

INSPECTION REPORT

THORN GROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Bishop's Stortford

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117277

Headteacher: Mrs Yvonne Parker-Beeson

Reporting inspector: Mr Michael Raven
3961

Dates of inspection: 16 – 18 June 2003

Inspection number: 247756

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 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Thorn Grove Bishop's Stortford Hertfordshire
Postcode:	CM23 5LD
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr Gillian Allcock
Date of previous inspection:	December 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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3961	M Raven	Registered inspector	Mathematics Foundation Stage of learning	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievement How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9189	J Horwood	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20963	J Keiner	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology History Educational inclusion Special educational needs English as an additional language	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
32323	J Puddick	Team inspector	English Music Physical education	
12764	W Thomas	Team inspector	Science Art and design Geography Religious education	

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	13
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	15
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	18
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	19
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	20
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	23
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	24
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	29

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Thorn Grove Primary School serves 185 boys and girls aged from three to 11 years. Eighteen children attend the nursery each morning. Pupils come to the school from a wide geographical area in and around the town of Bishop's Stortford. They are predominantly from a White British ethnic background, with only a handful of pupils coming from other ethnic groups. Fourteen pupils are learning English as an additional language, three of these being at an early stage of the acquisition of the language. Fourteen per cent of pupils have special educational needs, a little below the national average, although the proportion of pupils with Statements of special educational needs is high. Pupils' special educational needs cover a range of learning, behavioural and emotional difficulties. Most children start school with levels of personal, social and emotional development and skills in communication, language and literacy, which are similar to those usually found at this age. The same is true of their mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. Standards in English, mathematics and science are high by the time pupils leave at the age of 11, although standards in information and communication technology (ICT) and design and technology could be improved. The teaching is good and it promotes good learning for most pupils, although the support for those pupils for whom English is an additional language could be improved. The leadership and management of the headteacher and other key staff are good. The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities. However, it does not play a strong enough role in the development of the school. The school offers good value for money.

What the school does well

- It ensures that pupils reach high standards in English, mathematics and science by the age of 11 years.
- It is well led and managed, with a very clear focus on self-evaluation and school improvement.
- The teaching is of good quality.
- The school promotes very good attitudes to school, enthusiasm for learning and very good relationships.
- Children get off to a very good start in the nursery and reception classes.
- The school's partnership with parents and carers is very good and it makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning.
- Very good use is made of the outdoor environment to enrich pupils' learning experience.

What could be improved

- The identification of the needs of and the provision made for those pupils who are learning English as an additional language.
- The standards in information and communication technology reached by the oldest pupils.
- Standards in design and technology.
- The role of the governing body in school improvement planning.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in December 1997. It did not improve for three years. However, since January 2001, it has made rapid improvement in a number of significant ways. The leadership and management have improved. Standards have risen. Teaching has improved. All the key issues for improvement identified at the last inspection have now been addressed.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
English	E	D	B	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	D	E	B	B	
Science	D	C	A	A	

The inspection confirms that pupils are now achieving well, so that standards are above average by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. They are also above average in writing by the end of Year 2. However, in reading and mathematics they are average, rather than above average as they were in last year's national tests at the end of Year 2. This is because a high proportion of Year 2 pupils this year have special educational needs. Standards in most of the other subjects about which it is possible to make a judgement are in line with national expectations, both at the end of Year 2 and by the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6. In information and communication technology (ICT) standards fall short of the nationally expected level in Year 6. This is because the oldest pupils have not had the benefit of the good teaching and provision that currently exist for the whole of their time in school. Standards in ICT are much better lower down the school; for example, in Year 4. Standards in design and technology fall short of the national expected levels at the end of Years 2 and 6. By the time they come to the end of their time in the reception class, most children are likely to reach expected levels of personal, social and emotional development and to have the expected skills in communication, language and literacy. Their mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical and creative development are also likely to meet national expectations. The trend in standards over the past five years has been broadly in line with the nationally improving trend, although improvement since 2001 has been rapid. The school sets appropriately challenging targets for pupils' performance in national tests in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6. These were far exceeded in last year's tests. The results of this year's tests were not available at the time of the inspection.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils take part in lessons and activities outside lessons with great interest and enthusiasm.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils are attentive in class and sensible as they move around the school and at playtimes. There is no evidence of bullying, sexism or racism.

Aspect	Comment
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils have some good opportunities to take responsibility, for example, as members of the school council. Boys and girls, including those who have special educational needs, work and play harmoniously together. There is good racial and ethnic harmony, tolerance and understanding.
Attendance	Good and well above the national average.

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.

English and mathematics, including the basic skills of reading, writing and the use of numbers, are taught well. Teachers provide plenty of good, clear direct teaching, especially in English and mathematics lessons. This ensures that pupils easily understand. Classes are well controlled, so that good discipline is maintained and pupils are able to get on and learn without distraction. The teaching successfully promotes pupils' interest and enthusiasm for learning, with a very strong start being made on this in the nursery and reception classes. The teaching meets well the needs of pupils who have special educational needs, so that they learn well. There is some good practice in meeting the needs of those who are learning English as an additional language; for example, in Year 4. However, the identification of these pupils' needs and the provision for meeting them are patchy and inconsistent, so that they do not always learn as well as they might.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall, with real strengths in the nursery and reception classes, where the curriculum is rich and stimulating. The school provides a wide range of activities outside lessons. The balance between subjects, particularly in Years 5 and 6, could be improved.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. These pupils are well supported so that they are able to take a full part in all the activities on offer.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Unsatisfactory, overall. Good in some classes, but not good enough in others. As a consequence, some of these pupils are not able to play a full part in all lessons.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall. The programme for personal, social and health education makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. More use could be made of the cultural diversity within the school itself to promote pupils' cultural awareness.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. There are good procedures for ensuring child protection, including protection from unsuitable material when using the Internet or email. The procedures for checking on pupils' progress are sound.

The school has established a very good partnership with parents and carers.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher possesses a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. She ensures a clear focus on the main issues for school improvement, especially raising standards. Senior managers share this clear vision and sense of purpose and direction. The leadership of the provision for pupils learning English as an additional language requires improvement. The principles of best value are appropriately applied.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory overall. Governors are committed to the school and they have a sound understanding of the school and of their part in it. Their involvement in school development planning requires improvement.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The headteacher and senior staff rightly give a high priority to the systematic and rigorous assessment and evaluation of the school's performance, including the quality of teaching.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school spends its money wisely, for example, in developing a new ICT suite, relocating the nursery class and developing a new library. Staff are deployed to best effect; for example, in supporting the learning of pupils who have special educational needs.

There are good levels of appropriately trained, qualified and experienced staff. The accommodation is good. Resources for learning could be improved; for example, in the provision of books and materials for science and also for ICT.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is well managed and led. • Teachers expect pupils to try hard and do their best. • Behaviour is good. • Their children make good progress at school. • The teaching is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's partnership with parents. • The information that they receive about their children's progress.

The inspection supports all the positive views expressed by parents and carers. However, it finds that the school's partnership with parents is now very good and that the quality of information provided for parents is also very good. Initiatives such as the classes for parents and their children in ICT skills make a very strong contribution to the partnership.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. When the school was last inspected in 1997 standards, including those in English, mathematics and science, were in line with the national average by the end of Year 6. However, by 1999 standards in mathematics and science had slipped and were below average. In Year 2000 standards were below average in all three subjects and well below average in English. The fall in standards continued, with at least two of the three 'core' subjects of English, mathematics and science being below or well below average each year until 2002. That year, standards were above average in all three subjects, and well above average in science. The inspection finds that standards are again above average at the end of Year 6 in all three subjects, although standards in the other subjects are generally lower than those in the 'core' subjects. Most pupils in Year 6 read with at least the skill expected for their age and many exceed the expected level. They are able to discuss the style that characterises the author they are reading. They discuss the theme of the book at some length and recognise the emotional impact on characters of particular difficulties, such as blindness. Most pupils speak clearly, taking account of their audience, and use language effectively to make clear their meaning. In mathematics, most pupils reach the nationally expected level by the end of Year 6 and around three in ten exceed expectations. Most pupils recognise the equivalence of fractional and decimal numbers, such as one half and 50 per cent. They understand the idea of probability and work out the mode, median, mean and range of a set of data.
2. The reversal of the decline in standards followed the appointment of a new headteacher in January 2001, since when the school has gained many new members of the governing body, including the Chair of Governors. There has also been an entirely new teaching staff since the last inspection, many in the past two to three years. These changes have brought about some important improvements in leadership and management and the quality of teaching, and the benefits are seen in rising standards. A clear focus on raising standards is reflected in the school improvement plan, where reading and writing in particular feature as top priorities. The school has rightly identified the need to keep a close eye on its own performance. The introduction of a very good system for the regular monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching has been key in maximising pupils' achievements. The comparison of teachers' lesson planning from two years ago with that used now illustrates tellingly a much more thoughtful and systematic approach to meeting pupils' learning needs. The analysis of pupils' performance in national tests has helped teachers to identify what has been taught well and what needs greater clarification. Teaching has been modified to take account of this information. For example, the teaching of mental calculation has been given greater emphasis, as this was identified as a weakness through the analysis of pupils' performance.
3. The good teaching that pupils receive is an important factor in their good achievement and the resultant improvement in standards. Pupils' very good attitudes to school and their enthusiasm for learning are also important. The strong start that they make in the nursery and reception classes means that the children are interested and want to learn right from the start.

