

INSPECTION REPORT

MARKYATE VILLAGE SCHOOL

Markyate, St Albans

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117127

Headteacher: Mrs S Webster

Reporting inspector: Miss C Thompson
22822

Dates of inspection: 10 - 13 February 2003

Inspection number: 247724

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: | Cavendish Road Markyate St Albans |
| Postcode: | AL3 8PT |
| Telephone number: | 01582 840537 |
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| Appropriate authority: | The governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mrs R Baker |
| Date of previous inspection: | 12 January 1998 |

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | | | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|--------------|------------|----------------------|--|--|
| 22822 | C Thompson | Registered inspector | Science Design and technology Information and communication technology Educational inclusion English as an additional language Foundation stage | What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further? |
| 9736 | J Brasier | Lay inspector | | How high are standards? b) 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? |
| 32592 | J Chambers | Team inspector | English Art and design History Geography | |
| 20457 | B Fletcher | Team inspector | Mathematics Religious education Physical education Music Special educational needs | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Markyate Village School is an average sized primary serving the village community. There are 214 pupils on roll including 35 children who attend the nursery in the mornings. Very nearly all pupils are white and live in the local village. The area is neither particularly advantaged nor disadvantaged. There is a small number of pupils from diverse ethnic backgrounds but all have English as their first language. Attainment on entry is above the local education authority average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is around the national average as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs. The main needs of these pupils are identified as autism, specific learning difficulties and physical need. In past years, the school has had a high rate of sickness among staff as well as difficulties retaining and recruiting teachers; this has led to a significant turnover of teaching staff.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an improving school with some good features. Markyate provides a sound education for its pupils and satisfactory value for money. Over time, standards attained by Year 6 are rising but, as yet, they are not as high as they should be, partly due to significant staffing difficulties since the last inspection. Standards in Year 2 are usually above average. Teaching for the youngest children is very good. In the remainder of the school it is satisfactory overall with a high proportion of very good teaching for Year 2. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

What the school does well

- Children get a very good start to school in the nursery and reception classes.
- The school makes good provision for pupils' personal development; relationships are very good. Older pupils are confident and reliable young people.
- Behaviour is good and pupils have positive attitudes to their work.
- The school looks after its pupils well and has good links with parents.
- Pupils with special educational needs do well because the school makes sure they are helped to succeed.

What could be improved

- Raise standards further in English, mathematics and science. Not enough pupils are attaining the higher levels in national tests.**
- The headteacher and senior management need to check on pupils' learning rigorously to make sure the new tracking system for English, mathematics and science has maximum impact.
- Not all teachers are setting high enough expectations for their more able pupils.
- In many subjects there are no systems for keeping track of pupils' progress.**
- Better use should be made of the school's computers.

** *already identified by the school*

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement is satisfactory. The school was last inspected in January 1998 when it was experiencing a high turnover of staff and had an acting headteacher. Since then, the school has had a permanent headteacher but has continued to experience staffing difficulties which have slowed improvement in standards especially in Key Stage 2. However, the school has made satisfactory progress in addressing most of the key issues raised by the last inspection and has good systems in place to improve further.

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 | | | | Key |
|-----------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|----------------------|
| | all schools | | | similar schools | |
| | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2002 | |
| English | C | C | C | C | well above average A |
| Mathematics | E | E | D | D | above average B |
| Science | C | D | D | E | average C |
| | | | | | below average D |
| | | | | | well below average E |

The table shows standards by the end of Year 6 have not been as good as they should be and this is acknowledged by the school. For many years the school has suffered from a high turnover of staff and staff illness. As a result, there has not been the consistency in teaching to secure steady progress in learning as pupils move through the school. Given that children normally start in reception with above average attainment, pupils should leave the school demonstrating at least average standards. Compared to similar schools¹, standards in Year 6 in 2002 were below average except in English. However, there are encouraging improvements and the trend for improvement is broadly in line with the national trend. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected levels in English and science has usually been around average, but it is at the higher level in all subjects (Level 5) that the school has not done well and this has affected the scores in the table above. In mathematics, standards have improved considerably and in 2002 for the first time for many years, an average proportion of pupils attained the expected level. The school recognises that it must ensure more able pupils do better and, accordingly, has set much higher targets this year (2003). Inspection evidence shows Year 6 are attaining average standards in all subjects but more needs to be done to ensure more able pupils achieve as well as they should and attain the challenging targets set. Standards attained in national tests for Year 2 have generally been above average. Inspection evidence shows Year 2 pupils are attaining average standards in all subjects. Reception children are attaining very well and nearly all are likely to attain the expected standards by the time they start in Year 1. In information and communication technology (ICT) standards are around average in the work seen but pupils do not make enough progress because they do not have enough opportunities to use computers.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Attitudes to the school | Good. Pupils are enthusiastic about school and have positive attitudes to their work. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Good. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. |
| Personal development and relationships | Very good. Pupils are helpful and courteous. They thrive on the good opportunities to take responsibility. |
| Attendance | Satisfactory and close to the national average. Most pupils arrive at school on time. |

¹ Schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and immensely improved since the last inspection when around one in five lessons was unsatisfactory. In this inspection, no unsatisfactory teaching was observed and almost two thirds was good or better. The great majority of very good and excellent teaching was noted in the nursery and reception classes and Year 2. In the nursery and reception classes, teachers have a very good understanding of the needs of the age groups, plan very effectively and work together with proficient assistants to provide interesting and challenging activities through which children learn very well. In Year 2, planning is very effective with very high expectations set for quantity and quality of work and behaviour; pupils learn well in this class. There are two main reasons why the high proportion of good or better teaching is not yet resulting in consistent, good learning and achievement over time: firstly pupils' learning has been affected by a high staff turnover and secondly teaching is not always carefully matched to what individuals need to learn to make maximum progress. In the main, more able pupils are not achieving as well as they should because teachers are not expecting enough of them and providing appropriate work. However, the school provides well for pupils with special educational needs and they make sound progress. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught satisfactorily with very good teaching and learning in literacy observed in Years 2 and 4. There are some excellent examples where homework helps pupils make good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Satisfactory with a good range of activities outside lessons. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | Good. Pupils with specific needs are supported very well. Individual education plans are appropriate; pupils receive very good help from proficient learning support assistants. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Good overall, with very good provision for pupils' social development. Many opportunities are provided for older pupils to take responsibility and they respond very well. They are confident, responsible young people. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | The school looks after its pupils well. A policy for ensuring racial equality is in place and monitored well. Currently, the procedures for checking up on pupils' progress and setting targets for future improvement are unsatisfactory and an acknowledged area for improvement. The recently introduced system for keeping track of pupils' progress should go some way to improving this situation. |
| How well does the school work in partnership with parents | The school has good, constructive links with parents. Good information is provided about what is being taught which helps parents make a good contribution to their child's learning. Many parents help in school on a regular basis. |

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Satisfactory with good features. The head and deputy headteacher provide good leadership but considerable staff changes and sickness has meant either a lack of key staff or the inability of some to fulfil their roles. Management is satisfactory with a clear focus on raising standards further. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Governors are proud of the school and understand its strengths and areas for improvement well. They are involved in school improvement planning with many newly-appointed governors keen to develop their expertise in this area. The principles of best value are applied reasonably effectively. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | Satisfactory overall. Good checks are made on teaching and data supplied about the school is analysed well. Currently there are no rigorous procedures for checking on what pupils are learning. |
| The strategic use of resources | The school has a good idea of what it needs to do to improve and funding is used to pupils' best advantage. The school's resources for learning are satisfactory and used efficiently except for computers. There is a satisfactory number of teachers supported by an adequate number of proficient support staff. Accommodation is satisfactory although the nursery classroom is cramped. |

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The strong community spirit which helps children become mature and responsible. Behaviour is good. Children like coming to school and are expected to work hard. <p>In meetings with 36 parents they expressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers are approachable and helpful; They know what goes on in school and what their children are learning. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The setting of homework is inconsistent. Pupils do not make enough progress in Year 1, especially in reading. <p>In their response to the questionnaire some parents felt that that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They are not kept well informed about how their child is getting on; The school does not work closely with parents; Some parents stated they would not feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or a problem. |

Inspectors agree with parents' positive comments and some of the negative ones. Pupils are helped to become responsible, caring individuals who behave well and work hard. The information given to parents is good and helpful. The school is approachable. Pupils do not read as much in Year 1 as they do in many classes. There is an inconsistency in the amount of homework set. In some classes there is exemplary practice where parents know exactly what is expected and how they can help. In other classes pupils do not have enough homework and parents may not be sure as to what they can do to help their child.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

Results over the past three years

- Initial testing (baseline) shows children start school with above average attainment.
- Standards attained by Year 2 are generally above average.
- Standards attained by Year 6 are average in English but below in mathematics and usually in science.
- Compared to similar schools standards are above average for Year 2 and below for Year 6.
- Standards in mathematics are improving in the juniors.
- Not enough Year 6 pupils attain the higher Level 5 especially in mathematics and science.

Inspection evidence shows

- Standards are above average in the reception class; children achieve well
 - Standards are around average in the infants and juniors; most pupils achieve soundly but more able pupils, particularly in Years 3 to 6 are not doing as well as they should
1. Since the last inspection in 1998, standards have generally dropped compared with other schools at Year 6 and improved at Year 2. Mathematics is the weakest subject, although standards are rising.
 2. Given that attainment on entry to the reception class is above average, it is clear that the standards attained at Year 6 could be improved and this is acknowledged by the school. Achievement overall is satisfactory but inconsistent; pupils with special educational needs generally make sound or better progress whilst more able pupils do not make enough. Where teachers take on a class that has experienced significant staff turnover, they have to work very hard to ensure pupils make up for lost time and in some cases, moderate their behaviour before pupils can start achieving as they should. Over time, junior pupils have been affected most by the school's difficulties in recruitment and retention of teachers and staff illness. As examples, last year's Year 6 had five different teachers in one year; the present Year 5, as Year 4, had a high turnover of supply teachers in one term and their progress and behaviour suffered as a result. In the main, the expectations set for more able pupils are not high enough; consequently, work set for them is not always helping them to make the progress they should. This year, the school has set more challenging targets for attainment in national tests for Year 6. However, inspection evidence shows more needs to be done, especially for more able pupils, to ensure that these are met.
 3. Over the past three years, standards attained by Year 6 in English have been around average. In mathematics, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard (Level 4) has improved year on year from well below average in 2000 to average in 2002. In science, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard has dropped from above average in 2000 to below average in 2002. In mathematics and science, it is at the higher level (Level 5) that the school does not do so well and is the reason why standards, as measured by 'average points score', are below average in mathematics and science. In mathematics the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 is well below average and in science it is below. Results for Year 6 in 2002 were affected by a high turnover of five teachers plus a number of interim supply teachers.
 4. For a similar period, standards in national tests and tasks attained in Year 2 improved until 2002 when, again, there was a high turnover of teachers for the class and standards dropped. In most years standards have been above average in reading and writing and well above average in mathematics.

