

INSPECTION REPORT

**ARDELEY ST LAWRENCE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
VOLUNTARY AIDED PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Ardeley, Stevenage

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117420

Headteacher: Christine Gibbard

Reporting inspector: Stephanie Lacey
3764

Dates of inspection: 3 – 5 February 2003

Inspection number: 247779

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	School Lane Ardeley Stevenage Hertfordshire
Postcode:	SG2 7AJ
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr Anne Gillam
Date of previous inspection:	November 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3764	Stephanie Lacey	Registered inspector	Foundation Stage, English, art and design, history and music.	The school's results and pupils' achievements, How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9528	Derek Bowers	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
30168	Paul Story	Team inspector	Mathematics, science, geography, physical education and equal opportunities.	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How good are the other curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
24019	Ken Parry	Team inspector	Design and technology, information communication technology and special educational needs.	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Ardeley St Lawrence Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is a small village school with 72 pupils on roll aged between four and eleven. There are ten more girls than boys. There are three classes. One for the 14 children in the reception year, one for pupils in Years 1 and 2 and a third class for pupils in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6. Most pupils transfer to local middle schools at the end of Year 4 and there are currently only three pupils in Years 5 and 6. Pupils come from Ardeley, Moor Green, Wood End, surrounding villages and the outskirts of Stevenage. Most pupils live in owner-occupied housing, with a few in local authority homes. No pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is clearly well below the national average. All families have their cultural roots in the British Isles. Children's attainment on entry to the reception year is wide-ranging and varies from year to year. This year it is above average. Nineteen per cent of pupils are on the school's register of special educational need, which is broadly average. One pupil has a statement of special educational need.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school, with many strong features. Christian values form a sound foundation for the very good support and care for individual pupils. The headteacher provides a strong and sensitive lead. Good teaching ensures that most pupils achieve well and standards are above average by the time pupils leave the school. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards are above average in English, art and music by the time pupils leave the school.
- Good teaching ensures that most pupils achieve well.
- A very strong Christian ethos underpins the work of the school.
- The headteacher provides a very clear lead.
- A united and committed staff team care very well for the needs of individual pupils.
- The governors support the school very effectively.
- Staffing levels and the accommodation are both very good.

What could be improved

- Standards in English and mathematics in Year 2.
- There are no other significant areas for improvement, but the school has appropriately identified the following areas for development:
- Developing the use of information communication technology (ICT) in other subjects.
 - Work on teaching and learning styles.
 - Using assessment data more effectively.
 - The work of headteacher, staff and governors in monitoring how well the school is doing.

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 maintained the good provision for pupils' education, which was identified by the last inspection in November 1997. It has worked hard and successfully to raise standards. There is a continued emphasis on catering for the needs of individual pupils and the headteacher's skilful management of the teaching and support staff, as well as volunteer helpers, makes it possible for pupils to benefit from high levels of individual and small group support. The last inspection did not identify any significant areas for development and since that time the school has evaluated its work carefully year on year, in order to draw up an agenda for improvement. There have been substantial improvements made to the building and the newly opened Foundation Stage classroom provides a very good learning environment for children when they start school. A key factor in the successful maintenance of the good quality provision is the stability of a committed staff and governing body. Several

staff, including the headteacher and senior teachers, have contributed to the work of the school for many years and three of the governors have a lifetime association with the school. The school is continually seeking to improve and is in a good position to move forward further.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
Reading	A	A	A	A
Writing	A	A*	B	C
Mathematics	D	C	D	E

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Similar schools are those in the same free school meals' band. Ardeley is in the 0% to 8% band.

In small schools statistical information about standards can be misleading because the performance of one or two pupils can make a tremendous difference to percentage scores, but some general trends can be identified. In Year 2 national tests standards have clearly been well above average in reading for several years, with standards also high in writing. Standards have fluctuated in mathematics. In 2002 they were below average because, although all pupils attained the expected level 2, few reached higher levels. Standards in science assessments in 2002 were broadly average. In 2002 pupils at Ardeley did much better than their peers in similar schools in reading, about the same in writing and not as well in mathematics. Standards have risen since the last inspection in writing, are broadly similar in reading and have fallen in mathematics. Information about standards in Year 6 national tests is not included because fewer than ten take the tests year on year. The inspection found that children in the reception class have made a good start and are working at levels expected for their age, with some doing better. Most pupils make steady progress in Years 1 and 2, but currently standards in Year 2 are below average in reading, writing and mathematics. This is related to the make up of this year group. Most pupils are working at the levels expected for their age and there are a few pupils with special educational needs in the group. In science and all other subjects pupils reach the levels expected for their age. At the end of Year 4, when most pupils leave the school, standards are above average in English and average in mathematics and science. This represents at least sound progress from Year 2 tests. Standards in art and music are above average and average in all other subjects. The three pupils in Years 5 and 6 are making good progress in all subjects because of the good support that they receive. Pupils with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils make the same progress as their peers. There is no overall difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good overall. Pupils are positive about the school and their learning and are eager to do well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall. Pupils have good understanding of right and wrong and are very aware of the school's expectations. Most are attentive and listen carefully to their teachers and others. However, a few boys in Year 2 quickly lose concentration.
Personal development and relationships	Very good overall. Pupils willingly undertake responsibilities and older pupils look after younger ones. Pupils form very good relationships with each other and the staff.

