoy looking after their plants and in the Nursery, 'Fizz and Bella' the guinea pigs. They have very good experiences observing similarities and differences or changing materials and substances during water play and when involved in cookery. The use of information and communication technology in the Nursery and Reception classes is generally good. There are tape recorders in both classes and the Nursery has headphones for the children to use to listen to stories quietly without any distractions. There are four computers in the Nursery and two in Reception, although the children also have access to the computer suite in the school. The children also have good activities to develop their ideas in model making using a range of recycled materials and they have good access to a range of tools and implements for this type of work. The addition of a pulley mechanism in the Nursery sand pit, has been designed to lift a bucket of sand from the pit to a platform above. It is used very well by the children to develop their ideas about how things work and why they happen, and also for them to negotiate and co-operate as they play. There has been very good progress since the last inspection.

### **Physical development**

56. The children's skills in physical development are progressing very well. In the Nursery there is a very good range of activities to promote physical skills when climbing, balancing and jumping. The outdoor space has a good safety surface so the children can practise their expertise with confidence. During the inspection an excellent lesson developed the Nursery children's imaginative movements extremely well. They re-enacted what they had learned about how caterpillars and butterflies move.

The input from staff was excellent and helped the children to move with increasing grace and skill. The children in the Reception class have very good opportunities to swim in the on-site pool, which is beneficial in developing their confidence, co-ordination and bodily control. Opportunities for developing their hand control are very good and there is a very wide range of activities and tasks for the children to tackle to practise their manual dexterity and promote manipulative skills. There has been very good progress in this area of learning.

### **Creative development**

57. In the Reception class the children have very good opportunities to develop their imaginative ideas and the staff are very skilled in enabling them to be creative, through an inspirational and highly motivating approach. They can use their imagination, for example to perform a small play based on the story of the 'Crunchy, Munchy Caterpillar'. The story of 'Where The Wild Things Are' was also used to very good effect to develop the children's imagination, listening skills and to express themselves in a creative way. In Nursery and Reception classes, the children have good access to a range of resources in the art areas, including a very good range of materials to make three-dimensional models. They use an increasing range of media, such as paint, crayons, glue and malleable materials very well. There has been very good progress in creative development since the last inspection.

### **ENGLISH**

58. The pupils achieve high standards in English by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This is confirmed by their performance in the National Curriculum tests over the last four years. For example, in last year's tests, Year 2 pupils achieved writing standards that were in the highest five per cent of schools nationally and Year 6 pupils achieve very high standards, again performing so well that the school's results were in the highest five per cent of schools.
59. By the end of Year 2, speaking and listening skills are well above the expected level. All pupils are able to communicate confidently and effectively and have a well developed vocabulary. They readily chat to visitors about their work and have no difficulty in explaining what they are doing. These speaking and listening skills are well developed through the school and continue to be well above average. One Year 3 girl in a class discussion about the story of 'The Magician's Nephew', speaks of the witch in the story playing 'psychological tricks' on 'Digory' and then explains that it means 'playing with someone's mind'. The emphasis on good listening throughout the school and use of things like drama, poetry, regular class and group discussions all contribute to this high standard and the pupils are a delight to talk to.
60. The pupils read very well. Younger pupils take their reading books home daily and all the pupils spoken to read with adults regularly at school and at home. Well-kept reading diaries are also taken home and are effectively used by staff to monitor reading progress. The pupils have a love of books and talk with understanding about authors, illustrators and how to use an index and a glossary to find information. They use a wide range of skills to support their reading, including phonics, picture clues and context clues. Progress in reading is consistently very good and by Year 6 most pupils are above the expected level for their age. The pupils regularly use books and the Internet effectively to research ideas, often independently. They read with expression and understanding and have a good knowledge of different types of writing and texts. They talk knowledgeably about, for example, characterisation, plot and setting. When they are reading aloud pupils pay attention to context and punctuation

to help them read with real understanding and expression. The school has worked hard to promote good understanding with parents about how they can help. One example of this is the booklet prepared with the help of the library service, giving advice to parents of both infants and juniors about reading and reading skills and suggesting a range of good books.