5. Compared to similar schools over the past three years, Markyate has done reasonably well at Year 6 in English, but standards have been well below average in mathematics and below in science, although in 2002 standards in science were well below average. At Year 2, standards have been mostly above average, except in 2002.
6. Inspection evidence shows standards in Year 6 to be around the level expected in English, mathematics and science. The present standards attained by more able pupils are not likely to result in the higher Level 5 which indicates that some more able pupils are underachieving, most particularly in mathematics and science. In all other subjects, standards are around average with pupils with learning difficulties making sound progress. In ICT, progress for all is slowed by lack of opportunities to use computers to practise and consolidate skills.
7. Inspection evidence shows Year 2 pupils are attaining average standards and in response to very good teaching and very high expectations, pupils of all capabilities are achieving satisfactorily in all subjects.
8. Children enter the reception class with standards that are above those expected for their age. In response to very good teaching, they achieve well, with many likely to be making a good start on the National Curriculum by the time they start in Year 1.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

Strengths

- Very good relationships and personal development.
 - Good behaviour and attitudes to work.
9. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and understanding of the effect of their actions on others are good and personal development and relationships are very good. This is similar to the last inspection, although in the interim attitudes and behaviour deteriorated, according to both staff and pupils. Attendance is satisfactory. Unauthorised absence has increased from 0.1 to 0.8 per cent.
 10. Pupils enjoy school, are keen to start lessons and settle down to work well. They show much enthusiasm, for instance in a Year 3 handwriting lesson pupils were proud of their improvements and took great care in letter formation. 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. These good attitudes relate to the very good relationships between teachers, classroom assistants and the pupils, and to the enthusiasm of teachers and their good classroom management. In activities outside lessons, pupils show enthusiastic participation.
 11. Behaviour is good in most lessons, and very good in a fifth. A few pupils, with complex behavioural difficulties, are difficult to manage. On the playground, behaviour is generally good but occasionally rough play is a problem. Around the school and at lunchtime in the dining hall, behaviour is good. Exclusions are rare, one in the last academic year, and not permanent. Parents are involved long before the exclusion option is exercised and targets are agreed on the return to school. Good records of bullying and behaviour incidents are maintained. Oppressive behaviour is an infrequent occurrence. There is a record of racist incidents, but these are rare.
 12. Behaviour transgressions are carefully graded, and the worst grade has declined from 24 per term to a projected eight this term. The details of grade three and grade four transgressions are communicated to parents. This is very good practice. Parents report that behaviour is good and no comments were made about bullying.
 13. Relationships are very good. Teachers and classroom assistants know their children very well and enjoy working with them. Pupils are confident in speaking to members of staff about problems. Pupils help each other and give support. For instance in a Year 3 art lesson, pupils were presenting the results of their design for a sculpture to the Millennium Garden Committee. The pupils making the presentations were given much support by their peers, who listened and questioned sympathetically.

14. Personal development is very good. There are good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. They participate in the School Council, act as team captains, who address their teams several times per term, support charities, support the younger pupils in their reading, take visitors around the school, totally organise the school sports, act as play leaders for the infants and act as monitors for a variety of tasks.
15. Attendance is satisfactory. It is close to the national average. An analysis of unauthorised absence for each class in each term shows that high unauthorised absence correlates most noticeably with the use of supply teachers. The school day starts on time and there is good timekeeping throughout the day. The registration system is efficient. There are a few persistent latecomers but, generally, pupils are punctual for school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

Strengths

- Very good teaching for nursery and reception pupils.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Proficient classroom assistants are deployed effectively.
- Relationships are very good; teachers manage pupils well.

Areas for improvement

- Setting higher expectations for more able pupils.
- Providing work to extend more able pupils.
- Setting homework in line with the best practice in the school.
- Improving marking in line with the best practice in the school.

16. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. These judgements take into account lessons observed, examination of pupils' past and present work, and teachers' planning and assessment. During the inspection 44 lessons were observed and in these about one fifth were very good or excellent, two fifths good and two fifths satisfactory. The quality of teaching has improved immensely since the time of the last inspection where around one in five lessons was unsatisfactory.
17. In the nursery and reception classes, teaching is very good. Both teachers have a very good understanding of how young children learn and how to ensure consistent, good progress. Planning is very thorough with interesting and fun activities through which children learn essential skills. Classroom assistants and teachers work together as very efficient teams and share a determination to provide the best experiences for their pupils. Many parents help in the nursery. They are always clear about what is expected of them and make a good contribution to children's learning.
18. Throughout the school, teachers have a good understanding of the subjects they teach. Relationships between teachers and their pupils are very good. Teachers manage their pupils well with a very good level of mutual respect in nearly all classes. Proficient classroom assistants are a valued and valuable part of the teaching team. They are always clear about what they have to do and make a good contribution to pupils' learning and the efficient running of classrooms. Parents who assist in classes are also well briefed as to their tasks so that their expertise is used to maximum effect, as when several parents helped in a Year 2 design and technology lesson. Without too much input, parents ensured that sellotape, various materials and glue were used to advantage when pupils made their playground amusements. The results were very good; pupils were helped to persevere and succeed and self-esteem was high.
19. In all classes, teachers use questioning well to help pupils recall what they have learned previously, but there are occasions when introductions to lessons are too long and pupils' attention wanders and they become restless. Also, the length of introduction means that there is insufficient time for practical activities. Teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory. In some classes teachers are beginning to make very good use of ideas and concepts they have learned on courses about accelerated learning. For example, in reception, the teacher stops children for a few moments and reminds them what they are learning about, as in a numeracy

session about shapes when they were asked to 'Show me a triangle ...

square ... rectangle'. Some teachers have introduced their pupils to 'mind mapping' to help them plan stories or recall the geographical physical features they had seen on their journey to school. Pupils have enjoyed the strategy and have used it to good effect.

20. Teaching for pupils with learning difficulties is sound. Teachers plan satisfactorily for individuals' need and check on their progress. Teachers' very positive attitudes markedly increase the self-esteem of pupils who are eager to learn and to show what they can do. Teachers help pupils to build up basic skills. In the classroom, pupils are well integrated and have full access to the curriculum. Teaching assistants make notes about named pupils' progress and regularly exchange these with the class teacher. The special educational needs co-ordinator, teachers and learning support assistants, give very good support to pupils with a statement of specific need and maintain a continuous record of progress. Learning support assistants have specialist training. Good liaison with outside agencies provides a specialist input to planning and is beneficial to all. In the main, teachers manage very well the difficult balance between addressing statemented pupils' specific needs and including them in all that the class do. However, there are occasions when the behaviour of one pupil interferes with the learning of all. Teacher assistants have basic training in teaching basic literacy and numeracy skills. The additional groups for developing literacy skills are effective and pupils enjoy belonging to the groups and work hard, thriving on the extra attention.
21. Teaching and learning for more able pupils are sound overall but inconsistent. There are instances of very good practice in Years 2 and 4 where work is planned to ensure a good level of challenge to make pupils think hard and learn well. In other lessons observed and in examination of pupils' work, teachers are not setting high enough expectations nor planning to provide opportunities for pupils to extend their learning. As a consequence, more able pupils do not make the consistent progress they should as they move through the school; this, combined with a high turnover of staff, is one of the main reason that standards, as measured by average point scores, are not as high as they could be. The other factor is assessment. Currently, there are no useful systems for checking on pupils' progress in subjects other than English, mathematics and science. Therefore, teachers do not have a clear picture of what their pupils know and need to learn next. Teachers always mark their pupils' work but there is an inconsistency across the school in the quality of comments made. Where there is good practice, comments help pupils know what they need to do to improve, or parents are given suggestions as to how to help their child overcome a problem through practice at home. In other cases work is ticked and no comments made, where some may have been helpful.
22. In ICT lessons observed, the quality of teaching was mostly good. However, learning was satisfactory overall because pupils do not have enough opportunity to have 'hands on' experience with computers during lessons. They take turns to put into practice what they have learned and this means it can take some time for a whole class to have a turn. Discussions with pupils indicates that they may not always have a turn and sometimes time is cut short. Currently, the school's computers are not used to the full so ICT is not used as often as it should be in other subjects.
23. The setting of homework is inconsistent. There is excellent practice in reception and Year 2 where teachers provide parents with clear directions/suggestions of work to be undertaken. It is clear from the comments noted in the homework books that parents enjoy helping their children learn at home and that this is beneficial to progress. The amount of reading pupils do at home is commendable and has a good impact on progress. In other classes, the setting of homework is inconsistent. Older pupils do not have sufficient homework to allow them to develop good work habits and self-organisational skills to prepare them for the next stage of their education.

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

Strengths

- Good range of activities outside lessons.
- Good links with the community.
- Very good provision for pupils' social development.

Area for improvement

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to learn about a wider range of cultures and traditions and how these influence the way people choose to lead their lives.
24. At the previous inspection, the school was asked to develop a framework for the delivery of the curriculum that ensured continuity and progress in each subject and provided equally for the needs of all pupils. The school was also asked to meet the statutory requirements for the provision of information technology (IT) and design and technology (DT). The curriculum has been carefully reviewed in the intervening years and now provides for a wider range of learning experiences than were evident five years ago. There is now a clear curriculum structure and schemes of work are established for all subjects, although the physical education scheme is under review. The requirements for IT and DT are fully implemented. The needs of higher attainers are still not fully met but this is an issue for lesson planning rather than for the curriculum as a whole.
 25. The school offers a curriculum that is broad and balanced and relevant to the needs of the pupils. The teaching of all subjects is collaboratively planned and learning objectives are carefully identified. The school has a 'curriculum map' that enables all teachers to be aware of what is being taught in all year groups. Teachers plan for links across subjects, although this is an area where more development is needed. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are firmly in place and appropriate emphasis is given to pupils' acquisition of basic skills that allow access to all parts of the curriculum. The development of skills in information and communications technology is only satisfactory. Pupils do not have enough opportunity to practise their skills in the course of a normal lesson. This means that useful support to learning is denied to some pupils.
 26. All subjects in the National Curriculum are taught, including religious education. Sex education and drugs awareness are taught in accordance with the governors' policy and are part of a well-planned personal, social and health education programme. The aim of the programme is to give pupils the knowledge and skills they need, ultimately, to lead confident and independent lives.
 27. There is good provision for mathematics and English and standards are steadily rising. Both subjects have a prominent place in the curriculum and the time allocated is used well. Teachers use the national strategies as the basis for planning and each element is given due weight. The libraries provide good opportunities for supplementary learning. Planning for all subjects has improved since the last inspection. The schemes of work now provide for continuity in learning but some, such as physical education, need adapting to the specific needs of the school. The curriculum is enhanced for pupils in Year 6 by the provision of lessons in oral French. This lays a good foundation for language work in the secondary school.
 28. Markyate is a fully inclusive school. All pupils are given good access to the curriculum. Arrangements for supporting pupils, who have a very wide range of individual needs, are good. Significant support is given by the learning support assistants and the teachers' assistants to ensure that needy pupils develop self-esteem and confidence. The school cares for its pupils well and provides lessons where they can learn well, usually without interference or disruption. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. It fully reflects the present national requirements. Individual education plans are well written and contain small step targets that are realistic and achievable.
 29. The provision for after-school activities is good and provides pupils with a good range of opportunities for self-fulfilment. Many pupils learn to play musical instruments and are well taught by visiting teachers. The school is hoping to form a small orchestra in time for the summer production. The choir sings to good standards and has performed recently at a retirement home, earning high praise for its efforts. There are several recorder groups. In sport, the school has representative teams in soccer, netball, athletics and cross-country running. There are several after-school clubs including French, dance, and, unusually, cross-stitch where beautiful work is regularly on display.
 30. The school makes good contact with the local village community. All the indications are that the community is proud of its school. Pupils visit the local Baptist church regularly and hold the

annual carol concert there. The local clergy visit the school. Pupils visit the village to complete history and geography projects and to collect information from the villagers. Pupils are frequent visitors to The Cell, Markyate and gardens and also to the local water authority, so that they can see for themselves how things work.

