

INSPECTION REPORT

**Little Munden Church of England Voluntary
Controlled Primary School**

Dane End, Ware, Hertfordshire

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117402

Headteacher: Mrs L Feakes

Reporting inspector: Alan Andrews
10090

Dates of inspection: 30th June – 2nd July 2003

Inspection number: 247774

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: Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils: 4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Church Lane
Dane End
Ware
Hertfordshire

Postcode: SG12 0NR

Telephone number: 01920 438271

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Dr Sandy Taylor

Date of previous inspection: 2nd February 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
6436	Alan Andrews	Registered inspector	English; Art and design; Design and technology; Physical education; Special educational needs.	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
13481	Doug Binfield	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 its parents?
32162	Adrienne Beavis	Team inspector	Foundation Stage; Geography; History.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

6436	Martyn Richards	Team inspector	Mathematics; Science; Information and communication technology; Music; Religious education; Education inclusion; English as an additional language.	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Little Munden Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School is situated in the Hertfordshire village of Dane End next to the parish church of All Saints with which it has close ties. It has four classes and is smaller than most primary schools. Currently, there are 78 full-time children on roll aged from four to 11, including nine reception children. The majority live in Dane End, with the remainder coming from surrounding villages. Their socio-economic background is wide, ranging from rented local authority accommodation to larger owner occupied housing. They are admitted to the school in the year in which they become five. Those whose fifth birthday is before the end of February are admitted full-time in September. Those who are five after that are admitted part-time in September and become full-time at the beginning of the spring term. Attainment on entry is average overall, although there is a wide range of ability in the school. There are more boys than girls and Year 5 is much smaller than the other year groups. This is partly because some children leave the school at the end of Year 4 to transfer to a middle school. The percentage of children known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The percentage identified as having special educational needs is also below the national average. None of the children have a statement of special educational need. The school has no children whose mother tongue is not English.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a sound education for its children. An appropriate emphasis is placed on raising standards. Teaching overall is good. It is particularly strong at the Foundation Stage and with the older juniors where a new teacher is making a positive impact. The headteacher in partnership with the governing body provides effective leadership. The school is managed well on a daily basis. The curriculum is broad and there is very good provision for extra-curricular activities and special events. Partnership with parents is very good. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards of attainment are good in English and science for children aged seven and in science and physical education at age eleven.
- The overall quality of teaching is good.
- The Foundation Stage is a strength of the school.
- The provision for children with special educational needs is good.
- Very good provision is made for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Children's attitudes, behaviour and attendance are very good.
- The curriculum is enriched by a very good range of extra-curricular activities and special events.
- The school enjoys a very good partnership with parents and this is much appreciated by them.

What could be improved

- Attainment in mathematics, particularly at the junior stage.
- Arrangements to enable subject coordinators to gain a clear view of standards of work and teaching in their areas of responsibility.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since its last inspection in 1998. It has raised standards of attainment in English and science and sustained the confidence of its local community. Care and support for the children is now very good. Attendance and punctuality have both improved. Children with special educational needs now make good progress. Key issues from the previous inspection have been tackled with determination. There has been a high turnover of staff and teaching at the upper end of the infant stage is now at least satisfactory and often good. Teachers' planning is more consistent and lessons benefit from this. The provision for brighter children is better, although there are occasions in mathematics when work is not hard enough for them.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			*similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	D	D	B	C
mathematics	E	E	D	E
science	E	D	A	B

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

* schools with similar numbers of children eligible for free school meals.

The school's results in national tests need to be treated with caution because small cohorts make statistical comparisons unreliable. As could be expected in a school of its size, results year by year have fluctuated. However, the general trend during the period 2000 to 2002 has been up, although in mathematics the results have been consistently below the national average. The school puts considerable effort into analysing its performance so as to improve standards. Children's achievements are checked carefully and determined efforts are made to meet overall targets. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress and by the end of the reception year most will have achieved the early learning goals and some will have exceeded them in reading, writing and mathematics.

Lesson observations and scrutiny of work from children in the present Year 2 show attainment in English and science to be above the national average whilst in mathematics it is in line with the national average. In Year 6 there is more variation. Attainment is above average in science, in line with the average in English and below average in mathematics. The school was expecting this situation because of differences in cohorts, but a new teacher of older juniors is making a positive impact on children's achievements, particularly in mathematics. Attainment in all other subjects is in line with national expectations at the end of both the infant and junior stages. The exception is in physical education where attainment at age eleven is above average. Attainment in religious education is in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children enjoy school. They want to learn and work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good in lessons, assemblies, playtimes and lunchtimes.
Personal development and relationships	Both are very good. A range of opportunities are provided for children to undertake responsibility.
Attendance	Children are punctual for school and there are high levels of attendance.

Children settle to work quickly and make good use of their time. Attendance last year was well above the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The overall quality of teaching observed was good. In almost two thirds of the lessons seen this was the case. There were no unsatisfactory lessons. In addition, some very good and one excellent lesson was observed with the Foundation Stage children. Very good teaching was also seen with the older juniors. Features of this high quality teaching include really well chosen and presented tasks, the systematic building of skills and high expectations of what children can achieve in the time available. Throughout the school the teaching of literacy is consistently good and children benefit from this. Some good teaching of science was observed and is helping to raise standards in the subject. Physical education for the older juniors is taught very well with emphasis on the use of demonstrations, discussion and practice. Over the last four years children in Year 6 have not made consistently good progress in numeracy. However, with the good teaching they are now receiving there is strong evidence of ground being made up. The teaching of children with special educational needs is mostly good. Individual learning programmes are drawn up carefully and this helps children to make good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Provision for the Foundation Stage children is a particular strength. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities and special events that enrich and extend children's learning experiences.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Children participate fully in the life of the school and make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are no children whose mother tongue is not English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for children's personal development is very good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very effectively in lessons, assemblies and at other times.
How well the school cares for its pupils	There is a high level of pastoral care and concern for the children. Effective measures are in place for dealing with health and safety issues.

The school enjoys a very good partnership with its parents. They are very interested in what their children do and support them really well. Communication with parents is very good. They are kept well informed about their child's progress. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage very successfully promotes children's independence as well as their social, literacy and numeracy skills. Throughout the school, children with special educational needs are enabled to experience success. The curriculum is enhanced through good links with the church and use of the local environment.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides clear educational direction and sense of purpose. There is no deputy headteacher or senior management team.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Results in national tests are analysed carefully so as to identify priority areas for improvement. The progress of the school development plan is reviewed regularly.
The strategic use of resources	Financial resources are directed effectively to help raise standards.

The headteacher has a good understanding of the school's needs. Determined efforts are made to achieve targets for improvement. Leadership and management are both effective. This is particularly commendable because the deputy headteacher left in 2001 and was not replaced because of fluctuating numbers on roll and the cost involved. A management point was offered and all teaching staff invited to apply, but no one wished to undertake the additional responsibility. The school has an appropriate complement of teachers, although two are leaving their permanent posts shortly. Accommodation is satisfactory overall with a mixture of old and newer buildings. Learning resources are satisfactory, but good in English. The school applies the principles of best value well when making purchases.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school, behave well and become mature and responsible. • Children work hard and make good progress. • Teaching is good. • The school is led and managed well. • The school works closely with parents and keeps them well informed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The high turnover of teaching staff.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. The school has experienced a high turnover of teaching staff in recent years and is working hard to appoint and retain high quality teachers.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Attainment on entry to school of most children is typical for their age. Recent national guidelines for the Foundation Stage curriculum have been implemented. The school uses the early learning goals and the relevant parts of the literacy and numeracy strategies. Children make good progress and by the end of the reception year most have attained the early learning goals and some have exceeded them in reading, writing and mathematics. This has much to do with the teacher's high expectations and the provision of tasks that capture children's interest and promote very good attitudes towards learning. The praise and encouragement they receive builds their confidence and motivates them to work hard.

2. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of work shows that in the current Year 2 attainment in English and science is above the national average and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. In mathematics it is in line with the national average. In Year 6 a more varied picture emerges. Attainment is above average in science, in line with the national average in English and below average in mathematics. The fall in attainment reflects differences in cohorts. In addition, children have not made consistently good progress in mathematics over the past four years. The good teaching they are now receiving means that ground is being made up.

3. The school's small cohorts mean that its results in national tests need to be treated with caution. This is because statistically the results are unreliable. As could be expected in a school of its size, over the period 1998 to 2002 results have fluctuated. That said, the general trend for children at age seven and eleven has been up, although in mathematics the results have been consistently below the national average.

4. The school puts considerable effort into analysing its performance so as to improve standards. Children's progress is checked carefully and determined efforts are made to meet overall targets. Brighter children do better than at the time of the last inspection. The national literacy and numeracy initiatives have helped the school provide more challenging work for them and standards have risen. However, there are still some occasions in mathematics when work is not hard enough for them. While there is variation from year to year, there is no significant difference between the standards reached by girls, and those of the boys.

5. The percentage of children identified as having special educational needs is lower than in most other schools and there are no children with statements of special need. The support they receive relies heavily on programmes of work provided by class teachers, but sometimes delivered by teaching assistants. The achievement of the children is good in relation to their ability and the work of the teaching assistants is valuable in helping them to make progress.