61. Writing skills are very good. Year 1 pupils were seen forming sentences using 'igh' words on whiteboards, most of them independently. By Year 2, almost all the pupils are forming letters well and produce pieces of extended writing, using cursive script. Good use is made of other subjects to develop writing skills, such as the work Year 2 have done in geography about the travels of Barnaby Bear and the booklet in history about 'games our mums and dads and grandmas and grandpas played'. Suitable attention is paid to spelling and punctuation, with most pupils correctly spelling regular words and generally using capital letters and full stops properly. Several pupils are beginning to use speech marks with understanding. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress throughout the school. Year 3 were observed very successfully setting the scene for stories and 'creating an atmosphere' by using effective words. Five pupils spoken to explained that reading good books helped them to be able to write better and their idea of good books included authors such as J. R.R. Tolkien, J. K. Rowling, C. S. Lewis, Dick King-Smith and Laura Ingals Wilder. Year 4 pupils are using semi-colons to separate clauses in a sentence. Year 5 were seen drafting a poem in the style of Shakespeare, following a discussion of 'Winter', and the finished products were very impressive. By Year 6, the pupils are producing a wide range of writing and have a very secure understanding of how to use both standard and non-standard English in a variety of circumstances. In a lesson observed they were developing chapters in a piece of extended writing in the fantasy genre, using the publication of the latest Harry Potter novel and the works of Tolkien as stimulation. They talk knowledgeably about plot and character development and use their skills to produce story openings that 'catch the attention' and 'grip the audience'. The pupils are sometimes clumsy with spellings but often correct errors themselves when these are pointed out to them by teachers and support staff.
62. The pupils have excellent attitudes to learning English. These are the result of exceptionally good relationships in class and all teachers have high expectations of behaviour. The pupils work well independently or in groups and are well focused on their lessons whether discussing in the whole class or working individually or in groups. Because of these extremely positive attitudes, the high quality of teaching, the very effective literacy strategies the school has put in place, well targeted work aimed at their needs and the high quality support given by teachers and teaching assistants, all the pupils make very good progress throughout the school. This includes pupils with special educational needs.
63. Lessons observed and an analysis of work done across the school during the year show that the overall quality of teaching and learning is consistently very good and some excellent teaching was observed. Planning is very good, with clear learning objectives that help the pupils to focus on the key objectives of each lesson. Teachers engage the pupils well in discussions, making sure that all are involved by asking appropriate questions of individual pupils. The teaching of basic skills is very good overall. Teachers use a very effective range of teaching methods, which helps to stimulate pupils in different ways. Teachers manage the pupils well and the real interest shown in pupils by all staff leads to excellent relationships. Teachers know the pupils well and ongoing assessment is very good. This allows teachers to plan work aimed at the needs of different pupils so that they all, including the more capable

pupils and those with special educational needs, are suitably challenged by their work. Work is marked regularly and the comments are helpful and give clear guidance on how the work can be improved, as well as giving praise and encouragement. One of the strengths of literacy through the school is the consistent use of group targets to focus the pupils' learning. Teachers regularly refer to these targets in lessons and in marking and it helps move the pupils on. Just occasionally in lessons seen the pace was a little slow, causing some loss of momentum for pupils with a shorter concentration span. Although work was generally well targeted in these few lessons there were times when the more able pupils could have been challenged and extended even more.

64. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported in lessons. They are encouraged to explore their feelings, emotions and relationships through a range of poetry and prose texts from different cultures.
65. The English co-ordinator leads and manages the subject very well and has a very clear understanding of what the needs of the subject are. She checks the teachers' planning to ensure that the National Curriculum for English is effectively covered. Teaching and pupils' work through the school are monitored to make sure that skills are taught progressively and that standards are consistent. Assessment procedures are very good and various test results are very well analysed to help teachers with planning for pupils' needs and provide extra support where necessary. Resources are very good and are used well. The school is aware of the need to make more use of information and communication technology to support and develop pupils' skills. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

## **MATHEMATICS**

66. Standards by the end of Year 6 are high when compared to national expectations and the pupils also perform extremely well in national tests. Standards are also well above average by the end of Year 2 and the pupils achieve at a high level for their age. The progress all pupils make in mathematics is good, this includes the pupils who have special educational needs. Mathematics has been improved considerably since the previous inspection, when standards were judged to be average.
67. In Year 6 the pupils can manipulate numbers to perform calculations, for example, to find the highest and lowest totals using one digit numbers. They can convert and compare percentages, fractions and decimals accurately. They also have a very good understanding of three-dimensional shapes and can design 'nets' which are accurate to make these shapes. In Year 5, the pupils are learning to calculate using percentages, as when working out 25 per cent of 148. The work presented to them becomes increasingly complex and encourages them to think and solve problems. For instance, solving the problem of how to work out the best discount and also the cheapest items in a sale. In Year 4, the pupils can manipulate and explore with numbers to solve simple problems, find two and three digits to add to a certain amount. In Year 3, the pupils can manage extremely well to divide numbers, understanding remainders and rounding numbers up or down when problem solving. In Year 2, the pupils can cope with number operations, of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division and can also handle money problems correctly. They are learning very well to use number facts and apply this knowledge to more complex calculations. In Year 1, the pupils have a good understanding of number facts to ten and more able pupils can work with higher numbers to twenty and are beginning to understand that subtraction is the inverse of addition.