31. The school has good relationships with its partners in education. It is part of the graduate teacher trainee programme and takes students from the local university. The school has links with secondary schools in the area that intensify at the time of secondary transfer. Secondary pupils complete work experience at the school to learn about teaching skills. The school is part of a local consortium of primary schools and this leads to a useful exchange of information and ideas.
32. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has progressed well since the last inspection and is now good. Pupils' moral and social development is a strength of the school.
33. The school assembly is the focus of satisfactory provision for spiritual development. Pupils arrive to the accompaniment of music, chosen from different parts of the world. Pupils are taught to respect and value each other. This is most apparent in the 'showcase' assembly when pupils learn of the achievements of others. Sometimes, the assembly is held in the school's attractive grounds where pupils can reflect 'amid the birdsong'. Pupils listen carefully to stories from different parts of the world and learn how others live. A prayer is usually spoken and there is a moment for quiet reflection. The central themes of assembly are carried forward into religious education lessons where they are set in the context of world religions. Circle time provides an opportunity for pupils to talk about events at home or at school and to share their feelings with others. Art, music and writing provide further expression for thoughts and feelings, but these not yet linked to other aspects of spiritual development.
34. Provision for moral development is good. The school is unequivocal in what it expects from its pupils. They are clear about what is right and what is wrong. The good behaviour of most pupils is evidence that they recognise the difference. There are very well-defined rewards and sanctions that the school has put firmly in place in recent times. The result is a well-ordered community that provides a largely undisturbed working environment, where pupils feel safe and secure. A system of rewards, highlighted in the showcase assembly, attended by parents, confirms the aims of the school to encourage each pupil to achieve his or her highest potential.
35. Provision for social development is very good. Relationships throughout the school are very good and are sympathetically monitored by all staff, who provide good role models for their pupils. No examples of aggressive behaviour were noted during the inspection. Pupils are kind and caring to each other. Older pupils take responsibility for looking after those who are younger. Pupils are concerned when others are in distress. The school fosters a strong sense of community, with common, inclusive values.
36. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. The school embraces the wider community and is in close contact with the village it serves. The school has taken part in dances around the village maypole and has completed projects in history and geography, making use of local resources. Pupils have made good use of the school's spacious grounds, making natural sculptures of twigs and laying treasure trails. The millennium garden is a delight. Pupils have enjoyed a music day, a science week and a drama workshop, all of which draw in aspects of local community life. Pupils visit museums and art galleries and by the time pupils leave the school, many have developed some insight into the influences that have shaped their own cultural heritage. The religious education curriculum encourages pupils to learn about other cultures and to understand the merits of different lifestyles. However, there is little planned provision in other subjects for pupils to appreciate the strengths of other cultures. The school does not yet provide adequately for pupils to live in a multi-cultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

Strengths

- Good procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare.

Area for improvement

- Assessment and its use in raising standards.
37. Care of pupils is a strength of the school with good health and safety practices, good child protection procedures, good welfare arrangements and good procedures for improving behaviour. There are weaknesses in the procedures for and use of assessment. This position is close to that at the last inspection.
 38. The school is a happy place. Parents say that children are encouraged to mature and work hard and that their children are happy.
 39. The school is a safe environment with all the expected safety measures in place. Safety inspections are undertaken regularly and defects remedied quickly. Internet safety is very good. Equipment is checked regularly. Child protection procedures are in place. The nominated person, the headteacher, is experienced in this field, has good contacts and knows the local procedures. All adult staff who come into contact with children have been trained in child protection and are aware of procedures to follow. Welfare facilities are good and children with health problems are identified to those who need to know. There are a number of first-aiders. There is a medical room. Medicines are administered by the office staff. The school has close links with the local health visitor, who is able to offer a variety of support for pupils.
 40. Procedures for the promotion of attendance are satisfactory. The school makes telephone calls to parents on the first day of absence. Attendance is not analysed by class and the attendance figures for the autumn term have not been calculated. Rewards are given for ninety-nine per cent attendance and above. The impact of poor attendance on a pupil's education is stressed to parents in the prospectus and annual report. The education welfare officer handles the attendance performance of a few families and this support is appreciated by the school. The governors have decided that they will no longer authorise requests for holidays in term time.
 41. Procedures for promoting good behaviour are good. Following a period when behaviour had deteriorated due to staff instability, the headteacher took a strong leadership position on this. Her objectives are very clear. Rules are uniformly applied [Golden Rules] with a highly structured classification of behaviour transgressions and consequences balanced with rewards on a liberal scale, including 'Golden Time'. This has been an effective strategy. Parents are involved when pupils acquire a level 3 or 4 transgression, which is good practice, although a few parents have expressed resistance.
 42. There are very good procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour, through assemblies, circle time and encouraging pupils to confide in adults if they have problems.
 43. Procedures for monitoring and encouraging pupils' personal development are satisfactory. There is very little recording of personal development outside the nursery and reception classes and this presents problems in a school with a fairly high staff turnover, as incoming teachers are not primed on what to expect. The headteacher is hoping to negotiate the introduction of written records of personal development. Otherwise, teachers show interest in their pupils and want to see them succeed. Teachers talk sympathetically about their pupils, especially the ones causing them concern. Every year, parents receive the targets that have been set for their children.
 44. The school has a policy for assessment, recording and reporting which was revised in July 2000 but further revision is now required as the school's practice has developed since that time. The school development plan identifies the work needing to be done to ensure that procedures for assessment inform both planning and teaching and that there is a consistent approach to assessment across the school.
 45. Baseline assessment is carried out on entry to the nursery and again in the reception class. This information is used well to inform planning and provides valuable information as to children's starting points. In the rest of the school the recent procedures put in place for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory and should have a good impact on standards. Individual progress is now more closely monitored using a software program which was introduced in

September 2002 using achievement data from 2001/02. Targets for individual pupils' levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science are set in July, revised in October if necessary and progress towards these targets checked in February. Each

class teacher meets with the headteacher to discuss these targets and take action if pupils are not on course to achieve them. This tracker information is accessible to all staff and training is to be given to enable teachers to enter future data.

46. Currently, assessment and its use are unsatisfactory. The school has a system whereby individual records are kept on each pupil's attainment in English, mathematics and science and a predicted level of attainment for the next school year. The records are used as a means of tracking and checking on progress but have not been found to be as effective as they could be. A more detailed tracking system is now in place through which progress against targets can be checked regularly. Clear assessment against National Curriculum levels is not in place for any subjects except English, mathematics and science. The school has correctly identified that it must put procedures in place and rigorously monitor these to see how it informs teaching, teachers' expectations and curriculum planning.
47. The school has recently adopted a model of assessment, which gives pupils written and verbal feedback to enable them to progress in their writing. This is currently being adopted for reading and numeracy. The model provides pupils with clear learning targets. Targets are not yet formally shared with parents except at the annual parents' meeting. Some teachers are starting to refer to these targets in marking pupils' work and providing them with valuable feedback. If used consistently across the school, this could prove a useful tool in helping raise attainment at the higher Levels 3 and 5.
48. The headteacher leads on the development of assessment in the school. She and members of the senior management team have undertaken good data analysis and drawn up a development plan for assessment, with clear priorities. This year has seen the school examining its value added information which, by looking at children's baseline on entry to school, their results in national tests at Year 2 and their results at Year 6, aims to show the effectiveness of the teaching and learning experience for each pupil. The school is able to monitor pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science through the use of optional national tests in Years 3, 4 and 5. The headteacher currently has a good overview of pupils' levels of attainment as she entered all the data into the software program, discusses pupils' targets with class teachers and also looks at the termly piece of unaided writing undertaken by pupils and marked by class teachers.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

Strengths

- Good information for parents.
 - Good parental involvement in school and in their child's learning.
49. The involvement of parents in the school and their children's schooling, coupled with the strong efforts to involve them by the school are strengths. However, it is a mystery why some parents who answered the questionnaire do not appear to support the school, while the 36 parents inspectors have spoken to have all been very supportive. Nevertheless the proportion of 'strongly agree' replies to the questionnaire has trebled compared with the last inspection.
 50. Parents spoken to have high opinions of the school. They have only minor criticisms. Those who answered the questionnaire have high opinions of the teaching, behaviour, the hard work that their children are expected to do and their developing maturity. Their matters of concern are the approachability of the school, homework, the information that they receive on progress and the extent to which the school works closely with them. The inspection team agrees that there is some good teaching, but 'overall' teaching is satisfactory [but very good for the youngest children]. The team agrees that homework for older pupils is unsatisfactory. The team considers

that the school is very approachable and that good information is provided about the progress of pupils. There is no doubt that the school works closely with parents.

51. The quality of information provided for parents is good. There are regular and informative newsletters. The prospectus is well presented and contains useful information. The annual report by the governors is brief but contains all the statutorily required information. Both could be used more effectively to highlight and emphasise the strengths of the school. The language used could be more informal. School reports have good analyses of achievements in all subjects. There are however no levels of attainment, except for Years 2 and 6. Each report has three targets for improvement and these are followed up at progress meetings. Opportunities are available for parents to discuss reports. Parents of pupils with special needs are always invited to discuss revisions of individual education plans. These are all examples of good procedures.
52. Progress meetings, at which parents can discuss how their children are getting on, take place twice a year. Curriculum information is supplied every term and more frequently in the nursery. Parents receive a condensed version of the school development plan and are invited to comment. There have been after-school family numeracy sessions. Parents have been consulted through questionnaires and were consulted about the behaviour policy. These are all good practices for involving parents in their children's education.
53. The contribution of parents to children's learning at school and at home is good. For example many parents help in class, particularly with the younger children. They help with trips, on sports days and in the gardens. There is a flourishing 'friends' association that provides valuable finance and holds social functions. The monthly cake sale is very popular. Parents support 'showcase assemblies' and concerts. Parents are invited in to help tackle behaviour and attendance problems and are also informed by letter. Parents help with reading at home and with homework and there is especially good use made of homework books in reception, Year 2, Year 4 and Year 5. Induction into the nursery is preceded by a home visit, followed by a meeting with teachers, a governor and a representative of the 'friends'.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Strengths

- The headteacher's and deputy headteacher's clear sense of direction for the school.
- The governors' and headteacher's strong commitment to the professional development of staff.

Areas for improvement

- More rigorous checks on pupils' learning.
- More emphasis in school development planning on the achievement of more able pupils.
- Accommodation for the nursery class.

54. Leadership is satisfactory overall with strengths in the head and deputy's clear sense of purpose and direction for the school. They know what they want for the school. When the headteacher was appointed in 1998, the school had been through a long unsettled period and was experiencing staffing and staff sickness difficulties. These staffing difficulties, combined with considerable staff illness have continued. It has been difficult to build and retain a senior management team in order that their work can impact on the quality of education the school provides. For example, there has been a high turnover of subject co-ordinators and a new deputy headteacher. As a consequence, progress has been slowed in developing teaching and learning, raising standards further and also in sustaining useful systems of assessment. However, much has been done since the last inspection; schemes of work are in place for all subjects and have been reviewed and updated. The deputy is currently trialling a software program with a view to further improvement in curriculum planning. The quality of teaching has improved immensely. An effective software program has recently been introduced and is used for tracking pupils' attainment and setting crisp targets in English, mathematics and science. The deputy headteacher provides a very good role model for teaching and has had a good impact on improving the quality of teaching in mathematics and on the subject's future development.