Attendance	Satisfactory and in line with the national average.
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TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Good	Satisfactory	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.

Good teaching overall ensures that most pupils achieve well. In the lessons seen the quality of teaching ranged from excellent to satisfactory, with the strongest teaching in the oldest and youngest classes. Significant strengths in the teaching include very good relationships between staff and pupils, very good teamwork, very good subject knowledge in relation to the teaching of art and design, music and physical education. Areas that need improving include whole school consistency in the marking of pupils' work and in the use of target setting for individual pupils, expectations of presentation of work and management of pupils' behaviour in some sessions. Literacy and numeracy are both taught effectively and this ensures that pupils make steady progress in the development of basic skills. One of the strengths in this area is the good support provided for pupils with special educational needs, who work in small groups on a range of 'catch up' programmes.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and balanced. Provision for work in the Foundation Stage, art and music are particular strengths. The school makes good use of trips and the local environment to enrich the work planned.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs. Very good levels of staffing means that pupils often work with support in small groups.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This remains a strength of the school. Spiritual and cultural provision are very good, underpinned by strong Christian ethos. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is good. Both are promoted well by school and evident in pupils' behaviour and the close knit caring community.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has very good procedures and practices to ensure the health, safety, care and protection of all its pupils. The school has effective measures to promote good behaviour; these are being monitored to ensure a consistency of approach. There are good systems in place for checking how well pupils are doing. The school is beginning to use the information gathered to set individual targets for improvement and to modify work planned where necessary. The use of assessment data to enable the school to raise standards further could be improved.

The school has a very good partnership with parents. The quality of information provided for parents is good overall. Parents make major contributions to children's learning by their support at home and in their involvement in school activities. The Friends' Association works very hard for the school and raises substantial amounts of money for school funds. There are strong links with the village community and some local people help in the school on a voluntary basis.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher is a very clear and inspirational leader, who is striving to improve the school still further. She provides very good support for colleagues and manages a complex staffing structure very well. The senior teacher gives sound and committed support.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors support the school very well. They use their talents and expertise very well in the best interests of the school. Many governors visit the school during the working day and have a clear picture of how well it is doing.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school analyses the performance of pupils in national tests carefully. There are good procedures in place for checking how well the school is moving towards the improvements planned for year by year, with some governors more involved in monitoring than others. Informal evaluations of the teaching and learning in classrooms have provided a sound basis for further development, with plans to improve this area.
The strategic use of resources	Financial and human resources are used well. The school successfully maintains a generous staffing ratio and has budgeted well to improve the accommodation. The principles of best value are used well in financial planning.

The school is very well staffed by a committed and hard working team. All staff, including teachers, teaching assistants, administrative staff, lunchtime staff, cleaner in charge, cleaner and grounds man make significant contributions. The accommodation is very good and very well maintained. The grounds are spacious and attractive. The school is well equipped and resourced.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Behaviour is good. • The school is helping their children to become more mature. • Children are expected to work hard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about their children's progress. The school's links with parents. Activities outside lessons. Homework arrangements.

Ninety per cent of parents returned the questionnaire sent to them seeking their views about the school. This is an excellent response. Nineteen parents attended the meeting held for them before the inspection. The inspection fully endorses parents' positive views expressed in the left hand box. A few parents expressed some concerns through the questionnaire, which are included in the right hand box. The inspection found that the information provided about pupils' progress is good, with clear written reports and good opportunities to speak to staff both formally and informally. It also found that there is a good range of activities planned outside lessons considering the size of the school. These include a residential visit. It found that homework arrangements are satisfactory overall, with room for improving the liaison with parents. Although there are no apparent weaknesses in the partnership with parents the staff need to look further into the reasons why a few parents feel that the school does not work closely with them.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

Starting school

1 When children start school in the Foundation class their skills, knowledge and understanding are wide ranging and the balance of higher and lower attaining pupils varies year on year. This year, the group as a whole are doing better than one would expect for children of their age in most areas of learning¹.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2

2 Statistical information in small schools can be misleading because the performance of one or two pupils can have a huge impact on the data. However general trends can be identified. It is clear that standards at Ardeley have been well above average in reading for the last four years, with pupils doing much better than their peers in similar schools. Similarly, standards in writing have been above or well above average for the same period, with standards in the top five per cent of all schools in 2001. In 2002, standards were above average, with pupils doing as well as their peers in similar schools. In mathematics, standards have fluctuated over the last four years from well above average to below average. In 2002 they were below average and much lower than standards in similar schools. This was because, although all pupils attained the expected level 2, only one reached the higher level 3. Standards in science assessments in 2002 were broadly average. Last year higher attaining pupils did not do as well in writing and maths as they did in reading. Standards have risen since the last inspection in writing, are broadly similar in reading and have fallen in mathematics.

3 There are several factors that account for the differences in pupils' attainment in English and mathematics. These include:

- very good individual support for pupils in reading, both at home and at school, that contributes to the high standards;
- some lack of challenge for higher attaining pupils in mathematics;
- some lack of cohesion in planning for the development of mathematical skills.