68. The quality of teaching and learning in mathematics is good overall, with examples of very good and excellent teaching in Years 2, 3 and 5. The staff have a good understanding of how to teach mathematics and have implemented the national strategy for teaching numeracy very well. The teaching of basic skills in mathematics is good, the pupils acquire these skills effectively and the staff plan lessons well with high expectations for what the pupils can achieve. The methods employed in lessons are good, the pupils learn at a good rate and the teaching assistants are used well to support the pupils' learning. The staff use resources effectively and the assessment of what the pupils are learning is very good.
69. The co-ordination of mathematics in the school is good, the subject is regularly monitored to check for coverage of the curriculum, standards and teaching. A review of what has been achieved in mathematics and areas for development in line with other subjects is useful in identifying what needs to be done to maintain high standards. Resources are good overall and are used well in lessons. The procedures for assessment of the pupils' mathematical understanding and skills are very good. The use of information and communication technology in mathematics is useful, but this is an aspect of the school's work which is underdeveloped.

## **SCIENCE**

70. Standards in science are well above average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. The pupils achieve very well because the work provided for them is challenging and meets their needs and abilities. National tests reflect these high standards which have been maintained for the last three years. The pupils achieve very high standards in English and well above average standards in mathematics and this is helping them to achieve the same high standards in science. The pupils' work shows that they utilise their literacy and numeracy skills very well in science. The teaching is very effective and is particularly strong in providing the pupils with opportunities to organise their investigations and test hypotheses and predictions.
71. The teaching and learning in the infant classes are very good and well organised, enabling the pupils to achieve very well, including those with special educational needs. A very good Year 2 lesson was observed which built on previous work. The lesson helped the pupils to identify characteristics about themselves to help them classify and categorise specific features. This formed part of a topic about the classification of animals and, this lesson in particular, helped the pupils to focus on observable features that can be measured using standard and non-standard units of measure such as centimetres and hand spans. The lesson involved very good discussion with the pupils who showed curiosity and great interest. The practical work provided many opportunities for higher attaining pupils to work at a more advanced level and each group of pupils worked collaboratively so that those who needed extra support were helped throughout, for example, the pupils helped others to use the height measure to record their readings.
72. Throughout the junior classes, teachers provide very good opportunities for the pupils to explore and question. The pupils' recorded work in science challenges the pupils' thinking so that higher attaining pupils reach higher standards. Throughout, teachers put a high emphasis on the nature of fair testing so that the pupils are aware that only one variable can be changed in any one experiment if causal connections are to be discovered. This understanding is reinforced and used to very good effect in a Year 6 lesson where the teacher used the pupils' own ideas and suggestions to help them measure the intensity of light from a light bulb. When investigating the changes to light intensity when using different gauges of wire in an electric circuit, the pupils

applied their very good knowledge to check any changes that could be measured. One pupil thought of a 'ring of light' as a tool for measuring light intensity around a bulb. By measuring the diameter of the light emitted from the bulb the pupils could compare the relative intensities of light emission. Another very good idea was applied across the class. Here another pupil thought of layering paper so that measurements of light could be calibrated according to how many layers of paper the light bulb could shine through.

73. The pupils draw effectively on their background knowledge about healthy living and the process of blood circulation in the body. The pupils in Year 5 for example, have gained a very good understanding of how to measure changes to pulse rates and used their recording and numeracy skills to very good effect as they measured heart rates during exercise. The pupils recorded work shows that they understand the physical process of evaporation and are able to explain clearly why some substances evaporate more quickly than others. Although some use is made of computers as an aid to learning, the evidence suggests that opportunities are missed to fully utilise information and communication technology by, for example, combining their word-processed work with diagrams.
74. The pupils achieve very well because teachers provide challenge for more capable pupils and effective support for those who have moderate learning difficulties. The pupils record their predictions and have a clear understanding of the experimental process and usually act on their own initiative using manageable steps to carry out their investigations. In the lessons observed, teachers planned appropriate activities for the pupils that enabled them to investigate and explore further. Their workbooks show that conclusions are drawn from the evidence and linked back to the accuracy, or not, of their predictions. Other topics are not neglected, with pupils studying nature phenomena ranging from the solar system to micro-organisms, and investigating the behaviour of sound and the structure of the food chain.
75. The quality of teaching and learning in science is very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and their management skills are very good. Lesson planning is very well structured as it builds on what has been done before so that, as the pupils move up the school, tasks become increasingly challenging and complex. The majority of pupils achieve above average standards because the tasks set are appropriate to their needs and abilities. Boys and girls are equally motivated by the learning opportunities provided. Support staff are very effective in helping individuals and groups of pupils who have special educational needs. Consequently, these pupils are effectively drawn into the learning process.
76. The subject is very well managed and monitored. The headteacher and senior staff manage to assess the needs of the school well and have identified appropriate areas of development. Leadership of the subject is very good, leading to a balanced curriculum and good lesson planning, including the effective emphasis on enquiry approaches to learning. The curriculum also carries a strong focus on health education, supporting learning in aspects of personal and social education. The use of information and communication technology could be improved through a systematic planning of computer assisted learning in science. The ongoing assessment of the pupils' progress, with its potential for finer tuning of learning opportunities, is well established. The school is aware that the early identification of more capable pupils informs teachers' planning better. The headteacher is fully aware of the strengths and areas for development in science teaching. Both the headteacher and senior management team analyse test results, including those following optional tests for each year group from Year 3 onwards. In this way they set