4. Standards reached by the end of Year 2 have also risen in recent years. In reading and writing they were well above average in the 2002 national tests. In mathematics they were above average. Standards are not as high this year. Although they are above average in writing, they are average in reading and mathematics. They are better than they were in 2001 in all three subjects. The reason that they are lower this year than last is that the year group contains a higher proportion of pupils who have special educational needs – higher than that for the school as a whole. In relation to their starting point and capabilities, these pupils are achieving soundly.
5. Standards in ICT are clearly rising, in response to an increased focus on this subject and resultant improvements in the leadership of the subject, the way it is taught and resources for learning. They remain below national expectations at the end of Year 6 because these pupils have not experienced for long enough the good teaching and rich curriculum that is now provided. However, standards do meet national expectations at other points, including the end of Years 2 and 4. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make too little use of email as they learn, for example, to exchange information and ideas with others. This is because of some continuing technical difficulties. Pupils in Year 6 have too little experience of comparing how they use ICT with the use of other methods of information gathering, such as using reference books. They do too little to compare the use of ICT in school with that in the world outside school.
6. Standards in design and technology are below national expectations throughout the school. This is because the subject has historically had a low profile and raising standards has not been a high priority. Too little time and emphasis is given to pupils' own consideration and evaluation of what they have designed and made and how their products could be modified and improved.
7. Most pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve as well, overall, as other pupils, because the teaching and learning styles in the school provide well for almost all pupils, and teachers and support staff usually support language development in lessons well. However, the school's own system for checking pupils' progress shows that the reading ability of a number of the older pupils is falling behind. This is because they do not receive enough support in learning the more formal English necessary to meet the expected standards at the end of Year 6.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils' attitudes to the school and learning are very good. Pupils arrive at school, mostly accompanied by a parent, and enter the school grounds by a single access gate where the headteacher or another member of staff greets parents and pupils. The pupils are very well behaved as they arrive and all are very happy to be at school and they enter enthusiastically. The day starts well with the effective registration period, which ensures that pupils are calm. They are polite and well mannered when moving around the school and this results in a well-disciplined community that remains calm throughout the day. Their attitudes throughout the school are very good, with pupils paying attention in lessons and working hard. Pupils show interest in the activities available to them with participation in both lunchtime and after-school activities as well as being keen to contribute in lessons.
9. The behaviour of pupils throughout the school is good and in some lessons very good. Around the school, including at breaks and lunchtimes, behaviour is good with no evidence of any bullying or other type of oppressive behaviour. In the few lessons where there is any inappropriate behaviour, the situation is very well managed. There is adequate supervision at all times during the day. Part of the behaviour management

strategy is to provide plenty of activities for the pupils at break-times in all weather conditions and these are all well supervised. There have been no exclusions so far this year. There were two last year and the pupils involved are both back at school where they have been given appropriate support and their behaviour has improved greatly.

10. Relationships throughout the school are very good, with staff leading by example. There is a friendly 'family' atmosphere in which staff and pupils communicate well. Pupils from different backgrounds, including different ethnic groups, play and work well together. Pupils' personal development is good and they are given responsibilities in lessons and around the school. The school council is a good example of pupils taking responsibility. The elected members from each year group meet regularly and discuss issues; for example, facilities they would like to see improved. Opportunities for independent learning are satisfactory. A good example was seen in a Year 1 English lesson when pupils carried out research and reporting work independently whilst the class teacher was helping a group with their reading skills. Pupils' personal development is well supported through the personal, social and, health education provision, the religious education course contents, and issues addressed during assemblies and discussions with their teachers. These all help pupils to understand the feelings, values and beliefs of others as well as the impact of their actions on them.
11. Attendance levels are well above the national average, but unauthorised absence is also above the average. The actual level of unauthorised absence in fact only exceeds the average because of circumstances outside the school's control. For example, a pupil who did not attend for a long period was, in fact, living abroad, but the school had not been notified. Only a few pupils arrive late at school.
12. Parents, pupils and the school identify a marked deterioration in attitudes and behaviour in the period following the last inspection. It is clear from the evidence that there has been good improvement in all aspects of attitudes, behaviour and personal development over the last two years.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

13. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. Good teaching is promoted through the school's very good, rigorous and systematic systems for monitoring, evaluating and developing the quality of teaching. The teaching seen during the inspection was good in one half of the lessons observed. It was very good in just over two lessons in ten. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. The analysis of pupils' work done over the course of the school year and the scrutiny of teachers' records, including lesson planning, confirms that the quality of teaching is good, overall. It promotes good learning, so that pupils achieve well. The effects are seen in the above average standards in some subjects, particularly at the end of Year 6, and in the rising trend in other subjects, most notably ICT.
14. The children make a good start learning to read and write. In a good lesson in the reception class, for example, the children learned to recognise some of the sounds that letters make. They then went on to use this knowledge to have a go at writing shopping lists, successfully choosing and forming some of the initial letters of words such as 'crisps' and 'coke'. Because this work was set imaginatively in the context of work on the theme of a picnic, the children were interested and enthusiastic. They learned fast and achieved well because of the positive attitudes that the lesson promoted. The teaching was very clear and the differences between sounds were very carefully explained and illustrated. Imaginative use was made of a glove puppet, which made

amusing 'mistakes' in pronouncing sounds, for example, confusing 'house' with 'horse' and 'loaf' with 'leaf'.

15. Such good, clear, direct teaching is seen in most classes. For example, in a very good Year 2 mathematics lesson the teacher explained very clearly to pupils at the outset what it was they would be doing and what they were expected to learn. This gave the pupils a good understanding of their own learning. It built well on what had gone before, as the teacher referred back to previous lessons, taking care to check that pupils had understood and remembered what had been learned. Following an appropriate period of carefully chosen group work, well matched to pupils' varying capabilities, the teacher returned at the end of the lesson to the starting point. She helpfully summed up with pupils what had been learned, checking on their understanding and consolidating their learning. It was a notable feature of this lesson that teaching assistants were very actively involved at all stages in supporting pupils' learning. This was particularly effective for a group of pupils with special educational needs, including those with Statements of special educational needs.
16. Similarly effective direct teaching was also seen, for example, in a Year 4 English lesson, where very effective use was made of ICT to illustrate the use of persuasive presentation in advertising. It was also evident in a very well prepared English lesson in which Year 5 pupils studied the text 'Goodnight Mr Tom' and learned to write from different points of view. The teacher skilfully promoted pupils' understanding of their own learning. He related new to earlier learning and looked ahead to the next lesson, so that pupils could understand how they would be able to use what they had learned. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, the teacher made good use of very carefully prepared materials and visual aids to learning in order to explain clearly the work pupils were to do on solving problems using information presented in graphs and tables.
17. The teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good, overall. These pupils benefit from the emphasis on making sure that pupils know key vocabulary, which is written up on the board and used by teachers in a range of contexts so that pupils can more easily understand what it means. The pupils' learning is also helped by the opportunities provided in many lessons for them to discuss their ideas in pairs or small groups. However, teachers too rarely use those ICT programs, such as 'talking' word banks, which offer particularly good help to such pupils.
18. Where pupils with special educational needs work directly with specialist support staff they make good progress. For example, their support assistant helped Year 4 pupils in a history class to work with white boards to write ideas about the lives of the rich and poor in Tudor times. This enabled them to participate fully in the class discussions.
19. The teaching of those pupils who are learning English as an additional language has both strengths and weaknesses. It is satisfactory, overall. Particularly good support for their learning was seen in Year 4, where the teacher repeatedly used the school's digital projector, the Internet and other ICT facilities to help these pupils to see vivid visual examples and animation, which helped them to understand and take part. However, most teachers too rarely employ visual aids, which offer particularly good help in understanding new ideas and language.
20. Where pupils with English as an additional language work directly with specialist support staff, they make satisfactory progress in the early stages of learning English. However, the school's specialist support for pupils with English as an additional language is not as effective as it could be in working in partnership with class teachers. In some cases, teachers do not do enough advance planning with the support service.

On some occasions, support resources, such as ICT support programs, are not in place so that they can be used promptly when needed. Very rarely are pupils introduced to the main subject vocabulary in advance of lessons, with demonstrations and practise of the tasks to be done. Few opportunities are taken to pair pupils who are beginners in learning to speak English with pupils who speak the same home language, but are more knowledgeable and confident in speaking and understanding English. For older pupils, and those who are getting beyond the earliest stages of learning English, there are not enough translations of key vocabulary into their home language, or enough visual, practical apparatus or prompt cards to enable pupils to understand and create correct sentence structures in their written work.

21. In some classes, where pupils do not receive direct support, teachers do not do enough to plan and provide for the needs of pupils who have English as an additional language. In some lessons, there is too much extended teacher talk that is not explained, and pupils are not given enough time to complete the tasks they have been set.

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

22. The curriculum offered is satisfactory, overall. It is broad and balanced as a whole, although the time allocations to some subjects, such as history and religious education, are low, most notably in Year 6. The school has met a key requirement of the previous inspection by adopting and developing nationally recommended plans. These now ensure that requirements for the curriculum are met and enough detail is given in the plans to ensure that teachers know what is to be covered. The curriculum is enriched by a good programme of visits for pupils in all years, including field study visits for Years 2, 5 and 6.
23. The school does well in ensuring that pupils with special educational needs are provided with the right learning opportunities to meet their individual targets, and also in ensuring that these pupils share as widely in the learning of all subjects as possible. For example, in ICT lessons, teaching assistants ensure that pupils with special educational needs have the right guidance to do as well as their classmates in learning to use new programs. There is particularly good support for pupils with autism and related conditions through advice and practical guidance from outside specialists. However, in a minority of lessons some pupils with special educational needs do not gain enough understanding of the subject because their teachers do not follow the school's teaching and learning policy closely enough, for example, by providing key subject vocabulary and phrases needed. Although the school has not yet done as much as it could have done to identify and provide for gifted and talented pupils, opportunities have been provided for mathematically very able pupils in Year 4 to join in mathematics lessons for Year 6 pupils.
24. The school provides well for the promotion of literacy skills through its teaching and learning policy, which emphasises the importance of teaching pupils key words needed for lessons, and offers them many opportunities to discuss their work in pairs and small groups. Classroom literacy displays in each class also include helpful aids for each age group, such as alphabet lines for younger pupils, and reminders of how to check their written work for the oldest pupils. Lessons in some subjects such as history offer good opportunities for pupils to compare how information about the topics they are investigating is presented in different texts. However, there is scope for improving pupils' spelling skills as well as the strategies older pupils use for understanding non-fiction texts. There is satisfactory provision for pupils' numeracy

skills, which includes displays in each class of number lines and groups to help them learn key skills. Lessons in some subjects, such as science, history and design and technology include opportunities for pupils to apply and extend some of their mathematical skills, for example, through designing biscuit packaging or presenting the results of their science experiments in graphical form.