4 Only one or two pupils take the national tests at the end of Year 6 and so judgements about overall standards are inappropriate.

Inspection findings

5 The inspection made judgements on the attainment of pupils at the end of the Foundation Stage, at the end of Year 2 and at the end of Year 4, when most pupils transfer to local middle schools.

Foundation Stage

6 Children make good progress in their reception year and by the time that they enter Year 1 most have reached the early learning goals² in all areas of learning. This year children are doing particularly well in the areas of personal, social and emotional development, communication language and literacy and knowledge and understanding of the world.

¹ The areas of learning are: personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development.

² Early learning goals establish expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage.

Years 1 and 2

7 Most pupils make sound progress in Years 1 and 2. Most Year 2 pupils are working within level 2, the level expected for their age, in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Very few pupils are doing better than this. Consequently standards overall are below average in reading, writing and mathematics and average in science. This appears concerning, but is directly related to the make up of this particular group, with several pupils who have special educational needs and few higher attaining pupils.

8 In all other subjects pupils reach the levels expected for their age. Only physical education and recorder tuition were timetabled during the inspection period and apart from these subjects, judgements are based on pupils' work and conversations with them about their skills, knowledge and understanding.

Years 3 and 4

9 At the end of Year 4, standards are above average in English and average in mathematics and science. This represents at least sound progress from Year 2 tests, when standards were above average in reading and writing, and average in mathematics.

10 Standards in art and music are also above average at the end of Year 4. They are average in all other subjects. Physical educational, art and design, ICT and music were timetabled during the inspection and again judgements in other subjects are based on discussions with pupils as well as evidence from the work that they have completed. It is apparent from pupils' work in Years 1 to 6 that insufficient opportunities are taken to develop pupils' ICT skills in other subjects.

Years 5 and 6

11 The three pupils in Years 5 and 6 are making good progress in all subjects because of the good support that they receive.

Progress of pupils with special educational needs

12 Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) achieve in line with other ability groups. Most of them have particular difficulties in reading, writing and mathematics. A few also have behaviour problems. Teachers and classroom assistants support these pupils well and as a result they make steady progress overall towards their individual targets. When working with a classroom assistant or withdrawn for additional help in small groups they make good progress.

Higher attaining pupils' achievements

13 Higher attaining pupils are challenged effectively in most sessions, with scope for higher expectations in some mathematics sessions and in relation to the quantity and presentation of their work.

Providing equal opportunities

14 The school monitors results of tests and assessments to check that all groups perform equally well. Although there are some differences in performance between boys and girls over the past three years in the Year 2 tests and teacher assessments, the school has carefully compared results and established that it is due to prior ability and composition of the group. Overall there are more girls than boys in the school, but in some year groups there is a large imbalance between the sexes. In the current Year 2, for example there are many more boys than girls and it is in the older pupils' class that girls predominate. There is no overall difference in the attainment of boys and girls, apart from the national differences, with girls tending to do better in reading and writing than boys, and boys tending to do better in mathematics and science.

15 The school identifies its more able pupils and makes provision for them in English and mathematics through the use of ability grouping. Similarly pupils in years 5 and 6 in the junior class are often withdrawn for work in a separate group.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16 Since the last inspection the school has maintained and strengthened the overall positive picture in this area of its work.

Pupils' attitudes

17 Overall pupils' attitudes to the school and learning are good. They are eager to attend and take pride in their school and describe the things they enjoy. The early establishment of good routines as pupils enter school means they quickly develop good attitudes to their work and the ability to concentrate on the task in hand. The warm encouragement of the staff means that pupils quickly settle into the Foundation class. Good and imaginative teaching helps pupils to develop a sense of achievement and enjoy learning. They listen carefully to instructions, work hard and persevere well with tasks. This was particularly evident in a numeracy lesson with children under five.

18 These good attitudes remain with pupils as they progress through the school. The very good relationships throughout the school mean that pupils and adults work well together with mutual respect and trust. Strong Christian values are evident in this and visitors cannot fail to be impressed by the caring family atmosphere. The good teaching in many of the lessons stimulates pupils' interest and consequently they are enthusiastic and eager to learn. Pupils are keen to join in and contribute and there is no shortage of responses to teachers' questions. Children under five showed evident excitement in trying to hit the target with their beanbag and repeatedly worked at this to improve their accuracy. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 worked with clear interest and enjoyment whilst investigating the conductivity of materials. In assemblies and during the weekly Mass they take obvious delight in singing hymns and songs sensitively and enthusiastically.

Attitudes of pupils with special educational needs

19 The staff work hard to ensure that pupils with SEN enjoy the same very good relationships with adults as all other pupils. As a result, most of them have positive attitudes to their work and are keen to do well. Pupils respect and care for each other and this encourages those who are less confident.

Pupils' behaviour

20 Behaviour in lessons, assemblies and around the school is invariably good. Pupils are attentive to their teachers and respond well to the school's policy of positively reinforcing good behaviour. Where inattention does occur, as was seen on some occasions amongst a small group of boys in the Year 1 /2 class, pupils are quickly corrected and it does not unduly interfere with the learning of others. Pupils are clear about the behaviour expected and how it is reinforced through assemblies and PSHE sessions and two of them are currently working on a guide to good behaviour. Pupils respond well to the adults in the school whether they are teachers, teaching assistants, administrative staff, visitors, helpers or lunchtime assistants.

