

# INSPECTION REPORT

**WATTON-AT-STONE PRIMARY AND  
NURSERY SCHOOL**

Watton-at-Stone

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117171

Headteacher: Lisa Mannall

Reporting inspector: Judith Clarke

25509

Dates of inspection: 7<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> October 2002

Inspection number: 247735

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
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Rectory Lane Watton-at-Stone Hertfordshire
Postcode:	SG14 3SG
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Wilf Emsley
Date of previous inspection:	6 <sup>th</sup> November 2000

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
25509	J. Clarke	Registered inspector	Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage Art and design Geography Education inclusion	Information about the school The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught How well the school is led and managed What the school should do to improve further
19430	T. Hall	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with parents How well does the school care for its pupils
30144	J. Hastings	Team inspector	English Music Religious education The provision for pupils with English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils
22324	J. Tennant	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology Physical education	
32207	J. Thomas	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology History Provision for pupils with special educational needs	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Watton-at-Stone Primary and Nursery school is situated in the village of Watton-at-Stone in Hertfordshire. It is an average sized primary school with 214 pupils (111 boys and 103 girls) aged four to eleven on roll. This is an increase in pupil numbers since the school was last inspected. Most children come from the village but a significant proportion of the pupils come from the surrounding areas. There are 34 children who attend the nursery class each morning. The children start in the reception class in either the September or January of the year in which they are five. The attainment on entry to the school meets the levels expected for children of this age. At present seven per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is below average. The school has 15 per cent of its pupils with special educational needs; most of these need additional help with their English work, some have emotional and behavioural problems and a few have very specific language and communication difficulties. The vast majority of pupils are of white ethnic origin and come from homes where English is spoken. A number of pupils, 6 per cent, join the school at times other than in the reception class.

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

This is a good school where pupils achieve well. By the end of Year 2 standards are well above average in writing, reading and mathematics, and above average in science, design and technology and physical education. By the end of Year 6, standards are well above average in mathematics and science and above average in design and technology and physical education. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. There is very good leadership by the headteacher and the governing body who are well supported by the staff. The school provides good value for money.

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

- The pupils achieve well and make good progress; as a result they attain well above average results in Year 2 in writing, reading and mathematics and in Year 6 in mathematics and science.
- The children in the nursery and reception classes have a good start to their learning.
- The school encourages the parents to have confidence in the school and parents have responded by ensuring the pupils' attendance is very good.
- The leadership of the school has a very good strategic overview of its development and has clear strategies in place for its further improvement. This is demonstrated by the very good leadership of the headteacher, the very well informed view of the governing body and the good levels of management within the school.
- The good quality curriculum is enriched by many visitors, very good provision for extra-curricular activities and residential opportunities for the pupils, including for the oldest pupils an opportunity to learn French.
- Teaching and learning throughout the school are good.

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

- Standards in writing by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils' learning in some lessons where discipline is not secure enough.
- The attitudes of some pupils to their learning.

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

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

The school last had a full inspection in November 2000. The school was then judged to have serious weaknesses; this is no longer the case. Good progress has been made in addressing the issues raised for school development. Very good improvement has been

made in the leadership and management of the school. The new headteacher gives the school a very good educational steer. She is well supported by subject co-ordinators who have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and manage their subjects well. Standards by the end of Year 2 in reading and writing have risen. Good improvements have been made in standards in handwriting and presentation of work. Similarly the provision for the more able pupils. The accommodation for the younger children has improved and this has enabled good progress to be made in the provision for play in the outdoor environment. The teachers now make good use of the information they have on what the pupils can do to plan their work. The attendance figures are now recorded and reported accurately, very good progress made here. Satisfactory improvement has been made in improving the pupils' behaviour in lessons. The leadership of the school has effectively led the school forward and the school is well placed to continue 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			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	D	A	C	D
mathematics	B	A	A	A
science	A	B	A	B

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

In 2001, Year 6 pupils achieved well above average results in their national tests in mathematics and science. Their results for English were average. Comparisons with similar schools show they were well above average in mathematics, above average in science but below average in English. In the national tests and tasks for Year 2 pupils their results for reading and writing placed them in the highest 5 per cent nationally. In mathematics they achieved standards well above average. Examination of the school's performance over time shows that for Year 6 pupils in mathematics and science steady and significant progress has been made whilst in English the picture is erratic and there is clearly more to do. The picture is overall one of rising standards. The school sets challenging targets, with high expectations of the pupils. In 2002 the unconfirmed results for Year 2 pupils, show the pupils achieving at levels slightly below the A\* seen in 2001. In Year 6, the unconfirmed results show similar standards to that in 2001.

Based on the work and lessons seen during the inspection standards in English and mathematics in Year 2 are well above average. They are above average in science. By the end of Year 6 standards are above average in mathematics and science but average in English. The pupils' skills in reading and speaking and listening are above average, it is the writing element of their English work that is not as strong and needs further improvement. Standards in physical education and design and technology are above the levels expected at the end of Years 2 and 6. In all other subjects the pupils in Years 2 and 6 attain at the expected levels. During their time in school the pupils achieve well and make good progress in most aspects of their work. This is the result of good teaching and learning overall.

On entry to school in the nursery class the children's attainments meet the levels expected for children of this age in all their areas of learning. It is likely that most children in the reception class will reach the levels expected of them, with some working at higher levels before they start the National Curriculum in Year 1.

### PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Pupils show interest in their work but some do not always work hard. Attitudes overall are satisfactory but some pupils show a lack of application to their tasks. Some pupils talk over their teachers and fidget during lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall. The conduct of many pupils is good and for a few exemplary. Behaviour has improved since the last inspection but a few pupils find it difficult to manage their behaviour and have specific support to help them behave better. There were five pupils who were excluded temporarily last year.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships within the school are satisfactory. For many there is a happy companionship with a good rapport between the pupils and pupils and staff. The school promotes good relations between people of different racial groups.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance is very good because pupils enjoy coming to school. Pupils are punctual and lessons start on time.

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall throughout the school. There was no unsatisfactory teaching observed during the inspection. There is some satisfactory practice but the majority of teaching is good. Teaching in the nursery and reception classes was consistently good with much that was very good. Although teaching has improved since the school was last inspected there is clearly more to do in improving teaching still further. In satisfactory lessons the pupils are not always fully focused on their learning and occasionally the teachers talk over the pupils. In some lessons the teachers spend too long talking and the pupils do not have enough time to complete their tasks. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well. In these lessons the teachers plan very closely to the National Strategies and this is an effective feature of their work. The results can be seen in the improving standards in English and mathematics throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs and the few pupils with English as an additional language are well planned for in lessons. They have good help from their teachers and teaching assistants and as a result they achieve well. Teachers work hard to ensure that all are catered for in lessons and as a result all achieve well. The levels of homework set by the school are similar to that of other schools and homework is used effectively to extend the pupils' learning.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements. It is enriched by a number of visitors who share their interests and expertise with the pupils. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. Residential experiences help the pupils to develop their self-confidence. There is a good opportunity for older pupils to learn to speak French.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. There are good arrangements for identifying and helping pupils with special educational needs. The school is effective in ensuring that all pupils take part in all aspects of the life of the school.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The school makes good provision for this small number of pupils and ensures they are not disadvantaged.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The pupils have many opportunities to develop good social skills and to become responsible citizens in the school and wider community. The Class and School Councils give the pupils opportunities to consider how they can improve their own environment.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school takes good care of the pupils. The school has good procedures for Child Protection and Health and Safety and as a result the school is a safe place to learn. The teachers have good systems in place for checking the progress the pupils make in lessons. This gives the pupils good help in aiding them to improve their work.
How well does the school work in partnership with parents	Very good. The majority of parents view the school very highly. There is very good information available for the parents. Parents give the school good support in many of the school activities.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher provides clear educational direction for the school. The quality of her vision for the future has been significant in the progress made since the last inspection. Management in the school is good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governors have a very clear vision for the future of the school. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. All statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school has rigorous procedures for developing and targeting areas for improvement. The school compares itself to other schools and takes into account the views of a wide range of opinions when considering change.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school uses the resources available well. Staff are generally well deployed. Learning resources are good and make a positive contribution to the way the pupils learn. The accommodation is very good. The recently redeveloped accommodation for the nursery and

	reception children provides a very effective learning environment. The school makes sure it gains good value for the money it spends when purchasing goods and services.
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## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children like school.</li><li>• The children make good progress.</li><li>• Teaching is good.</li><li>• Staff are approachable.</li><li>• Teachers expect their children to work hard and do their best.</li><li>• The school is well led and managed.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The levels of homework.</li><li>• The information they have of how their children are getting on.</li><li>• How closely the school works with them.</li></ul>

The inspectors agree with all the positive comments made by the parents. The levels of homework set by the school are similar to that of other schools and homework is used well to further the children's learning at home. The inspectors agree with the significant majority of parents who feel there is very good information available for them on how well their child is getting on and that the school works closely with them.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Children start school in either the September or January of the year in which they become five. They begin school with levels of attainment, which are average. As the pupils move through the school they make consistently good progress and achieve well regardless of their background or ability. A number of pupils join the school at a time other than the reception year and they are helped to fit into the school quickly so that they are not disadvantaged by their move. Although the vast majority of pupils come from the surrounding villages and towns, the parents of these pupils have made a positive decision to send their children to this village school. The pupils across the school achieve well and make good gains in their learning.