6. Children throughout the school are pleased to talk to visitors about their work and matters that interest them. They listen attentively in lessons, answer questions sensibly and communicate meaning clearly. At age seven and eleven, their speaking and listening skills are in line with the national average. Their use of vocabulary is sometimes good, but they are often reluctant to put forward a view or enter into debate.

7. Children enjoy reading and listening to stories. They read regularly at home and parents often actively support them doing so. At age seven, most children have reading skills

above average for their age. They read with growing confidence and fluency. They understand what they have read and can recall details of characters and story lines. Many can name several authors they enjoy. At age eleven, children use more expression when reading aloud. Most have reading skills typical for their age. They have favourite authors and stories. Brighter children can predict story outcomes and suggest plausible alternatives.

8. Children write for a range of purposes and, at age seven, their writing skills are mainly above average. Stories are usually developed well with appropriate and often interesting vocabulary. Most children show a secure understanding of the use of full stops and capital letters. At age eleven, children's writing skills are generally in line with the national average. They show a growing understanding of sentence structure and some of their work shows imaginative use of vocabulary. Handwriting is usually neat and uniform. Good use is made of dictionaries to check spellings, but there are sometimes simple and unnecessary errors.

9. In mathematics, children's attainments are average at age seven and below average at age eleven. At the end of the infant stage, most children can solve two digit addition and subtraction calculations. They use their knowledge of tables to find answers to simple problems of multiplication. They understand the properties of regular geometric shapes, can read simple graphs and use common measures of length and weight. At the end of the junior stage, children use their knowledge of tables to make quick calculations. They understand common fractions and decimals. They can make simple graphs, use standard measures accurately and recognise regular mathematical shapes. However, a significant minority of children find the subject difficult and have not progressed as well as they should. The good teaching they are now receiving is making up ground.

10. Improvements have been made in science work and children's attainments are above average at age seven and eleven. This is better than at the time of the previous inspection. Children enjoy practical work and have a good understanding of the importance of fair testing. Older children can predict the results of experiments and can record their findings clearly using tables, charts and graphs.

11. Attainments in all other subjects are in line with national expectations at the end of both the infant and junior stages. The exception is in physical education where attainment at age eleven is above average. This is because the school gives considerable emphasis to swimming, and the teaching of physical education to older juniors is of a high quality. In religious education the children reach the levels of attainment expected in the locally agreed syllabus at the ages both of seven and eleven.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Children's attitudes to learning are very good, as they were at the last inspection. They enjoy school and are keen to learn and work hard. During lessons they listen carefully and respond well to questions. Written work and practical tasks are undertaken conscientiously and children take care in the presentation of completed work. Younger children often benefit from working with older ones, especially when they are undertaking tasks together in small groups. Children, including those with special educational needs, show a co-operative approach to learning and this makes a positive impact on the standards achieved. Boys and girls behave equally well in school and all show similarly positive attitudes to their work.

13. Behaviour is consistently very good in classes and around the school. The previous report indicated that behaviour was normally very good but problems arose in lessons that were poorly controlled. During this inspection, all teachers and teaching assistants ensured that children were engaged on interesting and challenging work so that learning was not

interrupted by behaviour difficulties. There is a calm and orderly atmosphere throughout the school day. This is helped by children's polite, friendly and respectful approach. High standards of behaviour were seen in assemblies, the dining hall and during playtimes. Instances of serious misbehaviour, including bullying, rarely occur and any such incidents are dealt with quickly and fairly. There were no exclusions last year. Parents are pleased with the high behaviour standards that make an important contribution to learning.

14. The provision made for children's personal development is very good. The close links with All Saints Church include opportunities for children to be involved in special church services at harvest, Christmas and Easter and to mark the end of the school year. The full programme of talks by visiting speakers and the special curriculum weeks help to extend children's knowledge and experience. Drama productions, music events, sporting activities and the many school clubs enable them to develop special interests. All classes take part in visits in the immediate locality and further afield. Children in Years 4 to 6 have a residential stay at a farm in Devon, whilst those in Year 6 also have a day trip to France. Children's keenness to help the needs of others is demonstrated by participation in events to raise funds for charities, such as the donation of £1,000 for Dogs for the Disabled. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Overall, children have a very full programme of activities that helps to raise self-esteem and provides many opportunities for personal development.

15. Children are respectful of each other's feelings and beliefs. They are thoughtful and sensitive in discussion about matters touching on issues of right and wrong and alert to the risk of inadvertently hurting the feelings of others. They are helpful and unselfish in their dealings with each other and they cooperate very well on shared tasks during lessons. Most are beginning to understand something of our cultural traditions in art, music, literature and dance.

16. Attendance is very good and has improved since the last inspection when it was good. The attendance last year was well above the national average and there was no unauthorised absence. Punctuality is good and the school has successfully addressed concerns about lateness mentioned in the previous report. Lessons and other activities start and finish on time. All these positive factors help children to progress well with their learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

17. The previous inspection judged the quality of teaching to be a strength of the school and to be very good at the junior stage. There was some excellent teaching of the reception children. However, there was inconsistency in the quality of teaching in the upper part of the

infant stage where some unsatisfactory teaching was observed. In recent years there has been a high turnover of staff and all but one of the teachers seen in lessons have joined the school since the last inspection. The present situation is that the overall quality of teaching is good. In almost two thirds of the lessons observed this was the case. In a small number of lessons the teaching was very good and in one lesson it was excellent. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen and this represents an improvement on the last inspection. Whilst most lessons are carefully planned to make sure there is sufficient challenge for brighter children, their work in mathematics does not always extend them enough. Some very good teaching and one excellent lesson was seen with the Foundation Stage children. This is a broadly similar picture to findings of the last inspection. Very good teaching was also observed with the older juniors. This is particularly noteworthy because the teacher is in her first term at the school and has quickly had a positive impact on children's progress.

18. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good overall and some lessons are of a high quality. This is because:

- the Foundation Stage teacher has considerable knowledge and understanding of this age group. She is very well supported by the nursery nurse;
- children are managed effectively and with kindness so that they quickly feel secure;
- recent national guidelines for the Foundation Stage curriculum have been introduced successfully;
- the teachers' planning is clear and sets out what the children are to learn, the activities they will undertake and what will be assessed;
- the classroom is organised well with bright displays that support children's learning and celebrate their achievements;
- tasks are chosen well so as to excite and enthuse the children;
- skills are built up in a systematic way so that children make good progress in their learning;
- there is a sense of fun that helps children enjoy school.

19. In both the infant and junior stages the teaching is mostly good. Lessons have a clear structure. They are generally planned well and often begin with an explanation of what is to be learned and how this links with previous work. Good use is made of teaching assistants and they make a valuable contribution to children's learning. Resources are prepared carefully and are easily available when required. The teaching of literacy is consistently good and children benefit from this. Good progress has been made in enabling children to undertake computer work across the curriculum. Some good teaching of science was observed. Physical education for the older juniors is taught very well with a strong emphasis on building skills through demonstrations, discussion and practice. Over the last four years children in Year 6 have not made consistently good progress in mathematics. However, with the good teaching they are now enjoying there is solid evidence of ground being made up.

20. In all infant and junior lessons teachers have expectations that children will:

- work hard and do their best;
- behave well so that there is a positive working atmosphere;
- follow instructions carefully so that they know what they have to do.

Children respond really well to these demands and take a pride in their achievements.

21. Features of the high quality teaching seen in lessons with the older juniors include:

- high expectations of what the children can achieve in the time available;
- imaginative and demanding tasks that motivate children and challenge them to think hard;
- a very good mix of practical, written and oral work;
- on-going feedback to children with an emphasis on how they can improve;

- an expectation that children use the correct technical vocabulary when answering questions and explaining their work;
- very good use of time, so that lessons are productive and children make good progress in their learning;
- a sense of purpose that motivates children to do their best.

22. The teaching of children with special educational needs is mostly good. Teachers know the children well and relationships are very good. As a result, children are keen to please and to work hard. Their needs are assessed accurately and individual learning programmes are drawn up carefully. Targets for improvement vary in quality, but are usually clear, precise and realistic. Teachers take on-going account of the targets and this helps children to make good progress in lessons.

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

23. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum enriched by links with the church, a wide range of special events and extra-curricular activities. Particularly good use is made of the local environment and the community. The curriculum provides opportunities for children to develop personally as well as academically. Special events include theme weeks, residential visits and the celebration of religious festivals. Good use is made of visitors to enhance children's learning. For example, during the inspection a visitor talked to the infants about her seaside experiences as a child.

24. The Foundation Stage curriculum is a very good one. It is based on recent national guidelines for children of this age. It provides a range of activities and tasks that motivate them to make good progress and reach the expected early learning goals in all areas of experience. It takes into account the need for interesting activities in and out of the classroom. The classroom itself provides a colourful and stimulating environment that reflects the high value placed on children's efforts. This successfully helps to promote their self-esteem and confidence.