21 Resources and equipment are carefully used and quickly cleared away so that time is not wasted. At lunchtimes supervised pupils walk sensibly, in pairs, down the lane to the village hall. Within the hall they quietly wait to collect their meal or calmly talk to their friends at the table. In the playground they mix well, with older and younger pupils playing happily together. There have been no exclusions during the past year and no signs of bullying, racism or sexism were seen during the inspection. Pupils report, in discussion, that arguments are

quickly resolved and that they are clear that they would go to an adult if there were a problem. They appreciate the opportunities that classroom 'circle time' provides for exploring ways of coping with problems that naturally occur as a result of living together and for the promotion of tolerance and harmony. Parents' views echo this with almost all having a very positive view of standards of behaviour.

Pupils' personal development

22 The very good relationships throughout the school have a positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning because they feel valued, secure and well supported. Pupils are polite and considerate to staff, visitors and each other. They are encouraged to look after each other and respect others' views and beliefs, which they do with sensitivity. They listen well to one another and value what others have to say. Pupils are aware of the effects of their actions and considerate of others' feelings. They appreciate the opportunity to contribute ideas and would welcome more formal systems for taking account of their views. Their enthusiasm and appreciation of the chance to be involved in the refurbishment of the toilets illustrates this well. A strong PSHE programme plays an important part in strengthening pupils' confidence and self esteem. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and respectfully treated by their peers.

23 From an early age pupils are encouraged to take responsibility from remembering to take their reading book home, to tidying up after lessons and changing their footwear as they enter the school. Older pupils set out materials and resources for lessons, act as monitors at the lunch table, prepare the hall for assembly and officiate at Mass. They take their monitor roles very seriously and provide good role models for younger pupils. Pupils are actively involved in fundraising for the village, support a number of charities and have a special link with a village in Kenya. They are often encouraged to work independently and within the literacy and numeracy sessions they often work collaboratively on tasks without direct support.

24 The school's strong commitment to pupils' personal development is well demonstrated by the annual residential visit of all pupils in Years 1 to 6 to a fresh venue each year. These visits involve outdoor and adventurous pursuits that develop individual and team qualities as well as providing pupils with the valuable experience of caring for themselves.

Attendance

25 Attendance was satisfactory last year and the level of unauthorised absences was below the national average. The attendance was well above average during the previous two years but dropped last year due to a significant increase in the number of term-time holidays. So far this year the level of attendance has started to rise again and there have been very few days lost because of holidays. Most pupils arrive at school punctually each day.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

26 Overall the quality of teaching is good and ensures that most pupils achieve well. The quality of teaching has been maintained since the last inspection, with the strongest teaching in the oldest and youngest classes, as it was last time. In lessons seen, the quality of teaching ranged from excellent to satisfactory, with no unsatisfactory teaching.

Strengths in the teaching

27 There are significant strengths in the teaching, which underpin the work in all classes. These include:

- Very good relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils trust their teachers, whose positive approach raises pupils' self esteem.
- Very good teamwork. Teachers and assistants work closely together and the good staffing levels make it possible for pupils to receive individual or small group support.

This is particularly helpful for pupils with special educational needs. Job share arrangements also generally work well, with pupils in Years 1 to 6 benefiting from the expertise of at least three teachers in both classes.

- Very good subject knowledge in relation to the teaching of art and design, music and physical education. High expectations in these areas raises pupils' achievement.

Areas for development

28 Within the context of good teaching overall, there are some areas that need improving. These include:

- Marking of pupils' work. Teachers mark work regularly, but do not always give pupils sufficient information about what they need to do to improve. Work is not always assessed in relation to the purpose of the piece of work.
- The use of target setting. Teachers are beginning to set individual targets for pupils in English and mathematics, but there is some inconsistency in approach, which is potentially confusing for pupils.
- Expectations of presentation of work. Again there is some inconsistency between teachers in the expectations of how work should be set out and presented.
- Management of pupils' behaviour in some sessions. Sometimes, especially when they are expected to sit and listen for a long period, pupils are a little restless and do not concentrate as well as they might.

Teaching in the Foundation Stage

29 The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is good and ensures that children achieve well. The quiet, calm approach of the teacher has helped children to settle quickly into school life and to undertake learning activities in a calm and sensible way. Work is well planned and children are fully engaged in learning by purposeful and interesting tasks. The room and outside area are well organised and provide good opportunities for work in all areas of learning. The teacher is very clear in her explanations and makes very good use of resources like the electronic whiteboard to explain new ideas to the children. The nursery nurses provide good support and work sensitively with small groups and individuals.

Teaching in Years 1 and 2

30 Sound teaching of pupils in Years 1 and 2 ensures that most pupils make steady progress. Staff work very well with parents to support the pupils, in reading particularly. Most parents share books very regularly at home with their children and there is good individual support for pupils in school. This in part accounts for the high standards in reading in recent years. There is a sound emphasis on teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Pupils in this age group are taught by several teachers, with two particularly responsible for work in English and mathematics. These experienced teachers work well together to plan learning tasks for the pupils. This is usually effective, with some attention needed in relation to planning for skills development in mathematics. This may contribute to some under-achievement in this subject.