25. There is good provision for extra-curricular activities. The school organises good quality lunchtime and after-school activities for older pupils, including a choir, science and ICT clubs, as well as a range of sports clubs such as netball, football and rounders. In the term of the inspection, there was a board games club for pupils in Years 1 and 2. There are also opportunities for pupils to take part in local sporting contests, such as a six-a-side football competition, and inter-school netball and rounders games. Girls and boys take part in all the clubs equally enthusiastically. Pupils also have opportunities for paid musical tuition in the flute, clarinet and violin.
26. The school is strongly committed to promoting equal opportunities, and teachers take care to ensure that they create good opportunities for girls and boys to learn together in lessons and share leading parts in whole-school activities, such as assemblies. The school has adopted a race equality policy that meets national requirements, including recording of and prompt action on any racist incidents. This has been carefully followed since it was agreed. Recently purchased and existing stocks of books and curriculum materials have been checked to ensure that they promote positive images of different cultures. However, not enough has yet been done to build up a stock of dictionaries, other books, and curriculum materials, including ICT programs, that use the home languages of pupils who are learning English as an additional language, to help them better understand the curriculum. There is a strong emphasis on supporting pupils from disadvantaged groups, for example, through raising money from local trusts and the school fund to ensure that all pupils can take part in residential and field trips.
27. There is good provision for personal, social and health education. 'Circle time' in each class provides opportunities for pupils to discuss and explore a wide range of potentially sensitive issues, such as problems with friendships, or the death of a pet. The school involves the nurse in helping to teach a programme of sex and relationship education for the oldest pupils. The science curriculum, which emphasises healthy living, deals with the use and misuse of medicines and drugs in a specific programme for Year 5 pupils.
28. The contribution by the local community to the curriculum is satisfactory. There are visits to local churches, and individual parents from minority ethnic groups have been invited in to talk to pupils about their religious life. There has also been support for sports coaching by well known rugby and football clubs. However, there is scope for the wider involvement of other religious and community organisations, businesses, sports and cultural groups to enrich the curriculum. The school has effective relationships with partner organisations, such as local secondary schools, including some placements where their students help with literacy and other classroom tasks, whilst the school offers guidance on how to support the learning of young children. The school also receives placement students from local further and higher education colleges who are following childcare and teacher training courses. There are well-established links with other local primary schools through a consortium, which shares training events for all the teachers in the schools.
29. There is satisfactory provision for pupils' spiritual development. Assemblies include celebrations of the major festivals of Christianity and other key religions. They also follow themes, where the day's prayers, linked to the theme, offer the pupils

opportunities for deeper reflection. The school conforms with the legal requirements for a daily act of worship. There are also opportunities in a small number of lessons for pupils to experience a sense of the wonders of the world, for example, when they exclaim in awe when they see how a sunflower head consists of hundreds of seeds. However, although the themes of assemblies are planned, the school does not do as much as it could to provide more opportunities to promote pupils' sense of their own spirituality, for example, by writing their own prayers or enabling them to talk about the most moving events in their lives.

30. Provision for pupils' moral development is good. Many assemblies have a strong emphasis on building pupils' moral understanding. During the week of the inspection, an assembly theme on honesty enabled the pupils to think about and offer their own ideas about temptations and the right way to behave in situations like finding a purse full of money. 'Circle time' discussions and some books chosen for literacy lessons enable pupils to talk and think about the moral dilemmas children and adults face. During the week of the inspection, Year 5 pupils discussed the arguments for and against fox hunting, as part of their studies of how to develop persuasive writing. The school is currently trying out a new national teaching scheme on citizenship, which promotes pupils' awareness of their rights and responsibilities.
31. The school provides well for pupils' social development. The school has clear 'Golden Rules' that pupils understand and observe. Pupils have many opportunities in lessons to work together co-operatively in pairs and in groups of different sizes. 'Circle time' discussions enable pupils to explore the more sensitive situations, such as potential bullying. Staff act as very good role models and build positive relationships with pupils and between pupils throughout the school. They also use the house points system to reward good behaviour. The school council has provided opportunities for those pupils who act as representatives of their year groups to contribute to the development of the school environment and to organise events to raise money for charity. There are opportunities for the older pupils to act as play leaders who help younger pupils at break times and befriend those who have experienced difficulties. The school also organises charity events, which are important in developing pupils' awareness of their responsibilities towards others who are in need, including collecting and distributing food from the annual Harvest Festival to local sheltered housing groups, and its 'Operation Christmas Child' collection of parcels for needy children across Europe.
32. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. It has improved over the last two years. The school has acquired a good range of attractively produced story and picture books that retell stories both from traditional British folktales and classics and those from different traditions across the world, such as the Hindu story of Rama and Sita. Displays of artwork around the school show how a good range of artists, such as Kandinsky, Monet and Andy Warhol, have been drawn on in lessons to inspire the pupils' work. Whole-school musical events and assemblies include opportunities for pupils to hear and learn music from different cultures, such as African chants as well as classical music. The school also arranges visits to musical and theatre performances, as well as performances in the school by visiting musicians, such as a harpist and a string quartet. There have been some opportunities for pupils and parents who come from minority ethnic cultures to share their cultural traditions, for example, by talking about how they celebrate Eid. However, the school does not yet do enough to recognise and draw on the rich diversity of the cultures of all the pupils in the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

33. The school provides good care for its pupils and has good procedures for child protection. Staff are all briefed in child protection procedures by the headteacher and

through the child protection policy. The school has a good approach to health and safety with a clear policy well overseen by the headteacher and implemented effectively by the site manager. While the school carries out risk assessments for school trips to ensure pupils' safety, formal records of these are not always in place. Regular health and safety inspections are carried out by the headteacher and the site manager, with the results reported to the governing body. The site and activities throughout the day are adequately supervised. The school carries out fire drills and alarm tests on a regular basis and good records are kept. The school has good provision of medical facilities including qualified first-aid staff and a first-aid treatment area. Accident reports are completed and external agencies are involved as required. The school procedures for injuries, including bumps on the head, are safe and appropriate. Pupils are treated by the first aid staff and if necessary they are then sent home, or medical support is obtained, as appropriate. If they are not sent home, the school helpfully uses the emergency contact number to notify parents of any mishap, as they find this more reliable than sending a note home at the end of the day.

34. The school provides a friendly, family environment and the personal development of pupils is monitored informally. Close relationships ensure that pupils are well known to staff and that the pupils know whom to contact about any problems. Staff are available to support the pupils at all times during the day.
35. The procedures for promoting good attendance are secure. The school makes it very clear to parents that they should ensure that pupils attend and that they are expected to send letters explaining any absence. However, the school does not contact parents on the first day of any unexplained absence. Procedures do not specify how often analysis of attendance data should be carried out, but the size of the school is such that the headteacher is able to monitor it on a regular basis.
36. The behaviour policy is well known to staff and pupils. Rules are identified to parents and explained to the pupils, who are clearly aware of the school's expectation that they will behave well. Pupils are involved in producing their own class rules and there is a range of appropriate sanctions and rewards. Teachers use good classroom management skills to apply the procedures and they are effective. There was no oppressive behaviour seen during the inspection, demonstrating the effectiveness of procedures to prevent bullying.
37. There has been good improvement in all the procedures associated with pupils' care over the last two years.
38. The use of assessment to check on pupils' progress and to set targets for them was an issue for action identified at the last inspection. The school has worked hard on this and procedures for the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science are now satisfactory. Records are kept of pupils' attainment in a variety of tests and in the National Curriculum assessments at the end of Years 2 and 6. These results are used to inform curriculum planning, to provide work that matches pupils' learning needs and to set individual targets. Targets are set at the beginning of the academic year and reviewed with the headteacher in February. This system is now well established. Assessment in the other subjects is now starting to develop.
39. There is considerable scope for improvement in assessing the needs of pupils who are learning English as an additional language. Initial interviews with pupils and their parents do not make written records of what knowledge the pupils have of their home languages and other languages and, if they are older, their experience of schooling and

of their home country. There is some evidence that pupils with English as an additional language have been incorrectly identified in the past as having special educational needs, and that not all the pupils in the school who have English as an additional language have been identified and their needs correctly assessed. The headteacher, who acts as the school's co-ordinator for pupils with English as an additional language, has drawn up a register of every pupil listed as having English as an additional language, which assesses their English skills against a scale provided by the local education authority. However, few teachers understand the scale or its implications for planning their lessons.