25. At both the infant and junior stages the school is working with the nationally recommended programmes of study and there is a clear overview of what children will learn. Appropriate time is allocated to all subjects and the time in the school day is used well. A two year rolling programme is used to ensure appropriate coverage for all children in mixed year classes. Homework is used effectively to consolidate and extend children's learning.

26. The school lays proper emphasis on the important skills of literacy and its careful introduction of the national literacy strategy has helped raise standards. Its strategies for teaching numeracy, however, have not been as effective, particularly with the older juniors. Religious education is provided in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus. Provision for swimming is particularly good.

27. Children in Year 6 are given the opportunity to learn French through a weekly lesson and a variety of activities, including a French breakfast, a cake stall and teaching songs to the rest of the school assembly. The confidence the children gain in 'having a go' at speaking French is appreciated by parents.

28. Staff and governors know how important it is to make sure all the different groups of children are able to take full advantage of what the school offers.

29. Provision for children with special educational needs is generally good. Their self-esteem is successfully maintained and they are enabled to take a full part in the life of the school. Procedures for identifying such children are sound and comply with national requirements. They are overseen by an experienced coordinator who works closely with class teachers. She also liaises appropriately with outside agencies and the children benefit

from this. Children's individual educational plans are up to date and written well. Most targets for development show careful diagnosis of children's learning difficulties and how they might be addressed.

30. It was a key issue from the previous inspection to raise attainment by increasing the challenge provided to the school's brighter children. The school has identified these children more clearly and staff regularly check their progress and the plans made for them. As a result, the provision for such children has improved considerably. The introduction of national programmes for literacy and numeracy has also helped by providing work at a suitable level, although there are still some lessons in mathematics when brighter children spend too long on tasks which are insufficiently challenging.

31. Checks carried out in school using a range of test results enable staff to see whether boys or girls tend to do better in their work. The numbers in each year group are small, so the information is hard to interpret, but the results give no indication of advantage or disadvantage to either gender. The evidence from the inspection confirms this, finding that girls and boys can all take part in the full range of school activity.

32. When the school was last inspected the provision made for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was very good. The school has successfully sustained this high level of provision.

33. In line with its Christian foundation, the school takes seriously its responsibility to promote spiritual and moral development. In assemblies and religious education lessons for example, children are encouraged to reflect on their own beliefs and values and those of others. They discuss times when they have been unselfish in helping others and when they themselves have been helped. They think about occasions on which they have to make decisions, to do what is right or what is wrong. The school gives high priority to care, mutual respect and personal integrity. These values are embedded in the golden rules applied to daily life in school. In other parts of the curriculum too, children are sometimes struck by amazement, wonder or empathy. Recently the younger children were able to see the hatching of chicks from eggs, in a classroom incubator. The delight and wonder in this experience, and in handling the chicks, is powerfully evident in the school's photographic record of the occasion.

34. Children learn how to work well in small groups, sharing tasks fairly. Older children take responsibility for younger ones at playtimes and lunchtimes. They also carry out a number of other practical responsibility roles in the school. Care for each other, politeness and respect are emphasised throughout the day. Children are taught about their duty of care to the less fortunate. They support local and national charities enthusiastically, the children themselves often suggesting money-raising activities. The school is involved in an

imaginative environmental project with a local pharmaceuticals company. It has also been helped in improving its immediate environment through a combined grant from Learning through Landscapes and Sport England. Children in Year 6 join in a very good citizenship programme at a local secondary school, learning what it means to be active and effective as a member of a democratic community. Their annual school journey to Devon gives a valuable opportunity to learn about social living away from the home.

35. The school enriches children's cultural experience through visits to places of interest, visitors to school, and theme weeks dedicated to particular subjects such as art and history. Children have visited the National Gallery and Stevenage Museum, and enjoy an annual in-school production by a theatre company. Literature and poetry are valued in school and well used to support learning not only in English, but also in science and religious education. There are arts components in the extra-curricular programme and the school choir joins in local and county musical activities. The school's close links with its local church and community enable it to teach children about the history, traditions and culture of their own village. Staff recognise the importance of providing opportunities that properly reflect the range of cultures found in Britain today. Children visited a Hindu temple and enjoyed a talk in school by a Hindu lady about her religion and culture. They learn about world artists and composers and attended a steel band performance at a local secondary school. Staff have carefully checked their resources, especially books, to make sure they do not present narrow or stereotypical images or accounts.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. Very good provision is made for children's welfare and guidance. This represents an improvement compared to the previous inspection when the overall provision was judged to be satisfactory.

37. Staff provide a consistently high level of pastoral support where the interests of the children are put first. This is reflected in the caring and supportive learning environment that is provided throughout the day and with after school activities. Good arrangements are made to help children joining the school to settle in well and also to prepare Year 6 children for the transfer to secondary schools. The school has recently established a breakfast club for a trial period of one year that is currently attended by four children. Staff work closely together to ensure that good support is provided for children with special educational needs.

38. Effective measures are in place for dealing with health and safety issues. There are clear policies and guidelines to staff dealing with issues such as fire drills and emergency procedures. The governors' premises committee undertakes a health and safety audit each term. The governing body has recently drawn up a plan to provide access facilities for persons with disabilities. Personal, social and health education is a regular feature in the curriculum timetable. This includes provision for sex education with a special programme for children in Years 5 and 6. The school nurse talks to children about the use of medicines and other health issues, such as smoking. There is, however, no specific arrangement for advice to older children about the dangers from drug abuse. Accidents and illness are dealt with capably by staff trained in first aid. Detailed health and safety records are maintained. Appropriate arrangements are in place for child protection.

39. Very good procedures are made for promoting and monitoring attendance and punctuality. The school's expectations are made clear to parents who are co-operative in notifying reasons for absence. Registration work is undertaken quickly and any follow-up action is instigated efficiently. There is ready access to the education welfare officer, although very few problems arise in this area of the school's work.

40. Arrangements for promoting high standards of behaviour are very good. Children understand the expectations set out in the school rules. Each year they are also able to contribute to the formulation of special 'golden rules' for their class. Good behaviour and attitudes are rewarded with praise, stickers and awards for the Child of the Week and the Star of the Week. These are very popular with the children and reinforce the importance placed on this area of the school's work. There are also very clear sanctions for dealing with misbehaviour, including bullying. These are implemented on a consistent basis and, where appropriate, involve discussions with the parents concerned.

41. Class teachers regularly monitor and record children's personal development. This provides a helpful basis for updating parents on personal achievements or any concerns, usually at consultation meetings and in the annual written reports.

42. Staff check the progress of different ability groups of children on a regular basis to make sure none are slipping behind. Checks are also made to ensure boys and girls make similar headway.

43. The school has refined and improved its planning and assessment procedures since the last inspection when this was a key issue. The school policy sets out a framework for assessment and there are clear links to planning and target setting.

44. The school is developing the use of computer based systems to monitor progress and set targets in English, mathematics, and science. These systems enable the school to keep track of children's progress through the National Curriculum levels and to adapt work to meet particular needs. The school makes good use of data to compare children's attainment from the start of school with results in national tests. The school also analyses children's test papers in English, mathematics and science to identify strengths and weaknesses. It is well placed to begin taking appropriate action where necessary to improve standards further.

45. Assessment opportunities are shown on teachers' daily plans. They keep their own records to monitor children's progress in English, mathematics and science. Progress in other subjects is monitored informally through discussion and observation of children's work. Some children are involved in their own target setting. Group targets are set for reading. However, the use of individual targets so that children know how they have achieved and what they need to do to improve is not consistent across the school.

46. The marking of work is mainly kept up to date and includes comments that help children understand how their work can be improved.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

47. The school has a successful and distinctive partnership with parents. This is a strength of the school that makes an important contribution to the children's learning and to the work of the school community. This maintains the position seen at the last inspection.

48. Parents have a very high regard for the work of the school. They state children like school, behave well and are helped to become mature and responsible. Parents indicate that children work hard and make good progress. They feel that the school works closely with parents and keeps them well informed about their child's progress. Parents feel that teaching is good and that the school is led and managed well. A few parents express concern about the high turnover of teaching staff.

49. Inspectors fully agree with parents' positive views. They recognise the school has experienced a high turnover of teaching staff in recent years. However, it is working hard to appoint and retain high quality teachers.

50. The quality of information given to parents is very good. The attractive prospectus provides a full description of the school. This is supplemented by special advice to parents on induction arrangements and about the transfer of Year 6 children to secondary education. Helpful newsletters about school activities and events are issued weekly. Staff are readily available for informal discussions with parents about any concerns that may arise. Parents are particularly well advised about their child's progress at consultation meetings with the class teachers and by the evaluative comments in the annual written reports. The governors' annual written report explains the work of the governing body and records school achievements. However, it does not fully meet legal requirements, as information relating to pupils with disabilities is not included.