55. The headteacher and governors are committed to ensuring subject co-ordinators are given opportunities to learn about and develop their roles and to this end have made it possible for four teachers to attend ten half-day training sessions. Unfortunately one of the co-ordinators has left the school but the remaining three are finding the course very beneficial especially in helping them to understand the outcomes and impact of analysing data. The co-ordinator for English has already put this knowledge to good effect.

56. The headteacher also provides a very positive lead in promoting pupils' personal development and improving behaviour. She has a clear and successful vision that the school is a strong community where all help each other and there is mutual respect. The school's aim to 'work together, achieve forever' is met well in the main, although some more able pupils could achieve more and this is acknowledged by the school.
57. Governors also provide satisfactory leadership with strengths in the very good leadership of their chair and their good understanding of the strengths and areas of improvement in the school. From this understanding they are setting the headteacher very appropriate targets for development. Governors' roles and responsibilities are very clearly defined with very good communication between all committees. Currently, many governors are relatively new to their roles and are keen to build up their expertise so that they can develop their role in acting as a critical friend to the school. The chair of the finance committee brings her own expertise to the role and has a very good understanding of the school's budget and budget planning and advises governors accordingly. All monies allocated to the school for specific purposes, such as special educational needs, are used to pupils' best advantage. The principles of best value are applied soundly.
58. Management is satisfactory. School development planning is comprehensive and has a reasonable focus on raising standards but, currently, there is not enough detail about expectations at the higher levels in national tests and this is an acknowledged area for improvement. The headteacher, deputy and co-ordinator for the juniors make thorough analyses of national test data and other data collected about the school. Governors, too, are involved in these analyses. The information gained is used to set targets for future attainment. Recently, the school has realised that they are not as successful as they should be at helping pupils to attain the higher levels in national tests. From their analysis of data, it is noticeable that in past years the school has been successful in helping lower attaining pupils and those with special needs achieve well. The school now acknowledges that, whilst retaining their good provision for pupils with special needs, there needs to be a change of emphasis to ensure the more able pupils achieve their best. Already, a good strategy has been formulated and higher targets have been set for attainment at Level 5 in mathematics and English; however, inspection evidence suggests that unless there is more teaching input and/or challenge, these targets are unlikely to be met.
59. Teaching is monitored effectively by the head, deputy and some subject co-ordinators. Areas for improvement are noted and teachers given advice on how to improve and suitable support provided if necessary. Newly qualified teachers have appropriate mentors and all requirements to help them succeed are in place. They are pleased with the support not only from their mentors but from the whole school. Procedures for checking on pupils' learning are in place but in the main are not rigorous enough to ensure the headteacher is aware of inconsistencies in practice across the school. The recent effective check on the use of reading records across the school is a very good example of how beneficial in highlighting strengths and areas for improvement such checks can be.
60. Management of special educational needs is good. The knowledge, commitment and organisational skills of the special educational needs co-ordinator, supported by the headteacher, are the foundation for good provision for all pupils with special needs. The development plan for special educational needs takes full account of the need for closer contact to be made between class teachers, teacher assistants and the special educational needs co-ordinator. Regular feedback about pupils' progress is provided for all teachers. There is a shared commitment to raise standards.
61. The school has tried very hard to ascertain the causes of staff illness, for example, the heating systems have been checked and each bout of illness is recorded in attempt to track down the root of the problem. In order to lessen the work-load on subject co-ordinators, the school employs a part-time teacher to relieve co-ordinators to undertake their roles. In addition, this teacher covers for staff sickness, if possible, which lessens the number of different supply teachers coming in to school. These moves have been a very effective use of funds.
62. The accommodation is satisfactory overall. The outside areas and dell provide good, interesting spaces for play and work. The nursery classroom is adequate in terms of floor space but with 35

children and sometimes five or six adults, it is cramped. The school is short of storage areas which results in the hall having things such as an overhead projector stored there and this is not ideal for physical education activities. Resources for learning are satisfactory except for computers. The ratio of computers to pupils is below national figures (currently 1:11 and school's 1:15). The number of teachers is satisfactory and they are supported by a suitable number of proficient classroom assistants.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

63. Markyate is an improving school. To continue this improvement, the school should:

(1) **Raise standards in English, mathematics and science by:

- Setting realistic targets and time scales for improvement and governors checking progress against these;
- Making very effective use of the new tracking system;
- Ensuring all teachers set high expectations and appropriate work for more able pupils;
- Putting in place systems for the senior management team to make regular and rigorous checks on pupils' work with an agreed focus;
- Using the outcomes of monitoring and assessment to make further improvements as necessary.

Paragraphs: 2, 3, 6, 21, 56, 91, 100, 102, 108, 113, 115, 116, 121, 122

(2) **Put in place systems for checking on pupils' progress by:

- Putting in place assessment systems for all subjects, with ICT as a priority, which give teachers a clear picture of what pupils know and need to learn next and what National Curriculum level they are at.

Paragraphs: 123, 128, 133, 141, 148

(3) Raise standards in ICT by:

- Consulting with staff as to how they could make better use of the existing computers;
- Putting in place a system whereby use of computers is monitored regularly.

Paragraphs: 6, 22, 25, 112, 142, 144, 147, 155, 160, 166

In addition to the key issues above, the following should be considered for improvement:

- Pupils with profound learning difficulties disturbing the learning of their peers;
- More homework for juniors;
- Groups going out for additional teaching should not miss plenaries;
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop a better awareness of other cultures and the influence this has on the way people choose to lead their lives.

Paragraphs: 20, 23, 36, 62, 70, 103

** already identified by the school for improvement

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of lessons observed | 44 |
| 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 | 2 | 8 | 17 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 4 | 18 | 39 | 39 | 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) | 18 | 171 |
| Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals | N/A | 30 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

| Special educational needs | Nursery | YR – Y6 |
|---|---------|---------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 1 | 3 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 2 | 50 |

| English as an additional language | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 0 |

| Pupil mobility in the last school year | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 13 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 23 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 5.2 |
| National comparative data | 5.4 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 0.8 |
| National comparative data | 0.5 |

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

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

| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| | 2002 | 16 | 18 | 34 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | Reading | Writing | Mathematics |
|---|----------|---------|---------|-------------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above | Boys | 11 | 9 | 14 |
| | Girls | 15 | 15 | 18 |
| | Total | 26 | 24 | 32 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above | School | 76 (91) | 71 (95) | 94 (100) |
| | National | 84 (84) | 86 (86) | 90 (91) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|----------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above | Boys | 11 | 14 | 15 |
| | Girls | 16 | 18 | 18 |
| | Total | 27 | 32 | 33 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above | School | 79 (95) | 94 (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 | 17 | 10 | 27 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above | Boys | | | |
| | Girls | | | |
| | Total | 22 | 21 | 22 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above | School | 81 (77) | 78 (61) | 81 (90) |
| | National | 75 (75) | 73 (71) | 86 (87) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above | Boys | | | |
| | Girls | | | |
| | Total | 21 | 22 | 21 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above | School | 78 (81) | 81 (68) | 78 (90) |
| | National | 73 (72) | 74 (74) | 82 (82) |

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

Separate totals for girls and boys are not given in the above table as fewer than 11 girls took the tests.

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 | 135 | 0 | 0 |
| White – Irish | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| White – any other White background | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Black African | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Asian | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – any other mixed background | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – Indian | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – Pakistani | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – Caribbean | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – African | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – any other Black background | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Chinese | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Any other ethnic group | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| No ethnic group recorded | 16 | 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) | 8.5 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 18 |
| Average class size | 25 |

Education support staff: YR – Y6

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 13 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 238 |

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

| | |
|--|----|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 1 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 35 |
| Total number of education support staff | 2 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 57 |
| Number of pupils per FTE adult | 12 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

| | |
|--|------------|
| Financial year | 2001/02 |
| | £ |
| Total income | 518,459.10 |
| Total expenditure | 520,867.39 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2,909 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 31,567.97 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 29,159.68 |

Recruitment of teachers

| | |
|--|-----|
| Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years | 6 |
| Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years | 6.5 |

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 211 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 58 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 43 | 48 | 5 | 3 | 0 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 29 | 52 | 3 | 3 | 12 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 19 | 62 | 3 | 2 | 14 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 19 | 50 | 17 | 3 | 10 |
| The teaching is good. | 26 | 57 | 5 | 2 | 10 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 24 | 45 | 19 | 3 | 9 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 41 | 40 | 14 | 5 | 0 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 45 | 41 | 7 | 0 | 7 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 21 | 53 | 16 | 5 | 5 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 17 | 53 | 12 | 5 | 12 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 19 | 62 | 5 | 0 | 14 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 29 | 34 | 9 | 5 | 22 |

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 (nursery and reception class)

Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning.
- Very good relationships and high expectations.
- Very good teamwork between teachers and assistants.
- Very good links with parents.

Area for improvement

- Placing more emphasis on encouraging children to use the letter sounds they know to help them spell.

64. The school has a nursery class for children aged between three and four. There are two intakes per year - in September and January. Children attend mornings only. Prior to starting nursery, nursery staff visit the children and their parents in their homes. Parents speak highly of this visit, expressing the view that it prepares them and their child very well for the start to school. At the time of inspection, there were 35 children attending the nursery, 16 in the September intake and 19 in the most recent January intake, all of whom were three years plus. Children are taught by one teacher helped by a nursery nurse and classroom assistant.
65. Children move from the nursery to the reception class when they are nearly five. Again, there are two intakes depending on age. During inspection there were 23 children in the reception class. Children are taught by one teacher helped by a full-time classroom assistant.
66. Teachers quickly establish very good links with parents so that they feel confident that they are fully involved in their child's learning. The 'target books' used in reception show exemplary practice in involving parents in helping their child learn at home and giving very good opportunities to communicate with the teacher. Both classes have a display board for parents to check on to find out such things such as which letter sounds are being learned, any visits to be made and any equipment needed.
67. Teaching and learning are very good in both classes. Both teachers have a very good understanding of how young children learn and how to ensure consistent, good progress. Planning is very thorough with interesting and fun activities through which children learn essential skills. Relationships between all adults and children are very good and underpin the very good management of children. Even the very youngest children respond quickly to a quiet word from an adult and moderate their behaviour accordingly. Older children in reception try extremely hard and succeed in meeting their teacher's high expectations for behaviour; they demonstrate very mature attitudes and behaviour. Assessment is very thorough in both classes. Both teachers share the determination to provide the best experiences for their pupils. They work very well together and have some common practices so that when children transfer from nursery to reception, they do not find settling in a problem. An area for development, rather than improvement, is for teachers to develop and use more common formats so that these can just be continued when children transfer to reception.
68. Over the past four years, initial testing (baseline) when they start in the reception class shows children's attainment to be above the local authority average.
69. Provision for children with specific difficulties is very good which helps them make remarkably good progress. They are fully included in everyday class activities and benefit from carefully planned individual activities to address their specific needs.

70. The provision and teaching for children in the nursery and reception have improved since the time of the last inspection. The very helpful involvement of parents has continued to be a strength. Resources for learning are satisfactory but the nursery classroom is cramped.

Personal, social and emotional development

71. Teaching and learning are very good in this area. Provision in both classes is very good. Both teachers and their assistants work together as a team, all setting consistent and high expectations for the right way to behave, with a focus on being kind and tolerant which makes for a smooth transition from nursery to reception. All adults provide excellent role models for calmness, good manners and consideration. In the nursery, children are provided with a good range of activities. Children are expected to choose what they do, stick with an activity and, if appropriate, clear up and tidy away at the end of a session. The great majority of children show good levels of perseverance within an activity such as building Jack's castle or making the longest brick 'road'. In the reception class, children, again have good opportunities to make choices and order these. They move from one activity to another such as using a computer program to playing with the dolls' house but always make sure they have left things tidy. They take great delight in taking the register to the office. They change themselves efficiently for PE lessons and leave their clothes tidily. During inspection, many examples were noted where children were good naturedly helpful and kind to each other. By the time children start in Year 1, it is likely that very nearly all will attain the expected standards with a significant number exceeding these.