40. The school has a good system for teachers to note initial concerns and so help to identify, at an early stage, pupils who may have special educational needs. Liaison with and support from external agencies, such as educational psychologists is good, and helps to provide rapid expert diagnosis and advice. Teachers and support staff know their pupils very well and have good informal contact with parents.
41. The school's marking policy sets out expectations clearly for all staff. However, the marking of pupils' work is variable across the school and across subjects. Marking celebrates completed good work, but comments rarely give pupils clear guidance on how good their work is or what they can do to improve it.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

42. The partnership between parents and the school is very good. The 'open door' policy of the school and the approachability of the staff make parents feel very welcome. Parents' views of the school are very supportive. There was a good response to the pre-inspection questionnaire for parents and carers and good attendance at the parents' meeting. The most pleasing aspects for parents are the high expectations of children by the teachers, the fact that the school is well led and managed, that teaching is good, that their children make good progress and that they like school. Areas where parents would like to see an improvement are the closeness with which the school works with parents, the information they receive about progress and the range of activities outside lessons. The inspection team investigated these areas and concluded that all these areas are at least good and that the concerns reflect the situation that existed before the arrival of the current headteacher. The partnership has improved significantly over the last two years.
43. Individual comments were made by about ten per cent of those who returned the questionnaires and they were mainly supportive of the school and its leadership. The concerns raised related mainly to variations in homework and in extra-curricular activities, supervision at break times and the treatment of injuries, occurrences of bad behaviour and of some work being repetitive. All these were investigated, but were found not to be justified.
44. The information provided for parents is good, overall. The school sends letters home to parents about specific events and issues. There are regular good quality newsletters that contain useful information, and the date for the next issue is clearly identified so that parents know when to look out for it. The school brochure and governors' annual report are both very well presented and informative, fully meeting requirements. The governors' annual report is circulated with the copies of the prospectus, but is not formally referenced within it. Parents are also sent regular curriculum information to keep them fully informed about what children will be studying. The school has recently developed a school web site to provide an alternative route for parents to obtain information. Reporting on pupils' attainment and progress is good and comprises two

consultation evenings, an open day and a good, personal annual report, which provides detailed comments about pupils' academic achievements and a summary of their personal development. The school's 'open door' policy allows parents to talk to the headteacher at any time or to arrange to see the class teacher by appointment to talk about their child at any reasonable time. There is, however, a weakness in the school's provision of information for the parents of pupils who are learning English as an additional language. Some support, in the form of translation, is provided for parents who have English as an additional language, but this is not sufficiently systematic or regular.

45. Some parents play an active part in supporting their children at school by being a school governor or a member of the very active parent teacher association, which provides financial support to the school as well as arranging social functions for parents and children. Recently the association organised a float for the local carnival which helped to raise the profile of the school in the community. Parents also support their children's education by implementing the home/school agreement and listening to reading. A significant number of parents support pupils directly by helping in school; for example, with reading or by helping with school visits or events. The school also organises courses for parents aimed at giving them the skills to help their children as well as being of benefit to themselves. Currently a group of parents is being trained alongside their children in ICT skills.
46. The partnership has considerably improved since the last inspection, but the response to the questionnaires indicates that not all parents are aware of the opportunities for them to take advantage of the more 'open-door' attitude of the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

47. The school is well led and managed. The leadership of the headteacher and senior staff ensure a clear and convincing commitment to high achievement, summed up in the school's vision statement: 'Our school...will be known for its shared culture of success, achieving high standards...'. The headteacher's clear understanding of where the school stands and what needs to be done to bring about continuing improvement is clearly reflected in the school's incisive evaluation of its own performance, particularly relating to pupils' achievements and the quality of teaching. The effects of this evaluation and the action taken in response are to be seen at many points, most notably in the improvements in standards and the quality of teaching in the past few years. A clear vision for school improvement is also seen in the school's five-year strategic plan. This accurately diagnoses strengths and weaknesses and sets out a clear and appropriate agenda for school improvement. It focuses on the need to secure and sustain improvements in standards. It identifies some of the main challenges facing the school in the next few years, such as developments in ICT and their likely impact on learning.
48. Key staff, including the deputy headteacher, make up an effective senior management team. This team shares with the headteacher a clear sense of educational direction and a good capacity to bring about further school improvement. Members have all undergone helpful training in school self-evaluation. This has equipped them well for their role, especially their delegated responsibilities for the monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching and the setting of performance objectives for colleagues as part of the performance management process.
49. Although there are significant strengths in subject leadership, there are also some weaker areas. ICT is very well led and managed. The subject leader has very good

subject knowledge and expertise. He has a clear understanding of the standards achieved and what needs to be done to develop the subject and raise standards. The situation is similar in mathematics and English. However, some of the other subjects are less well led. The role of subject leaders in monitoring pupils' achievements and the quality of teaching in a number of subjects, apart from English, mathematics, science and ICT, require improvement.

50. The leadership and management of the provision for pupils learning English as an additional language need improvement. The headteacher is currently responsible for co-ordinating support for these pupils. She is aware that more staff training and improvements in provision are needed, and it is a priority for development. The school does not have a written policy that lays down a common system for identifying and meeting pupils' needs. Teaching assistants have had effective training in supporting pupils at the early stages of learning English through their own training course provided by the local education authority. All staff have had some training in the last year in understanding the assessment system used by the local authority, and how to support pupils learning English as an additional language, but it has not been enough. Some staff still regard pupils' use of their home language outside school as a barrier to learning English. More needs to be done to ensure that the most effective use is made of ICT to support these pupils, including the provision of word-processing facilities, CD-ROMs and web pages in the pupils' home languages. The school does not currently receive direct funding for pupils with English as an additional language and the support provided by the local education authority is limited.
51. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities soundly and discharges its statutory duties appropriately. It has worked hard under its new Chair to overcome a legacy of inadequacies in governance. Many governors have undertaken appropriate training to fit them better for their role. Governors keep themselves reasonably well informed about the work of the school and its strengths and weaknesses. The governing body receives regular reports from the headteacher, and members make visits in their capacity as 'link' governors associated with particular subjects or aspects of the school's work. However, their role in school improvement planning requires improvement. At present, they leave this important job mainly to the headteacher and her staff, especially senior staff. Governors are well aware of school improvement priorities and show a clear commitment to them. They do show a keen interest in the progress that the school is making.
52. The school applies the principles of best value soundly to its work. Comparisons are made between its performance and that of other schools, both locally and nationally. For example, the headteacher and senior staff carefully consider pupils' achievements in National Curriculum tests comparing them with those at other schools both locally and nationally. The school carries out consultation with parents and pupils about aspects of the education they receive, through distributing and analysing questionnaires. Competitive quotations and tenders are invited when obtaining goods and services, in order to secure the best possible value for money. A good example of challenging the way things had been done was seen when the governing body decided to discontinue use of the school's swimming pool and send pupils to a local pool for lessons, on grounds of cost to curriculum time and the effectiveness of the provision.
53. The school's staffing and accommodation are good. The school now has a permanent teaching staff appointed – the one temporary teacher being replaced by a permanent teacher in September – which is sufficient to deliver the curriculum to the single age group classes that have been established in the school. The accommodation is of good quality and well maintained and cleaned. The whole school has been fitted with

new carpets and equipped with new furniture. Accommodation is being enhanced by the new library that is almost complete.

54. Resources for learning are unsatisfactory. The school has suffered from a shortage of funds in recent years, consequent upon the fall in pupil numbers as the standing of the school in the neighbourhood declined between 1997 and 2001. This has left a legacy of inadequacies in learning resources, which the school is working hard to overcome. There have been some good recent improvements, for example, in the provision of books and ICT equipment. However, more books are needed and ICT hardware and software still require further improvement. Resources for the teaching and learning of a number of other subjects, most notably science, also need improvement. Too few resources are dedicated to supporting the learning of those pupils who are learning English as an additional language.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

55. In order to address the issues raised in this report, the headteacher, governors and should now:

- (1) improve the identification of the needs of, and the provision made for, those pupils who are learning English as an additional language by:
 - putting in place a policy for meeting the needs of pupils who are learning English as an additional language;
 - ensuring that all staff receive appropriate training;
 - putting in place a programme for the systematic monitoring, evaluation and development of the provision for pupils learning English as an additional language and checking on their attainment and progress.

(paragraphs 7, 19, 20, 21, 26, 39, 50, 54)

- (2) raise standards achieved in ICT by the oldest pupils by:

- pressing ahead with the good developments in this subject.

(paragraphs 5, 116 – 118)

- (3) raise standards achieved throughout the school in design and technology by:

- ensuring that the teaching of design and technology gives due emphasis to the whole curriculum, but especially those elements concerned with pupils' evaluation of and improvement on their own designs and products.

(paragraphs 6, 103 - 106)

- (4) develop the role of the governing body in school improvement planning

(paragraph 51)

The school should also plan to address the following minor weaknesses:

- review the balance of time given to the different subjects, particularly in Years 3 to 6;
- continue to improve learning resources.

The school is aware of the need to continue to raise standards in ICT and the need to continue to improve resources for learning.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	32
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	34

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	7	16	9	0	0	0
Percentage	0	22	50	28	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.

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)	9	176
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	24

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	26

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	14

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	31
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	29

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.3
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	17	10	27

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	17	17
	Girls	9	9	9
	Total	26	26	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (83)	96 (78)	96 (94)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	17	17
	Girls	8	8	9
	Total	25	25	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	93 (78)	93 (94)	96 (83)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	11	14	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	9	9	10
	Girls	12	13	13
	Total	21	22	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	84 (56)	88 (56)	92 (81)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	5	7	8
	Girls	9	4	7
	Total	14	11	15
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	15 (44)	23 (62)	23 (81)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

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

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	121	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	10	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	3	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	3	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22
Average class size	25.1

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	181

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	17
Number of pupils per FTE adult	9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	7

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2002/2003
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	£
Total income	520,362
Total expenditure	517,097
Expenditure per pupil	2,795
Balance brought forward from previous year	11,324
Balance carried forward to next year	14,590

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	185
Number of questionnaires returned	94

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	61	34	3	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	61	34	2	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	45	50	2	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	52	7	0	2
The teaching is good.	63	23	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	51	16	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	61	30	2	7	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	33	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	34	41	16	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	63	36	0	2	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	51	41	4	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	49	7	5	3

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

56. The provision for the children in the nursery and reception classes is good. It is much better than it was at the time of the last inspection. The teaching is now good in both classes. Support staff are deployed well and give good quality support for the children's learning. This ensures that the children get off to a good start in their schooling. They learn and achieve well. By the time they come to the end of their time in the reception class, almost all of them reach the nationally expected levels of skill and development, the *Early Learning Goals*, in all the areas of learning for children of this age. Children who have special educational needs are helped to achieve well in relation to their capabilities and starting point. The most capable achieve well, so that they often exceed expectations by the end of their year in reception. Children who are learning English as an additional language achieve soundly, overall, as a result of the good quality support that they receive. However, the identification of their learning needs on starting school could be improved.