51. Parental involvement has a very good impact on the work of the school. Several parents provide voluntary help in classes, for example with reading, mathematics and art and design. One parent teaches recorders whilst others help organise school clubs and provide transport for visits. The school has significantly improved the homework arrangements since the last inspection. As a result, the positive support that parents now give to homework makes a significant contribution to their child's learning. The parent teachers' association is a flourishing and well-supported organisation. The association's full programme of events has raised over £5,000 a year. Such funds are utilised to subsidise swimming and school trips as well as to provide learning and recreational facilities.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

52. The previous inspection in 1998 found that the headteacher had a good understanding of the school's needs and a strong commitment to providing the best for all children. This is still the case. The school has the confidence of its local community and, in partnership with

the governing body, the headteacher provides effective leadership. This enhances the school's capacity to improve. Key issues identified in the previous inspection report have been tackled well. Firm educational direction is given and there is an emphasis on the need to raise standards. Small cohorts mean results in national tests need to be treated with caution. That said, the school analyses them carefully so as to identify priority areas for development. Targets for improvement in performance are realistic and determined efforts are made to achieve them. All this is the more commendable because the deputy headteacher left in 2001 and was not replaced because of fluctuating numbers on roll and the cost involved. A management point was offered and all teaching staff invited to apply, but no one wished to undertake the additional responsibility. Forthcoming changes in staff provide the governors with an opportunity to review the situation once more.

53. The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. It has appropriate committees that meet regularly. The relationship between governors and staff is good and has a positive impact on the school. The chair of governors acts as a critical friend to the headteacher and this is appreciated. Governors are closely involved in the production and monitoring of the school development plan. It sets out clear priorities for 2003/4 and also includes a vision statement for the next five years. Governors make many informal visits to the school and there are also structured visits linked to literacy and numeracy. This is good practice because it helps build an effective partnership between governors and staff.

54. Day to day management of the school is good and enables everyone to get on with their tasks. Visitors are dealt with in a pleasant manner and made to feel welcome. The school is rightly proud of the learning environment in which the children work. There is a sense of community and care for one another. The general ethos of treating children as individuals, valuing their efforts and supporting them in areas of difficulty are reflected successfully in its daily life.

55. The headteacher rightly places emphasis on her role of monitoring, evaluating and improving the quality of teaching and learning. In addition to scrutiny of children's work, a programme of lesson observations has been put in place that includes written feedback and areas for development. This is particularly important because of changes in staff.

56. All teachers carry a number of responsibilities for coordinating areas of the school's work. They are enthusiastic about their roles. Their tasks include overseeing resources, helping to prioritise developments and giving guidance to colleagues when required. Some non-contact time is given, but this is understandably limited. Much of their monitoring is of an informal nature and this is helpful. However, there are not enough formal strategies in place to enable them to have a clear view of standards and teaching in their areas of responsibility across the school.

57. The school's approach to the teaching and management of children with special educational needs is good. The children are supported with skill and sensitivity. The special needs coordinator is an established member of staff who has held the responsibility for some years. She is well organised and liaises closely with other class teachers and with the link governor. She has two half days each term to help her carry out the role of special needs coordinator and uses this to check the work of the teaching assistants.

58. The school has an appropriate complement of teachers. There is sufficient expertise and experience jointly to deliver the curriculum. However, there has been a high percentage turnover of teachers. Two more recent appointees are due to leave their permanent posts at the end of term. The governors plan to implement a system of exit interviews to improve retention.

59. There are clear job descriptions. A system of performance management has been successfully introduced for teachers. There are plans to extend the programme to include all non-teaching staff in the future. High priority is given to training and professional development.

60. Teachers are well supported by teaching assistants. The school secretary is recently appointed and supports the school organisation well. All the non-teaching staff make a valuable contribution to the school and to the overall high standards of care.

61. Accommodation is originally Victorian but has been extended and improved. It is kept clean and tidy. There are many places for children to work outside the classroom, including a small separate music room. The well-resourced library is a strength of the school. There is also a well-equipped technology area and good use is made of this and the school hall. The new Millennium garden is well planned to provide a variety of experiences with different structures, sculptures, flowerbeds, and paths. The outside play area for the Foundation Stage children is small, but is adequate for the number of children. The school has plans to move the playhouse and make a bigger space so the children can have regular access to wheeled toys and other large equipment.

62. Resources are satisfactory overall and those for English are good. The book stock is maintained well and the library organised effectively. There is no computer suite but there are computers in every classroom. Resources for both the Foundation Stage and special educational needs are satisfactory.

63. Currently there are no children with disabilities in the school. However, the building at present falls well short of requirements in this respect. For example, it lacks suitable toilet provision or wheelchair access. The governors are fully aware of this and have conducted an audit to identify the alterations needed.

64. Financial management procedures are good. Governors and the headteacher have a clear view of educational priorities when drawing up the school development plan and setting the annual budget. During the year, the finance committee meets regularly to review progress against the budget headings. Day to day transactions are controlled well by the headteacher helped by the school secretary and a finance representative from the education authority.

65. There are good arrangements in place to secure best value. Orders for work and services are placed after consideration to cost effectiveness. Financial decisions are clearly linked to planned initiatives to improve standards. The school seeks every opportunity to augment financial resources. This has recently included a £10,000 Lottery Grant for outside play facilities.

66. Income per pupil is well above the national average, as is expected for a small school. However, given the standards achieved and the quality of education offered, the school is providing satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

67. The governors, headteacher and staff should take action to:

- (1) raise attainment in mathematics, particularly at the junior stage;

Paragraphs: 1-11, 30, 91-101;

- (2) establish more thorough systems that enable subject coordinators to gain a clear view across the school of standards of work and of teaching in their areas of responsibility.

Paragraphs: 56, 89, 100, 109, 124, 134, 140, 149, 160, 166:

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	27
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	3	16	7	0	0	0
Percentage	4%	11%	59%	26%	0%	0%	0%

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/A	78
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/A	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/A	7

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	14

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.7
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
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	6	6	12

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	4	5	4
	Girls	6	6	6
	Total	10	11	10
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	83 (75)	92 (75)	83 (83)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	4	4	4
	Girls	6	6	6
	Total	10	10	10
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	83 (83)	83 (83)	83 (75)
	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	5	7	12

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	4	4	5
	Girls	6	4	7
	Total	10	8	12
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	83 (80)	67 (30)	100 (100)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Girls	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Total	N/A	N/A	N/A
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	N/A (70)	N/A (70)	N/A (100)
	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	61	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	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)	4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17
Average class size	19

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	69

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	N/A
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	N/A
Total number of education support staff	N/A
Total aggregate hours worked per week	N/A
Number of pupils per FTE adult	N/A

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	273,426
Total expenditure	257,569
Expenditure per pupil	3,103
Balance brought forward from previous year	15,857
Balance carried forward to next year	3,987

Recruitment of teachers

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

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	78
Number of questionnaires returned	53

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	25	1	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	57	42	1	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	74	26	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	42	43	13	2	0
The teaching is good.	57	38	3	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	58	38	2	0	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	75	25	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	34	4	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	57	32	9	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	53	36	9	2	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	64	32	4	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	66	34	0	0	0

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

68. Children start school in the year in which they become five. Their attainment on entry is broadly in line with that expected nationally for their age. Those whose fifth birthday is before the end of February are admitted full time in September, those who are five after that are admitted part-time in September and become full time at the start of the spring term. At the time of the inspection the reception children were in a mixed class with younger Year One children. These arrangements vary from year to year according to the number of children in the age group.

69. Recent national guidelines for the Foundation Stage curriculum have been implemented. The school uses the early learning goals and the relevant parts of the national literacy and numeracy strategies. The teacher's planning is clear and sets out what the children should learn, the activities they will do and what will be assessed. Children make good progress and by the end of the reception year most have attained the early learning goals in the six areas of learning¹. Some have exceeded them in reading, writing and mathematics. Children with special educational needs also make good progress.

70. The classroom is well organised with bright displays and areas designated for mathematics, reading, class activities, computers, and creative work. Lively displays celebrate children's work and attractively arranged resources encourage children to participate, which they do.

71. Teaching in the nursery and the reception classes is never less than satisfactory. Examples of good, very good and excellent teaching were seen during the inspection. All adults are used very effectively to support children's learning. The nursery nurse provides very good classroom support.

Personal, social and emotional development

72. Teaching in this area is very good. All adults have very good relationships with the children and they encourage care and recognition of success. At the end of the day the children assess their own performance and say whether or not they have earned a sticker. This is a significant achievement for children of this age. Their behaviour is very good. They listen to each other and work and play cooperatively together. Most are becoming independent. They dress themselves and take care of their belongings. They select which activities they will do, marking their choice on a chart. The children are polite and caring and readily acknowledge the help of adults at the end of a session. Good opportunities for development are presented through a wide range of activities, resources and routines so that, at the end of the reception year, children have achieved the early learning goals in this area.

¹ Areas of learning are: personal, social and emotional development; communications, language and literacy; mathematical development, creative development, physical development and knowledge and understanding of the world.

Communication, language and literacy

73. Children start school with skills in line with those expected for children of similar age. By the end of the reception year most have reached, and some exceeded, the early learning goals in speaking and listening, reading and writing. Teaching in this area is very good. Adults' good subject knowledge and preparation, together with appropriate challenge and support ensures children make good progress.