targets for each year group and this helps them to monitor and check progress so that standards are maintained throughout. There has been very good progress since the last inspection.

## **ART AND DESIGN AND DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

77. The standards of work in art and design and design and technology in the school by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are above those expected. The excellent input in art and design in Year 3 enables the pupils to achieve very good standards in their artwork. For example, during the inspection the pupils were making their own stylised sculptures from clay, to represent their class and how they see themselves. All groups of pupils make good progress in both subjects, including those with special educational needs. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.
78. Work on making glove puppets in Year 1 and 2 indicate the good progress the pupils make in design and technology and shows how they hone their skills and produce a good quality product. In art and design in Year 4, the pupils can design their own adornments on a chair to represent a character or a special occasion, they work well together to collaborate to create their design. In design and technology they are presently studying how to design and make their own working electrical torches, using appropriate wiring, batteries and lamps to form an electrical circuit. Work in Year 5 is of a good standard in both art and design and design and technology. The pupils study food technology, make musical instruments, some of which reflect those from a variety of cultures, and artwork linked to scientific observation of lilies, primroses and irises, is good with some examples which are very good. The visiting artist who came to the school provided a wealth of activity for the pupils across the school, to make their own models and self-portraits, to express themselves and create a permanent reminder of their artwork.
79. Although relatively few lessons were observed, from displays and samples of the pupils' previous work, it is possible to judge teaching and learning in both subjects as good overall, with excellent teaching in art and design in Year 3. The teaching of art and design in this year group is excellent and the pupils make excellent progress as a result. The staff across the school have a good understanding of how to teach art and design and design and technology. They teach basic skills well, which means the pupils acquire these skills effectively and achieve well. The pupils learn at a good rate, staff use resources well, and generally, ongoing assessment of what the pupils can do to build on their previous knowledge, is good. The pupils behave very well in lessons and have very positive attitudes towards their learning, with an enthusiastic response and very good creative effort. In Year 6, there has been good input from specialist support, which has had a positive effect on standards of the pupils' work, for example to design and make slippers. Art club is held regularly after school with the help of parents.
80. The leadership and management of art and design in the school are satisfactory; there is some monitoring of the planning of art and design, but little formal observation of class teaching or analysis of the pupils' artwork by the co-ordinator. The co-ordination of design and technology is good, with a good awareness of what the pupils have achieved. Assessment procedures in both subjects are satisfactory overall, but there is an awareness of this as an area for development. The use of information and communication technology is also not developed fully in both subjects. Resources are good in both subjects and used effectively to support the pupils' development in using their artistic skills and design techniques.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

81. Standards in geography are above those expected by the end of Years 2 and 6. The pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in developing knowledge and understanding and in the development of skills in geography, such as mapping. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.
82. By the end of Year 2, the pupils have developed a good understanding of the local area and of places elsewhere, including abroad. They are aware of many countries and they know how to locate them on the world map. Geography learning is made more interesting by using the 'travels of Barnaby Bear'. The pupils are encouraged to take a toy bear with them if they travel away from home and to keep a diary to record events and experiences. These are then shared with the class. 'Barnaby' and members of his 'family' are very well travelled and the pupils' diaries of his activities make interesting reading. In a lesson observed, the pupils were planning journeys for 'Barnaby', including deciding on which method of transport will be used and from where.
83. Work scrutiny shows that, by the end of Year 6, the pupils have a good understanding of different types of environment. They have looked at environmental issues and have made their own evaluations of traffic problems and possible solutions. They have conducted surveys, producing charts and tables to display and review results. They are knowledgeable about and can read and use maps, aerial photographs, grid references and use cross-references. They know about different habitats, mountains and coastal regions and the effects of activities such as tourism upon these. The work has contributed well to the pupils' awareness of economic, social, moral and cultural issues that affect countries and different environments.
84. The quality of teaching and learning is good for pupils of all age groups. Teachers plan lessons well and basic geographical skills, such as map reading, are taught well. Teachers make good links with other subjects, such as history and science, showing clearly how the physical features of a place affect human activity at different times and in different places. The pupils are given opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills well. Relationships are excellent throughout the school, and this contributes to the good quality of learning.
85. The curriculum for geography is well balanced and meets statutory requirements. Use of the local area for fieldwork and surveys makes the subject more relevant to the pupils and those in Years 4, 5 and 6 have good opportunities to take part in residential courses. Visits to and from the Environmental Centre stimulated Year 5 pupils to think about problems of drought and water supply in some areas of the world. Through links to a computer web site, the pupils explored a range of options to suggest how to solve these problems. Year 6 pupils took part in a residential visit to France and the high quality of work on display arising out of the visit is a testimony to the value of this trip and how it has supported their learning in geography.
86. Procedures for assessment and recording in geography are not consistent through the school, making it difficult to check how well the pupils are progressing and to ascertain the depth of their knowledge and understanding. This is an area that has been recognised as needing developing further and a good start has been made. Resources are good and are used well. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