Communication, language and literacy

72. Teaching and learning are very good and by the time children start in Year 1 it is likely that nearly all will attain the expected standards with a significant number exceeding these.
73. In both classes, all adults provide very good role models for clear speech, careful listening and using a wide vocabulary. During inspection, nursery children were learning the opposites 'long/short' and 'tall/short'. Many fun activities were on offer such as comparing lengths of blue spaghetti, building the tallest house or comparing the lengths of stick insects. Within these activities all adults took every opportunity to extend or reinforce a child's vocabulary by careful questioning or 'modelling' a sentence for a child to follow. Parent helpers had been briefed as to what was expected of them so the good ratio of adults to children provided very good learning opportunities.
74. Nursery children have very high expectations of enjoyment from stories and listen very carefully and delight in the pictures. They handle books confidently, know where to start and enjoy sharing pictures and making up the story to go with the pictures. Children enjoyed re-telling the story of Jack and the Giant (Jack and the Beanstalk) and gave their opinions confidently as to what sort of person the giant was. A letter sound of the week is taught with many interesting ways of reinforcing children's learning such as blue spaghetti and blowing blue bubbles for letter /b/. Most children know the sound of the letter at the beginning of their name.
75. In reception, children have very positive attitudes to reading and make very good progress. During the fifteen minute focused reading every day (FRED) session, explicit planning made sure all profited from the activity. More able readers chose books carefully, read them to themselves or shared them with a friend very sensibly. Others read with their teacher and made good gains in learning strategies to attempt unknown words. Children read very regularly at home and reading diaries show a very good dialogue between home and school which promotes very good progress.
76. Letter sounds are taught well but not enough emphasis is placed on encouraging children, especially the more able, to use these to help them to attempt to spell words they want to use in their writing. Handwriting is taught well so that children soon make very good progress in forming letters and holding their pencil correctly.

Mathematical development

77. Teaching and learning are very good in both classes and by the time children start in Year 1 it is likely that nearly all will attain the expected standards with a significant number exceeding these.

78. In the nursery, fun activities provide good opportunities for children to count and compare. For example, a few parents and children lined up and children were asked who was the tallest and shortest and was this the same if they changed positions. Pairs of trousers were compared and children found great amusement in noting that the short trousers would not fit the tall person. The youngest children count reliably to five and many beyond. Some older children count to 35.
79. In reception, children name circles, triangles, rectangles and squares and many note that the opposite sides of a rectangle are the same and that a square's sides are all the same. Children are very clear about what they are expected to learn because their teacher shares this with them and they repeat it. Very good reinforcement 'breaks' are incorporated into the session where children are asked to stop and show their teacher a triangle shape, a square or a circle. These moments are very helpful in keeping children focused on what they are learning.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

80. Teaching and learning are very good in both classes and by the time children start in Year 1 it is likely that nearly all will attain the expected standards with a significant number exceeding these.
81. In the nursery, children give great thought as to how they can design and make their house suitable for a giant and they set about the task with great concentration. New vocabulary is developed well when children are asked to describe the materials they have used to decorate their balloons. In their 'post office' children learn that letters need stamps on if they are to be delivered. ICT skills are developed well when children use a mouse to click and drag articles to 'find teddy'. Children learn to look after living things with care when they observe their stick insects and their young and note how small they are.
82. In reception, children use the mouse to click and drag very efficiently. Children discuss the types of animals found in cold countries and know that igloos are made from snow. Examination of children's work shows a great deal of work undertaken. They have looked at old and new transport and designed and made a model car. They have investigated materials that hold water and the life cycle of a butterfly related to the story of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*.

Physical development

83. No teaching was observed in this area in the nursery. However, it can be said that the provision for, and teaching of small controlled movements, such as holding a pencil correctly and using a paint brush to good effect, are very good. Very good attention is paid to ensuring good habits are developed from the start. In a reception PE session in the hall, teaching was very good so that children made very good progress in developing their skills in using small and large PE equipment.
84. By the time they start in Year 1, nearly all children are likely to have attained the expected levels with many making a good start on the National Curriculum.

Creative development

85. Teaching and learning are very good in both classes and by the time children start in Year 1 it is likely that nearly all will attain the expected standards with a significant number exceeding these.
86. Nursery children are provided with varied and interesting activities through which they learn to look carefully before they draw an object as when a small group visited the 'sea room' to draw a shark, shells or an octopus. They concentrated for a good time, used their pencils or crayons to good effect and many managed to include a good amount of detail. Children enjoy learning rhymes and songs and sing with enthusiasm.
87. In reception, excellent organisation and teaching helped children develop a very good understanding of the possibilities for mixing colours and making patterns. Children's concentration and behaviour were impressive whilst they mixed their colours in plastic bags and dripped the results on to paper.

88. In both classes, interesting and inviting role-play areas provide very good opportunities for acting out stories or playing alongside others of the same age.

ENGLISH

Strengths

- The number of pupils attaining average levels is continuing to improve.
- Good assessment and target setting procedures are in place for writing.
- Lower attaining pupils make good progress.
- Good use of teaching assistants.
- Pupils' positive attitudes towards the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Setting higher expectations for pupils to attain the higher Levels 3 and 5.
- Raising standards in writing and spelling throughout the school.
- Monitoring pupils' learning more rigorously.
- Ensuring pupils taken out of lessons for group work do not miss important plenaries.

89. For Year 2 pupils, results of National Curriculum tests from 1999 to 2001 showed they attained standards either above or well above national averages for both reading and writing. In 2002 however, standards for reading were below the national average and those of similar schools. For writing in 2002, standards were below the national average and well below those of similar schools. In the same year, results at the higher Level 3 were only just below the national average for reading and writing. In 2002, standards were affected by the high turnover of staff for the year group.
90. From 1999 to 2002, in national tests for Year 6, results were in line with the national average. In 2002, standards attained were above the national average at the expected Level 4 but below at the higher Level 5.
91. Inspection evidence shows that standards in Years 2 and 6 are average but, at the time of the inspection, not enough pupils appeared to be on course to attain the higher Levels 3 and 5. No significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls in reading or writing were seen at the time of the inspection. Pupils with learning difficulties make sound progress.
92. Boys and girls have positive attitudes towards the subject and, in response to the teaching, concentrate and work hard in lessons. It is only if the level of work provided is not sufficiently challenging or the teacher does not make sure that the pace of the lesson is maintained, that the level of concentration decreases. Teachers work hard to ensure that all pupils are included in the lessons.
93. All teachers set high expectations for pupils as to how speaking and listening activities need to be conducted in class. The behaviour policy, the high quality of the pupil/teacher relationship and the work the school is doing in developing pupils' respect and care for one another, have a good influence on standards in speaking and listening. A quiet working atmosphere is maintained in most classrooms and pupils are reminded of how to listen to one another and to not call out when other pupils are speaking. In some of the best lessons, less confident pupils are given time to prepare their answers to questions in whole class teaching sessions. In Year 2, pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their speaking and listening skills and achieve levels expected for their age. For example, pupils listened to a lively telling of the story of the 'Holy Grail' by the class teacher who used small models of characters and settings to bring the story alive. Pupils sustained a very high level of concentration and were able to explain the plot of the story and how the setting of Camelot had changed as a result of the story's events. In Year 6, standards appear average but, during the inspection, higher attaining pupils in this year group rarely volunteered to answer questions. Generally, however, with the pupils from Year 3 onwards, as a result of the improvement in planning with its speaking and listening focus, some pupils are making good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. This was seen when groups of Year 5 pupils had to perform a lively retelling of "Cinderella" to fully engage the audience of the rest of the

class. Teaching staff are responding to the need to develop pupils' oracy as a means to raise levels of attainment in writing.

94. In reading, Year 2 pupils attain average standards. As a result of good teaching, they know the difference between fiction and non-fiction books and identify where the index page is in a book. When tackling unfamiliar words, pupils use a range of strategies. Better readers are able to read with fluency and accuracy, self correct, talk about the characters and story line and predict what will happen next. Pupils of all capabilities have the right level of reading book and, due to the colour banding system to identify books appropriate for certain reading abilities, pupils are able to independently select books when required. Year 6 pupils attain average standards. These pupils discuss their preferred authors and are able to talk about "genres". Reading aloud is confident and with good expression. Pupils tackle unfamiliar words confidently, using a good range of strategies. More able pupils use inference and deduction and a few are able to discuss what the author intends in his or her choice of words or phrases. The school is presently developing reading targets for all pupils as a means to raise levels of attainment in reading.
95. The school's analysis of data related to pupils' attainment in reading, has brought about changes in reading provision within the school. The school acted upon the results of interviews of boys related to their views about reading and held a very successful book week in which male relatives of some of the pupils read books to them and presented positive reading role models. Analysis of data has also resulted in the school having fifteen minutes focused reading every day (FRED) sessions in each class in which a variety of reading activities takes place, including group guided reading. Some parents assist in FRED activities. Pupils clearly enjoy the FRED sessions, which were introduced in January 2003 and are now well used to the routines. Inspection evidence shows a lack of consistency in the amount of detail recorded by teachers relating to pupils' progress in group guided reading sessions.
96. A variety of reading record books is in place for all year groups to facilitate a dialogue between child, parent and teacher regarding each pupil's progress in reading. The school's senior management team has very recently monitored these. The best practice in Year 2 shows detailed comments from both parents and teachers, with pupils and parents clearly being encouraged by the teacher's assessment and advice, as well as a clear explanation as to the number and range of books each child should take home. The best practice for the older pupils shows guidance from the teacher as to how each individual pupil can progress, regular teacher comments and good book reviews by the pupils themselves.
97. In writing, Year 2 and Year 6 are attaining standards in line with those expected. The recent introduction of methods such as 'mind mapping' for organising thoughts and planning writing, is being used to good effect both in English lessons and other subjects. Where pupils are achieving well in their writing, such as in Year 4, it is because the teacher has organised her planning with a specific written outcome planned. Pupils are thoroughly acquainted with the specific type of writing, taught the specific skills and knowledge needed and given appropriate support to enable them to produce an effective piece of written work. Some teachers have begun to establish cross-curricular links to other subjects with writing and these give a clear purpose for the writing tasks as well as providing other opportunities for pupils to write.
98. By Year 2, pupils write clear instructions, simple letters, poems and use story settings and character profiles to write traditional tales and expand on stories from other cultures. Pupils make good use of word-processing to display their work. In Year 2, examples were seen of pupils writing endings to a traditional Indian tale "The Wicked Stepmother" and this was given a real purpose as the pupils made a simple puppet theatre to retell the story to other pupils. In the same class, very good use of group guided writing sessions in the daily hour of literacy teaching enabled pupils to write different parts of another Indian story "The Great Storm". Pupils clearly enjoyed doing this as well as painting accompanying illustrations. When pupils are given a range of different types of writing to do, they respond well, especially where a real purpose is given for the writing and the work has been carefully planned to both support and challenge pupils at all stages of the writing process.
99. Pupils' progress in writing is, at times, limited by a lack of confidence and knowledge related to spelling. Many pupils do not use the sounds they know to help them spell, have not learned the

irregularly spelt words such as 'because' and lack the confidence to tackle the spelling of unfamiliar words. As a consequence, too much time is lost and thought is interrupted when pupils stop their writing because they do not know how to spell a certain word. The school is aware of this and the spelling policy, which shows practice in the teaching of spelling is about to be reviewed. Alongside the methods suggested by the government, to develop pupils' knowledge of sounds, the school uses a commercial scheme but there is no consensus on how this scheme is used. To develop pupils' spelling knowledge, spelling journals have been recently been introduced but their use is inconsistent at present.