Teaching in Years 3 to 6

31 Overall the teaching for this age group is good and again ensures that most pupils make good progress. This term the job share arrangements have altered slightly, but good provision has been maintained. Planning and preparation are particularly strong points. It is in this area of the school that the use of teachers' subject expertise in particular areas has been especially effective in driving up standards. In both art and design and music pupils achieve well because of the contributions of the three staff working in these areas. Good provision is made for the three older pupils in literacy and numeracy particularly. They often work in a small group with a visiting teacher or assistant.

Teaching of literacy and numeracy

32 Teaching of both literacy and numeracy are sound, with some good features. There is a strong emphasis on teaching the basic skills and this has been effective in establishing pupils' reading, writing and numeracy skills. Most pupils are confident readers by the time that they leave the school, write with some clarity and have a good understanding of the four rules of number. Teachers draw on a range of published schemes for both English and mathematics teaching. This provides a firm structure for the development of skills, but some lessons lack sparkle as a result and pupils are not always caught up in the excitement of learning. There is scope for more work related to helping pupils to appreciate the work of different writers, to writing for a real purpose and for undertaking mathematical investigations and problem solving. One of the strengths in this area is the good support provided for pupils with special educational needs through a range of 'catch up' programmes.

Providing equal opportunities

33 Teachers are careful to support boys and girls equally in their learning and there is no indication that either group is favoured in questioning, allocation of tasks or formation of working groups. In both English and mathematics teachers use ability grouping when planning and organising lessons to meet the needs of all pupils including those of different year groups in the mixed age classes. Practical tasks in mathematics and science allow opportunities for pupils to work at their own level. At other times in science and in all other subjects pupils follow the same work and complete the same tasks achieving as much as they can in the time available.

Teaching of pupils with special educational needs

34 Overall, teaching of pupils with SEN is good and the school makes effective use of additional staff and resources. For example, six pupils in Years 3 and 4 were both challenged and supported in very structured and intensive sessions in the Blue Room and as a result they made good gains in spelling. On another occasion, pupils in Years 1 and 2 worked with the rest of the class for the first part of a literacy lesson and then with a classroom assistant in the staffroom during the group activity. They thoroughly enjoyed being alphabet detectives searching for missing letters and sounds. There was a good blend of fun, helpful guidance and direct instruction that helped them to move forward.

Homework

35 The inspection found that the homework policy was clear and that all pupils understood the expectations in relation to reading regularly. Pupils have reading diaries where books read are recorded and progress is noted by both parents and staff. There is scope for providing some written guidance within the notebooks for parents. Older pupils are expected to note down any homework set, but there is not a sufficiently robust system in place to ensure that parents are aware of the expectations week by week.

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

36 Overall the school provides its pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum that is relevant to their needs, meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and those of the Foundation Stage. The school has continued to develop its curriculum since the last inspection to take suitable account of changes in requirements and to better meet the needs of its pupils. It continues to enrich this curriculum and extend pupils knowledge and understanding through after school clubs, a wide range of visits and visitors and very good use of both its own site and the surrounding locality.

Development of the curriculum

37 Since the last inspection the school has focused on the implementation of the numeracy and literacy strategies, very successfully introduced planning for the Foundation Stage based

on the six areas of learning and adapted its documentation for all other curriculum areas in the light of new requirements. It has selectively developed its own curricular documentation from guidance of the Curriculum and Qualifications Authority, local authority schemes and commercial packages to best suit the needs of its pupils. Teachers make good use of this documentation when planning their lessons.

38 Curriculum maps for each subject outline how account will be taken of the needs of pupils in the mixed age classes by alternating topics on a two-year cycle in Years 1 and 2 and a four-year cycle in Years 3 to 6. They provide a clear overview of coverage to prevent repetition and ensure suitable progression.

39 Links are often made between subjects as for example in the study of faiths and the geography of countries, with children under five learning about Sri Lanka and Buddhism. Sometimes the links extend further as, for example, when the visit to the Pelham environmental centre by pupils in Years 1 and 2 formed the basis for work in art, science and geography. ICT is sometimes used to support learning in other subjects as for example when older pupils find out what Tudors wore from a CD ROM or younger pupils use a program to practice numeracy skills. The school recognises that ICT is not yet being used consistently to support learning in other subjects and has identified this as an area for development. It has also recognised the need to focus more on the use and application of mathematics through practical activities and investigations together with greater use of investigations in science to extend and develop the skills of scientific enquiry.

Strategies for teaching numeracy and literacy

40 In mathematics and English the clear and detailed guidance of the national strategies for numeracy and literacy provide good support in planning work for pupils of different ages and abilities. Pupils often consolidate their numeracy skills as they employ them in accessing other tasks. Literacy skills are clearly used to access and complete tasks in many other subjects and sometimes the texts used are directly linked with other subjects. However, opportunities for this are not yet systematically planned or always clearly identified, especially in mathematics.