74. Speaking and listening skills are taught through stories, rhymes, role-play, practical activities and discussions. Children are confident in joining in discussions and answering questions. They can recall events in order and describe what they are doing. For example, they were excited to talk about their recent visit to the seaside at Frinton.

75. Children are encouraged to read from the moment they start school. There is an area in the classroom where they can choose to read books. Reading to adults is individual, in pairs and in groups. It is carefully taught with attention to phonics. Children are learning how to use simple word building skills to check unknown words. They also use picture cues well to make sense of the text. They are beginning to use information books to find out about things for themselves.

76. Children have regular chances to develop writing skills. They are learning to spell simple common words in their writing. They try hard to produce accurate work. Opportunities are provided to make writing fun, for example the idea that a lonely mermaid needed cheering up with messages in a bottle.

Mathematical development

77. The teaching of mathematics is very good. Staff have high expectations of what children can achieve in the time available. They use a variety of activities, good questioning skills and a fast pace to ensure all children are involved. In one lesson observed, the teaching assistant skilfully extended the activity beyond the planning when it was clear the children could go further. Opportunities are taken to use mathematics in familiar situations. For example, in registration time they were asked, "What do we know about ten?" and during a physical education lesson children counted the number of jumps. Children are responsive, well behaved and keen to answer. In another lesson observed they were helping the 'Turtle' to count. They recognised numbers to 10 out of sequence and could say whether 'Turtle' needed to count on or back to reach a particular number. Children are learning about telling the time in hours and can sequence pictures in order. Some children know number facts to ten. They can identify odd and even numbers and show simple doubles and halves. They are learning about coins and the money system. Good use is made of interesting practical activities to make mathematics learning fun. By the end of the reception year most children have achieved the early learning goals for this area.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

78. Teaching in this area is again very good. Adults build on children's natural curiosity to help them learn well. Good use is made of the school grounds and the locality to help children discover the world around them. Planning and recording children's work on computers is particularly good and enables teachers to chart progress very well. Children are confident in their use of the keyboard and mouse and write for themselves, using the shift key to change case. Children are successful in designing and making activities and can choose their materials and use tools to shape and join them together. At the time of the inspection, they were making boats to their own design using balsa wood, cotton reels, straws and masking tape. They were then seeing if their boats would float. Children are learning about animals and their young. They are learning how to compare now with times past through a visit to the seaside. They listen to visitors talking about their childhood experiences. Most have achieved, and some have exceeded, the early learning goals by the end of the reception year.

Physical development

79. Teaching in physical development is good. It is planned well and matched to children's abilities. Children handle scissors and other small tools appropriately and move about the school and classroom sensibly and confidently. During outside physical education lessons children move well in the space available. They are sensible and listen to and follow instructions carefully. They run, jump and skip with confidence. They are beginning to understand the effect of exercise on their body and know why it is important to warm up. They are learning to use large and small apparatus with confidence. Opportunities for children to use big wheeled toys and climb outside every day are limited. However, children make good progress in this area of learning and meet the early learning goals by the end of the reception year.

Creative development

80. Adults support this area of learning very well and there is an appropriate range of opportunities to develop children's creative skills. Children explore colour and texture in painting and making things with play dough. They clearly enjoy these activities. For example, they were excited and enthralled to see the colour change as they mixed blue and yellow play dough. In singing, the children are learning simple songs. They sing in time to the music and listen carefully. They can identify loud and soft sounds in the music they hear and are learning to use body actions, such as clapping, in time to the music. Construction toys and other planned activities, such as the seaside shop and the playhouse, all contribute positively to the development of children's creativity. As a result, they meet the early learning goals by the end of the reception year.

ENGLISH

81. The previous inspection found attainment in English to be in line with most schools nationally at age seven and eleven. However, extension work for brighter children was limited and this was identified as a key issue.

82. Currently, attainment overall at the end of the infant stage is above average and this represents an improvement since the last inspection. It is average at the end of the junior stage. The school was expecting this situation because of differences in cohorts. Reading and writing skills are above that expected for most children nationally at the end of the infant stage. Speaking and listening skills are in line with expectations nationally. At the end of the junior stage reading, writing as well as speaking and listening skills are all in line with national expectations for children of this age.

83. The school's results in national tests need to be treated with caution. This is because the relatively small numbers of children in some cohorts make them statistically unreliable. Over the period 1998 to 2002 the results understandably fluctuated. That said, there was an upward trend. Realistic targets have been set and considerable efforts have been made to meet them. The school has worked hard, successfully, to ensure that brighter children are appropriately challenged and extended. Homework has been used effectively to enhance work in lessons.

84. Scrutiny of work and lesson observations during the inspection show that children, including those with special educational needs make good progress overall. The national initiative on literacy has been introduced well and teachers feel it is helping to raise standards. Texts are chosen carefully so as to appeal to children's interests. Teachers take the opportunity to reinforce literacy skills in other lessons, for example when recording studies in science and history.

85. Children are pleased to talk to visitors about their work and matters that interest them. They are polite and respectful. In lessons they listen carefully to adults and other children. At age seven, most are able to speak confidently and to communicate meaning clearly. They answer questions sensibly, but do not often develop their replies by using their own experiences to illustrate a particular point. Their use of vocabulary is satisfactory, although in discussions they are sometimes slow to offer opinions or to express preferences. By age eleven, children's confidence has increased and they are beginning to use their own experiences and knowledge to develop answers to questions. Their range of vocabulary is sometimes good, but in class discussions children are often reluctant to put forward a point of view or to enter into debate.

86. Children enjoy reading and listening to stories. Appropriate time is given to the development of reading skills, including the use of letter sounds to help tackle unfamiliar words. This approach is used particularly well for children with special educational needs and they benefit from this. All children's individual reading books are chosen carefully and this shows good teacher direction. Children take books home regularly and reading records are used effectively as a means of dialogue between parent, child and teacher. This encourages children to read on a daily basis and to see it as a really worthwhile activity. Many parents actively support this area of work by hearing their child read and recording comments in the reading records. At age seven, most children read with growing confidence and fluency. They understand what they are reading and can recall details of characters and story lines. Many can name several authors they enjoy. By age eleven, children read aloud with increasing use of expression. Brighter children can predict story outcomes and suggest

plausible alternatives. Many have favourite authors and stories. They use dictionaries well and their library and reference skills are satisfactory.

87. Opportunities are provided for children to write for a range of purposes, including stories, poems, letters, reports and playlets. At age seven, they show a secure understanding of sequencing events in the right order. Their work is set out well and full stops and capital letters are mostly used correctly. Stories are usually developed effectively with appropriate and often interesting vocabulary. Brighter children show a growing awareness of writing for different audiences. By age eleven, children mostly plan their writing well. They show a growing understanding of sentence structure, including the use of commas, speech marks, question marks and exclamation marks. Some writing shows imaginative use of vocabulary. Handwriting is usually neat and uniform. Dictionaries are used to check spelling, but there are some simple, unnecessary errors.

88. The structure provided by the literacy hour has given teachers clear guidelines about the organisation of lessons and this is proving beneficial. The lessons observed at both the infant and junior stages were never less than satisfactory and almost all were good. Teachers prepare resources well and their lesson plans are clear about what children are to learn and how. This is usually explained to them at the beginning of the lesson so that they know what they are going to do and why. Relationships are very good and help establish a positive climate for learning. Children have very good attitudes towards the subject and behave really well. Features of the good teaching include:

- high expectations of what the children can achieve in the time available;
- activities that appeal to children and hold their interest. An example of this was seen in a lesson for older juniors in which they considered invitations and their purpose;
- good control and management, including the effective use of encouragement that helps build children's confidence;
- good subject knowledge shared effectively with the children;
- an emphasis on basic skills, such as the use of capital letters and full-stops;
- skilful questioning that keeps children involved and assesses their understanding;
- a sense of purpose and direction that ensures time is used productively.

89. The subject coordinator has held the responsibility for some two years. She sees teachers' planning, has updated the school's reading scheme and led the production of the policy statement. Much of her monitoring of work is done informally, but she has observed colleagues teaching and given verbal feedback.

90. Children's literacy experiences are broadened and enriched through Book Weeks, annual productions and occasional visits from theatre groups and poets. Such activities help to enliven children's interest in the subject.

MATHEMATICS

91. When the school was last inspected, the attainment of the seven and eleven year olds in mathematics was found to be average. The proportion reaching higher levels in the subject was also average, although brighter children were seldom sufficiently challenged by the work set for them.

92. Currently, attainment at the end of the infant stage is average. It is below average at the end of the junior stage. This is because children at present in Year 6 have not made consistently good progress in mathematics over the past four years, but with the good teaching they are now enjoying there is solid evidence of ground being made up.

93. Children's results in national tests and assessments in 2002 showed standards below average for both seven and eleven year olds, and well below those found in similar schools. At both ages, fewer children than in most schools reached higher levels of attainment. Children did less well in mathematics than in English and science. The school's mathematics targets for 2002 were missed. Targets set for 2003 are very much lower. This data requires some qualification, since only a small sample of children took the tests and assessments, each child accounting for some eight per cent of the total score. This said, national test and assessment data covering the period from 1998 to 2002 indicate that attainment in mathematics has been consistently below average over that period. There is no significant difference in the attainment of girls and of boys.