100. In writing for Years 3 to 6, there is satisfactory coverage of the required skills. Some of the tasks given to pupils are very imaginative and capture pupils' imagination whilst still maintaining clear writing purposes. In Year 4, for example, through very good teaching, pupils skilfully and enthusiastically used their knowledge of how "Happy Family" stories were written to appeal to a young audience. They used the knowledge they had acquired through reading and discussing these texts, to write their own version of a "Happy Family" story, which they wished to read to younger pupils. The teacher made the task fun by suggesting they write a story about "Mrs Tough the Teacher". With the exception of the more able, Year 6 pupils are achieving satisfactorily and, when given challenging and interesting tasks, make satisfactory progress in writing. Pupils were seen, for example, learning and applying the language of formal writing, using information given in a newspaper report of a summer ball, to write a clear formal invitation to the same event. Currently, some teachers are not setting high enough expectations for their more able pupils. Though individual targets are in place, they are not referred to enough in the teaching to ensure maximum impact on raising pupils' attainment in writing.
101. The quality of marking and feedback to pupils about the standard of their written work is variable and the school has noted this in their own monitoring procedures. Insufficient attention is presently given to ensuring that pupils know what it is about their writing that makes it successful and what they need to do to improve it further. In some of the best practice, pupils in Year 4 and 5 respond to written comments from the teacher as to what they need to do to improve their writing and sometimes are even seen to apologise to the teacher if they have forgotten to check their writing against their learning target.
102. Overall, teaching in all English lessons is satisfactory and in half these lessons it is good or very good. Where the teaching is very good, teachers know exactly what they want their pupils to learn and explain this carefully to them. They skilfully use a variety of methods to interest all pupils, differentiate for their learning needs, sustain their concentration and ensure they are motivated to make very good progress in the lesson. The school now has a clear scheme of work of all that needs to be taught to ensure that pupils progress in their learning in English. Lessons have clear learning objectives, which enable all pupils to know what it is they are going to learn and how this will be demonstrated. Lessons show the work to be done by the different ability groups but, at times, the work for the higher attainers is not challenging enough. Clear strategies are in place to raise levels of attainment. There are now good procedures in place for assessing pupils' progress and providing them with individual learning targets to improve their writing. Good use is made of the skills of all teaching and learning support assistants. Across the school, insufficient use is made of homework as a means to develop pupils' progress in reading and writing. Examples of exemplary practice were, however, seen in Years 2 and 4.
103. Effective use is made of additional strategies to raise the achievement of lower attaining pupils and develop their self-esteem. Good support is provided to these pupils via strategies such as early, additional and further literacy support. These strategies, alongside the booster classes for Year 6 pupils, are part of the school's response to their own careful data analysis and the need to raise all pupils' achievements in writing and reading. The school will need to monitor the timings of these sessions however, as during the inspection, pupils were seen to miss returning to their class for plenary sessions when the learning of the lesson was revisited.
104. Under sound leadership and against a background of considerable changes in the teaching staff, there has been satisfactory progress in the teaching of English since the last inspection and the school has worked hard to continue to raise pupils' standards. The high turnover of staff has, however, limited the effectiveness of some of the improved practice in the teaching of reading and writing skills in the school. The subject leader provides a clear sense of direction for the subject

and has correctly identified the areas which need to be addressed. Opportunities are provided for the subject leader to observe teaching and monitor standards in the subject. The subject leader's attendance on a ten-day subject leader course is proving to be of great benefit, as it has stressed the importance of data analysis and clear action planning as a result. The school does not yet do a careful analysis of pupils' national test papers and this would help the school determine the areas of teaching and learning which need to be addressed if more pupils are to reach Level 5. The subject leader has worked hard to ensure that the school makes best use of resources and support provided by the National Literacy Strategy and is maximising the school's links with a beacon school in order to improve teaching and learning in English. The school has recently purchased literacy computer programs to support pupils in developing knowledge and skills in aspects of reading and writing.

105. The library for older pupils is appropriately stocked. The school has worked hard to make it an inviting area, which offers a useful selection of books for pupils to use for research and develop knowledge of a wide range of fictional texts. The school plans to develop this library area. A delightful library area for the younger pupils has been created, helped by funds for furnishing from Friends of Markyate School, with attractive furniture and a good range of storybooks, all of which are coded according to their subject. A limited number of information books is kept in this library. A newly started Key Stage 1 Library Club meets once a week and provides a valuable opportunity for younger pupils to experience the pleasure to be gained from visiting a library and reading books.

MATHEMATICS

Strengths

- The good quality of subject leadership, together with a shared commitment to raise standards.
- Good provision for pupils with special educational needs who are taught in small groups and receive individual help from support staff.
- The recent improvement in standards for pupils in Years 3-6.
- The management of pupils. Relationships are very good and pupils have good attitudes to learning.

Areas for improvement

- Raise expectations of pupils' performance, especially more able pupils.
- Plan the regular use of information technology to support learning.
- Ensure that all mental and oral work is crisp and demanding
- Ensure the assessment of pupils' progress is consistent across all year groups.

106. Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is sound. It is better than at the time of the previous inspection.
107. During the inspection, it was seen that pupils in Years 2 and 6 attain standards that are in line with those expected for their age in numeracy and in other areas of the mathematics curriculum, including shape, measure and data collection. Attainment is broadly similar to that noted at the previous inspection, although pupils make better progress in developing basic number skills because teaching is more sharply focused.
108. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 3 to 6, when measured against their prior attainment and most make satisfactory progress in the lessons seen. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teaching assistants as they work towards well-defined personal targets. More able pupils are not consistently set work that is sufficiently challenging and they do not always progress as quickly as they could.
109. The 2002 national test results paint a similar picture. Standards are in line with the national average at the end of Year 2 and with the standards found in schools with a similar intake. By the end of Year 6, pupils reach standards that are just below the national average, but which are significantly better than those of the previous year. Only a small proportion of pupils attain the

higher grades and this is primarily because of the disturbed pattern of teaching during the year and in preparation for the tests.

110. By Year 2, many pupils have a sound knowledge of counting, ordering and adding numbers. Some pupils find 'taking away' difficult and hesitate when counting backwards. Regular practice at the beginning of each lesson develops confidence in their ability to count. Pupils know the names and properties of 2D and 3D shapes and accurately count edges, corners and faces. Pupils in Year 2 also understand how shapes fit together and enjoy using five squares to form pentominoes. Pupils learn well from the good use of equipment, such as cones, cubes and spheres. They learn more quickly when they can see and touch shapes. Regular use of computer programs that would further enhance learning is not yet in place. Pupils use number skills in telling the time in both analogue and digital mode on the hour and half hour. They also practise the use of money, by working out the change from fifty pence or a pound. Pupils learn how to collect data when they spin two coins simultaneously and draw a block graph of the result to illustrate the probability of the coins falling heads or tails. In Year 2, regular homework, notified to parents weekly, is an exemplary support to learning.
111. By Year 6, most pupils are familiar with the basic elements of mathematics that they will encounter in secondary school. Pupils understand fractions, decimals and percentages and how to convert one to another. Pupils do not have enough practice in quick mental calculation and in the accurate use of the calculator. The essential skill of estimating before calculating is not well developed, which sometimes means that pupils write down answers from the calculator that are clearly incorrect. Pupils learn about line and rotational symmetry. In one lesson, good use was made of a video presentation before pupils experimented with shapes in an attempt to discover the order of rotational symmetry. Pupils know about the metric system of weights and measures and most can apply these to simple problem solving. Some pupils have difficulty, for example, in converting millilitres to litres, and need to practise this kind of skill more rigorously in mental work.
112. Pupils use number skills satisfactorily in other subjects, although there is no formal policy for numeracy across the curriculum. For example, in history, pupils chart historical events on a time line and in geography, they use their knowledge of co-ordinates to read a map. In science, pupils use measuring skills in preparing and conducting experiments. Information technology is not used enough in the classroom as an expected part of everyday mathematics.
113. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and it has several good features. Teaching is better than it was at the previous inspection, where teaching in Years 1 and 2 was judged to be unsatisfactory. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject and use time and resources well. Teachers work very closely with the learning support assistants to ensure that all pupils get the help they need to progress. In the few lessons where learning support is not available, pupils progress more slowly. Relationships are very good and are based on mutual respect. Teachers share the lesson objectives with the pupils and check to see what has been learned. Questions are used well and pupils are asked to explain their answers. This helps to confirm learning and to highlight misunderstandings. In the best lessons, teaching is well planned and takes into account the needs of all pupils. Teaching is clear and is built securely upon prior knowledge. In some lessons, higher attaining pupils are not challenged enough and spend time repeating work in which they are already competent.
114. The subject is well managed by an experienced teacher who has clear plans for its future development. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored and evaluated but good practice must continue to be shared if teaching is to become more consistent. Day-to-day assessment of pupils' progress is satisfactory. Although the process of tracking pupils' progress has just begun, assessment procedures over time do not yet provide the kind of information that sharpens planning and leads to a rise in standards.

SCIENCE

Strengths

- Pupils' very good attitudes.

- Opportunities for investigative work.

Areas for improvement

- Raising standards, especially those attained by more able pupils.
- Assessment and its use.
- Setting higher expectations for more able pupils' achievement.
- Subject leadership.
- Making more use of ICT.