## **HISTORY**

87. It was only possible to observe two history lessons. However, careful analysis of the pupils' work through the year indicates that standards by the end of Years 2 and 6 are above the levels expected. The pupils make good progress and there are no significant differences between the progress of girls, boys or those pupils with special educational needs.
88. By the end of Year 2, the pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of events, people and changes in the past, and are developing good skills of historical enquiry. Through their topics on homes and famous people such as Florence Nightingale and the history of toys they have made good comparisons between life in the past and their own lives. Work has included a survey of toys and games played by parents and grandparents, helping to develop mathematical skills too. Other examples of good links with other subjects were seen such as in music where the pupils in Year 2 composed a 'Toy Symphony'.
89. The pupils build upon their knowledge and skills through the school. In Year 3, they show good knowledge about Ancient Greece and develop skills of historical research well as they think about what evidence we have about the Ancient Olympics. This is linked to religious education as they learn about the religious significance of the original games. Year 4 are also knowledgeable as they explain about the Vikings, their invasions and the influence they have left, for example, in place names ending in 'gate'. Literacy skills are well developed by higher attaining pupils who write newspaper accounts of a Viking attack on a monastery. Year 5 books show a good development of understanding of Tudor life and times and once again there are links with literacy and the work of Shakespeare. The literacy lesson where Year 5 pupils had the opportunity of performing one of Shakespeare's poems, 'Winter', in the almost completed outdoor amphitheatre was a rare example of true 'awe and wonder'. By the end of Year 6, as well as extending their knowledge and skills well, pupils organise and communicate their work well and their work on Victorians and World War II, as well as providing stimulation for a range of writing, is well linked with religious education and geography. The school's golden jubilee celebrations have provided a rich source of additional historical research and work and these are well shown in a variety of displays of Russell School from 1953 to 2003.
90. Lessons observed and the work seen show that teaching and learning in history are good throughout the school. Planning, subject knowledge and pupil management are all good. Work is well targeted to meet the different needs of pupils. Pupils have a very positive attitude towards history and enjoy their work. Very good use is made of English and drama, for example, the school is currently preparing an end-of-year production called 'The Evacuees'. The pupils are thoroughly enjoying this as it builds on the work they have done in history when they studied World War II.
91. The curriculum is broad and balanced and history is well managed. Resources are good and are used well, with the pupils' experiences being enriched by visits to places like Verulamium, St Albans, Windsor Castle and the British Museum. The school is currently devising improved assessment procedures to enable staff to monitor more consistently how well the pupils are progressing and achieving through the school. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