94. By the time they are seven, most children can solve two digit addition and subtraction calculations in the form of $64+19$, using a range of methods. Typically they use their good knowledge of counting in tens to reach 80, before subtracting one. They know that addition calculations can be reversed through the process of subtraction, and can use their knowledge of two, five and ten times tables to find answers to simple problems of multiplication. They know the properties of regular geometric shapes, can read block and line graphs accurately and use common measures of length and weight.

95. Most eleven year olds know their tables and use them for speedy calculation, including multiplication and division with large numbers. They understand common fractions and decimals, and can explain the idea of negative numbers in a practical context, such as reading a thermometer. They have made graphs and pie charts of weather conditions and can explain what these charts tell them. They use standard measures accurately. They recognise regular mathematical shapes and some can define the properties of the shapes. However, a significant minority of children find the subject difficult and their attainment is below what is expected for their age. Children with special educational needs make sound progress in mathematics because teachers plan tasks matched to their abilities and provide extra help, where necessary, through the teaching assistants.

96. The previous inspection found that teaching was generally good, although there were some instances of low expectations and insufficiently challenging work. Three lessons were seen during the present inspection. Lessons in the infant and the younger junior classes were satisfactory, while the lesson seen in the Year 5 and 6 class was very good. The particularly good lesson was about regular two-dimensional shapes and their symmetries. The teacher imaginatively used overhead projection onto a large screen to show silhouettes of regular shapes, challenging children to define their properties, to identify their symmetries, and to use coordinates to plot their reflections. The lesson was very challenging and the children had to concentrate intently. The teaching approach used ensured they sustained their interest and allowed them to try out their own ideas about how to plot the reflected shapes. The quality of the teacher's questioning was very high because she knew her subject well. All these qualities together produced a lesson in which the children made rapid progress, albeit from a low knowledge base in some cases.

97. There are some weaknesses in lessons that are otherwise satisfactory. Since the last inspection, the school has introduced the national programme for numeracy teaching. This is helping to raise standards because it provides very precise guidance about the work children should be doing each year. Teachers plan their lessons in accordance with the programme's guidance, but sometimes lay too little emphasis on the importance of strong, direct teaching of the subject. While there have been improvements in providing suitably challenging work for the more able, teachers are still sometimes too hesitant to divert

particularly quick learning children onto more productive tasks. When this happens, they do not progress as well as they might.

98. Teachers reinforce children's mathematical skills by drawing on them for other subjects. In both geography and information and communication technology lessons, for instance, children have used statistical data bases to find and order information. They have produced graphs, tables and mathematical charts to present their findings.

99. Children's attitudes to work in mathematics are good, especially in the junior classes. They work diligently, collaborate very well in small groups and have enough confidence in their knowledge to put forward their mathematical ideas without inhibition. Even when they find the work hard, they persist with determination. Sometimes the attention of the younger children wanders, but their teacher quickly corrects this.

100. The coordinator for mathematics has held the post for only a short time. She uses the information the school now has to track the progress of each child and she analyses their test performance to see which aspects of the subject they find difficult. She checks her colleagues' plans regularly to ensure the necessary ground is being covered. She has produced a good action plan to improve provision in mathematics. At present, however, it has not been possible for her to see other teachers at work, or to examine weekly plans, to ensure that lessons are of a consistently high standard.

101. After disappointing test results in 2001, governors made mathematics teaching a priority for development. The emphasis has now understandably switched to other subjects, but firm action will need to be taken to ensure that the improvements in standards of mathematics discernable now, are sustained.

SCIENCE

102. At the time of the last inspection, the attainment of seven and eleven year olds in science was found to be average, although brighter children were not challenged enough by their work. Standards at present are above average at the end of both the junior and infant stages. In the 2002 national tests and assessments the eleven year olds did very well. All the children reached the average level and half of them reached the higher level. These were very high standards and considerably better than in similar schools. Infant children, however, did much less well. Their results, as assessed by their teachers, showed their attainment to be well below average. Their attainment now is much better.

103. The school is rightly very pleased with its 2002 junior stage results, but it must also be remembered that in the previous two years the results were below average.

104. Most of the seven year olds have learned from experiments that light is necessary for seeing objects, and that reductions in the amount of light result in reductions in visibility. Using a covered shoebox with a small hole, they discovered that each enlargement of the hole made the objects inside more visible. They then used torches to increase the visibility of the box contents. Through some good experimental work involving running model cars down an inclined slope, they learned about forces, which pull objects downwards, and how to record their observations. For their age they have a good understanding of the importance of fair testing for experiments to be reliable. They can explain some of the factors that need to be held constant when running their cars down the slope.

105. By the end of Year 6, most children can explain clearly how various mixtures are separated by processes, such as sieving and filtration. They understand that solutions can be dissolved into constituent parts through evaporation and condensation. Faced with a kettle containing water mixed with food colouring or with salt, many of the children can predict what the result will be when the solution is boiled and evaporated. The brighter ones can explain why the salt is “left behind”, and can even relate this to efforts to produce clean water in developing countries. They know how to construct electric circuits, how to include switches and devices, such as bulbs or buzzers, and can draw their circuits accurately. They have a good understanding of how variables are controlled in experimental designs, and can record their results clearly using tables, charts and graphs, including the use of computer programmes. Children with special educational needs learn well in science because they have help with writing and recording. Consequently weaknesses in these areas do not hinder their science learning. Girls and boys do equally well.

106. Only two science lessons were seen during the inspection, one in the infants and one in the mixed Years 5 and 6 class. Both lessons were good. Lively and imaginative introductions to the lessons captured the children’s interest. The younger children listened intently to the story “Can’t You Sleep Little Bear?” which led to discussion of fear of the dark, of what can be discerned in the dark, and of how light is needed for objects to be seen. Children went on to conduct experiments using light boxes, to learn more about how light and dark interact. The Year 5 and 6 lesson was also marked by good quality discussion. The children had to concentrate very hard, and make full use of what they had previously learned, to predict what would come out of the spout of a boiling kettle. They realised that water vapour would be invisible and were then challenged to explain what the visible steam was. Once they puzzled this out, they were asked to relate this process of evaporation to earlier learning about the water cycle and how rain is created. They went on to explore how evaporation can separate other solutions and finally used a good computer website to investigate how developing countries cope with their need for water. In both lessons, teachers’ questioning, based on their thorough knowledge of the subject, was rigorous and pushed the children’s thinking into new areas. Brighter children develop a deeper understanding in the course of this work. This corrects a weakness in the last inspection when they were not challenged enough in their lessons.

107. During the inspection, some children were withdrawn from science lessons to continue with computer work on another subject. Since the missed science lesson cannot be duplicated for them subsequently, they are not receiving their proper entitlement in the subject. This withdrawal should be discontinued.

108. Children enjoy their science lessons and show a positive attitude to their work in the subject. At their best, in the older junior class they show an intense interest, concentrate well, and conduct their work maturely and carefully. Their behaviour is excellent. Younger children are also enthusiastic about their practical work in science, and impatient to be active. However, some are slower to settle to the written work of planning and prediction that precedes the experimental activity.

109. The coordinator for science has only been in post for a few weeks. However, she is an experienced subject leader from her previous schools and has a clear idea of how she wishes to influence the subject and raise standards further. The school does not yet have the processes in place that would enable her to have a confident knowledge of how well the subject is taught through the school.

ART AND DESIGN

110. Two lessons were seen during the period of the inspection, one each at the junior and infant stages. Judgements were informed by an examination of teachers' planning, interviews with a sample of Year 6 children, scrutiny of work as well as of displays around the school. The programme of activities is sometimes lively and interesting. There are examples of good work, but overall, the children's attainments at age seven and eleven are broadly in line with that of most schools. This is a similar finding to that of the last inspection.

111. Children build up their skills in a systematic way. Their learning over time, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory. Interesting ideas are generated and children show increasing confidence in experimenting with a range of media.

121. Most children show satisfactory skills in drawing, painting and colouring. This often helps them illustrate work in other subjects, for example in history activities about seaside holidays long ago. As they move up through the school their creative development is satisfactory and they show an increasing ability to represent what they see and feel through pictures. The use of sketchbooks helps them to do this. Their work includes, printing, marbling, collage, batik and the making of computerised pictures. Children show growing awareness of colour, texture, shape and size. They mix and apply paints with confidence. An example of this was seen in an infant lesson in which children were successfully painting pictures of a beech. They showed a willingness to experiment with colours and to observe outcomes, as when they were asked to find out what colours would make the sand look golden. Children in Years 3 and 4 have produced pleasing press prints based on dreams. Those in Years 5 and 6 have used batik effectively to make images of their recent visit to the Eden Project in Cornwall. Appropriate emphasis is given to observational skills and a digital camera is used to good effect in this regard. Appropriate attention is also given to the work of well known artists. For example, infant children have used marbling inks to produce wave pictures in the style of the Japanese artist Hokusai. These studies help children to be more aware of the ways in which different artists represent what they see and feel.