115. In Years 2 and 6, pupils attain the expected standards, as was the case at the time of the last inspection. It is at the higher levels that the school is less successful. Inspection evidence shows that it is likely that fewer than average Year 6 pupils will attain the higher Level 5. In Year 2, in response to good teaching and high expectations, it is likely that more than the school's usual proportion of pupils will attain the higher Level 3 and be around average.
116. Over the past three years, standards attained by Year 6 appear to be declining. In fact, in two out of the three years, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 was above average. The apparent decline is because the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 is below average. In 2002, pupils in Year 6 had five different teachers during the course of the year and this clearly had an impact on standards. In 2002, standards were lower at the expected levels but remained around the same for the higher level. Compared to similar schools, standards were average in 2000 and dropped to below and well below average in the following years. Again, the cause of this is the lack of enough pupils attaining the higher levels and it remains the situation in the present Year 6.
117. Standards in Year 2 present a similar picture. Over the past three years the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 2 has been average and above. Indeed in 2001 the proportion was similar to the top five per cent of schools in the country. However, when it comes to attainment at the higher levels, not enough pupils attain these, so that at this level standards are well below average. Compared to similar schools, standards have been average to very high at the expected Level 2, but average or well below average at the higher Level 3.
118. Inspection evidence shows pupils cover the expected range of work and that opportunities for experimental and investigative work are now reasonable and much improved since the last inspection. In all lessons observed and in discussions with pupils, they demonstrate very good attitudes towards science and particularly like experimental work.
119. In Years 1 and 2, pupils learn about light sources and nocturnal creatures. They understand the parts of the human body as they label diagrams correctly. Currently pupils are learning about forces – pushes and pulls. In a good lesson for Year 2, pupils organised themselves in groups to find out such things as how fast a ping pong ball can go when fanning it, using a football pump and blowing it. Others tried the best way to move and control the ball. A good level of discussion and hypothesising went on in groups and they recorded their findings efficiently. Pupils have a reasonable idea of 'fair testing'. Good links are made between subjects as when pupils visited the local park and looked at 'pushes and pulls' in the play area. In design and technology they have designed and made their own slides and roundabout amusements.
120. No lessons were observed in Years 3 and 4 but discussions with enthusiastic pupils show Year 4 have a very good idea of what plants need to grow. They have a good understanding of the need to ensure 'fairness' in their tests, measure accurately, and be clear about what it is they are trying to find out. Pupils understand the need to check results and question them; for example, they had set up an experiment to exclude light from some seeds they had planted. However, they soon discovered that they had not made the pot 'light proof' as the seeds had grown and squeezed between the pot and the card cover. They could explain how they would organise the experiment better next time to exclude light. The recording of their experiments is good, carefully illustrated and presented well. In this class standards are good.
121. In Years 5 and 6, pupils have learned about gases, the properties of solids and liquids. They have had good opportunities to experiment with such things as bottle flutes when learning about sounds and tracking perfume droplets when learning about gases. Good links are made with

other subjects such as the geography topic on water. In a satisfactory lesson for Year 6, good opportunities with practical games helped pupils recall that some materials can be in one of three states. For example they were expected to show the card with the correct 'process' for washing drying on a washing line, or water freezing. In a Year 5 and 6 shared session, good use was made of a sensor linked to a computer to show the rising temperature of water as it was heated. Few pupils could recall the temperature at which water boils but did have some idea of evaporation through their topic on water in geography. Overall, standards are around in line with expectations but few pupils, at present, are likely to attain the higher level.

122. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and explain new knowledge accurately. They are very aware of health and safety issues and make sure that their pupils, too, are aware of conducting experiments safely. Planning for all lessons shows clear learning objectives which are shared with pupils and in most lessons these objectives are checked on at the end to test out learning. Pupils with learning difficulties are fully included in lessons. They make sound progress because they are supported well by suitable work and proficient classroom assistants. However, there is an inconsistency in teachers' expectations for more able pupils. Where expectations are high, as they are in Year 2 and Year 4, pupils achieve well because there is a good level of challenge for more able pupils. In other classes, teachers do not expect enough of their more able pupils and therefore many underachieve. Marking is inconsistent. In the best examples, pupils are challenged to think if what they have predicted will happen or if they have recorded incorrectly they are expected to put things right. In other examples, work is always marked but few comments are made.
123. Leadership for science is unsatisfactory. A part-time teacher is caretaking the subject and provides helpful support for colleagues. The school follows the national guidelines for science, but currently, there are no useful assessment procedures in place to give teachers a good understanding of what their pupils know and need to learn next and whether they could do better. Resources for the subject are satisfactory.

ART AND DESIGN

Strengths are

- Pupils' positive attitudes towards the subject.
- Good use of teaching assistants and parental support in lessons.

Areas for improvement are

- Assessment and its use.
- Provide planned challenge for more able pupils.

124. In Years 2 and 6, standards are average as they were at the time of the last inspection. Pupils' progress and learning are satisfactory and the quality of some of the artwork on display is satisfactory or better. Only three art lessons were seen during the period of the inspection. Judgements about standards of attainment are based on these lessons, discussions with pupils and a scrutiny of their work, teachers' planning documents and talking to staff and the subject leader. Year 2 produced portraits as part of a carefully planned unit in which time had been spent mark-making using pastels and pupils exploring their own faces using mirrors. They produce paintings to illustrate aspects of a text and, as part of a healthy eating unit of work, designed a group fabric wall-hanging of fruit. Year 1 also produce eye catching posters to promote healthy eating which are displayed in the dining hall. Year 6 pupils apply their knowledge of clay and processes they have learned in working with clay, in order to design, make and decorate containers. When provided with appropriate challenge and given opportunities to evaluate their own and others' work, they go on to produce some well-crafted pieces such as a pot decorated with a cat and a coil pot with a sleeping snake as the lid. There is clear evidence of good progression in pupils' skills in working with clay over a relatively short period of time.
125. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their art and design and take pride in their work. They work with care and are willing to try new ideas in order to achieve the best results. Behaviour in the art lessons is good as pupils are interested and provided with ongoing advice and encouragement from adults. Pupils in Year 6 were keen to do research using the Internet to find interesting designs for other

containers. The subject makes a positive contribution to pupils' cultural, spiritual and social development as, for example, in a Year 5 art lesson, the pottery work of Clarice Cliff was looked at and discussed, using some good photo resources. Pupils were able to suggest why Cliff might have wanted to produce such colourful designs after World War One. They enjoyed working with one another to discuss geometric designs for a container.

126. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have a satisfactory knowledge of the subject and understand how to help pupils develop the wide range of skills needed to master a range of media. They base their planning on a scheme of work using government guidelines. Lessons are well organised, have clear learning objectives and planned key questions for assessment opportunities. There is provision on planning sheets for work for lower and higher attaining pupils although in lessons seen, opportunities to extend more able pupils were missed. Resources are used effectively. There is some use of information and communication technology in the subject with younger pupils using a computer program to create designs and older pupils using the Internet to do research. Much of the display in the school is linked to art and teachers work hard to create a stimulating environment that celebrates pupils' work.
127. The subject leader provides sound leadership and has a clear idea of what needs to be done to develop the subject. She has good subject knowledge, an enthusiasm for art and a flair for display, which is reflected in the high quality displays in her own room and around the school. The school's art policy, updated in October 2002, now more accurately reflects practice. The subject leader who has sampled work and interviewed pupils, monitors the progress of both pupils' knowledge and skills. The subject leader conducted some very informative pupil interviews. The information gathered from these has been acted upon and has resulted, for example, in more 3D work which pupils requested. Parents support art teaching in many classes and the contribution of a parent in the Year 6 class in helping pupils evaluate and improve their work, was of a high order. The school has a cross-stitch club, run by extremely enthusiastic and talented teaching assistants and attended by approximately ten pupils of both sexes. Pupils spoken to at this club are immensely proud of the work they have produced and are inspired by the adults running the club. Pupils have benefited from working with visiting artists and the subject leader is keen for this to continue as well as visits to galleries and enhanced use of the school's grounds.
128. Currently, the school does not have a portfolio of moderated work to help teachers gain a clear understanding of work at different attainment levels. There is no formal assessment of art against National Curriculum levels. The use of sketchbooks needs to be carefully considered, as pupils do not presently see them as a valuable means to develop their designs and skills.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Strengths

- Pupils' very good attitudes.
- Interesting and relevant topics.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment and its use.
- Subject leadership.

129. Standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are in line with expectations which is an improvement since the last inspection when standards were unsatisfactory. Good improvement has also been made in addressing the key issue to 'implement the National Curriculum for design and technology'. The school follows national guidelines and examination of pupils' work, displays and photographs shows that all requirements are met effectively. Pupils make sound progress in developing a clear understanding of the design and making process and in evaluating their work. Year 4 pupils had conducted a survey of preferred sandwich fillings and designed sandwiches. Year 5 had made 'watery' musical instruments such as an ocean drum and rain stick with a selection of containers and card. They had covered and painted their instruments and made very perceptive comments about how they could change the resonance or make them easier to play.

130. The school organises the teaching of design and technology in 'blocks'. Pupils learn art and design for a set time and then design and technology. No lessons were observed in Years 3 to 6; consequently, an overall judgement on the quality of teaching and learning for that age group is not possible. Only one lesson was observed in Years 1 and 2, therefore it is also impossible to give a fair judgement as to the overall quality of teaching and learning.
131. Discussions with pupils show they have very positive attitudes towards the subject, enjoying the challenges of designing and the productivity of making. They show a good regard for working safely.
132. Year 1 and 2 pupils had visited the local park to look at the play equipment and used a word processing program to display their accounts of the visit. They had then designed, drawn and labelled their own playground equipment and in an excellent lesson in Year 2, pupils followed their plans to construct their designs. The very good number of adults in the class ensured success for all pupils with the minimum of adult intervention. Pupils were totally absorbed in their tasks and made excellent progress. They soon learned in a very practical situation, that it may be necessary to make changes in the making process and that strength and support are vital components. Discussions with pupils showed they could all say how they would improve their design or change the materials they had used to make a better model. Pupils demonstrated above average standards in this particular lesson.
133. Currently there is no subject co-ordinator. The headteacher is caretaking the subject, she checks all planning and provides support for colleagues. There are no assessment procedures in place to guide teachers in their planning. Resources are satisfactory.

GEOGRAPHY

Strengths are

- Good use of teaching and learning assistants to support the learning of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Pupils' positive attitudes.

Areas for improvement are

- Assessment and its use.
- Provide planned challenge for more able pupils.
- Monitor teaching and pupils' learning across the school.

134. At Year 2 and Year 6, standards are average as they were at the time of the last inspection. Pupils of all capabilities make sound progress as they move through the school. During the current inspection, the only lessons seen were in Years 1 and 6 as geography and history are covered in alternating termly blocks. Judgements are based, therefore, on discussions with pupils, together with a scrutiny of their work and discussion with the subject leader.
135. By Year 2, pupils describe physical and human features of places and recognise and make observations about those features that give places their character. They identify on maps where they live, understand what the various lines of their address mean and use the village of Markyate as a valuable resource for their study of a locality. Pupils in Year 1 explain the difference between human and physical geography due to carefully planned teaching. In the lesson seen, they were able to identify landmarks in Markyate using photos and could order a series of human and physical features on their journey to school and represent these diagrammatically.
136. Year 6 pupils explain features of the water cycle process and understand how these change the features of places. They talk about how people can damage the environment.
137. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Lesson planning is detailed, with clear learning objectives and opportunities for both differentiation and assessment. Teachers have sound subject knowledge and provide a suitable range of learning opportunities. Information and communication technology is used to develop pupils' geographical knowledge and skills as in Year 6 when pupils use the Internet to find a particular site to play a game to develop their

understanding of the importance of water in drought ridden countries. Good use is made of the support provided by teaching and learning support assistants, mainly for pupils with lower levels of attainment or special educational needs who make satisfactory progress and appear to greatly enjoy the work they do. Geographical terminology is emphasised to help develop pupils' knowledge. In lessons seen, there was recall of previous work and the use of good questioning to test for understanding. Pupils find the subject interesting, they concentrate well on the tasks set and they are well behaved. The very occasional incidences of lack of concentration were due to a lack of challenge for the higher attaining pupils who began to chat with their friends. Fieldwork includes visits to Markyate and St. Albans.

138. The school follows government guidelines and local education authority plans as the basis for its scheme of work. The subject leader provides sound leadership and has a clear idea of what needs to be done to develop the subject further. Along with other key members of staff, the subject leader is keen establish cross-curricular links between geography and other subjects. She has monitored planning throughout the school and teaching in Years 3 and 4, however, there is no overview of standards attained across the school. The school has no means of assessing pupils' progress against National Curriculum levels. There is a need to update resources in geography, including video material.