#### ***Nursery and reception children***

2. The children in the nursery come to school for the morning session. The initial check the teacher makes of the children shows that the children's ability is broadly average. When they transfer to the reception class they are checked again and these results show the children have made good gains and they have average levels of attainment in all the expected areas of learning for children of their age. They achieve well throughout the nursery and the reception year. This is the direct result of good and often very good teaching and a purposeful and challenging curriculum, which interests the children. Consequently by the time they have completed the reception year most are likely to achieve at the levels expected of children of their age with some children working at higher levels. This is borne out by the end of year checks of their ability.

#### ***Years 1 and 2***

3. Results in the Year 2001 national tests and tasks for the pupils in Year 2, show that standards in reading and writing were very high and standards in mathematics and science were well above the national average. This is very good improvement from 1999 when standards were significantly lower. When compared with similar schools standards in reading, writing and mathematics were high.

4. The Year 2002 national results are well above average when compared to the national figures for the previous year. As yet, there are no national comparisons for 2002. These results demonstrate at least good and often very good progress throughout Years 1 and 2 with the pupils making significant gains in their learning and achievement being high.

5. Inspection findings show that for the current group of pupils in Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well above average, whilst standards in science are above average. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics have improved since these subjects were last inspected. The improvement of standards in English and mathematics is due to the successful implementation of the National Strategies and a determined effort throughout Years 1 and 2 to raise standards. The improved standards in science are the result of an exciting science curriculum, which is based upon investigation and experimentation. Standards in design and technology and physical education are above average, which is an improvement since the last time the subjects were inspected. This is the result of good teaching, which focuses on the careful progression of skills. Standards in music are at the levels expected for Year 2 pupils and are not as high as they were the last time the subject was inspected. This is because of the shift from specialist teaching to all members of staff teaching music. Standards in all other subjects are at the levels expected for Year 2 pupils and remain the same as they were at the last time they were inspected.

### **Years 3 to 6**

6. The national test results for the pupils in Year 6 in 2001, in mathematics and science were high when compared with all schools nationally. In English they were average. In English the pupils' test results show that writing is the weakest element of their work. Teachers have recognised this and have put a range of strategies in place to improve writing throughout the school. Although writing has been a high priority in the school the effects of this extra input have yet to show in improved test results. However, it can be seen in the pupils' work that their writing standards are improving.

7. Inspection evidence shows that standards in the current Year 6 are average in English and above average in mathematics and science. Writing still remains an area for school improvement. Higher standards can be seen in Years 3 and 4 and these pupils are on track to achieve highly when they become Year 6. The current Year 5 class is however a lower attaining group of pupils. A significant number of this class have specific special educational needs and some of the pupils are particularly troubled and find it difficult to behave well and find their work rewarding. This class had a difficult year when they were Year 4 as they had a number of temporary teachers. This has had an impact upon the progress of this group of pupils. At present they are settled with a permanent teacher who is working hard to engage them and to move their learning significantly on. Standards in this class at present are below the levels expected for English, mathematics and science.

8. Standards in design and technology and physical education are above the levels expected which is an improvement since the last time the subjects were inspected. Standards in music are at the levels expected for Year 6 pupils and are not as high as they were the last time the subject was inspected. In all other subjects the pupils achieve at the levels expected which is similar to that at the time when they were last inspected.

### **Across the school**

9. Statistical evidence supports the view that boys do not do as well as the girls in the school. This is particularly marked in science where the girls outperform the boys. The school is carefully watching the situation and is looking at the ways the boys learn. The school is also investigating teaching styles as they recognise that the boys respond negatively to overlong introductions to lessons and sometimes tend to fidget and daydream and lack application to their work. In some year groups however there are significantly more boys than girls and this can make statistical data unreliable. For example, in Year 4 there are 23 boys and 9 girls. Overall inspection findings show that all pupils achieve well.

10. Pupils with special educational needs and the very few pupils for whom English is not their first language make good gains in their learning. In most classes, the school gives pupils good levels of support and this means that these pupils are given good help with their learning and as a result they remain on task and achieve well.

11. The school sets itself challenging targets and strives to achieve them. They look carefully at the potential for each pupil and work hard to match it. The staff are committed to raising standards throughout the school.

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

12. The pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are satisfactory. Parents firmly believe their children enjoy school and make good progress. The majority of pupils are eager to come to school, settle down quickly and are interested in their lessons. However, a significant number in almost half of the classes are often fidgety. Talking over the teacher in lessons is far too common. In some classes this extends to bad behaviour taking up too much of the teachers' time and holding up progress for themselves and others.

Nevertheless, all pupils are very willing to talk about what they are doing, happily correct their mistakes, and readily explain how they arrived at their answers. Occasionally the pupils take a while to settle to their tasks and find it difficult to work hard. This means that the amount of work they complete in lesson time is not good enough.

13. The great majority collaborate well in groups when encouraged to do so. This is particularly evident where teachers provide challenging and interesting lessons. For example in a Year 5 art and design lesson, after an absorbing introductory demonstration, the pupils shared resources well. They produced a good variety of work with a real buzz of industry and remembered the different structural methods well. This ensured that they learnt well, although some found it difficult to maintain their enthusiasm to the end of the lesson. The great majority of pupils display good qualities of independent learning when given the opportunity. Many pupils, even the youngest, listen very well and all speak confidently making constructive contributions to lessons.

14. Behaviour is satisfactory. The conduct of many pupils is good and for a few exemplary. This is most apparent where there is good pupil management and exciting tasks set. The great majority of pupils are polite, courteous and trustworthy. They are generally orderly when moving around the school and take care of their environment. Play is largely good natured with a broad mix of small and large groups absorbed in lively activities.

15. Pupils engage in lively conversation over lunch. Most pupils co-operate happily with midday supervisors who give very good help to the younger pupils as they play. However, self-discipline is variable. The pupils themselves indicate that overall behaviour has improved. All pupils, even those who offend, appreciate the systems of rewards and feel that sanctions are fair. Where there are rare instances of aggression, tendency towards bullying or name calling, all know how very seriously they are viewed. There has been one fixed term exclusion in the present year compared with five in the last. This is viewed as a stable and improving situation.

16. The pupils' personal development overall is satisfactory. Most pupils have a growing understanding of the impact of their actions on others. This is particularly evident from talking to Year 6 pupils who exhibit a very sensible understanding of what being part of the school is about. Some encouraging social behaviour is developing amongst the younger pupils in the reception class and as pupils progress through the year groups. In personal and social lessons the pupils contribute well and come to increasing mature conclusions. There is a strong moral code. All pupils are clear about the difference between right and wrong and share in the making of their own class rules. They are proud of the school's Golden Rules. This prepares pupils well to take an active part as responsible citizens in school and the wider society.

17. Pupils' respect for other's feelings and beliefs is satisfactory. There is a growing realisation of the vast world of resources and relationships around them which is strengthening the pupils' spiritual awareness. Pupils are learning to have a respect for others' feelings and beliefs and understand one another's differences. They enter well into the atmosphere of assemblies, in songs and prayers and listen very respectfully to staff and visitors who lead assemblies. The pupils have a good realisation of the diversity of cultures, which is revealed in the discussions in the personal and social lessons and the celebrations of one another's achievements in art and design, music and sport. Pupils sing songs and cheerfully answer to registration in several different languages. There is real enthusiasm for the after school clubs. These are well attended and pupils appreciate the time that staff and visitors give to helping them to improve.

18. Social development is satisfactory and for a significant number good. All enjoy the daily routines, for example, preparing for lessons or supporting one another by sharing resources. Even the youngest know where to put their things. The School Council and the Class Councils are an asset to the school. A wide range of issues is raised by the pupils and seriously discussed. They feel their decisions are fairly considered and prompt action taken where appropriate. This helps the pupils to become active participants of life in school.

19. Relationships are satisfactory. For the majority there is generally happy companionship. Pupils are seen to look after younger ones. Pupils talk to staff during breaks about what they have been doing and can freely share any concerns. Consequently, a good rapport is evident between pupils and between pupils and adults in school.

20. Attendance is consistently very high and well above the average. Pupils know that regular attendance and punctuality are good habits to be fostered for the future in order to improve their progress. They enjoy the friendly competition for the weekly Attendance Cup and the Annual Attendance Certificates. Consequently, the great majority of the pupils attend very well and lateness is not an issue. Registration is prompt and effective.

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

21. The quality of teaching and learning in the school overall is good. In all lessons teaching was at least satisfactory. In 70 per cent of lessons observed the quality of teaching was good or better. In 23 per cent of these lessons the teaching was very good. There were no unsatisfactory lessons observed during the inspection. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection where teaching was satisfactory with some unsatisfactory teaching observed. Although the quality of teaching has improved, there is more to do. The teachers have worked effectively together to improve their work, and the headteacher has helped them significantly. The deputy headteacher who is a very good teacher leads by example in the school. New teachers to the school have also helped to share their expertise with colleagues. Teachers have taken on new ideas to develop and improve their teaching even more. The result of this good teaching is seen in the quality of learning and achievement throughout the school, which is good.

22. The quality of teaching in the nursery and reception classes is at least good and often very good. Teaching in this area of the school is strong. The teachers are clear about their teaching they target the children's learning so that all achieve well and make consistently good progress.

23. Throughout the school the teaching of literacy and numeracy is good. The teachers have been effective in introducing both of these government strategies and the results can clearly be seen in the greatly improved standards achieved by the pupils especially in Years 1 to 2 where the pupils achieve at the highest levels. The positive effects of these strategies has been slower to see in the test results for Year 6 pupils but improvements can be seen especially lower down the school in Years 3 and 4.

24. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is effective in helping other subject areas. For example, in science lessons the pupils have many opportunities to write about their experiments and record their findings on charts and pictograms.

25. Teachers meet the need of pupils with special educational needs through good quality help from teaching assistants and tasks matched appropriately to their needs. Teaching assistants plan with teachers and prepare their own resources to support learning. They contribute well to the checking of pupils' progress. Working both with individuals and small groups, they provide pupils with an appropriate balance of help and challenge, and ensure

that pupils are well included in lessons and have good access to the learning. Those few pupils who have English as an additional language are well catered for in class, the teachers ensure that they are clear about the learning in the lesson and give them extra help when it is needed.

26. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of many of the subjects they teach and as a result they teach the basic skills well. They use the correct technical terms and appropriate subject based specific language to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of each subject. This was particularly evident in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT), where technical language is used accurately.

27. Teachers' planning is good. They plan carefully and ensure that lessons build securely on what has gone before. They recognise when they need to amend their work and change their plans to accommodate the learning taking place. This is particularly effective in the nursery and reception classes where the teachers and support staff constantly check the children's understanding and use the information they gather to tightly focus on future learning. The teachers share the learning objectives for each lesson with the pupils so that they are clear what it is they are learning and why, so that they are actively involved in their learning. Planning generally takes good account of the different levels of attainment in the classes, so that all are appropriately helped and stretched.

28. Teachers' expectations of the pupils' and their work is satisfactory. Teachers do not always ensure that all the pupils are listening when they speak. Some talk over the pupils' fidgeting and in these cases not all pupils are fully involved in the lesson. Where teachers have a more demanding approach to attitudes and application to work the pupils' attention and engagement increases. This is an area for improvement for some teachers.

29. Teachers sometimes over direct their lessons. In satisfactory lessons they spend too much time explaining and directing what the pupils have to do. The result of this lack of crispness in delivery is twofold. Firstly, the pupils become restless and their concentration dips and secondly, the amount of time they have to complete their tasks is shortened. This is an area for improvement. Organisation of resources, staffing and groupings of pupils is good and this enables the pupils to learn well and at a good pace.

30. The management of the pupils throughout the school is good. It is beginning to be consistently developed throughout the school with the satisfactory behaviour of the vast majority being a reflection of this commitment. For some troubled pupils good behaviour is difficult and they are encouraged and helped in a number of different ways to achieve and to apply themselves to their tasks. Teachers and support staff are very supportive of these pupils and work hard to enable them to succeed. In this way the school is fully inclusive and works effectively with these challenging pupils.

31. The quality of day-to-day marking is good. The teachers monitor the pupils' work well in the class giving support and advice, as needed. They are effective in this and have a clear picture of their needs and next steps in learning. The teachers check the learning that has taken place in their lessons and use this information to guide their future work. The homework the school provides is good and enables the parents and carers of the pupils to make a positive contribution to their child's learning.

32. Pupils throughout the school are keen and are eager to come to school. Higher attaining pupils are appropriately stretched and challenged in their work and pupils who find learning difficult are given good help and guidance. The pupils who attain at the expected levels are given tasks to stretch their thinking. Throughout the school the pupils generally achieve well.

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

33. The school provides a well-balanced and broad curriculum that is relevant to the needs of all pupils. All the subjects of the National Curriculum are taught including sex education, attention to drugs misuse, and personal, social and health education. Religious education is taught in conjunction with the locally agreed syllabus and the national guidelines. Subject leaders have drawn up policies and curriculum plans for all subject areas.

34. The curriculum overview enables teachers to plan in detail for each subject, and ensure that there are links between subjects, and literacy in particular. There is a whole school emphasis on ensuring that pupils' literacy skills are transferred and used effectively across the curriculum, especially pupils' writing skills. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are now well embedded into school practice, and teachers are beginning to use the framework more flexibly in order to meet more accurately the needs of all pupils. The school has adopted the Early Literacy Strategy for infant pupils, and the Additional Literacy Strategy for lower juniors and this is making a positive contribution to pupils' learning. Teachers now ensure that the needs of the higher attaining pupils are fully catered for in their lesson planning. Year 6 pupils benefit from the inclusion of French as an addition to the National Curriculum.

35. The programme of work for the nursery and reception children has been reviewed in the light of the new guidance for young children. The class teachers provide a challenging and extremely stimulating environment both indoors and outdoors and this is a strength of their work. They have only recently moved into their new area but already an exciting climate for learning has been created. Daily planning is thorough and clearly defines what the learning objectives of the lessons are. The teachers' emphasis is in developing the children's first hand experiences and learning through play, enquiry and interests. Learning in all lessons is clearly identified and the children are encouraged to be independent and purposeful in their learning.

36. All statutory requirements of the curriculum are met for the pupils with special educational needs and they are well supported to access the full National Curriculum. Individual education plans are available for all pupils and these indicate the support the pupils need. They are detailed and have targets for the pupils to work towards. Early identification of pupils who are in need of extra specific help is a very positive aspect of the work of the school. The tasks set in class are well matched to the pupils' abilities and they have good help from the effective teaching assistants. This has a positive impact upon the pupils' learning as all staff make very good efforts to include pupils of all abilities and background into every activity.

37. In physical education there are wider opportunities to receive professional coaching, in football, rugby, cricket and tennis for example, and to participate in sporting competitions in a broad range of sport. The teaching of sport is effective because it is based upon the teaching of skills. There is a considerable range of sporting activities promoted in the school. The music curriculum is extended beyond the National Curriculum. Pupils are offered the opportunity to join one of the school recorder groups, sing in the choir, participate in the local musical festival or learn to play a musical instrument. The peripatetic music service provides

specific tuition for pupils. The science curriculum is particularly innovative as it is based upon practical activities. After school clubs are popular and they include a wide range of activities which appeal to a wide range of interests. Personal, social and health education, including citizenship, makes an important contribution to pupils' personal development.

38. Pupils have the opportunity to go on residential visits. Year 2 pupils go to Cuffley Camp whilst the older pupils visit a variety of venues and these extended visits develop their learning and also support pupils in their personal development. The school has a very effective programme of educational visits that ensures each class goes on a visit once a term linked to an aspect of their studies. Good use is made of visitors, with authors, artists and theatre groups all providing valuable learning experiences for pupils. The school plays an important part in the life of the community and has useful links with the local playgroup and secondary schools.

39. The overall provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good.

40. Provision for spiritual development is good. Assemblies and discussions during religious education lessons make a significant contribution to raising the pupils' spiritual awareness. Local clergy come in regularly to share in assemblies and make a significant contribution to the spiritual as well as the general well-being of the school. Visitors talk about the importance of different religious festivals, for example the importance of Hanukah. So the school is effective in providing knowledge and insight into different faiths and religions.

41. There is good and effective provision made for moral development. Teaching and support staff provide very good role models for pupils and have friendly relationships with them. Adults encourage pupils to behave responsibly because they want them to succeed. Moral standards are firmly introduced as part of the school's codes of behaviour. Pupils' self-esteem and confidence are helped by fair praise and encouragement. This encourages pupils to behave better and to strive to learn well.

42. The provision for pupils' social development is good. Generally good relationships secure the school's success. Group work in many lessons frequently highlights the good level of co-operation. A range of daily opportunities is created for pupils to take initiative and responsibility. Good work and effort are fairly appraised at the end of lessons and in assemblies, especially when significant personal achievements in learning are made. As a result the pupils recognise their responsible attitudes to work are valued.

43. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Pupils learn about other faiths and cultural traditions through literacy, history, geography, art and design and music. This is enhanced by a high quality library, open every day for parents and their children to choose books together. Displays around the school heighten pupils' awareness and knowledge of their own and other cultures. For example, there are multi-cultural signs and posters displayed around the school. Teachers use other languages to greet the pupils during registration and this gives pupils opportunities to learn and use other languages.

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

44. The safety and welfare of pupils is good. Staff are welcoming and work hard to support the pupils in a secure, warm and clean environment. They provide a happy working atmosphere in which the pupils grow into rounded individuals and learn well. All adults in school are aware of the strict criteria to be observed in child protection. There is sensitive care for pupils who are unwell. The school has good access to educational, medical and social agencies when required. The safety of pupils in school and on visits is well organised

and secure. The inspectors share the concern of governors regarding fire exits. This matter is being attended to in the coming half term. Minor matters of signs are receiving attention.

45. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are very good. Monitoring is thorough and any unexpected absences would be chased up immediately. Parents are familiar with the criteria for absence and co-operate very well with school. Attendance and punctuality are regularly promoted during registration, assemblies and by individual reports to parents as a result attendance rates are very good and this has a positive impact on the continuity of the pupils' learning. The Education Welfare Officer works well with school in respect of a few families.

46. Procedures for monitoring and promoting self-discipline are good. There is a comprehensive behaviour policy to encourage good attitudes and high standards of self-discipline. Staff conscientiously share the guidelines with pupils, resulting in improved standards by the great majority of pupils and this has a positive impact upon their learning. A refined range of strategies is used to support a number of pupils with personal and social problems. Procedures for eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. Bad behaviour or bullying is viewed very seriously and with disappointment. Parent's co-operation is promptly sought. Isolated instances are confined to a small cohort. All staff work together to provide a consistent framework within which the pupils are helped to improve.

47. The school has good procedures for checking the progress pupils make and whether they are working at a good rate. This is a very good improvement since the last inspection. The teachers make good use of this information to guide their lesson planning, so that the pupils' learning is carefully targeted. Data analysis gathered from the breakdown of national test results is used effectively to move the pupils learning on. Although the school has worked on this area for development there is still more work to be done in refining and improving the way the teachers use the data the school gathers. This is in hand.