Personal, social and emotional development

57. The good quality of teaching that the children receive and the rich curriculum they experience, mean that the children are interested in learning and take part enthusiastically in the activities offered. Because the classes are well controlled and good relationships are established, the children soon become confident and willing to try new experiences. They are mostly happy to speak in front of a group of friends and, by the end of the year, many of the children in reception are confident enough to involve visitors in their play. For example, they enjoyed serving 'cups of tea' and 'beans on toast' to an inspector.
58. The children in the nursery soon learn to sit still and listen when this is appropriate. This was seen, for example, as they took it in turns to answer their names politely at the start of the day. It was also observed in the reception class, for instance, as the children listened carefully to the glove puppet, who sometimes got his sounds wrong!
59. From their first days in school, the children learn to understand the need to take turns and share. As they play in the café in the outdoor area, they learn that they must allow other children to have a turn at being the waitress or customer.
60. The children are given plenty of opportunities for personal independence. For example, after a music lesson in the nursery, the children packed away the instruments, placing them very carefully in their box. They put their name card away and collected their belongings, such as their sun hats, ready to go home. When they are getting ready to cook, they wash and dry their own hands carefully, rolling up their sleeves first, making good use of soap, water and paper towels.

Communication, language and literacy

61. The children get off to a good start developing their early reading and writing skills in the nursery. This good foundation is built upon well in the reception class.
62. In the nursery, the children enjoy learning the 'sound of the week'. For example, they collect pictures of things that begin with 'w' and say their names, listening carefully for the initial 'w' sound. Through such activities, the children develop a good knowledge of

the sounds that letters make. By the end of their time in the nursery, several of the children are confident enough to spot letters in a piece of adults' writing and ask, for example, "What does that 't' word say?"

63. In both classes, the children enjoy listening to stories and poems. In reception, for example, they enjoyed the story of 'The Bear and the Picnic Lunch', which related well to the theme for their activities that week. They followed closely as the teacher read with good expression from the big book. They enjoyed commenting, answering questions and discussing with their 'talking partners' what they would take on a picnic.
64. Role play opportunities in both classes give the children lots of good experience of interacting with others and negotiating plans, activities and ideas. The stimulating outdoor area is used particularly well for children in both classes to take part in imaginative self-initiated play. A group of children were seen engrossed in 'measuring' the buildings and discussing and 'writing down' their measurements. Many good opportunities are provided for the children to write, for example, recording their own name on a completed piece of work. By the end of the reception year, most children write their name unaided, using a clear well-formed script.

Mathematical development

65. The children learn the names and shapes of numbers from their earliest days in the nursery. Many good opportunities are provided for them to count. For example, at registration, they count how many children are present, most being quite confident counting as far as 18 together with their teacher. By the end of their time in the nursery, the majority of the children are confident in recognising all the numerals from one to nine. Most count up to ten objects reliably, for example, choosing seven buttons to fix to the teddy's coat. Only a small proportion of the children – the youngest ones – struggle to count beyond two. Several of the children can add and subtract in a practical way. For instance, they can add two more buttons to five in their set and say that that makes seven. The children learn about shape and size, for example, as they order their bears by size or balance two sets of bears in the weighing scales.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

66. The children have some very good opportunities to learn about the made and natural world. They look closely at living things, such as the beans, sunflowers and carrot tops that they grow. They enjoy looking for caterpillars on leaves, and watching as the tadpoles develop into frogs.
67. A good range of construction equipment is provided and this encourages the children to build, for example, 'furniture' to take on their picnic. The children use the tape player independently to listen to nursery rhymes. They are competent in controlling the machine to make it play and can also adjust the volume and use the headphones for individual listening. The children use the computer to support their learning, for example, controlling the mouse confidently to paint pictures on the screen and to 'dress' teddy.
68. The children observe and record the weather and talk about how it changes from day to day. They consider how the weather might affect their 'picnic'. They look at maps and find out something about the wider world as they seek holiday destinations.

Physical development

69. The outdoor area is used very well to promote the children's physical development. The children enjoy using the large wheeled toys and they control these safely and skilfully. They move freely across the large paved area, making good use of the space available, avoiding bumping into one another or falling off. They negotiate the steps up to the play area with good physical control and co-ordination.
70. Their small-muscle control is developed through the use of tools such as scissors and glue spreaders. The children in reception, for example, showed good control and skills as they independently cut out pictures of foods they had selected and stuck them onto paper to illustrate their 'picnic'. The children in the nursery used bear-shaped cutters competently to shape their biscuits, and moulded and shaped the dough carefully with their fingers.

Creative development

71. The children use a suitable range of painting, drawing and collage materials and techniques and experience colour, texture and shape in various different forms. They make holiday and 'Teddy Bears' Picnic' pictures, and draw pictures of their own bears. In the nursery, the children greatly enjoyed listening to music and singing along to the 'Teddy Bears' Picnic' song. Most were able to clap and beat out a simple rhythm on an instrument.
72. The children's imagination is successfully promoted through plenty of good opportunities for imaginative self-initiated play. Adults often take a role in this, and contribute to its development. This was seen, for example, as an adult participated in the children's play on the wheeled toys, 'filling up' their cars with 'petrol' and discussing what they would do in the case of a breakdown.

ENGLISH

73. Standards in English improved considerably between 2001 and 2002 and the school exceeded its targets, with pupils in both Years 6 and 2 achieving test results higher than those expected for their age. Although results for 2003 have not yet been published, inspection evidence shows that these good improvements have been sustained and standards for 11-year-olds remain above average. Children aged seven have also progressed well, particularly in writing, but because the class has a higher number of pupils with special educational needs than last year, standards overall are not as high this year.
74. The school is in a good position to sustain and improve standards in the future. The close focus on English in the school improvement plan, together with improved lesson planning resulting from the successful implementation of national guidance on the teaching of literacy, ensures that teaching is focused on improving pupils' literacy skills. The quality of teaching has also improved and the school now tracks pupils' progress systematically, enabling planning and resources to be more closely matched to pupils' needs.
75. Most pupils, including the most able, achieve well in relation to their capabilities. Although they start school with generally average language skills, by the time they leave standards are above the national average. Pupils who experience particular difficulties, including those who have special educational needs, are given extra support and they make good progress as a result. Teaching assistants make valuable contributions to

the learning of these pupils, for example, by leading discussions that help develop deeper understanding, re-wording questions to make them more explicit and explaining things in different ways. A particular strength seen in many lessons is the way that support staff help pupils to develop independent working strategies. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language achieve satisfactorily, overall, although the provision for them is uneven, being of good quality in some classes, but less effective in others. There are no great differences in the achievement of boys and girls.

76. Classroom displays are used effectively to support pupils as they write. For younger pupils, words are displayed alongside helpful illustrations and in Year 2, key vocabulary is written in Punjabi as well as English, both to support pupils learning English as an additional language and to help all pupils to appreciate the multicultural nature of our society. As pupils move through the school, displays become more focused on the grammatical aspects of language. Synonyms, speech marks and pronouns are the focus in Year 3, while in Year 4, connectives displayed on footsteps across the classroom help pupils to understand how to use these words to join their ideas.
77. Throughout the school, pupils are confident writers who achieve well for their age and ability. Younger pupils are taught to listen to letter sounds so they can attempt to spell any word. This approach leads to lively writing as evidenced in Year 1 when pupils wrote 'blurbs' for book covers urging readers to, 'Come on a magik adinvecha fid wot happns'. By the end of Year 2, pupils' spelling of common words is secure, and they write at length using imaginative vocabulary often inspired by teaching in other subjects. An art and design lesson focusing on colour-mixing, really developed pupils' understanding of descriptive words, prompting one to write in his jungle story about an 'alligator in camouflage green'. Older pupils write in an increasing range of styles to different audiences. Using ICT, pupils in Year 5 wrote to the author, Michael Morpurgo, with one pupil explaining that, 'Kensuke's Kingdom is one of my favourite books because it is written with a brave character and it has quite a few mysteries'. Pupils in Year 6 are able to use formal language correctly as they create application forms for joining sports and drama clubs urging applicants to, 'Please write in black to facilitate photocopying' and, 'You may wish to submit a curriculum vitae'.
78. The school understands the necessity to allow pupils extended time for writing so that they have opportunities to practise the skills they learn in English lessons. This time is used well. Pupils compose, revise and improve their writing, leading to high quality work of which they are justifiably proud. During a good extended writing lesson in Year 2, pupils were given frequent opportunities to discuss their ideas before they wrote them down and to reflect on the quality of their sentences. By the time pupils reach Year 6, teaching focuses on subtleties of meaning and pupils use individual white boards and discussion in pairs to improve a given extract and evaluate the effectiveness of their own writing. Pupils are also encouraged to reflect on the quality of their writing in subjects other than English. As a result, the investment of time and resources on developing literacy skills is now beginning to have a wider impact on standards of subjects across the curriculum.
79. Technical skills are also given due attention and all pupils from Years 1 to 4 practise handwriting every day. The impact of this is evident in the increasing number of pupils consistently joining their letters. Spelling strategies are also taught systematically, enabling pupils to apply skills in new situations as evidenced in a good lesson in Year 5 where pupils commented as they learned to extend words, "Shouldn't we use the ie rule?".