92. Standards in information and communications technology (ICT) are above those expected by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 but could be higher. Standards in ICT have improved since the last inspection with some work being done by the pupils in infant and junior classes that exceeds the standards expected. The new computers and particularly the introduction of a computer suite, are having a positive impact on standards and enable the pupils to use ICT to learn basic skills. However, the evidence from work covered across the curriculum in other subjects suggests that there are missed opportunities in teachers' planning to incorporate ICT more fully. Furthermore, given that the pupils do so well in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, standards in ICT are not as high as they should be.
93. The pupils are achieving satisfactorily and making sound progress in their learning. This includes the pupils identified with special educational needs. Many pupils bring with them their own home experiences of ICT, for example, using the Internet and e-mailing friends. Year 3 pupils have undertaken work which requires them to e-mail their friends and have set up their own e-mail addresses.
94. By the end of Year 2, the pupils can use the keyboard and mouse with confidence to operate drawing programs and access games, stories and information. Year 1 and 2 pupils are able to use graphics and text programs with reasonable confidence to draw and label pictures and explore the 'mark making' tools of the program. The pupils had clearly been taught well and had acquired the necessary skills to draw pictures by controlling the computer mouse. They can correct their own mistakes using the 'undo' tool and are increasingly becoming confident with computers as they load and save their work. Year 1 pupils in a very good lesson were taught the vocabulary of early control technology. The teacher set up tasks in the school hall which required the pupils to work out routes around obstacles. They instructed a partner to move forwards, backwards, left and right and understood the idea of whole and quarter turns. By the end of Year 2, the pupils can control a programmable robot called 'Roamer' and make it move in different directions.
95. By the end of Year 6, the pupils can search the Internet for relevant information on a specific topic and also retrieve information from CD-ROMs. Evidence from previous work covered shows that the pupils are capable of using sophisticated multimedia authoring programs to refine and present information for a presentation by combining text and graphics. However, this is not always evident in the work the pupils do in, say, English or other subjects. The pupils can make posters by combining text and graphics, for example, advertising the school's forthcoming golden jubilee celebrations. ICT specific skills are being learned when the pupils use the ICT suite each week but some of the tasks, especially for more able pupils, could be more challenging. The pupils in Years 5 and 6 are capable of searching for information, editing and refining texts and graphics as well as improve the presentation of their recorded work so that it attracts the attention of different audiences. Year 3 pupils responded very well to the challenges of using and controlling sound as part of work on control and modelling but as the pupils move up the school, the lack of ICT to reinforce specific skills affects how much they learn and consolidate. Consequently, the pupils' knowledge and understanding is patchy and sometimes disorganised. This is evident when observing the pupils solving a range of authoring tasks. Some pupils use the appropriate icons and short-cut menus and others self-correct by improvising and using more roundabout methods to retrieve information or to 'undo' previous tasks. Some of the methods used are inefficient and serve to illustrate the patchy nature of the school's use of ICT.

96. The pupils have very good attitudes to ICT. The youngest children in the Nursery and Reception classes are making a very good start and also have good access to computers in the classrooms as well as using recorders to listen to songs and stories. The pupils behave very well and they respect the equipment and all take pride in the work they complete and print out.
97. The teaching is good and learning satisfactory. The teaching has improved since the last inspection but there is still much to do to ensure the pupils reach higher standards. The school has improved resources significantly and teachers use these well to ensure that all the pupils have access to ICT but this is usually limited to using the ICT suite. However, there are advanced plans in place to incorporate a fully integrated and wireless network as well as using laptop computers in classrooms. There has been a systematic and well co-ordinated training programme for all the staff and their confidence is increasing as they use the facilities. Consequently, there is now some good expertise within the school. Some links are made with other subjects such as English, mathematics, science, geography, history and design technology but these are not being systematically planned across the school, resulting in patchy cross-curricular provision which does not fully utilise the potential of the school's ICT resources.
98. The co-ordinator provides satisfactory leadership. She has a good knowledge of the ICT curriculum and has the necessary expertise to lead and co-ordinate staff training. The last inspection judged that some aspects of the ICT curriculum were not being covered adequately. Since then the headteacher and staff have improved standards well and ICT is becoming a stronger feature of the school's curriculum but there is still much potential which is not being fully utilised to help the pupils in their learning across a range of subjects. A scheme of work is in place to aid and guide teachers' planning. Resources are good and improving as the governors and staff assess the impact of the use of computers across the school and in the new suite.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE - FRENCH**

99. Year 6 pupils were observed being taught French by one of the senior teachers. The lesson was very good and appropriately challenging. Very good use was made of the recent visit to Normandy by the pupils and staff when they practised conversational language and common phrases. In the lesson observed, the teacher prepared a challenging task which required the pupils to listen to a recording from a French radio or television broadcast. The broadcaster announced the national football and rugby results and the pupils used a worksheet to identify and mark off the scores as they were being read. The pupils enjoyed the challenge and the teacher skilfully re-played parts of the tape to point out particular phrases and numbers.
100. The school encourages the pupils to participate in a broad range of activities, both in and out of school times. Some pupils also attend special French classes which run after school every week. Together with the very good quality of teaching provided by the senior teacher each week and the expert teaching provided after school by a French teacher, the pupils benefit from these experiences and are already becoming adept at using conversational French before starting their secondary education. Both the pupils and parents are very pleased that the school offers these opportunities to learn another modern European language.