48. The school sets challenging targets for its Year 6 pupils based on anticipated levels of attainment for each individual or group of pupils. Higher attaining pupils are identified and sufficiently challenged in lessons. Those pupils who need extra help are quickly identified they are helped in class and so they achieve well. The school is at present checking the way pupils learn, so that they can see why the boys appear to do better than the girls.

49. The information that the school gathers is becoming increasingly used by the teachers, as they group the pupils in their class. In English and mathematics the pupils have individual targets for their improvement and they are clear what it is they need to improve next. Class teachers keep thorough and detailed information on the progress that the pupils make over a range of curriculum areas. These enable the teachers to provide good quality reports for parents.

50. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are good. Teachers know the pupils well individually and receive their confidence and co-operation. However, they have to work very hard to promote the pupils' persistence, application and concentration. Notwithstanding, parents are pleased that teachers expect their children to work hard and do their best. They feel the school's ethos and values have a positive effect on their children and help them to mature. Parents feel staff are approachable. They feel their concerns are listened to and dealt with effectively.

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

51. The majority of parents view the school very highly. This is evident from encouraging comments at the parents' meeting, the very positive returns of questionnaires and parents spoken to during the inspection. They have increasing confidence in the headteacher and in what the school provides and achieves for their children. There is a comprehensive school prospectus, beautifully illustrated and covering all aspects of school life. The governors' annual report is equally full and informative. It gives very good insights into the school, and an objective view of progress made in the past year. These publications are supported by regular letters on current matters and events, throughout the school year. Statutory information is very good and ensures the parents are fully informed about the life and work of the school.

52. The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is very good. The quality of information to parents about their children's progress is very good. The school provides a curricular overview for every year group at the beginning each year. There are ample opportunities for parents to speak to staff through the year. Written reports conform to requirements, are detailed, individual to the pupil and have pointers for the next stage of learning. Annual reports are sent out in the spring term to give opportunity for discussion of any revised targets well before the end of the year. Parents are invited to comment but few take up the opportunity. Discussion on current achievement, further progress and target setting is shared with parents at all consultation evenings. These evenings are extremely well attended and viewed by most parents as fruitful. The school and the parents have a very effective working relationship, which is designed to support the pupils in their work. The school uses pastoral support plans to ensure that all parents where appropriate have an opportunity of helping their children when difficulties arise.

53. The impact of parents' involvement with the work of the school is good. The school strongly encourages the co-operation of parents in their children's learning. A good number of parents are perceived to encourage and help their children at home, particularly in the earlier school years. A small number of parents come into school regularly and help in lessons. Many more are very willing to assist with extra curricular activities, educational visits, residential trips and maintenance. All this service is valued and helps the pupils with their learning. Attendance at curricular related events however, for example a recent reading evening, is disappointingly low. Parents attend concerts and events, such as sports days in large numbers.

54. The Friends of Watton-at-Stone (FOWS) work hard to support the school. A tightly run committee promotes a wide range of events in fun and fund raising. These are greatly enjoyed by parents and extended families, producing significant funds for extra resources. These have recently included physical education equipment, music systems, individual white boards and drinking fountains for the pupils. The association subsidises theatre visits, school trips and provides refreshments for events such as Sports days. All this activity is greatly appreciated by the school.

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

55. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school and provides very good leadership. She has in the short time that she has been the headteacher worked tirelessly to improve and rectify the serious weaknesses that were present in the school. The quality and effectiveness of her leadership has been significant in addressing the all the issues from the last report and ensuring that good progress has been made in addressing the areas for improvement. She is an able communicator and has used her skill to encourage, inspire and motivate staff. All staff spoke of the way in which she has helped them to improve. She

delegates responsibility very well. All staff are very clear about their roles and responsibilities and they act as the school's specialists in their field. The headteacher is ably assisted, by her deputy headteacher, who is a very effective teacher. She provides a very good role model for staff, demonstrated by her teaching and management skills.

56. The contributions the senior management team and the subject co-ordinators make to the school are good. They have clearly defined roles and areas of responsibility. This means that staff work effectively as a team and work hard to support and help each other. There is a shared commitment in the school to improve, raise standards and help the pupils to reach their full potential. The whole staff supports the strong management in the school and this is driving standards up. The strength of the leadership and teamwork in the school means that pupils with specific learning and behavioural difficulties, the few who do not speak English as their first language, as well as the more able, are fully supported and helped to succeed in this inclusive environment.

57. The governing body provide very good support for the leadership and management of the school. They are very clear about where they wish the school to be and the strategies they have in place to secure this vision. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They gather information from a range of sources and use their considerable expertise to ensure its educational direction. There is a strong committee structure in place and the chairs of the committees meet regularly to exchange information. This means that the full governing body meetings are run very efficiently. The chair of the governors has a very well informed view of the school. He meets regularly with the headteacher to ensure that operational aspects of the school's management are functioning well and that the educational direction of the school is on track. All statutory requirements are met.

58. There are rigorous procedures for checking and improving teaching, learning and curriculum provision. The headteacher and senior management team observe the teaching and learning throughout the school. The strengths and areas for development are shared with all teaching and support staff as part of their annual performance review. These targets for improvement are revisited every six months so that progress against the targets can be seen. Management of subjects is good. The subject co-ordinators are responsible for checking the curriculum, observing teaching and learning and checking pupils' work; as a result standards are improving.

59. Overall the school has a good overview of its position in terms of strengths and areas for improvement due to the work of the headteacher, governing body, senior management team and subject co-ordinators.

60. The management of the school places a high priority to the continuing development of all staff. The school has recently gained its accreditation as Investor in People. A new member of staff has had a good induction package to support his transition from senior to primary education.

61. The co-ordinator for special educational needs is new to the post. In a short time she has efficiently re-organised the school systems and established good contacts with external agencies. She has introduced individual programmes for targeting pupils' behaviour, which are in addition to the well-established procedures for targeting pupils' learning. She provides good support for colleagues and has identified appropriate priorities for future development. The pupils learn well as a result of the efficient systems in place.

62. There are sufficient teachers and support staff to teach the requirements of the National Curriculum. The deployment of the teaching assistants is satisfactory. They do a good job and are a valuable aid for the teachers. In some classes the lack of a teaching assistant has an adverse impact on the learning in the class. The school constantly reassess the allocation of teaching assistants and makes changes to their deployment when necessary.

63. The accommodation in the school is very good. It is spacious and does not inhibit learning. The building is well maintained and kept to a high level of cleanliness. Displays are used to celebrate pupils' work. The school has large airy classrooms, which means the teachers are not constrained by lack of space. The school has recently moved the reception classes and the nursery class together so that they have a secure, sheltered area for outdoor activities. There is a hall, which is used for assembly and physical education and a separate dining hall for dinners. The recently completed library and the computer suite are attractive areas for the pupils. The school grounds are extensive and provide hard surfaces and grassed areas for the pupils to use for play and physical education lessons. The provision for learning resources is good and makes a good contribution to the delivery of the curriculum.

64. The headteacher, the chair of finance and the financial adviser work together well. They ensure that the school uses its available resources to meet its agreed priorities stated in the school improvement plan. The budget for the school is very tight and consequently they keep a careful note of expenditure. The school always seeks to get the best value for the money it spends and sets costs against agreed standards of work. The headteacher is effective in managing the budget in a strategic manner.

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

65. The school should:

- (1) Maintain the drive to raise standards in writing by ensuring the pupils know exactly what it is they need to do to improve further and ensure that the pupils have more opportunities to practise their skills.  
(Paragraphs: 6, 7, 34, 47, 90, 94)
- (2) Ensure that where appropriate, all teachers offer interesting and challenging lessons, and they improve their class management skills so that less time is wasted on minor discipline issues.  
(Paragraphs: 21, 28, 29, 55, 95, 104, 111)
- (3) Seek further ways of motivating those pupils who are currently too easily distracted by ensuring that they are kept on task through offering them a more motivating set of learning experiences  
(Paragraphs: 9, 12, 28, 30, 95, 96, 104, 111)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	61
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	47

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	13	29	18	0	0	0
Percentage	2	21	47	30	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 one percentage point.

### 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)	16	230
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	16

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	33

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

#### 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	20

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.8

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	23	8	31

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	30	30	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (95)	97 (95)	97 (100)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	30	30	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (100)	97 (100)	97 (100)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

Where the number of boys or girls in the year group are ten or fewer the individual results are not reported.

### 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
	2001	17	10	27

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	21	22	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	78 (89)	81 (86)	96 (100)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys			
	Girls			
	Total	23	24	25
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	85 (75)	89 (61)	93 (93)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

*Where the number of boys or girls in the year group are ten or fewer the individual results are not reported.*

**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	204	5	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

## Teachers and classes

### Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20
Average class size	23

### Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	132.75

### Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	32
Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	40
Number of pupils per FTE adult	8

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2

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

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	552 175
Total expenditure	554 301
Expenditure per pupil	2 431
Balance brought forward from previous year	2 157
Balance carried forward to next year	31

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	214
Number of questionnaires returned	97

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	66	30	2	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	49	45	2	2	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	50	9	2	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	43	12	6	12
The teaching is good.	57	38	0	2	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41	44	12	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	33	1	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	41	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	37	51	11	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	49	47	1	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	53	41	2	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	46	7	0	12

## **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**

66. The children's attainment in all of the recommended areas of learning for young children is at the level expected for children of their age. The children achieve well in all areas of learning in both the nursery and reception classes and they make good progress. This is the result of at least good and often very good teaching and learning. Consequently, because they have a good start to their schooling, the vast majority of the children reach the expected level of attainment for children in all areas of learning by the end of the reception year.