HISTORY

139. At the time of the inspection, not enough evidence was available to be able to give a fair judgement on teaching and learning. Only one lesson was observed. The school teaches history in 'blocks' alternated with geography. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows a suitable range of work is undertaken across the school and pupils make satisfactory progress. Standards are average in Years 2 and 6 as they were at the time of the last inspection.
140. In the good lesson observed in Year 4, pupils showed very positive attitudes toward the interesting topic of portraits in Tudor times. They listened very attentively to their teacher's clear exposition and volunteered very perceptive questions and observations as to why Queen Elizabeth I was standing on a map. Pupils made good progress in their learning in this lesson as a result of their teacher's clear planning and high expectations.
141. The subject co-ordinator provides sound leadership and is aware of what needs to be done to improve provision in the subject. Currently there are no useful systems for assessment in place. Resources are adequate and good use is made of visits to places such as Hatfield House for a Tudor re-enactment day.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Strengths

- Teachers' good subject knowledge.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes.
- Very good improvement since the last inspection.

Areas for improvement

- Make better use of the computers and increase the number if possible.
- Assessment and its use.

142. Standards are average for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils. Pupils make reasonable progress as they move through the school. However, progress could be better if pupils had more opportunities to use computers to reinforce and extend their knowledge and understanding. Pupils have very good attitudes towards ICT and in discussions with them they express disappointment that they do not have enough time on computers and that sometimes they do not get to finish their work.
143. Very good improvement has been made in ICT since the last inspection when standards were judged to be well below expectations and teaching unsatisfactory. There was no scheme of work, no co-ordinator and many systems were unreliable. All staff have benefited from training and are confident and secure in their knowledge. Currently, the school follows national guidelines for teaching and has more reliable systems although they are not all compatible. Each class has at least one computer in their room and there are extras in the junior library and in Year 1 classroom.
144. In ICT lessons observed, the quality of teaching was mostly good. However, pupils' learning was satisfactory overall because they do not have opportunities to have 'hands on' experience with computers during lessons. They take turns later to put into practice what they have learned in a lesson and this can take some time for a whole class to have a turn. In Year 2, a very clear, brisk introduction helped pupils relate their learning in a literacy lesson to the task of using the cursor, shift key and delete key to correct punctuation and reorganise text. Nearly all pupils could give reasonable explanations as to how to use the delete key and how to use a cursor. Resources had been prepared very well and had a high interest factor as they were related to the story of the Holy Grail. All pupils were gathered around one computer but the teacher had prepared an enlarged version of the text on the screen so that all could see.
145. In a Year 6 lesson, again, the teacher had prepared resources thoughtfully so that all knew what was on the screen. Good questioning helped pupils recall their knowledge of how to enlarge cells and enter data into a spreadsheet. They found the task very interesting and gave their full attention because it was related to their geography topic and associated homework on water

- usage. Pupils also use the Internet effectively to log on to the WaterAid site to play a game which gives them a good understanding of the crucial importance of safe, clean water and how difficult it is to obtain in Ghana.
146. Discussions and demonstrations with Year 4 pupils show they can easily retrieve their work from their individual folders, can import pictures to text, and highlight and change the font size if necessary. They have covered an appropriate range of work and show enthusiasm for the subject and pride in their work.
147. A good start has been made on linking ICT with other subjects, as seen in Year 6 and Year 2. However, the school's computers are not used to the full so there is room for further improvement in this area.
148. The co-ordinator has been in post since 1998 and has overseen the purchase of suitable new machines and software. She provides sound support for her colleagues but does not have a good overview of standards across the school to inform future planning. There is not a system in place for checking on pupils' learning as they go through the school so teachers do not have a good understanding of what their pupils have covered and what they need to learn next. Assessment and its use are the next step.
149. By current standards, the school has fewer computers than average.

MUSIC

Strengths

- Standards of performance.
- Pupils' attitudes to music and their enjoyment of it.

Areas for improvement

- Improve composition and increase the quantity of written work.
- Assess and record pupils' progress in order to improve continuity in learning.

150. In Year 2 and Year 6, pupils' attainment in classroom music is in line with that expected nationally. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and take a full part in lessons and after-school activities. The standards evident at the previous inspection have been maintained. Musical performance is now a notable feature of the schools' provision in music. Pupils have good opportunities to enjoy taking part in music making and to listen to music from around the world. Music contributes significantly to pupils' personal development.
151. Pupils make satisfactory progress in all elements of the music curriculum and pupils' achievement related to age is never less than satisfactory. Achievement is good for the many pupils who learn to play a musical instrument from the good range taught by visiting teachers. The recorder groups and the choir progress well and reach a good standard of performance. The choir sang recently at a local retirement home and won high praise for its performance. Parents are pleased with the good standards of performance at the end-of-term concerts.
152. Pupils in Year 1 show remarkable self-restraint as they demonstrate an ascending and descending glissando with voice. Pupils learn that everyone can make music and enjoy it. They tackle the work with great enthusiasm. They practise and refine their performance. Pupils read from an elementary musical score and learn to watch the conductor carefully. They also learn to make simple comments about other pupils' work. Pupils with special needs respond well to this lesson and find that their contribution is valued.
153. Pupils in Year 3 listen to a piece of classical music and identify and clap to the beat. They listen to a series of different rhythms where they beat time with their fingers and learn that the beat influences the mood of the music. Pupils learn the language of music such as 'rhythm' and 'tempo' and use it correctly. They show that they have mastered the beat by clapping two separate rhythms simultaneously. Pupils in Year 5 sing a Caribbean calypso and accompany themselves on percussion. They sing well, although not always aware of 'light' and 'shade' and show that they are at home with a pulsating rhythm.

154. The quality of teaching is sound. Teachers work hard to ensure that lessons are stimulating and enjoyable. Performance and listening dominate, while composing and appraising take a lesser role. Teachers are often bold and imaginative in their approach to music and this leads

directly to the enjoyment of music and to the willingness of the pupils to take part. Relationships are good. Teachers and pupils make music together. Teachers make good use of the instruments available. The best lessons look and sound like musical workshops.

155. Lessons are planned satisfactorily and teachers look for ways of linking music with other subjects, for example, in an excellent display of investigating sounds and musical instruments. This includes bottle flutes and yoghurt pots used as telephones. Although teachers are aware of what pupils know, understand and can do there are no formal records of their progress and this makes good continuity in learning difficult to achieve. There is too little written work so that pupils do not have a permanent record of what they have achieved.
156. Music is energetically led by a teacher who uses her voice and guitar to good effect in showing pupils how music is made and enjoyed. The hymn practices show the school at its best, displaying a strong sense of community and purpose. The development plan for music selects the most appropriate priorities, including teachers' training needs and the expansion of resources. It also anticipates the preparation of an arts festival for the summer term.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Strengths

- The management of pupils and the quality of relationships.
- The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils.
- The range of after-school activities.

Areas for improvement

- Assess and record pupils' progress in order to improve continuity in learning.
- Establish a scheme of work to underpin all lesson plans.
- Improve aspects of accommodation.

157. Physical education has a firm place in the curriculum and is supported by a good range of after-school activities. Pupils' attainment in Year 2 and Year 6 is in line with national expectations. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve appropriately for their age and make at least satisfactory progress in all aspects of physical education.
158. Provision for swimming has been restored to the curriculum since the last inspection, when the local pool was closed for refurbishment. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 have lessons in swimming in the autumn and spring terms, given by qualified instructors at the pool. It was not possible to observe lessons during the inspection week although records held at the pool show satisfactory attainment and progress.
159. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 demonstrate their physical ability as they stretch and bend during the warm-up session. Pupils dress appropriately and enjoy physical exercise. In Year 1, pupils dance to lively music. They practise and refine their dance steps. Pupils dance imaginatively and respond to the changing mood of the music. For example, when told to 'get frantic' they do, but quickly calm down when the mood changes again. Pupils in Year 2, use the apparatus to practise balancing skills. They travel on the floor and across the benches, and strike imaginative poses. Control of body movement improves steadily. Pupils, working in pairs, become aware of good bodyline and tension by pulling away from the point of balance. In Year 6, pupils demonstrate what they have learnt in previous years by performing a demanding set of warm-up exercises. They learn how to pivot on the spot and then use this skill in a short game of bench ball.

160. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. It is much better than at the time of the previous inspection, when several lessons were said to be unsatisfactory. Pupils are well managed and lessons are safely conducted. Teachers err on the side of caution, which means that activities are not as adventurous as they might be. Relationships are good. Teachers and pupils enjoy physical education together. Lessons are satisfactorily planned although they are not consistently underpinned by a scheme of work that ensures continuity of learning. Although teachers are aware of what pupils know, understand and can do, their progress is not formally assessed and recorded.
161. The new co-ordinator and the teachers are assessing available schemes of work, in order to determine the one that is most appropriate to the school's needs. There is little monitoring and evaluation of teaching at present, although this is shortly to be established. Consequently, good practice is not shared sufficiently, which inadvertently denies some teachers the support that they need. Physical education lessons are well supported by a good programme of after-school activities including football, in which the school excels, netball and athletics. Adventurous pursuits are provided by a residential trip for Year 6 to the local centre. Large and small equipment is adequate but it is not as accessible as it should be. Storage space is inadequate. The hall is not equipped with fixed climbing apparatus and this limits the scope for challenging activities. The hall is also cluttered with stacked chairs, recording equipment and percussion instruments that are potentially hazardous to physical activity. The Millennium Garden is an excellent outdoor facility.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Strengths

- The provision of a broad and well balanced curriculum.
 - The management of pupils and the quality of relationships.
162. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, pupils' attainment in religious education meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Satisfactory standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. Pupils are taught RE from a multi-faith perspective. This helps them to understand the customs, symbols and practices of world religions and the effect they have on people's lives. Learning about religion and from religion contributes well to pupils' personal development.
163. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress. For the majority, knowledge and understanding grow steadily and pupils achieve what could reasonably be expected of them. Assembly themes and circle time contribute well to the quality of teaching and learning. In circle time, pupils discuss their own concerns in the security of the classroom and can see how these relate to stories from the holy books. Pupils talk about their problems and others offer sensible solutions. There are good displays around the school that make religion interesting and accessible. For example, there are illustrations of the stories Jesus told and a model of the *mezuzah*, a parchment scroll, a symbol of the Jewish faith.
164. Pupils in Year 2 talk about belonging and ways of making people feel welcome in new surroundings. Pupils provide photographs of themselves as babies and recall their first memories. They show each other baptism certificates and relate what they remember of their own baptism. The teacher shows the pupils her christening spoon and talks about its significance. Pupils tell stories of their initiation into the *Brownies* or *Beavers* and discuss the importance of belonging. Pupils record events from their family history and share stories with their partners.
165. Pupils in Year 4, hear the story of Zaccheus from the Bible and learn how his meeting with Jesus changed his life. Pupils look for the meaning in the story and decide that kindness to others always makes a difference. Pupils are asked to relate the story in their own words having been reminded by the teacher that 'not everyone was a big fan of Jesus.' One pupil writes, 'I have just had the time of my life'. Pupils in Year 6 examine the significance of the Jewish Passover and the celebrations associated with it. Pupils are fascinated by the Seder plate used at the ceremonial meal and, working in pairs, talk about its importance and illustrate the foods used.

166. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and it has some good features. Teachers provide a secure environment where pupils are confident enough to express their own views and to ask questions. Pupils are managed well and relationships are good. Teachers have good expectations of work and behaviour and pupils clearly understand what they have to do. Teachers make satisfactory use of artefacts to illustrate key points but teaching is not sufficiently varied. Too little use is made of role-play, video, information technology and textbooks. There are no formal assessment procedures or records, although teachers are aware of what pupils know and can do.
167. The school's first priority in future development is to ensure that teaching and learning are carefully monitored so that good practice may be shared more widely. Resources to support learning are satisfactory but need to be developed to include artefacts from all world religions.