## **MUSIC**

101. Music is a very strong feature of the school's provision and curriculum. The pupils achieve high standards throughout the school and this is demonstrated best when the large numbers who are members of the school's orchestra and band perform to pupils and parents as well as to other audiences. The school is clearly committed to providing a very broad range of creative and expressive arts that includes music, dance and drama. End of year productions are a popular feature of the school's work as well as a broad range of experiences that involves the pupils in local and national schools' concerts. Music plays a very important part in this and the subject is very well taught and managed by a committed team of teachers led by an enthusiastic and highly qualified teacher who specialises in the subject. As part of the school's golden jubilee celebrations, and continuing its annual commitment towards producing a special celebration of music in the form of a music day, the school is preparing a 'Musicathon' – a day's celebration with all classes, pupils and staff participating in a feast of musical ensembles and singing.
102. Standards by the end of Year 2 are above those expected. Year 2 pupils can produce their own simple compositions based on the theme of a 'Toy Symphony' using untuned and tuned percussion instruments. In a very good lesson, the pupils listened to different 'toy' sounds from a recording and described what happens to the sound as it gets quieter or louder. Improvising the noise of a racing car for example, the pupils responded very well, "...it's a zingy sound..." or when listening to the sound of a toy robot, "it sounds 'rattly' or 'squeaky'.... Very good use was made of a collection of toys brought in by the teacher. The pupils listened as other pupils, holding the toys, made different sounds. This culminated in the pupils using a good range of percussion instruments to represent different objects. One pupil said that the sound of the xylophone reminded her of a 'rainbow'. Others playing instruments such as guiros, shakers, drums and triangles performed together to improve their understanding of dynamics to produce an improvisation of a 'toy symphony'. This theme was also used as a stimulus by Year 1 pupils as they improvised the different sounds that toys could make. Throughout the infants, the pupils recognise symbols representing quiet and loud sounds and can keep time using simple notation when playing in small groups.
103. Evidence from the many photographs and portfolios of music playing that adorn the walls and corridors of the school shows that standards in music are high by the end of Year 6. This was confirmed during the inspection when the orchestra accompanied the singing during a whole-school assembly. A large number of pupils are members of the orchestra and school band. Very good instrumental tuition is also provided for a large number of pupils and, together with the music being taught throughout the school, the pupils benefit from these experiences so that music playing, performing and singing are treasured and important features of the school's curriculum. Instruments played include violins, trumpets, trombones, drums, clarinets, flutes, cellos, violas and recorders. The pupils combine melodic and rhythmic ostinato using a range of tuned and untuned instruments. They have developed confidence in playing and composing using an underlying rhythmic pattern in their music playing and are able to follow the teacher, keeping time and rhythm. Very good use is made of recording equipment to assess and refine their music. The pupils, in groups or small ensembles, read musical notation, including one excellent example of pupils with special educational needs producing their own musical compositions which are displayed on walls for all to see.
104. The annual music evening and performances that include national school ensembles played and performed at prestigious venues such as the Royal Albert Hall and other performances in front of parents and the local community identify the school as one

that celebrates its achievements through the expressive and creative arts. Imaginative compositional work undertaken by junior pupils in particular has been created and this has been recorded on tape as an assessment tool. The quality of music is of a high standard and discussions with the pupils show that they are enthusiastic about music, drama and dance. Pupils take pride in the music they have produced and are keen to perform these. Music is used to very good effect to support other school activities and many talented pupils play a musical instrument.

105. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is very good. This has been largely influenced by the efforts of the specialist teacher. Consequently, class teachers have developed their own teaching so they are increasingly becoming confident teaching music to their classes. The music teacher provides the pupils with the opportunity to respond to both elements of the music curriculum, listening and appraising and composing and performing with excellent opportunities for the pupils to listen to and appraise the music of accepted great classical composers. Very good opportunities are given for the pupils to consider music from other cultures and traditions.
106. The subject is very well led and inspired by the efforts of the school's music specialist. She has been directly influential in the raising of standards in music in the school. Resources are very good and the subject makes a valuable contribution to the pupils' cultural development and the overall ethos of the school. There has been good progress since the last inspection, especially in maintaining high standards.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

107. The pupils make very good progress in developing their skills in physical education and achieve standards that are well above those expected for their age by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. The pupils with special educational needs also make very good progress. Standards have improved well since the last inspection, especially in the infant years where the last inspection found standards to be below those expected. Whilst it was not possible to observe all elements of the physical education curriculum within the period of inspection, teachers' very good planning for the subject indicates that pupils are given the opportunity to work towards developing all the skills and knowledge required in the subject. The school also places a great deal of emphasis on extra-curricular provision which is excellent. There is a very wide range of activities provided, both competitive and non-competitive. During the week of inspection, older junior pupils participated in county-wide competitions in tag rugby and 'kwik-cricket'. Both competitions involve boys and girls playing together as a team and the school is renowned for its success in a wide range of sports and activities that include gymnastics, athletics, football, cricket, rugby, swimming, netball and basketball. The pupils achieve high standards which are reflected in the many sporting achievements awarded to the school, including the national 'Active Mark' in recognition of its commitment to physical education and sport.
108. During the week of inspection a number of swimming lessons were observed. The school has its own indoor pool which is very well maintained and equipped. Two parents, who are qualified swimming teachers, were also observed leading sessions and many other parents volunteer to support at the poolside. Teaching staff have recent and relevant First Aid qualifications so that safety arrangements are well organised. All the lessons observed were good or very good and led to purposeful instruction and challenge for the pupils. Consequently the pupils, including both infant and juniors, made very good progress and are swimming at levels that are far in advance of those expected for their age. For example, by the end of Year 6, nearly all

the pupils exceed the minimum required standard of swimming 25 metres unaided and are able to swim a variety of strokes skilfully with control and co-ordination.