67. There has been a very good improvement in the way the nursery and reception classes have been organised recently. The classes have moved to an area of the school where they can have a separate entrance. The classrooms surround a courtyard area, which makes a very good secure outdoor classroom. Very good improvements have been made since the last inspection.

68. The nursery class is run on a part time basis with the children coming to school in the mornings. The class is led by a class teacher who has three support staff to help her. At present 34 children are on roll. There is only one reception class of 17 children at present; another group of children will start in a new class in January. Most of the children have had some pre-school experience, the vast majority in the nursery class and the village playgroup.

69. The quality of teaching and learning for the children in the nursery and reception classes is good overall, although a significant number of very good lessons were observed. The teachers and the support staff are committed and skilful and work hard to move the children's learning on. Close and careful observations of the children enable accurate checks on progress to be made. These notes help to provide the focus for the child's next steps in learning. The children are helped and encouraged to become independent learners and to complete the tasks set for them. This encourages the children to develop good attitudes to their work

70. Children who have special educational needs are identified early and particular work and help is planned for these children. This early intervention enables the staff to give good help within the classroom for these children and as a result they make good progress.

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

71. In personal, social and emotional development, by the end of the reception year most children are likely to achieve the nationally agreed standards. Children achieve well and make good progress in this area of their work because they receive patient, supportive teaching. Children in the nursery class try hard to learn the class routines. They sit on the carpet and decide which symbol they should use to describe the weather. They are encouraged to help each other at snack time, share resources and to take turns when they play games.

72. The children in the reception class undress themselves for physical education and manage well. The class teacher encouraged the children to put their clothes in careful piles so that they were able to dress themselves without getting into a muddle. The children work together well in their activities, sometimes they find it hard to share resources. The children respond well to all the staff in both the nursery and reception classes. They listen carefully to what they have to say.

73. The teaching and learning in personal and social education are good. Members of staff are patient and consistent with the children and this enables the children to learn and develop their awareness of themselves and their peers. All staff promote clear ideas of what is expected of the children including the difference between right and wrong. The patience that the teachers and support staff show results in a calm working environment where the children feel happy and confident and make good gains in their lessons. All staff are very good role models for the children; they are unfailingly polite and set them a very good example.

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

74. In communication, language and literacy by the end of the reception year most of the children are likely to reach the levels expected for children of their age. The children achieve well and make good progress as a result of good and often very good teaching and learning. The children in the nursery and the reception classes enjoy singing rhymes and counting songs and remembering the actions that go with them. The nursery children sang “5 speckled frogs” watching the soft toys jump away one by one. These activities develop not only the children’s speaking skills but also their capacity to memorise repetitious songs.

75. The children in both classes enjoy stories; the reception children particularly enjoy the story of “The Rainbow fish.” They think about the fish and how he shared his scales with the other fishes. The children take home books and in this way the children’s learning at school is extended and reinforced by work done at home with parents or carers. Children in the nursery are introduced to books and learn to look carefully at the pictures to look for specific items and clues. They try hard to find their own name when they plan their work and on their name cards. The children are keen to write and work happily at the writing table. The children learn initial letter sounds and the actions that go with them. The reception children when they worked with the teacher showed a wide range of ability, from confidently copying her writing to learning to write the letters of their names. Writing skills are developing well with the children’s learning being very focused. As a result the children are becoming confident writers.

76. The teaching and learning in communication, language and literacy are at least good and often very good. Staff work hard to improve the fluency of all the children by constant discussions and conversations. For example, at the end of one lesson the children remembered they had been talking about the letter “l” and that lion and lollipop both started with “l”. Reading is promoted in both classes by the careful choice of books, which are stimulating and interesting for the children. This ensures that they enjoy their learning.

### **Mathematical development**

77. In mathematical development most children are likely to attain the standards that are expected for this area of learning by the time they reach the end of the reception year. The children achieve well and make good progress through good practically based teaching and learning.

78. The children in the nursery class are learning to count. They count together the number of children present during the session. They count out biscuits at snack time and understand that they need to count carefully. The children in the reception class are learning the terms “longest and shortest”. They study the size of the fishes the teacher has prepared for them and decide which is the longest, considering carefully how they are to check their ideas to see if they are correct. In this way they are beginning to use the mathematical language of comparative sizes and also work out mathematical problems.

79. The teaching and learning in mathematical understanding are good. All staff take every opportunity to develop the children's understanding of number through practical activities and play. This practical approach to teaching number and measurements ensures that all the children are fully engaged in their learning. For example, in the nursery the children enjoyed playing a game together. They knew they must wait for their turn and did so patiently. The children in the reception class enjoyed pegging the socks on the washing line outside, in order of their size. In this way they learnt together and helped each other. The children's learning is well developed and built securely lesson after lesson. The wide range of practical activities both indoors and outdoors is designed to consolidate and extend the children's learning through challenging and interesting tasks.

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

80. In knowledge and understanding of the world, most children are likely to reach the expected level for this area of learning by the time they complete the reception year. Good teaching and learning ensures that the children achieve well and make consistently good progress.

81. The teachers provide many challenging and purposeful activities in both the indoor and outdoor environment to engage and interest the children. The children in the nursery were busy making houses for "The Three Little Pigs" deciding whether they wanted to make the house of straw, sticks or bricks. The children use the "small world" toys to play with a farm, dolls house or garage to act out their own ideas and understanding. The reception children were busy moving house, packing boxes, moving them to the cottage using the wheeled truck, unpacking, washing clothes and hanging them out on the line, washing the windows of the cottage and painting it very carefully with water. What a lot of jobs to do! In these very carefully planned activities the children solve problems and are involved in purposeful play.

82. The teaching and learning in knowledge and understanding of the world are good. Staff plan a wide range of activities so that the children are fully engaged in their learning. The class teachers have good resources to use to interest the children. An extensive range of large and small construction kits and the very good accommodation means they are not limited by lack of space or equipment. The teaching of literacy and numeracy links effectively with this area of learning, for example as the children learnt to drive the electronic car they were encouraged to use the directional words of forwards and backwards.

### **Physical development**

83. In physical development most children are likely to reach the levels expected by the time they reach the end of the reception year. Good, often very good teaching and learning in this area enables the children to achieve well and make good progress. The children use a range of equipment and materials in their work. Their skills develop well. The nursery children used wide flat foam brushes to create their individual pictures whilst the reception children used huge brushes to "paint" the cottage. They use jigsaws and construction toys with good levels of dexterity. In physical education lessons the children in the reception class moved along the equipment showing good levels of poise and self control. The older children in the nursery class enjoyed working with the equipment in the school hall; they worked hard during the lesson and achieved very well.

84. The teaching and learning in physical development are often very good. In physical education lessons both the nursery and reception teachers have very high expectations of the children. They set up very clear routines and give the children many opportunities to explore the apparatus. The teachers use the support staff very well to help with the learning in

the lesson. The fast pace, clear instructions and sensitive guidance for the individual means that the children enjoy their lessons and learn very well.

### **Creative development**

85. In creative development most children are likely to reach the standard expected in this area of learning by the time they complete the reception year. The children achieve well and make good progress as teaching and learning in this area is good.

86. The children in the nursery use paint expressively. They have painted portraits of themselves to decorate the classroom walls. Both the nursery and the reception children particularly enjoy their music lessons. The reception children were busy learning "Harvest" songs to sing in their Harvest festival. Whilst the nursery children played their instruments to accompany Vivaldi's music. Role-play areas are used enthusiastically by the children as they effectively use their imagination in their play.

87. The teaching and learning in creative development is good. Staff provide many exciting opportunities for the children to develop their creative ideas through painting, music and play. They stimulate the children's interests with lively lessons that generate a high level of excitement and interest. The children are encouraged to express their feelings using a wide range of media. The children are given good opportunities to use their imaginations to work in a range of contexts.

88. The children make a very positive start to their education in all areas of learning. They listen carefully to instructions and behave well. The children try hard to concentrate on the activities set for them and many persevere with the tasks even if they find them hard. Sometimes they find it difficult to work on their set tasks before they choose to follow their own interests. The children settle well into the nursery and reception classes and quickly begin to understand the routines and sequence of life in school.

### **ENGLISH**

89. In the 2001 National Curriculum tasks and tests pupils in Year 2 achieved very high standards in both reading and writing. This shows very good improvement since the time of the last inspection. Pupils are now achieving well, and making good progress. A similar picture is expected from the results of the 2002 National tests. The additional literacy initiative and the high quality teaching pupils receive, assists positively in raising standards. By the end of Year 6 standards are in line with the national average. Although this is not as strong as it was at the time of the last inspection, for this group of pupils it shows good progress when taking their prior attainment into consideration. The results of the 2002 National tests are likely to confirm a similar trend.

90. Since the time of the last inspection the school has worked hard to bring about improvement in standards of English. The National Literacy Strategy is now well embedded into daily practice and is being used more flexibly to meet the needs of pupils. The incorporation of new initiatives has helped to improve teaching and learning throughout the school. The school is particularly concerned to watch the attainment of the boys, which is not as good as that of the girls. Development of writing has been and remains a whole school focus within the literacy hour. So far this has been successful in ensuring improvement at all levels and in other subjects, but there is still more to do. Reading is also given high priority and many good quality fiction and non-fiction books have been provided to encourage pupils to develop good reading habits. Regular reading at home is part of the well-organised homework programme, and the school library is available throughout the day for pupils to go

and read or carry out independent research. Parents are able to share the experience of changing home reading books with their children before the start of the school day.