80. Writing development is really enhanced when marking gives pointers for improvement, particularly when pupils are given opportunities to respond to the teacher's suggestions. However, this good practice seen in several year groups is not yet consistent across the school. Target setting is another area of inconsistency. Good practice was seen in Year 2 where pupils were constantly referred to their target of reading for sense, but in other lessons even when targets were clearly displayed teachers and pupils did not refer to them.
81. Pupils enjoy reading and the increase in reading time and improved resources are helping to raise standards. Parents also are beginning to take a more active role in supporting their children's reading. This has come about as a result of initiatives by the school in training, sharing information and encouraging parents to hear their children read regularly and record progress in the home/school reading logs.
82. Group reading occurs every day when older pupils hear younger pupils read, teachers and teaching assistants work with groups teaching reading strategies and pupils have opportunities to read their favourite books independently. Reading skills are also taught in literacy hours, when enlarged texts are shared with the whole class and expressive reading is modelled by the teacher. In a good Year 5 lesson the use of a listening frame enabled pupils to focus on feelings, setting and dialect as they listened to an extract from 'Goodnight Mr Tom'. Very good questioning in a Year 6 lesson encouraged pupils to infer details from the text that were not obvious from a first reading.
83. The potential of group guided-reading to enhance pupils' reading comprehension skills is not yet fully utilised by all teachers who sometimes resort to reading around and decoding words rather than discussing texts and posing challenging questions. In some year groups also, an over-reliance on written comprehension with closed questions does not challenge pupils to read for meaning. The school has already highlighted reading comprehension as an area requiring further development and, as a first step, all pupils now use reading journals, where they reflect on their responses to the books they read. This encourages pupils to think more deeply and consider how different authors write to engage their readers.
84. The teaching of English is good, overall. Speaking and listening are given a high profile and this is having a positive impact on the development of pupils' language skills and supporting both their reading and writing. In the best lessons questioning is used skilfully to challenge pupils to think more deeply. Pupils are involved in their own learning, reflecting on what they have done and how they might improve. Teachers expect pupils to work hard and challenge them to do so. This was seen, for example, as pupils in Year 6 worked on writing an opening for a chapter of an adventure story. Less effective lessons, seen, for example, in Year 3, do not give pupils a clear enough understanding of their own learning. The purposes of lessons are not always discussed at the outset. The work set is insufficiently challenging for the most able, so that they do not achieve as much as they might. Such lessons lack any coherent summing up at the end of what has been done and learned. In a small number of weaker lessons, the learning needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language are not clearly enough understood, so that they do not learn as much as they could.
85. Leadership of the subject is good. The co-ordinator is well qualified for the role and has initiated many improvements during the past two years. Management time is used effectively to analyse pupils' work, audit resources and observe teaching. Appropriate priorities for development have been determined, which now form part of the school improvement plan. Staff training is closely matched to the audit of needs and, as a result, the quality of teaching has improved. The co-ordinator also works very effectively

with the local education authority's literacy consultant, who has supported the co-ordinator in providing training for teachers, teaching assistants and parents. Although the school's stock of books has been enhanced in recent years, there are still too few non-fiction books.

MATHEMATICS

86. Standards are above average by the end of Year 6. This is similar to the position when pupils took the National Curriculum tests in 2002. Standards at the end of Year 2 are not as high as they were last year. This is because the current Year 2 group contains a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs. However, standards are similar to the national average. Given their starting point, most pupils achieve well. There are no great differences between the standards reached by boys and girls or in their achievement. Any difference in their performance in national tests can be accounted for by the impact of variations of the small numbers involved. Pupils who have special educational needs achieve well in relation to their capabilities, as do the most able. Overall, those who are learning English as an additional language achieve satisfactorily, although there are variations from class to class.
87. By the end of Year 6, most pupils multiply and divide decimals by ten or one hundred. They apply their calculation skills to real life problems, for example, working out how many 57 seated coaches would be required to transport 196 children and 15 adults on an outing. Much of the work exceeds national expectations for the end of Year 6, being more typical of that expected in the early years of secondary schooling. For example, pupils use and interpret coordinates in all four quadrants, which is expected of most pupils by about the end of Year 7, rather than Year 6.
88. By the end of Year 2, most pupils are working at around the expected level. As in Year 6, they spend a lot of their time working on the use of numbers. The full curriculum is provided, however, and there is a reasonable amount of work on shape, space and measures and handling data. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge and understanding to real life situations and solve problems. Most pupils add and subtract numbers beyond ten. They have a simple understanding of fractions, in a practical way, and identify, for example, one half or one quarter of a cake. They collect data, for example, about pets owned by pupils in their class, and analyse these and represent them simply in a graph. They identify lines of symmetry. Pupils tell the time using both analogue and digital clocks and most are able to cope at least with the time to the hour and half hour. They measure some of their belongings, such as books and pencils, using standard units of length such as centimetres as well as non-standard units, such as hand spans.
89. The teaching is good, overall. Teachers are particularly good at direct, whole-class teaching. They demonstrate and explain things clearly. There are some good examples of the purposes of lessons being explained clearly at the start, so that pupils understand their own learning. Good examples were also seen of whole-class discussions at the end of the lesson, aimed at summing up and consolidating what has been learned and checking for any misunderstandings. For example, in a Year 6 lesson the purpose of the lesson – the 'learning objective' – was displayed clearly on the board throughout the lesson and the teacher made clear reference to it, so that pupils were in no doubt what they were doing and why. However, teachers sometimes spend little or no time discussing what has been done and learned. This was seen, for example, in a Year 3 lesson, where there was no discussion of pupils' performance in a mental test. Because no feedback was given, pupils did not know how they had got on, or what they needed to do to improve next time. The marking of pupils' work requires

improvement. Too little is done to give pupils feedback on their work and advise them what they do well and what they need to try to improve. This is applicable mainly to pupils in Years 3 to 6.

90. Teachers make sound use of ICT to support pupils' learning. For example, pupils use the computers to store, analyse and represent data. There are some appropriate opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills as they learn in the other subjects. For instance, they measure their materials in design and technology lessons and represent some of the findings of their science investigations using graphs.
91. The subject is well led and managed. The subject manager maintains a clear focus on the most important issues for improvement, especially the need to drive up and maintain standards. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and pupils' performance are effective and include the careful analysis of pupils' performance in National Curriculum tests, which has led to the identification of weaker areas of teaching.

SCIENCE

92. Significant improvement has taken place in science since the last inspection. At that time, although pupils' attainment was judged as satisfactory at the end of Years 2 and 6, the requirements of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study were not being met and pupils did not make satisfactory progress. The school now ensures that all aspects of science are taught throughout the school. Pupils now achieve well, overall, reaching nationally expected standards by the end of Year 2 and above average standards by the end of Year 6. There are no great differences in the achievement of boys and girls and the standards they reach. Pupils who have special educational needs and the most able achieve well in relation to their capabilities. The achievement of pupils who are learning English as an additional language is sound, overall.
93. By the time they enter Year 1 from the reception class, pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of the world. This enables them to make a good start in their science work. The school has identified the need to provide pupils with better opportunities for investigative work in science. This is better than at the time of the last inspection, but more needs to be done.
94. Pupils in Year 1 investigate what seeds need to grow into plants. They plant sunflower seeds in different conditions and are learning to make predictions about which seed will grow best. In Year 2 pupils learn about the different kinds of habitats found in the school grounds. They understand that different creatures need different conditions for their homes. After they have walked around the school grounds, they make sensible suggestions as to which creatures might be found where, and why. They know that some creatures might thrive in damp and shady conditions and others do better in drier and sunnier areas. Work in pupils' books shows that a good range of work is covered in science in Years 1 and 2. The work of some less able pupils is held back by their difficulties with writing. However, when their work is written for them by an adult they show good understanding. Other pupils use their writing skills well, for example, as they write their own books about the life-cycle of a frog. They use labelled diagrams in their booklets and also provide contents pages and glossaries.
95. In Years 3 to 6 pupils develop their investigative skills further. In Year 4 pupils investigate the habitats of different creatures in the school grounds. They recognise that the conditions of different habitats are affected by the changing seasons. When

asked if they might find frogs in the grounds, pupils replied that as frogs are amphibians, there would need to be water nearby. By the end of Year 6, pupils have developed a good knowledge and understanding of living things, properties of materials and physical processes as they develop their skills of scientific enquiry. They also have a good knowledge and understanding of some forces, such as electricity and magnetism. They understand what constitutes a fair test when they set up and carry out their own investigations.

96. Pupils make some good use of their reading and writing skills as they learn in science. Teachers ensure that pupils understand and use correctly a growing scientific vocabulary. Pupils write up their experiments with labelled diagrams and describe their methods, the apparatus they used, their results and conclusions. They apply some of their mathematical skills too. For example, they use line graphs, bar charts and pie charts to record the results of their investigations. However, they make only limited use of ICT. They have not, for example, used ICT sensors to measure and record data such as changes in temperature or light, as is expected by the end of Year 6.
97. Teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and form very good relationships with pupils, so that they are able to motivate pupils well and control classes with ease. This, together with high expectations that pupils will work hard and do their best, ensures that pupils learn effectively. Pupils concentrate well, listen carefully to their teachers and try hard to improve their work. Pupils' enthusiasm for the subject and good behaviour in lessons also contribute to their learning and achievements.
98. The co-ordinator for science has held the post for just over a year. She has made a sound start on the role, and is beginning to monitor and evaluate standards in science. She has worked with colleagues in reviewing pupils' work and has begun to develop a portfolio of work exemplifying standards for each year group. The school now uses national guidance for science, which ensures that National Curriculum requirements are fully met.

ART AND DESIGN

99. No lessons in art and design were observed. At the time of the last inspection standards were satisfactory at the end of Year 6. No judgement was made on standards at the end of Year 2, although some examples of their work suggested that it was unsatisfactory. For example, "Pupils contributed to large class pictures, filling in shapes drawn by adults".
100. Art and design has not been a focus for development in the school recently as there has been a focus on improving standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. However, work on display and teachers' planning shows that art and design is taught regularly and some good examples of art work were seen. In Years 1 and 2 pupils use a range of materials to make collage pictures. They have drawn patterns from nature, based on shells leaves and pine cones.