109. From the evidence in teachers' planning and recorded evidence such as photographs and observations of extra-curricular activities led by teachers and others, the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is very good and very effective. Lessons are very well planned, organised and resourced, with teachers sharing lesson objectives with the pupils. Teachers focus on health and safety issues and provide appropriate warm-up and warm-down activities at the beginning and end of lessons. The school is devising and experimenting with checklists to assess and record how well the pupils are doing.
110. The subject is managed very well and the co-ordinator ensures that teachers' plans are monitored for consistency and progression. The personal dedication and commitment shown by the headteacher towards physical activity and achievement through sport and exercise are very much driving the school forwards in these important areas. There is a policy for the subject and a useful scheme of work which guides teachers in their planning. Resources for the subject are excellent and there is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities that support and enhance the pupils' learning. The school is very imaginative and skilled in this area as some of the activities involve sports or pursuits that most primary schools do not even consider as options. For example, in addition to those traditional sports mentioned above, the school also offers the pupils opportunities to participate in cross-country running, cycling pursuit, Tai Kwan Do, trampoline and other gymnastics events which are normally associated with secondary education. Some of these more unusual activities are taught or coached by qualified people. The school also has a well-established gymnastics club led by trained coaches who use the schools excellent facilities. Inter-school competitions are extensive and the school also organises in-house competitions such as athletics days and swimming galas. Physical education is a very strong feature of the school and this adds to the wide-ranging commitment of the staff towards physical activity, expressive and creative arts and music. Physical education makes a valuable contribution to the pupils' personal and physical development.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

111. Standards by the end of Years 2 and 6 are above those expected as set out in the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education. The pupils make good progress through the school. The pupils with special educational needs are well supported and also make good progress.
112. The pupils in Years 1 and 2 develop a good awareness of what different people believe and how they feel. They look at festivals, such as Christmas, Hanukkah and Divali, to help them to explore different people's beliefs and these are linked to assembly themes. They look at special books and signs and symbols and talk and write about what makes them special. They think about why people pray and write their own prayers. In a Year 2 lesson seen, the teacher used the book, 'The Snowman' to encourage the pupils to think about issues such as 'loss' through an extremely well handled discussion. This led to a discussion on what makes people different and special and the pupils were encouraged to write sentences about classmates saying what is special about them. The pupils showed sensitivity and maturity in thinking about difficult but important issues and this was very good spiritual, social, moral, and personal development.

113. The pupils' work shows that they continue to grow in understanding and awareness and by Year 6 they have a very mature approach as they continue to be challenged to think about religious, moral and social issues and their relevance. They have recently been looking at Hindu, Buddhist and Christian understanding of mankind's relationships with the natural world. In the lesson observed they were being challenged to choose, examine and suggest solutions to environmental problems where there is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer: a mature concept for pupils of this age. In a well focused lesson, the pupils worked in groups to scan newspapers and magazine for relevant problems, choose and outline an issue and write a letter to a newspaper proposing possible solutions. A wide range of issues, including light pollution, airport and noise pollution and destruction of coral reefs by trawlers, provoked lively and stimulating discussions. Several pupils were able to see different sides of the argument and understand how solutions themselves bring other problems. For example, in suggesting a ban on trawling near coral reefs, the pupils recognised that this would affect the livelihood of fishermen and might cause real hardship. The relationship between these real issues and the significance of religious beliefs in everyday life are thought provoking and stimulating issues for the pupils and they respond very well to the challenges presented.
114. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Although only two lessons were seen it is clear from planning and from the pupils' work that teachers plan their work well and that pupils are being stimulated and motivated to produce good work. A particular strength in the teaching is the way teachers use the pupils' own experiences and the knowledge they gain to make learning relevant to their own lives. The pupils have excellent attitudes to religious education and they behave very well.
115. The curriculum is broad and well balanced and is well managed. Assessment is in the process of being developed and this is being done thoughtfully and systematically across the school. Resources, including a range of artefacts, are good and are enhanced by a range of visits, including trips to churches and to the Watford Islamic Centre. This is an area the school are rightly keen to develop further. The subject contributes very well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.