91. Speaking skills are well developed because teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to use the spoken word to express their feelings, give their opinions, and join in class discussions. Pupils answer questions and give detailed explanations of their work and findings using a good range of vocabulary. For example, Year 2 pupils express their opinion about books they have read, whilst pupils in Year 6 can articulate clearly how they are affected when reading an extract of a biography of “Miss Stout” who lived in unfortunate circumstances.

92. Most pupils in the school enjoy reading and achieve high standards. Every class has a selection of good quality books that pupils are able to take home to share with their families on a regular basis. By Year 2 standards in reading are very high and show very good improvement since the last inspection. Readers in Year 2 read confidently, and with accuracy and expression. They correct their own mistakes and know how to tackle unfamiliar words. Their progress is closely watched and recorded in detail in their reading journals. This ensures their achievements are noted and targets are set for their next steps in learning. In Year 6 overall standards in reading are above average. Reading is expressive and pupils show clear understanding of the text they are reading currently. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their favourite authors and books that they have read. They talk about the effectiveness of the text when authors use devices like similes to create pictures in the mind of the reader. They too have detailed reading journals with entries from parents, teachers and pupils, clearly demonstrating the effective partnership that exists in school to support reading.

93. Pupils achieve very high standards in writing by the end of Year 2. They develop ideas using sentences containing appropriate vocabulary, using clearly formed handwriting, which is neatly presented. They start writing their poetry using simple ideas and rhyming patterns:

“July the farmer makes the hay  
For the cows to munch all day”

This form of writing is further developed through the use of similes, for example:

“As dark as the night sky,  
As orange as fungus  
As yellow as the sun.”

94. By Year 6 pupils have developed their writing skills satisfactorily, and write for a range of purposes and audiences expressing their ideas and feelings accurately. Although standards are improving throughout the school there is more to do especially in Years 5 and 6 where standards are still too low. Pupils are developing and using appropriate techniques but they need to hone their writing skills still further. They produce reviews of poems showing obvious enjoyment, and write dramatic openings for a suspense story using verbs and adverbs, “Her hair flowing wildly”. They draft and redraft to improve their writing still further. The presentation of written work is now much improved throughout the school with generally neater handwriting and more accurate spelling.

95. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and teach the basic skills including spelling, grammar and handwriting well using effective teaching methods. Careful planning ensures that all ability groups are catered for including the higher achievers, those pupils with special educational needs, and those pupils for whom English is a second language. Teachers generally have high expectations of pupil behaviour and manage them well. This results in good learning for example, in a Year 2 class, all pupils sustained attention for the whole lesson because they were so motivated by the teacher. Occasionally, in a small number of classes incidents of pupils being inattentive are not challenged and this results in less effective learning. Time is used to good effect so

that the pace of lessons ensures pupils learn effectively. Teaching assistants support pupils with special educational needs well and make the most of the time they spend with them. This results in this group of pupils making good progress throughout the school. ICT is used occasionally to support work in lessons. Target setting is used effectively in all aspects of English, so that pupils know what the next steps are in their learning. Pupils understand this process and know what they are learning because the teacher always shares the learning objective with them at the beginning and end of lessons.

96. Pupils learn well and acquire knowledge and skills at a good rate. Through well-focused lessons teachers ensure that pupils work hard and generally show steady application. The majority of pupils can sustain concentration and sustain interest throughout lessons, although a small number do find this difficult.

97. The subject leader knows the needs of the school well and has set about the task of rectifying the weaknesses in standards effectively through tracking the progress of all groups of pupils and ensuring that appropriate targets are set to move their learning forward. She has taken steps to put in place strategies to address the underachievement of boys, and to ensure that the needs of the more able pupils are more adequately met. The whole school is now committed to its aim of raising standards.

## **MATHEMATICS**

98. Standards in mathematics are well above average by the end of Year 2 and above average at the end of Year 6. The last inspection indicated that pupil attainment in these years was average and therefore a significant improvement has occurred since that time. Important contributory factors in the effectiveness of the school's use of the National Numeracy Strategy and the development of good quality teaching have had a positive impact upon the way the pupils learn. Pupils make good progress across the school and achieve well.

99. The 2001 national tests in mathematics showed that by the end of Years 2 and 6 pupils' attainment was above average when compared to schools nationally. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher than expected levels in mathematics was well above the national average. Inspectors found that the results for 2002 were well above average for Year 2 and above average in Year 6.

100. Year 2 pupils build well on their early mathematical experiences gained in the reception class, counting to 20 and ordering numbers accurately to 100. They look at patterns in numbers and solve problems well, by using number squares. The pupils work hard in their tasks and are enthusiastic as they sort numbers. They are confident with number bonds and place value and most pupils count accurately in 2's, 5's, and 10's from different starting points. They achieve well because of the clearly focused and targeted teaching.

101. Most pupils identify a range of flat and solid shapes correctly. For example in a Year 1 class, pupils identified correctly and recalled the properties of a number of shapes whilst they explored everyday objects. In this lesson the teachers' very high expectations of the pupils and quick pace to the lesson enabled them to achieve very well. Pupils identify a range of coins, using them to solve a variety of money problems. They have a clear understanding of hour and half-hour. Many pupils identify and use correctly a quarter of an hour. In measuring activities, most pupils use standard and non-standard units with care and confidence. Practical activities help the pupils' learning. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of the extra structured help they receive during lesson times.

102. By the end of Year 6 the pupils have continued to make good progress. The quantity, quality and range of their work is good. Pupils have a clear knowledge of how to accurately add, subtract, multiply and divide numbers beyond a thousand. They use all four number operations to solve problems and many understand negative numbers. Pupils show good understanding of the concepts they are studying; for example in a Year 6 class, pupils showed good understanding of known number facts and place value to consolidate mental multiplication. In this lesson the teacher was effective in using the mistakes the pupils made to clarify misconceptions and move their learning on. As a result all the pupils made good progress.

103. Pupils are taught a broad curriculum and have a good knowledge of all areas of mathematics. They use mathematical vocabulary correctly for example, in the Year 6 class the pupils talked about horizontal and vertical axes. Pupils' skills in mathematics help support their learning in other subjects; for example they collect data in science and geography and produce a range of graphs, tables and charts to display their findings. They use ICT to draw mathematical shapes and for charts and graphs. All pupils make good progress including those with special educational needs and those pupils who do not speak English as their first language. They make good progress because they have extra help from the class teacher and teaching assistants in class and so they do well.

104. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is at least good and often very good for Years 1 and 2. Teachers have good subject knowledge and prepare their lessons well. Teachers' planning is good and is clearly linked to the National Numeracy Strategy. Whilst marking is satisfactory overall, it is not consistent throughout the school in terms of giving pupils clear guidance as to how their work can be improved still further. High expectations, good explanations, very clear planning and the sharing of lesson objectives all ensure that pupils are involved in challenging and worthwhile mathematical tasks. In some lessons however the pupils find concentration and application to task more difficult and this is linked to lower teacher expectations. Teachers make good use of questioning to challenge pupils' learning.

105. Mathematics is well led by the co-ordinator with monitoring of planning, lessons and samples of work taken place. Resources for mathematics are good and together with the support offered by the teaching assistants and parent helpers are well used by teachers. The use of ICT is satisfactory overall. Mathematics is a strength of the school.

## **SCIENCE**

106. Based on lesson observations, discussion with Year 2 and Year 6 pupils and a detailed scrutiny of the pupils' work, attainment in science throughout the school is above average. All pupils achieve well and make good progress. Evidence from a sample of work from last year indicates that the pupils undertake a good range of science work and have regular opportunities to investigate and carry out experiments for themselves. However, girls do better than boys in the national tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, and the percentage of pupils who attain the higher level 3 at the end of Year 2 is only satisfactory compared to similar schools. These are areas for further development. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are given good help in class; they do the same work as their peers and make good progress in relation to their abilities.

107. Improvement since the subject was last inspected is good. Effective systems have been introduced to check and record pupils' progress and pupils are better informed of what they need to do next to improve their learning. Good use is made of homework to support learning.

108. Throughout the school, teachers give pupils regular opportunities to carry out practical investigations. As a result, pupils' abilities to make predictions, collect evidence and evaluate findings are well developed. For example, in an excellent lesson in Year 2, pupils investigated a variety of materials to see what changes occurred if these were heated or cooled. Pupils confidently predicted what might happen and discussed their findings. They recognised that cooked apples and pastry could not change back to their original state but that boiling water could change to steam and then back again to water once it was cooled. Another group compared wood, plastic, fabric and glass. They recorded independently how these materials were used in the classroom and, by using their knowledge of properties, explained why these materials were suited to their purpose.

109. In a very good lesson in Year 6, pupils investigated the effect of micro-organisms on different materials. They understood that micro-organisms feed and grow and that they can be harmful, for example, in causing food to decay. They recognise that they could also be beneficial, for example, in the making of yoghurt. Pupils use correct scientific vocabulary to describe their work such as microbe, nutrient, bacterial and viral.

110. The quality of teaching and learning in lessons ranges from excellent to satisfactory and is good overall throughout the school. All teachers plan effectively and cater for pupils of differing abilities so that pupils are appropriately challenged. Teachers identify clear objectives for learning which are shared with pupils so that they, in turn, understand the focus of lessons. In lessons, which are good or better, lessons move at a fast pace and pupils spend the majority of their time in practical activities, developing and practising their investigational skills. This good teaching ensures that pupils learn well and make consistently good progress.