122. The teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to good. Lesson planning is brief, but clear, and resources are prepared well. Health and safety arrangements, such as covering desks and wearing aprons, are adhered to closely. Teachers begin by reminding children about previous work and explaining what is to be done. Learning objectives are sometimes displayed on the board for children to see. This helps build their confidence and has a positive impact on their progress. During practical sessions, teachers sometimes stop the whole class in order to share a child's success and to give ideas to others. This is good practice because it helps children feel their efforts are valued and enables them to learn from one another. Opportunities are provided for children to make choices, such as the type of paper to use, but more chances could sometimes be given for them to put forward ideas of their own. Their behaviour in lessons is really good and their attitudes towards the subject are often of a high order. They want to do well and are proud of their achievements. In the best teaching, expectations of what children can do are good and work moves forward at a brisk pace. Questions are used effectively to help them think about how to improve. Tasks are presented well and motivate the children to work hard.

123. The coordinator for the subject supports colleagues when required. National guidelines have been adopted to determine the school's programme of work. Much of the monitoring undertaken by the coordinator is of an informal nature. More strategies are needed to enable her to gain a clearer view of standards and of teaching across the school.

124. The coordinator runs a popular art club and last year the school held an arts week to help raise the profile of the subject. Displays of art and design work around the school are often good. They help celebrate children's efforts, build visual awareness and encourage creative development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

125. No lessons were seen during the period of the inspection and it is therefore not possible to make judgements about the quality of teaching. Evidence was obtained from an examination of teachers' records and planning, interviews with children and scrutiny of previous work. This shows that sufficient time is given to the subject and that programmes of work are varied and interesting. There are examples of good work, but overall, the children's attainments at age seven and eleven are broadly in line with that expected for their age. A similar judgement was made at the last inspection.

126. Scrutiny of work shows that children build up skills in a systematic way. Their learning over time, including those with special educational needs is satisfactory. They show growing confidence in making choices and handling a range of tools and materials. Their manipulative and control skills are satisfactory, for example when cutting, gluing and joining materials together.

127. Children show very good attitudes towards the subject. They generate interesting ideas and are beginning to think carefully about how they are going to make their products. For example, infant children have made hand puppets and model houses. They began the construction of puppets by drawing pictures and using these as a template. Their work shows satisfactory sewing skills, although there is some lack of precision. In another example, older children made a shelter for a Roamer. They began with drawings and tried to get the scale right. Year 1 children have successfully made star viewers as well as pictures that include simple sliding mechanisms. Records show that children are given appropriate opportunities to take part in food technology. For example, the younger infant children have made jellies, gingerbread men and fruit salads. Emphasis is rightly given to being aware of the purpose for which a product is made. An example of this was the design and construction of slippers. Many children are beginning to think about the results of their work in terms of how improvements could be made. For example, Year 1 children completed a simple evaluation form about their sliding pictures. It included an identification of what they were happy about and what they were not, as well as what could be changed. However, children's efforts to record the way they have designed and made products and their evaluation of the outcomes should be more systematically undertaken.

128. The coordinator for the subject has held the responsibility for some two years and is available to support colleagues if required. Recent national guidelines have been adopted for the programmes of work. Much of the monitoring of the subject by the coordinator is of an informal nature. Currently, there are not enough strategies in place to enable her to have a clear view of standards of work and teaching across the school.

129. Displays around the school help to celebrate what children have achieved in the subject. They also encourage children to think carefully about what they are doing and help develop their visual awareness.

GEOGRAPHY

130. Only two lessons could be seen during the inspection, both at the junior stage. Further evidence was gathered from discussions with children and the coordinator, analysis of children's work and of displays. This evidence indicates that in both Year 2 and Year 6 children attain standards expected for their age and that their achievement is satisfactory. Children with special educational needs make good progress.

131. In discussion with Year 2 children, they can identify differences between Dane End and other localities. They know how to find information using maps, information books, the Internet, and other people's experiences. They know how to use and make maps and can say what characteristics help in the recognition of places, for example, they can give instructions for a route home, past the park, beside the field, until you see a tall tree. Children can describe simple changes in their village, such as more houses and fewer trees. 'Boris' the bear enlivens the interest of younger children as he visits other parts of the world and comes back with photographic evidence. There are good links with other subjects, describing visits to other places, writing about the Algarve and using the computer for research and word processing.

132. Children in Year 5 and 6 are studying water. They are learning to identify sources of pollution, observe samples and describe what they see. They can draw up a suitable table to collect and analyse their findings. They have also collected data on the use of water in the home using a tally chart. They have used a computer to convert this information to a pie chart. A written newspaper report about drought and its effects on life shows good links with work in literacy. Children's work on the coastal environment, erosion and land formation is presented well. In Years 3 and 4, children are making a study of different climate types, comparing Grenada with Spain. They use a computer spreadsheet to produce a rainfall graph and travel brochures as a model for writing their own persuasive brochure pages. When colouring a map, children show they can use a key successfully. They can describe the differences between a place in Spain in the 1950s and the present day and have good recall of learning about coral reefs and the effect of pollution.

133. Teaching was good in the lessons observed. There was a variety of well planned and challenging activities, good use of resources and high expectations of behaviour and standards of work. Some good links are made with other subjects to support children's learning, including the use of information and communication technology. Where teachers make use of too many prepared work sheets the challenge for some children is more limited

134. The coordinator is new in post. She is well qualified for the subject and has identified assessment, the reorganisation of resources and the monitoring of standards in teaching and learning as areas for development.

HISTORY

135. Only one lesson was seen during the period of the inspection. However, discussions with children, scrutiny of their work and of teachers' records and planning shows that by age seven and eleven children reach standards typical for their age. This means standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Children with special educational needs make good progress and are supported well.

136. The school makes good use of effective displays, visits to places of historical interest, speakers from the local community and theme weeks to enrich the children's historical experience.

137. Infant children use resources well to find out about the past. They pose questions and can compare life today with times long ago. For example, in talking with a visitor to school about the seaside during the war years, they found out about a rope support in rough seas, knitted bathing costumes and sweet rationing. This was followed by some interesting role-play as they discovered life on the beach with wooden deck chairs and people wearing knotted handkerchiefs. In discussion, they recalled trains on the pier, bathing machines and men with rolled up trousers. They can compare the materials used to make buckets and spades now and in the past and offer suggestions as to why certain clothing was worn. Children use digital photography to record their work and delight in taking pictures of each other with heads through the hole of a screen showing swimmers dressed in bathing suits.

138. Junior children learn about different eras in history and begin to develop a knowledge and understanding of how key people contributed to change. In Years 5 and 6, children are making a study of the Egyptians. They are learning about how the past is represented and interpreted and the common features with other civilisations. They are learning about the gods, pharaohs, the pyramids and the Nile. There are good links with other subjects, such as art and design. Children have a developing understanding of the use of evidence and can recollect key information from their learning. However, scrutiny of children's work shows an overuse of worksheets. That said, standards in presentation are good and children obviously enjoy learning about times past.

139. Teaching makes good use of resources. An informative display shows children visiting the museum at Stevenage, looking at artefacts and toys. Work displayed about an Egyptian Day shows children dancing, working on board games and dressing in costume. The history theme week shows a thatcher demonstrating his art, reflection on times during the war and Tudor costumes brought into school for children to examine.

140. The subject coordinator, who is new in post, has a sound overview the planning for each year group. She has plans to reorganise the centrally held resources and to monitor standards through teachers' planning, work sampling and observations.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

141. The school has sustained the good levels of opportunity provided to children that were noted in its last inspection. Standards at the ages both of seven and eleven were average at that time, and remain so. The previous report commented on the effective use of computer skills in other subjects, but noted that there were too few opportunities for computer work in literacy. While there are still some occasions where the use of computer skills could have extended and enriched lessons, the very thorough programme of staff training undertaken since the last inspection means that few opportunities are missed. The school has made clear progress in this regard.

142. Each class has a bank of three or four computers, several of which have Internet links. There are additional machines in the library. This is a good level of provision. The dispersed nature of the location of computers creates difficulties for teachers when they need to introduce new programmes or processes to whole classes of children. However, teachers have evolved several sensible strategies to cope with the problem. Sometimes they group their class around one machine and give a brief initial demonstration, so that children can work independently in subsequent days or weeks. Alternatively, teachers ensure that a small group of children gain confidence in the new material and then call on this expertise to help others. The school intends to buy a mobile projector to enable whole class lessons to be taught in the future.

143. The information and communication technology curriculum benefits considerably from the help of a parent who shares skills with the children on a regular basis, and from a paid specialist technician who visits every fortnight to correct the problems which inevitably arise with sophisticated equipment.

144. Overall, the school has responded well to the ramifications of its decision about dispersed location of computers. This arrangement has also brought some advantages, in particular, the immediate availability of computers to children in their own classrooms has resulted in a very good level of computer use to broaden and extend learning in other subjects. Work in literacy, mathematics, science and geography has benefited from this provision. At present, there is no facility for children to use email communications, although plans are in place to introduce this.