Equal opportunities

41 The school works hard to ensure that all pupils enjoy full equality of opportunity in the curriculum it provides. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by the teaching assistants and their teachers in accessing tasks and activities. Ability grouping in English and mathematics helps to meet the needs of all pupils and practical tasks in other subjects provide good opportunities for pupils to work at their own level. All pupils have equal access to clubs, sports and other activities provided by the school. Catch up programmes such as ELS and TRACKS are well used to develop pupils' literacy skills and enable them to access the curriculum.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs

42 Arrangements for pupils with SEN are good. Teachers adapt the work to meet their particular needs and most of the time pupils learn alongside their classmates about the same subjects and topics. Often this is with extra adult help. In addition, they regularly work outside the classroom, usually on carefully planned literacy programmes designed to help them catch up. However, the school is fully aware of the need to ensure that pupils are equally and fully involved in all aspects of school life, and therefore that they do not miss other essential or enjoyable whole class activities at these times. Consideration is being given to timetabling a common reading session to give an opportunity for easy withdrawal of groups that need extra support.

Extra-curricular and other activities including educational visits

43 Professional instructors and volunteers provide a good range of after school clubs that are predominantly sport based and currently include gymnastics, football and netball. The school is looking to extend these. A good range of visits and visitors are used to enrich the curriculum. These have included museums in Hitchin and Letchworth, the National Gallery, Natural History and Science museums, an astronomer, an archaeologist, scientists, crafts people and a drama company. All pupils in Years 1 to 6 benefit from weekly swimming sessions at the Ward Freman School in Buntingford and learn the recorder with a visiting specialist. Good use is made of the school's grounds and the village to support work in a range of subjects. An annual residential visit for all, except children under five, to a different venue each year provides further support for subjects such as PE, geography, history and art.

Personal, social and health education

44 Good provision is made for pupils' personal social and health education. This has recently been extended to take account of new national requirements. A good programme of activities that already included education on diet, health, sex, drugs and personal safety is being developed and integrated with circle time to help pupils develop a safe and healthy life style, gain confidence and learn to interact with others.

Links with the community and partner institutions.

45 The school has very good and supportive links with the local community. St Lawrence Church and the village are visited for events during the year. The local vicar is a regular visitor to the school and conducts a weekly school Mass which parishioners are invited to attend. Performances by pupils in school, country dancing at the annual fete, daily use of the village hall for lunches, the annual plant sale and joint art exhibition all forge very good links with the wider community. There are good links with a range of local partner schools, local secondary and middle schools and training institutions whose students regularly gain practical experience in the school. Prior to pupils' transfer to the next stage of their education there are visits by staff, taster lessons, meetings and suitable exchange of information.

Personal development

46 The school sees pupils' personal development as a very important part of its work. It continues, as at the time of the last inspection, to be a strength of the school and it has done well to maintain this position. It is stronger, as it was then, in spiritual and cultural development. This is largely a reflection of the school's ethos and the strong awareness of the spiritual and cultural elements in its planning. The success of the provision is monitored through both pupils' individual records of personal development and the staff's very good knowledge of their pupils in this small caring community.

Spiritual development

47 Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. Daily whole school assemblies and the weekly school Mass provide pupils with very good opportunities for moments of quiet reflection or focused prayer. The architectural design of the hall and the well-established features of the worship create a tranquil ambience and a sense of occasion that supports this very well. Pupils are effectively involved in this process as they read from the Bible, lead prayers and act as servers. They express their joy in their singing, particularly their rendition of 'Gospel Light' with its solo performance. Stories from the Bible such as Simeon's blessing of the infant Jesus and the festival of Candlemas are well used to illustrate trying to do better, how we can influence others and the pattern of the Christian year. In discussions, pupils report that the assemblies are one of the things they like best about their school.

48 Pupils have very good opportunities to reflect on their own feelings, emotions and reactions in the course of personal and social education. In religious education pupils learn

about rites of passage in the main faiths, are encouraged to think about similarities and differences in their own lives and appreciate the significance of artefacts in the main religions. In other subjects such as history and literacy they also have good opportunities to consider others' emotions and in subjects such as science, mathematics and art to marvel at the beauty of their world. Spontaneous outbursts of delight, as when children under five saw the 'hungry caterpillar' emerge from its bag, support and extend this process very well.

Moral development

49 Pupils' moral development is good and a central part of the school's Christian ethos. Pupils have a good sense of right and wrong due to the good guidance they are given. Adults throughout the school are very good role models for pupils both in the way they behave towards one another and the care they show for the pupils. The positive reward system is well used to reinforce and confirm expected behaviour and teachers remind pupils, as necessary, of their expectations and the school's rules. Pupils look at the rules of the major faiths in religious education and personal and social education provides good opportunities to consider why rules are necessary and explore the suitability of reactions. An example of this was when pupils in the Year 1/2 class considered whether anger was a justifiable response and how to deal with it. This is also reinforced in assemblies by stories with moral aspects. Pupils show suitable respect for the views and beliefs of others in discussions and when answering questions. Older pupils, particularly those with responsibilities, show integrity when dealing with other pupils particularly younger ones. They care about their school, and two of them are currently working to produce a good behaviour guide.