101. In Years 3 to 6 pupils all have sketchbooks, but, as yet, are not using these to collect ideas or to practise different techniques. Pupils study the work of famous artists such as Monet and Andy Warhol. Older pupils have produced a large collage based on Monet's 'Water Lillies'. They have created pictures based on patterns in nature and tried Warhol's technique of producing the same image in different complementary colours. Pupils' sketchbooks show that they have worked on close observation drawings and in Year 6 pupils have developed these into very attractive drawings of flowers showing good use of line and shading. There is little evidence on display of the use of ICT to support pupils' learning in art.
102. As no lessons were observed, there is not enough evidence to make a secure judgement on the teaching of art and design. The co-ordinator checks colleagues' planning to ensure that the Programmes of Study are covered appropriately. The school has recently organised 'art days' during which pupils had a range of experiences. This is helping to raise the profile of the subject and is developing staff expertise and enthusiasm. Further professional development in art and design is planned, during which staff plan to review the scheme of work and discuss arrangements for assessing pupils' progress. On the limited evidence available, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

103. The standards reached by pupils in design and technology at the end of Years 2 and 6 are below national expectations. Pupils do not achieve as much as they could. This is largely because, although pupils make such products as model fairground rides and pop-up cards satisfactorily, they do not have enough opportunities to develop the required knowledge, skills and experience in making initial investigations of the products they are set to design. They have too few opportunities to improve their work through documenting and evaluating it. As no design and technology lessons were available for observation during the week of the inspection, these judgements have been based on the analysis of pupils' work, the scrutiny of teachers' records and discussions.
104. By the end of Year 6, pupils produce a suitably varied range of products, including biscuits, picture frames, model pulley-driven lifting mechanisms and a range of toys. They use simple wind-up mechanisms and hydraulic systems to produce moving models. However, they do not have enough opportunities to use electric motors to drive models, and older pupils are only just beginning to use ICT programs to control models and systems they build. Although in some years, pupils make initial investigations, such as taking commercial products apart in order to explore how they are made, they do not do so consistently enough to build up the skills they need. They have too few opportunities to develop their understanding of designing and making products through written evaluations. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language usually make the same progress as their classmates, because the practical nature of the subject helps them to understand. However, there are few opportunities in the tasks set for the most capable pupils to make more ambitious designs and complete challenging projects.
105. There was too little evidence to make a judgement on the quality of teaching and learning. Evidence from the work completed by pupils shows there are strengths in Year 5 in developing challenging work on designing biscuit packaging, including the analysis of commercial packages, taste ratings of commercial products and those made by the pupils, and the use of a database to keep track of all the aspects of the work developed and completed. Evidence of work done in Year 3 also showed that pupils were helped to plan and document the making of picture frames well. For

example, a pupil wrote, 'First I have to cut the wood exactly 14cm long on the long sides and 11cm on the short side, and stick them together'. However, a good proportion of the work seen in this and earlier years was not carried out to a good standard, so that joints were not well lined up and joined, or models made too readily fell apart. No evidence was seen of any marking of pupils' work.

106. Since the last inspection, the subject co-ordinator has helped to improve the subject by ensuring that the school has the right range of resources to fulfil all the requirements of the National Curriculum. She has also organised the resources very effectively. The school has appropriately adopted and developed the nationally recommended plans for teaching the subject. However, because the current emphasis is on using design and technology to contribute to pupils' understanding of other subjects, too little is being done to ensure that pupils achieve the full range of the National Curriculum requirements. The co-ordinator has not yet done enough to find out about the best practice and achievements in design and technology in primary schools nationally, and spread knowledge of this throughout the school.

GEOGRAPHY

107. At the time of the last inspection standards were judged as satisfactory at the end of Years 2 and 6. Only two lessons were observed in the present inspection, as the subject is taught in blocked units. Evidence from these lessons and work in pupils' books, shows that standards remain average.
108. In Year 1, pupils learn about different locations, contrasting the town where they live with seaside towns and places in the countryside. They are beginning to use maps to locate different places. In Year 5 pupils were studying the water cycle. They were able to describe this using the correct vocabulary such as 'precipitation' and 'evaporation'. They discussed what happens to rain water when it reaches the ground and took advantage of a very wet day to investigate this. They had noted that in some parts of the school grounds the water takes a long time to drain away as there is a lot of clay beneath the field. No lessons were observed in Year 6. Work in pupils' books shows that they have studied different mountain range environments and also looked at coastal erosion. Apart from some information downloaded from the Internet about mountain ranges, there was no evidence of pupils using ICT to support their work in geography.
109. In both the lessons observed, teaching was satisfactory. Teachers have secure knowledge and prepare their lessons well. Pupils are well supported in the lessons, although learning is not always reviewed effectively at the end of lessons to help pupils to understand what they have learned. The work in books shows that some of the work set is not appropriately challenging for the most capable pupils and too much time is spent rehearsing known facts rather than developing pupils' geographical skills.
110. Geography has not been a recent priority in the school improvement plan. Since the time of the last inspection the curriculum for geography has been developed and there is now a whole-school plan for the subject based on national guidance. The curriculum is supported by visits, for example, to a local 'African' village where pupils learn about African crafts, music and customs. On their residential visit to Norfolk, Year 6 undertake fieldwork on rock pools and coastal erosion. The school has appropriate plans to develop local studies to support work in geography.

HISTORY

111. Pupils reach average standards in history by the end of Year 2. There was not enough evidence to make a judgement on the standards they reach by the end of Year 6. This is because pupils in the current Year 6 had in the school year of the inspection only studied part of one of the required elements of the National Curriculum and the school had not retained records of their work. However, work seen in Years 3, 4 and 5 shows that pupils attain standards that match national averages for their age groups.
112. Pupils achieve satisfactorily. In Years 1 and 2, they begin to develop their understanding of the differences between their own experiences and those of people in earlier times. For example, they compare toys used by their parents' and grandparents' generations with their own, and study photographs to see the differences between seaside towns and holidays 100 years ago and today. They also study more distant historical periods, such as that of the Great Fire of London, and the lives of famous people, such as George Stephenson, through stories and images from the times in which they lived. However, they spend too much time colouring in historical images and sketching their own times, and this does not challenge the most capable sufficiently.
113. In Years 3 to 6, pupils study the lives of people in Britain in Roman, Viking and Tudor times, as well as daily life in Ancient Egypt and Ancient Greece. They also learn about the lives of children in Britain during World War Two. In these studies, pupils use and compare information in a range of books to discover how rich and poor people lived, how they were housed and clothed, and what beliefs and interests they had. They enjoy learning about some of the more extraordinary skills of the Egyptians in embalming and relish the more gruesome details of the process. They particularly enjoy visits to museums and historical sites, such as Verulamium, and simulated historical events that help bring alive distant times for them. For example, Year 6 pupils retain vivid memories of their visit in the previous school year to a Victorian Christmas event staged at a local restored Victorian industrial building. They also begin to understand how historians and archaeologists use documents, images, and preserved and excavated artefacts to build up an understanding of the past.
114. Teaching and learning in history are good, overall. Only one history lesson was seen during the inspection, but there was good evidence of the quality of teaching and learning in the workbooks and folders from all years except Year 6. The Year 4 history lesson seen included very good use of the school's digital projection and ICT equipment to enable all the pupils, including those with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language, to share and discuss enlarged woodcuts and documents from Elizabethan times and deduce how rich people regarded the beggars of their time. This also enabled them to compare similar attitudes held today. Evidence from pupils' workbooks shows that teachers provide good opportunities to promote pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in Years 3 to 5, for example, by comparing Greek and Latin based writing systems and by comparing Egyptian counting and tallying systems with those we use today. However, little evidence could be found of much ICT use as a learning tool in classes other than Year 4. Through the visits and the emphasis on exploring beliefs and visual and documentary evidence, the subject also contributes well to pupils' spiritual and cultural development. Good oral feedback was seen in the lesson observed, but there was little evidence seen in pupils' workbooks of marking designed to sharpen pupils' understanding of historical issues and guide them on how to improve their work.
115. The subject is co-ordinated satisfactorily by the headteacher. She focuses primarily on checking planning, and improving curriculum provision by ensuring that pupils have opportunities to do related visits. She has also improved the range of resources for

teaching, including making a small collection of artefacts such as old carpet beaters and washing dollies from the Victorian period and modern papyrus prints to help pupils to understand the materials used by the Egyptians for writing. As yet, she has not checked the quality of history teaching in classes, or the levels achieved by pupils in different years in their written work. There are plans to further develop the range of books for the subject as part of the school's current library development programme.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