145. Most of the seven years olds are confident in using the mouse and the keyboard. They know how to open files and to make selections from menus. They can locate and use a simple word processing programme and have used graphics programmes especially well to create abstract seascapes in art.

146. By the age of eleven, most children have built well on their earlier experience. They have a sound understanding of how information and communication technology applications can help them in their own learning, and in their leisure activities. They appreciate, at a level appropriate to their ages, some of the ways in which new technology impacts on daily life and affairs. They can use the Internet for research purposes, finding out about climate in other countries, or about measures to combat drought in developing countries. They know how to input data to a database, and how to extract information from it. They have learned how to scan pictures into text or onto the school's website and can use multipurpose programmes, such as EXCEL. Children with special educational needs make good headway in information and communication technology because help from teaching assistants is readily available if they need it. Brighter children achieve satisfactory standards and there is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.

147. While computers were consistently in use during the inspection by individual children and by pairs of children working together, only one information and communication technology lesson was seen. This was in the Year 5 and 6 class, and it was well taught. Introducing a new data base programme, the teacher led a lively and searching discussion about how databases might be set up. Children realised that planning was needed and that research and information collection had to precede the inputting of data to the programme. They decided to research the theme of rivers and agreed a range of relevant data to be collected. The teacher very briefly demonstrated how the new programme worked, with the children standing around the computer and asked them to accumulate the required information on rivers as homework. The lesson succeeded well because the discussion was brisk and of a high quality, demanding deep thinking from the children. The teacher's own confident knowledge of the material being taught enabled her to push the children's learning forward very quickly, so that a great deal of ground was covered productively in a short time.

148. Children are very confident and enthusiastic in their attitude towards information and communication technology. Many have facilities at home and this clearly boosts their capability. They work very well in pairs or small groups, invariably behave very well, and show very good levels of sustained concentration. Their willingness to help each other is a marked feature of their activity in the subject.

149. The coordinator is available to give support to her colleagues and has produced a good action plan indicating how she sees the subject developing in the coming year. At present, she has little opportunity to check in detail the quality of teaching of the subject throughout the school, and on the standards reached by all the children.

MUSIC

150. Music was well taught at the time of the last inspection and both the seven year olds and the eleven year olds reached average levels of attainment for their age. The report noted the range of opportunity for instrumental tuition, the active recorder club and the good positive attitudes of the children to the subject.

151. No music lessons were observed during the present inspection so it is not possible to form a judgement about the overall quality of music teaching. However, discussions with the children and scrutiny of records and reports indicate that their attainment at the ages of seven and eleven remains average.

152. The younger children sing enthusiastically and tunefully, holding well to rhythms and phrasing. They modulate tone and volume well to fit the sense of the song's words and to balance with those around them. By the end of Year 6, children have extended their skills and knowledge in the subject. They know the groups of instruments in the orchestra and can name some important composers. They read musical notation at a simple, but satisfactory level, and can clap a given rhythm using crotchets, quavers and minims. They sing tunefully and with feeling, and many can play the recorder to an average level. Children with special educational needs make similar headway in music to that of other children.

153. The school does not have a teacher with specialist music skills, but has made adequate arrangements to ensure this is not a handicap. A satisfactory collection of instruments, texts and recorded music has been built up and staff make sensible and discriminating use of broadcast lessons. Singing plays a strong part in the children's musical development and older children can take part in the school choir. All children join in annual school performances and concerts and those taking instrumental lessons have a chance to play before an audience. Parents give valuable help in running the recorder club. Overall provision for music in the school is satisfactory.

154. The headteacher is the coordinator for music, although she does not have specialist skills in the subject. She carries out this responsibility effectively. She has successfully supported her staff in providing a sound programme of work for the children and ensured the school makes the most of musical opportunities that do not call for high levels of teacher subject specialism.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

155. Lessons were observed in games and athletics. An examination of teachers' records and planning shows all other aspects of the National Curriculum requirements are included in the programmes of work. Infant children, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress over time and, by age seven, their attainments are in line with most schools. Junior children make quicker progress and, by age eleven, attainments are mostly above national expectations. A strong emphasis is given to swimming. All children receive swimming instruction at a Hertford pool for one and a half terms each year. By the age of eleven they can swim at least 25 metres and some have really good skills in this aspect of the subject.

156. Children's attitudes towards the subject are good at the infant stage and very good at the junior stage. All children are appropriately attired for lessons and they behave really well. This has a positive impact on their progress. They move quickly and sensibly to and from the playground and field. This means that little time is lost and lessons begin on time. They listen carefully, follow instructions well and clearly enjoy the tasks set for them, particularly the older children.

157. Infant children participate in athletics with enthusiasm. In warm up sessions, they undertake jumping and stretching movements with satisfactory coordination of body parts. They run energetically, often out of breath through effort. They are beginning to show a competitive spirit, but a sporting attitude towards one another. However, when sprinting, many of them have not yet learned to look straight ahead. In addition, they tend to slow down before the end of a race. Older junior children learn specific games skills. For example, they are successfully learning how to attack and score in volley ball. In this regard, many children know how to strike the ball downwards using the palm of their hand. Their catching, throwing and moving skills are often good and show a growing awareness of the importance of positioning hands and feet as well as watching the ball. Children are mindful of each other and they work together well in pairs and in teams. Their sense of sporting behaviour and of fair play is good. They are successfully developing the ability to evaluate their own performance as well as that of others so as to improve.

158. The infant teaching observed was satisfactory. The lesson seen with older juniors was very good. At both the infant and junior stages, tasks have a clear focus and children are managed well. There is an expectation that all children will work hard and do their best, which they do. Teachers ensure that appropriate resources are to hand. This means that time is not wasted and children can get on with the activities without fuss. There are on-going reminders about earlier work and how it links with new tasks to be undertaken. In the very good teaching, activities move forward at a brisk pace and there is a real sense of purpose. There is a strong emphasis on the building of skills through demonstrations, discussion and practice of movements. Very good questioning challenges children to think hard and to observe movements closely. Activities are varied and are introduced with clear explanations as to what needs to be done and why. This helps to motivate the children and keep them on task. As a result, they make very good progress in their learning and are proud of their achievements.

159. Children benefit from a very good range of extra-curricular activities, such as football, netball and athletics. There is a good programme of competitive games with other schools. A successful Fitness Week is held annually and this raises children's awareness of healthy living and the part regular exercise plays within this.

160. The coordinator for the subject has held the responsibility for some two years. Recent national guidelines are followed in determining programmes of work. The coordinator sees teachers' planning, but does not give feedback. She has overseen the upgrading of resources, but finds it difficult to have a clear view of standards of work and of teaching across the school. Currently, there are not enough strategies in place to enable her to do this effectively.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

161. Only one lesson was seen during the present inspection, but this, together with evidence from previous work and discussions with the children, indicates that the subject is well taught. Children enjoy an interesting programme of activities based on the locally agreed syllabus. They respond in a lively and thoughtful way to the work and they reach the levels of attainment expected in the syllabus at the ages both of seven and eleven. This means the school has successfully maintained the standards of attainment and of teaching reported at the last inspection.

162. By the end of the infants, most of the children understand that religious faith groups are communities of people with common purposes and values. They see themselves too as being members of communities such as families and school, where members care for each other and abide by agreed rules. They know that Christians usually worship in churches and can explain why Christmas is important. They know a little about the ministry of Christ, one of the miracles for example, and have learned what happens at a Christening. Their knowledge of other religions is at a more superficial level, although they can explain what happens at the Hindu Festival of Divali.

163. By the time they reach eleven, children have successfully built on this foundation, deepening their understanding of religions and their effects on the lives of believers. They can explain, for example, how Christians perceive their God and compare this with Hindu concepts of deity. They understand something of the relation between Christianity and Judaism, and that Jesus was a Jew, but have little detailed understanding of the shared history of these faiths. They recall some factual information about Hinduism, its deities and main festivals, and have visited a Hindu temple. Overall, the children recall religious information satisfactorily, but have greater difficulty in appreciating differences of belief. Children with special educational needs usually make steady progress in their religious education lessons because writing demands are kept to a minimum for them, and adult help is to hand when needed.

164. The Year 1 and 2 lesson seen was a good one. Beginning with the reading and discussion of a well-chosen fiction story, the children talked about the selflessness and kindness of a key character who gave up something of value to make her small brother happy. This opening drew the children into the lesson and the following discussion was lively and productive. The teacher wisely allowed it to overrun the allocated time, because children were gaining so much from it. Their discussion focused on occasions when they themselves had given something up to help others. It encouraged a good level of reflection and added to children's spiritual development. Well-managed discussions like this allow brighter children to explore issues in greater depth.

165. In their religious education lessons, children enjoy discussion of moral and religious issues and conduct themselves in a serious and reverent way. The school rightly sees it as important to bring the subject to life for the children through visits to places of interest, good contacts with the vicar and the local church as well as the use of religious artefacts to illustrate points made in lessons.

166. The coordinator has a clear plan for how she wishes the subject to be developed further in the school. She supports her colleagues well in implementing the current locally agreed syllabus, but lacks the opportunity to form a rigorous view of the standard of teaching and learning in the subject throughout the school.