111. Teaching and learning are less effective when teachers spend too long talking at the start of lessons whilst the pupils listen. This allows some pupils, often boys, to daydream or fidget and miss out on learning. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils' application to their work and as a result, the pupil's lack of attention detracts from the effectiveness of the lesson.

112. The teachers consistently try to link science work to other subjects. For example, Year 1 pupils practise mathematical skills as they sort data about their eye colour. All pupils practise writing independently when they record experiments in their own words. The school takes part in national and local projects such as "Energy Week," "Three Valleys Water Project" and a "Balloon Day." These activities support pupils' learning in science and enhance the science curriculum.

113. Most pupils enjoy their science lessons and are keen to learn. They listen politely and contribute enthusiastically to discussions. They stay on task, sustain concentration and co-operate well with each other. However there are a small number of pupils in most classes whose effort and application to work is inconsistent. Teachers have to work hard to maintain their interest and channel their energies.

114. The co-ordinator for science is new to the school. He has worked alongside the previous co-ordinator and together they have conducted an analysis of test results and teaching resources, and have identified appropriate priorities for future development.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

115. Pupils' standards in art and design are average at the end of Years 2 and 6. This is because teaching and learning are good and as a result the pupils achieve well. The school has maintained similar standards to those at the time the subject was last inspected. Since then the subject co-ordinator has made significant improvements to the provision of art and design within the school. As a result there has been a greater emphasis on sculpture and three-dimensional work. Art and design is taught not only in its own right but also used to support other subject areas. For example, the pupils have drawn people moving and as a stimulus for this work the teacher has created a good display of sporting figures in motion.

116. The co-ordinator has recently introduced a number of initiatives to bring about improvement in the provision for sculpture in the school. The school has invited an artist to work with the pupils to create a diorama of fishes. The pupils have made huge fishes with stripes and spots which when suspended from a framework appear to be swimming. The pupils worked well as a team to create these large brightly coloured fish. The Year 6 pupils have made figures from wire and plaster in various poses showing movement. Alongside this work already completed are plans for a new whole school project.

117. During residential experiences the pupils extend and develop their artistic ideas further. They work with day light photography techniques and make images by placing leaves and twigs on photographic paper. They weave different colours and textures of wool around a frame made from two sticks and create patterns and arrangements from leaves, twigs and pebbles very much in the style of Andy Goldsworthy. In this way the pupils work with natural materials and look at the patterns and effects that they can create, as they effectively develop this aspect of their work.

118. In lessons the pupils work well on the tasks set for them. In Year 4 the pupils select their own brushes and paints as they paint the backgrounds for their pictures. Year 5, were engrossed in their clay work as they explored the different techniques they could employ when making containers with clay. Pupils in Year 6 concentrate effectively on developing sketches to show moving figures. Good planning by the teachers and clear learning objectives for the lessons ensure that the pupils make good gains in their learning and achieve well.

119. The teachers encourage the pupils to make good use of their sketchbooks to support their work. The pupils use them as an effective tool to try out their ideas and thoughts. In this way the pupils see their sketchbooks as valuable resource to help them in their work. In Year 1 and 2 the pupils look at colours in nature. Pupils in Year 1 try to match the colours seen in leaves and moss whilst the older Year 2 pupils work on creating their own landscapes. Here the pupils experimented with colour mixing to gain the correct colours tones and shades for their particular landscape.

120. The co-ordinator gives good support to her colleagues. She regularly checks the teachers' planning and the pupils' work, which means she has a clear view of the subject throughout the school. She has helped her colleagues to develop their own skills and has arranged after school sessions to help them.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

121. Pupils' standards in design and technology are average at the end of Years 2 and 6. As it was not possible to observe a large number of design and technology lessons during the course of the inspection, judgements have been based on careful observation of work already completed and lessons observed. Staff and pupils were also interviewed.

122. Achievement and progress in design and technology throughout the school are good. This is a good improvement since the subject was last inspected when standards were reported to be at the level expected.

123. Year 2 pupils successfully clarify their ideas for making a product through class and group discussions. Pupils work with a wide range of materials including card, construction kits and re-cycled materials. They systematically develop their skills of making finished products. Pupils explore the suitability of materials for creating puppets and make appropriate choices of materials. They work hard to develop their joining skills using items such as sticky tape, glue, staples, paper clips and sewing. The pupils talk about their work and explain why they chose the different materials. They evaluate their finished products and discuss ways of improving their designs and models. In this way their work develops well and they understand that some materials and joining methods are better for some tasks than others.

124. Year 6 pupils further develop their designing, measuring, manipulating and cutting skills. In food technology lessons pupils look at the properties of a range of different breads. They make sandwiches and use appropriate materials and equipment. They draw comparisons between small and large-scale production, identify what works well and what could be improved. Pupils record their work in a variety of charts, tables, lists and graphs. This was particularly evident in their work on investigating torches and lamps. The pupils practise their mathematical and writing skills to good effect. ICT is used satisfactorily to support design and technology lessons.

125. The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good. Teachers are conscious of safety aspects of the tools and materials the pupils use and ensure that pupils are not put at risk. Teachers' planning shows that expectations are high and this is reflected in the setting of challenging but realistic goals relating to pupils work. The pupils interviewed about their work displayed positive attitudes towards the subject. They clearly enjoyed talking about their work and described the processes they addressed and used in their lessons. As a result of effective teaching, which encourages the development of not only making skills but also constructive evaluation, the pupils' understanding develops well and they make good progress in their lessons.

126. The co-ordination of the subject is good. There is a set of plans in place based on the government guidelines with all aspects of the subject covered. Resources for design and technology are good; they are used effectively to promote learning.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

127. Standards in geography are average at the end of Years 2 and 6. Attainment for Years 2 and 6 remain at a similar level to that at the time the subject was last inspected. Standards have been maintained because of an interesting geography curriculum with a clear emphasis on developing mapping skills. The pupils make satisfactory progress as they move from year to year. Their achievement is satisfactory and this is the result of satisfactory teaching and learning taking place in geography lessons.

128. The teachers make good use of educational visits to help the pupils to become aware of their immediate locality and to develop their geographical skills still further. The use of residential visits to areas such as the Isle of Wight has enabled the pupils to look at the effects of erosion and to study a coastal, island environment. These first hand experiences are a valuable source of information for the pupils and enable the subject to come alive. Back in the classroom the teachers use the information gathered during the visits to develop and extend the pupils work still further. The pupils making good use of their writing skills to explain about their research and findings.

129. Mapping skills are effectively developed throughout the school. The pupils in Year 1 look carefully at maps of Dublin to locate the places visited by “Barnaby Bear” whilst he was on holiday. They begin to use co-ordinates to locate different places. In Year 2 they develop their mapping skills further with maps of the local area and the pupils learning about human and physical features. Pupils in Year 4 look at maps of the world recognising different continents and countries. They use the Internet to visit weather sites and find out about the weather in different parts of the world.

130. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The teachers plan their lessons clearly and share the learning objective with the pupils so that they are clear about their learning and their tasks. The pupils are positive about their lessons and for example, in Year 5 the pupils were keen to explore the similarities and differences between life in the Indian village of Chembakolli with life in their own village. A number of pupils in this class have special educational needs and they were well supported by the teacher, so that they completed the same work as the other pupils and achieved at the same level. In Year 4 the pupils used their previous learning of finding weather information from a national Website to gather further information about their chosen country. In this way the teachers use the pupils’ enthusiasm and prior knowledge to move their learning on.

131. The co-ordinator has a good view of standards in the school, which reflects the information she has gathered when she has tracked mapping skills and pupils’ work throughout the school. She checks teachers’ lesson planning and keeps an overview of the geography curriculum. She is enthusiastic about the further development of geography throughout the school and is clear about the need to maintain and develop standards even further.

## **HISTORY**

132. Standards in history throughout the school are average. All pupils’ achievement is satisfactory and they make satisfactory progress throughout the school. Improvement since the subject was last inspected is satisfactory.

133. By the end of Year 2, the pupils understand some of the differences between their own lives and those in the past. From studying pictures and photographs and handling artefacts, they successfully identify changes that have taken place in items such as toys. They draw timelines of their own lives and begin to develop a sense of chronology. They have a sound knowledge of historical figures such as Samuel Pepys and Florence Nightingale and important events such as The Great Fire of London.

134. By the end of Year 6, pupils have satisfactory knowledge of different periods of British history and also of how people lived in ancient cultures. They gather information from a variety of sources including the Internet. They describe the impact of events such as how life in Britain changed as a result of the Roman invasion. An extensive programme of visits to places of interest and a number of visitors invited into school make a significant contribution to the pupils’ learning. These include visits to St. Andrew’s Cathedral where pupils dress up as monks, Hitchin Museum where they experience aspects of Victorian life and St. Alban’s where they learn about life in Roman times.

135. The overall quality of teaching and learning in history is satisfactory. Pupils in all year groups are increasingly using a variety of sources such as pictures, artefacts, books and videos to ask appropriate questions and to find out information themselves. For example, pupils in Year 3 use books to produce an information sheet about Queen Boudicca and pupils in Year 5 make deductions about life in Tudor times by examining portraits and paintings.

Good links are made in history lessons to the teaching of English. Pupils write for a range of different purposes including descriptions, narratives, letters, diary entries, explanations, sequencing and recounts. They widen their vocabulary by finding suitable words to describe Henry VIII.