116. Pupils reach standards in ICT that meet national expectations at the end of Year 2. At the end of Year 6 standards are below expectations. This reflects a history of unsatisfactory provision of the hardware and software needed for pupils to achieve the standards expected at the end of Year 6, together with low levels of staff knowledge and confidence in teaching the subject. However, there have been substantial improvements in the last two years. This is reflected in the satisfactory achievement by pupils at the end of Years 2 and 6, as well as evidence of good achievement by pupils in some classes and in some aspects of the required ICT curriculum, such as developing ideas and making things happen by using programming to control model traffic lights and house lighting systems, and to develop electronic music compositions.
117. In Years 1 and 2, pupils use a range of programs to exchange and share information. They use word-processing programs and 'talking' word banks to write simple accounts of investigations they do, such as creating sets of mathematical shapes. They use paint programs to create their own choice of cover illustrations for their reading journals, using the program tools to create shapes, lines and circles of different sizes. They use a simple visual graph program to store information about their favourite colours, foods and animals. Specialised mathematical investigative programs enable younger pupils to find out about mathematical patterns and combinations they are learning. They plan simple routes that they program robot toys to take. However, they do not do enough to investigate, discuss and record how ICT is used in and out of school.
118. In Years 3 to 6, pupils use desktop publishing programs as well as word-processing to develop a wider range of communications, including newspaper-style reports, book reviews, questionnaires and posters. However, their continuing use of paint programs does not develop their skills in exchanging and sharing visual information enough, since in each year, they use it mainly for the same task of creating a cover for their reading journals. Too little emphasis is given to developing good awareness of the design skills needed for different audiences. In Year 5 pupils use electronic mail to send letters to authors whose books they have enjoyed, but pupils in Years 3 to 6, overall, still get too little experience of using this key tool because of technical difficulties in establishing a consistently reliable service. Pupils use a variety of graphs and database programs to find out and communicate trends and totals in mathematical and science investigations, such as a graph of shadow lengths at different lengths from a light source, or creating and using a database on British birds. However, they do not make enough progress in learning to research and evaluate the projects they are doing, and in investigating and comparing the way ICT is used in school and the wider community.
119. The teaching and learning of ICT are good, overall. Most lessons seen were good or very good, and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Very effective use of ICT to support literacy was seen in Year 4 where the teacher had made an excellent selection of a digitally projected animated commercial web site to show how words and animated images could be used to persuade readers and sell products. Because she had used cue cards and key word displays to help pupils to remember key persuasive features to

look out for, they were easily able to identify the way the web site used them. Pupils were riveted by the attractiveness of the site and eagerly vied to show the features that they recognised. Good teaching of programs to enable pupils to control simulated traffic lights and lighting systems was seen in Years 4 and 5. This included the careful introduction of small steps in introducing the program features pupils needed to use, good opportunities for the pupils to experiment in pairs and build up their programs step by step, as well as discussing their successes and difficulties with classmates. Pupils responded particularly enthusiastically to these opportunities and showed pride in what they achieved. Less successful teaching was seen in Year 3, where pupils were given a lesson introduction describing a long series of steps to take in using a music composition program, with no prepared guide sheet to act as a reminder. Less capable pupils and those learning English as an additional language made less progress than they should have done. Teachers and teaching assistants usually give good oral guidance and feedback. However, because the school restricts the use of printing out because of financial constraints, there are too few opportunities for pupils to receive written feedback on how to improve their work, and they are unable to see and evaluate how their work progresses over time.

120. The management of the subject is very good. It has been effective in bringing about significant improvement in teaching and standards, which is set to continue. The subject co-ordinator has successfully managed the continuing development of the school's ICT suite and has done much to ensure that the many technical problems have been overcome or minimised. He has helped to ensure that the recent national programme of training for teachers in ICT was successfully completed. He is now building on it to encourage teachers to make more use of ICT to help pupils with their learning in literacy and numeracy. More remains to be done to ensure that the very good teaching, which is seen in some years, becomes common to all. The co-ordinator has helpfully led training in ICT support skills for the teaching assistants. He has ensured that there is a good range of challenging software and hardware to enable the National Curriculum to be delivered to a good standard. He has a good understanding of how the facilities should be developed further in order to make the best use of ICT to offer pupils better learning opportunities in all subjects.
121. A particularly good feature of the subject's leadership is the contribution it has made to the school's extra-curricular use of its ICT facilities. The very good family learning programme for the parents of younger children has been successful in helping previously inexperienced parents to feel confident about helping their children to use computers. Its success is in large part due to the care that has been taken to ensure that the parents have been given good opportunities to help them to learn and work with the programs before they work with their children.

MUSIC

122. Inspectors were unable to observe enough music lessons to make an overall judgement on standards. Younger pupils are taught music by their class teachers, but in Years 4, 5 and 6 lessons are led by the music co-ordinator. In a very good lesson in Year 5, pupils were taught to compose using ICT. They confidently used pre-recorded musical loops to create an effective opening. They then evaluated their compositions considering how they could be improved. Pupils were extremely enthusiastic and worked well in pairs, helping each other with the task. Composition and evaluation is a developing area in the school and the co-ordinator has run staff training to encourage its use. A taped composition made by pupils in Year 4 shows that they are successfully able to blend together the spoken word and instruments, using dynamics, pitch and

rhythm appropriately to create an extended atmospheric piece depicting a city at the close of day.

123. The time given to classroom music is supplemented for all pupils by a weekly, whole-school, singing assembly. Pupils sing songs from around the world including an African song of welcome supported by the teacher on drums. Singing is tuneful and rhythmical, and with an accompaniment of light guitar chords only, pupils are able to maintain two separate vocal parts. Pupils of all ages enjoy this assembly and understand the contribution of their own efforts in supporting corporate music making.
124. Musical appreciation and understanding are developed through the use of termly themes, 'mood music' and 'music around the world' being two recent examples. The music is drawn to pupils' attention each day at the start of assembly and questions are posed encouraging them to research further information. Many pupils are able to recognise the piano and double bass as they listen to 'The Elephant' from Saint Saens' 'Carnival of the Animals' and describe the piece using correct musical terms. Professional musicians are invited to perform at school and in the past year pupils have heard a string quartet, a harpist and steel pan, drumming group. Such was the enthusiasm generated from this that the school purchased a set of drums for pupils to use.
125. Further musical opportunities are provided when visiting specialists teach clarinet, flute and violin. Pupils who learn these instruments attain above average standards and are encouraged to perform during assemblies and school concerts. The school choir, which is very popular, is open to pupils from Year 3 up and has raised the profile of the school in the community. Singing is of a high quality and both boys and girls participate with enthusiasm and practise hard each week to improve their performance. As well as performing in school concerts, which are very well supported by parents, the choir takes part in local festivals and sings in local hospitals and senior citizens' homes. In recognition of its success, the school choir has been chosen to perform in the Albert Hall in London next year as part of celebrating music in Hertfordshire. Pupils are also excited by the thought of making a CD in order to raise further funds for the school.
126. The subject is soundly managed by the co-ordinator who maximises the use of her subject expertise across the school. However, as yet there is too little time available for monitoring the quality of teaching and musical attainment in the classes that she does not teach herself.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

127. Standards at the end of Year 6 are similar to those expected nationally for pupils of this age. As no lessons were seen in Year 2, no judgement can be made about standards at that point. Lessons are based on a recommended scheme of work ensuring that dance, games and gymnastics are taught each year. Pupils from Years 1 to 6 attend swimming lessons in a local pool and most can swim at least the expected distance of 25 metres before they leave the school. From the few lessons seen and an overview of the scheme of work, provision for physical education is satisfactory.
128. Pupils' progress in physical education is closely related to teaching quality. In a good Year 6 hockey lesson, for example, pupils developed their skills of defence and attack well because they were taught the importance of balance and given opportunities to observe each other and evaluate the quality of their own performance. This, together with high teacher expectations of hard work, ensured that further practise was focused on improvement. In a Year 3 games lesson, however, there was insufficient focus on

explanation, demonstration and evaluation. Although pupils worked sensibly with bats and balls, they did not improve their performance appreciably. Pupils, on the whole, enjoy physical education and join in willingly with the different activities presented during lessons. Fitness levels for some pupils are poor, a significant minority being unable to sustain physical activity, such as paced running, for any length of time.

129. The physical education timetable is supplemented by visiting sports coaches and after-school clubs, currently rounders, football, hockey and netball. Sports clubs are well attended and older pupils show maturity and responsibility as they collect equipment and organise themselves to play while they wait for teachers to arrive. School teams formed from club members now compete regularly with other schools and are beginning to win some matches. This represents a good improvement in sporting opportunities and achievement because two years ago, when the current co-ordinator took up post, there were no sports clubs or teams at the school. The profile of sport at Thorn Grove is also raised in the community when it hosts the popular six-a-side football tournament each year.
130. Improving resources has been, and remains, a priority for the school. The subject co-ordinator supported by the link governor obtained sponsorship that enabled sports kit and basic equipment, such as goalposts and rounders bats, to be purchased, but small equipment remains in short supply. Storage facilities have been improved in the last year and pupils are now able to collect equipment and put it away tidily at the end of lessons.
131. Leadership of the subject is sound. The co-ordinator has attended Top Sport training to develop her role, plans are monitored to ensure appropriate coverage, information from swimming coaches is collected and recorded and the policy document has been updated. Plans for future development are based on a thorough audit and are appropriately focused on improving assessment so that standards and progress can be monitored more effectively.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

132. The last inspection report judged standards in religious education to be below the expectation of the locally agreed syllabus. Since that time the school has worked hard to address this issue and pupils now reach the standards expected.
133. No lessons were observed in Years 1 and 2, but work in books and teachers' planning shows that religious education is taught regularly. Year 2 pupils have learned about special places and visited a local church. One of the parents took a group of children to visit a mosque and talked to the class about Islam.
134. In a very good Year 4 lesson, pupils learned about the Bible as a special book for Christians. This built well on their discussion of their own special books. They showed great interest in the different Bibles their teacher showed them. They watched a video very attentively. In this different Christians talked about what the Bible meant to them and pupils were fascinated by the idea that it can be used as a manual for living.
135. Year 6 pupils thought about what Christians believe about God. They learned about Pentecost and the founding of the Christian Church. Pupils found it difficult to understand the very complex concept of the Holy Trinity and struggled to suggest what the role of the Holy Spirit might be. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 have also studied aspects of Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism. They understand that Buddhists do not worship a deity and that they believe in reincarnation. Year 5 pupils had enjoyed formulating

questions for a visiting rabbi, about the Jewish faith. In their work on Creation stories from different traditions, pupils learned that there are many questions to which there is not a definitive answer.

136. Teaching is satisfactory, overall. In the lesson seen in Year 4, teaching was very good. In this lesson the teacher had very good subject knowledge and presented the work in a very interesting way, which engaged pupils' interest and successfully developed their knowledge and understanding. Some teachers lack confidence in the subject and the school has identified this as an area for improvement. The co-ordinator has begun to collect samples of pupils' work and has worked with colleagues to analyse these, in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. The curriculum for religious education now meets the requirements of the agreed syllabus. However, the allocation of time to the subject is too variable between year groups and the school is about to review this to ensure a more even balance.