Social development

50 Social development is also good and is clearly reflected in the 'family' atmosphere that is apparent to parents and visitors. Pupils are given a range of opportunities to work with each other, either in pairs or small groups in lessons. Older pupils play with younger ones and look after them at the lunch table. After-school activities, visits to places of educational interest, and whole school productions and events also provide a good range of opportunities for pupils to learn how to work together and meet with others. All pupils, except the under fives, have the valuable opportunity of a residential visit with outdoor and adventurous activities to broaden their experience away from home. Older pupils conscientiously complete monitoring roles around the school and all pupils develop personal initiative as they undertake housekeeping tasks such as setting out and clearing away in lessons. Informal opportunities for pupils to contribute to discussion such as the choice of colour and flooring for the toilet refurbishment allow them to make contribution to the school community and develop a sense of responsibility which they are keen to extend. Pupils are encouraged to develop an understanding of their responsibilities in the wider world through a regular programme of charitable events and the special link with Runyenjes village, in Kenya.

Cultural development

51 Provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. They have very good opportunities to explore not only their own culture but also that of other countries and peoples. They learn about different faiths and beliefs in religious education and about different countries and their peoples in geography. Visitors such as the Sri Lankan student and visits by pupils from a multicultural school extend this well. Artistic traditions are explored in music and art with pupils emulating other artistic styles such as aboriginal and Japanese. They learn more about their own culture, traditions and locality in geography, history, music and English and this is extended further by activities such as country-dance, exploring the locality, community events and visits to museums. Pupils are developing a very good understanding and knowledge of other cultures and the school, although mono-cultural, is preparing them well for life in multi-cultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

Health, safety and care of all pupils

52 This is a strong area, which has been maintained well since the last inspection. The school has very good procedures and practices to ensure the health, safety, care and protection for all its pupils, including child protection. A comprehensive health and safety policy is in place and the school meets the requirements of the relevant legislation. The governing body delegates the responsibilities of the health and safety policy and procedures to the headteacher and a responsible governor. They are very meticulous and conduct frequent inspections of the school. All findings and actions taken are reported to the premises committee. Each term there are evacuation drills for the school buildings and also for the village hall where the children have lunch. All PE, safety and electrical equipment is tested regularly under contracts. A local authority specialist also carries out structural checks and the school architect does a full report on the buildings every five years. The fire brigade and road safety officer brief staff and children on potential hazards. Each day a number of the children wear safety jackets as they all walk from the school to the village hall. The parents operate an excellent system for managing the arrivals and departures of children each day by car.

53 The school secretary is the main first-aider and she is supported well by all other staff who have received recent instruction on emergency first aid and anaphylactic training. Accidents are recorded in a book in the staff-room and the secretary contacts parents promptly if there are any concerns. There are very good routines to manage break times and lunchtimes and the children are always well supervised. Special diets are catered for by the school catering staff with special attention given to the requirements of any children with allergies.

54 The child protection policy is fully in place with the headteacher as the designated person. The school's very good procedures follow the requirements of the local Area Child Protection Committee closely. Other members of staff are fully aware of the policy and procedures.

Measures to promote good behaviour and personal development

55 All staff are currently reviewing the very good behaviour policy and practice and the systems of rewards and sanctions to ensure consistency of practice. A behaviour information leaflet is to be produced. The staff have collaborated in developing ideas for games to encourage teamwork amongst the pupils. Any incidents are always recorded in a book in the staff-room. The children help and care for each other and support those who exhibit behavioural difficulties. If they see another child becoming upset their stabilising effect often helps to prevent a potential flare-up. New children are helped to settle very quickly in the school. Achievement awards and stickers are a good incentive and are popular with the children. There are progressive sanctions in place should the need arise. The special needs co-ordinator is accessing specialised support from the Children Schools and Families' Service for children with poor behaviour patterns.

56 Children are happy to come to school and there is no evidence of bullying, racism or sexism. Conflicts are resolved quickly and effectively by the staff. The headteacher and staff respond as soon as possible to requests for meetings with parents to support them and their children. There is personal contact by staff with parents to inform them of any incident during the day. Staff are exploring with other schools in the area any opportunities for older pupils to investigate wider citizenship and health issues.

57 Staff have experienced difficulties in securing statements for pupils with behavioural problems, but work hard to minimise the impact of one pupils' inconsistent behaviour on the rest of the class.

Measures to promote good attendance

58 The school keeps accurate records of attendance. Any absences are checked regularly by the secretary and teachers and followed up if there are no immediate explanations. The education welfare officer also checks the registers each term to look for any patterns of absences. In the prospectus parents are discouraged from taking term-time holidays and encouraged to make sure that their children arrive early. This is reinforced during discussions with parents and in newsletters. Punctuality is also recorded and monitored closely since any pupil arriving after 9.00 a.m. must report to the office.

Assessment

Improvements since the last inspection

59 Since the last inspection the school has worked hard to consolidate and develop further the wide ranging and effective assessment procedures that were already in place. An integrated approach that uses similar methods of assessment and recording is now in place for all subjects of the curriculum. Teachers conscientiously maintain good quality assessment records and make good use of these and their detailed knowledge of their pupils when planning for the next stage of their learning. Assessment information is well used to ensure parents and pupils are aware of how they are doing and what they should do to improve.