136. The pupils have good attitudes to history. They are enthusiastic and generally work hard in lessons. They are keen to answer questions and collaborate well with each other. They find information from home about their history topics. For example, pupils in Year 2 are challenged to suggest why the Fire of London spread so quickly and pupils in Year 6 research some of the main dates and events of World War II.

137. The co-ordinator has put in place an appropriate set of plans using national guidelines and has purchased a good range of resources to support teaching and learning. She has been given time to monitor standards and, as a result, has identified appropriate priorities for improvement.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

138. Standards in ICT by the end of Years 2 and 6 are average. This is a similar position to that at the time the subject was last inspected. Improvement since this date is satisfactory. The pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school and achievement is satisfactory. The computer suite is beginning to be used effectively as a result of the teacher's completion of their extensive computer training. This has improved their own skills and confidence, and alongside the systems that are now in place to keep a track of and record each pupil's progress, the school is well placed to move positively forwards. At present there is only a limited use of other new technology such as digital and video cameras, sensors and data loggers.

139. By the end of Year 2, pupils use the keyboard to present their work in a simple form, for example, using the return key to write items in a list. They know how to change the size and style of writing, save their work for future use and how to print it out. They produce pictures using an art package and know how to instruct a programmable toy to make it move. In Years 3 to 6, pupils develop their skills further. For example, Year 3 pupils use a control programme to instruct a screen turtle to draw four and five sided shapes. Year 4 pupils write increasingly complex instructions to reproduce their own patterns of shapes. Year 5 pupils draw snails in the style of Matisse with the help of an art program. Year 6 pupils use a spreadsheet to enter and analyse data, comparing the benefits of ICT with the mental calculations they had used in an earlier maths lesson.

140. Planning in ICT is satisfactory. Teachers identify appropriate objectives for learning and share these with pupils at the start of lessons. Work is planned to meet the needs of pupils with differing abilities and additional adult help is given, where possible, to help pupils with particular needs. As a result, all pupils make satisfactory progress. The teachers use computers to support learning in other subjects. For example, Year 4 pupils searched the Internet in a geography lesson to research information about different countries. The use of the computers in other subjects is developing appropriately.

141. Pupils enjoy using computers and trying out new software programmes. They work well independently but there is sometimes disagreement when pupils are asked to work in pairs or small groups. Several pupils attend a Computer Club held after school, which usefully supports their learning.

142. The co-ordinator is new to the school. She is enthusiastic and confident, and within a short time has identified appropriate areas for development. The school employs a technician

for half a day each week to keep equipment in good order. This ensures that valuable teaching and learning time is not wasted through technical failure.

## **MUSIC**

143. Standards are average at the end of Years 2 and 6. Standards in music have declined somewhat since the last inspection; due largely to the shift from specialist teaching to all members of staff being responsible for the teaching of music for their class. Achievement is satisfactory and pupils make satisfactory progress overall.

144. Opportunities for pupils interested in learning to play an instrument are available through the local music service for school. Pupils are taught individually by skilful peripatetic teachers to play brass or woodwind instruments. This enables them to make good progress and to play with confidence. There is good support for pupils wishing to play recorders from additional staff who come in regularly every week to take groups and clubs. The subject leader takes Year 2 recorder players, who are keen and interested, and they achieve well as a result. Towards the end of the school year the school puts on a major musical performance where the talents of the instrumentalists are put to good use.

145. The standard of singing throughout the school is good. Pupils sing tunefully, keeping to time following the duration of the notes. In assemblies the older pupils take the lead in singing, many of whom are in the school choir. The choir practises every week and on special occasions for example, at Christmas goes out to sing in the community, and at the schools' music festivals.

146. In Years 1 and 2 pupils understand that pitch is high and low notes and they sing along to a taped accompaniment, singing in tune. They recognise that the large keys on xylophones are low notes and small keys are high notes and play them in ascending and descending order to the taped songs like 'Hickory Dickory Dock'. They do this well and with confidence. They create stories using high and low notes and perform them to the class.

147. In Years 3 to 6 pupils learn about pentatonic scales and produce a tune using the given notes on tuned instruments including glockenspiels, xylophones and chime bars. They work in-groups composing their work, gradually adding percussion sounds. Performing their work to the class extends their learning. Other classes follow taped schools music programmes that enable pupils to learn a range of songs on a theme and to focus on melodic structure and repeated phrases.

148. In discussion with pupils they talk with enjoyment about singing and especially the Jubilee Concert held in the summer. They enjoy listening to music as they come into assemblies, and they know about some classical composers including Mozart and Beethoven.

149. The quality of teaching is variable but is satisfactory overall. Some of the teachers are more confident than others and this shows in their lessons, and affects the progress pupils make. The subject leader clearly demonstrates her expertise in lessons and through her management role is providing support for the non-specialists in the school, by carrying out classroom observation to identify strengths and weaknesses. The subject leader is effective in her management of the subject.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

150. Pupils' standards by the end of Years 2 and 6 are above average, with all elements of the statutory curriculum taught. There is good emphasis on outdoor education, including its potential impact on the social development of the pupils. Pupils achieve well and make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for in lessons and with specific support, help and encouragement they achieve as well as their peers. Standards have improved since the time the subject was last inspected.

151. In Year 2 pupils reached very good standards in a lesson where they attempted to explore action and movement with good control and co-ordination. The pupils made very good progress in the lesson, as they were able to create and perform movement patterns using changes in rhythm, speed and direction. The teacher enabled the pupils to achieve very well as a result her very high expectations both of their work, behaviour and attitudes. Consequently the pupils worked hard their behaviour was exemplary and they contributed ideas and suggestions with confidence and enthusiasm. The pupils watched each other and were able to improve their own work through discussion and observation of other pupils. This was a very good learning opportunity.

152. In Year 6 pupils learn how to develop their ball skills with increased control and accuracy. In a good lesson the class teacher ensured the pupils learnt to pass a rugby ball with speed and accuracy. As a result of the teachers' emphasis on improving technique, pupils developed good awareness of creating and using space and how to handle and pass a ball. Good planning, effective skill development reinforced by an active game ensured the pupils achieved well and enjoyed their lesson. During a Year 5 tennis lesson taught by a qualified tennis coach, the pupils clearly made very good progress in their racquet skills. The pupils enjoyed the lesson, worked hard and as a result of very good coaching made significant gains in their skill level. The pupils look forward to their tennis lessons. The fact that achievement is high gives the pupils more self-confidence, which in turn raises their own self-esteem.

153. The quality of teaching and learning in all lessons seen was at least good. There is a good programme of activities to be followed to ensure lessons are interesting and stimulating. The management of pupils is good and teachers' respond to distractions efficiently. Teaching is safe and all staff and pupils dress appropriately for activities with good emphasis on warming up and cooling down. Pupils enjoy the subject and make good efforts in terms of their physical and creative participation. The standards in physical education are also supported by competitive sports such as netball and football, which are played with other schools. Resources in physical education are good. The subject is well led by the co-ordinator and ably supported by all staff.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

154. The satisfactory standards achieved at the time of the last inspection have been maintained, and the teaching of religious education reflects the guidelines in the locally agreed syllabus. By the end of Year 2 pupils' attainment is average and it is a similar picture when pupils reach the end of Year 6. All pupils achieve satisfactorily and make satisfactory progress.

155. Pupils show a keen interest in their religious education lessons, and make reasoned statements or suggestions when trying to assess the deeper meaning when looking at pictures or handling artefacts. In lessons observed they concentrate well and are keen to join in the discussions and to ask questions.

156. Pupils talk knowledgeably about comparative religions. They talk sensitively about the need to be knowledgeable in order to avoid prejudice, and to understand the way other people live. During their time in school their lessons are reinforced with visits to local churches as well as St Alban's cathedral where they dressed as monks and sang Gregorian chants. During this experience they developed an understanding of the hardship endured by these monks as they committed themselves to God's work. They know that music in some religions is a form of expressing faith, and there is significance in colour i.e. white stands for purity at a Christian wedding, but in Sikhism red is the chosen colour.

157. Throughout the school the pupils learn about Christianity as well a range of major world religions. They are taught to look for similarities and differences. In assemblies they are addressed by members of the clergy from local churches and taught the Christian message. In a successful Year 2 lesson using their own knowledge of Christian signs and symbols, pupils begin to build their understanding that there are similarities with Islam. For example, Christians and Muslims pray, and they both have a holy book. Year 4 learn about Sikhism and what it means to belong to a group. They hear the story of the birth of the Khalsa and how believers demonstrate their commitment. Year 5 develop their understanding of the Ten Commandments in a modern setting through role-play. This method has a positive impact upon their learning, as they interpret the breaking of rules from within their own experiences. By Year 6 pupils are able to apply their previous knowledge of Christianity to interpret how art can be sacred and spiritual for the believer through classical works of art. They identify these aspects through symbolism. For example the hand of God, the dove of peace, and the drops of blood signifying that Jesus was to die. The lesson successfully enabled pupils to reflect upon the meaning of the paintings.

158. The quality of teaching and learning is always satisfactory and sometimes good teaching is evident. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use artefacts well to provide some first hand experiences for pupils, as in the case of prayer mats and the Qur'an. Lessons are carefully planned following the agreed guidelines to ensure that knowledge and understanding builds gradually as pupils move through the school. This ensures balance to the content. Work is marked regularly, and is informative advising pupils how to progress. Pupils are reminded about the quality of presentation, and where necessary referred back to their targets.