Developing manageable procedures

60 The headteacher has worked closely with teachers to develop and refine a good range of robust and rigorous assessment procedures that provide the school with a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses of both cohorts and individual pupils. There is a strong framework and timetable for ensuring that end of unit assessments in all subjects, as well as specified tests in English, mathematics and science are part of the ongoing process. These are supplemented by regular informal assessments through marking, discussions and observations that are recorded on lesson plans and in mark books. Lesson and curricular plans contain detail of the assessment focus and possible assessment tasks. The detailed baseline assessments made during the Foundation Stage are carefully recorded and well used as the basis for future predictions and comparisons of performance. All assessment data is carefully collated and presented in a format that allows the tracking and comparison of pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science over time. The school has tried to ensure that all teachers have the same understanding of attainment levels through exercises in comparing work. It has retained examples of pupils' work in all subjects to support this process and could now consider how best to present this as an exemplar of the different levels.

Use of assessment information

61 Good use is made of assessment data and the results of national tests to identify and compare the performance of individual pupils both locally and nationally and to identify areas for development. Good examples of this can be seen in the recently identified areas for development, which include improving the use and application of mathematical skills and of scientific enquiry to raise standards in mathematics and science. The school is currently considering introducing a software package that would allow quicker, easier and more detailed analysis of assessment data. This would enable the school to more easily compare attainment of particular groups, generate target predictions and generally reduce the considerable workload the current system places upon staff. Data is also used to check whether pupils are doing as well as expected and ensure that any differences in performance between boys and girls are purely a result of ability. Annual reports contain areas for improvement and parents feel they are well informed about their children's progress. Individual targets are still at the early stages of development and are currently being piloted in literacy. The school is currently considering how to develop and extend this process.

Monitoring and supporting pupils with special educational needs

62 The headteacher and staff are alert to the needs of individuals. As a result pupils with SEN are identified early in their school lives and teachers track their progress carefully. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and class teachers draw up pupils' individual education plans. They include targets and intended learning outcomes that are clear to everyone involved and therefore make it easy to measure progress. However, the targets, although appropriate, are often not easily attainable in the short term. Frequently they become ongoing from one termly review to the next. For example, one pupils' target was 'to know by heart the multiplication tables for 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9 and 10.' By the end of term he did well to learn the tables for 2, 5 and 10 but could not be credited with achieving his target in full.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

63 A very strong partnership with parents has been maintained well since the last inspection.

Parents' views of the school

64 Parents are positive about most aspects of school life. They feel strongly that their children like school and are making good progress. They believe that behaviour is good and their children are supported to become mature. Parents feel that the school expects their children to work hard, the school is well led and managed and the teaching is good. Most would feel comfortable approaching the school and they feel that their children get the right amount of work to do at home. The school's own questionnaire in June 2002 showed a similar level of support for these aspects of the school. The inspection endorse these positive views.

65 In the questionnaires some parents felt that the school does not provide an interesting range of activities outside lessons. For the size of school and the number of full-time staff the school has a good range of extra-curricular activities. These include a very extensive programme of trips arranged to support the curriculum. There are residential trips for all year groups, including years 1 and 2. Regular after-school clubs include gymnastics for two terms, football for two terms and fitness and dance for one term. A netball club is run at lunchtime. There are plans for an ICT club after the Spring half-term and a Morris and sword/country dance club and a short tennis club in the Summer term. There are also occasional drama activities and the headteacher would like to be able to offer French tuition.

66 About a quarter of parents feel they are not well informed about how their children are getting on and that the school does not work closely with parents. The parents were much more positive on these aspects in the meeting. Parents reported that sometimes notice is short though things have improved considerably recently with the introduction of a folder of letters or newsletters which are sent home each Friday for parents to check. The headteacher also feels that the lack of close working felt by a few parents is probably linked to opportunities to discuss special needs. The previous special needs co-ordinator left the school last year and it has taken a little time to put new arrangements in place. In the Autumn term the staff spent considerable time with the educational psychologist discussing some of the pupils with special needs and this left less time for discussion with the parents of some of the other children with special needs. Staff illness during the Autumn term affected availability at the consultation evenings.

67 The school feels that there is room for improvement in parents' understanding of the content and delivery of the curriculum and is planning an open forum in the Autumn term this year. Some parents would like some help in understanding the modern approach to mathematics. Staff would also like to increase the number of parents who attend open

afternoons to see their children at work. They recognise that this requires adequate notice of dates and reminders and more attention to emphasising their purpose and the importance to the children.

The information provided by the school

68 The prospectus is updated annually and gives a clear presentation of objectives, ethos, history, development and organisation. Good detail is provided on all subjects of the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. There is also substantial information on a good range of aspects of health and safety. The governor's annual report to parents is also thorough and well presented. The regular letters and newsletters are of good quality. These are friendly and welcoming in style and include details of events, school term and year dates, charity and fund-raising events, trips, Friends' Association events. There are occasional curriculum meetings to discuss topics such as literacy, consultation evenings in the Autumn term, an open afternoon in the Spring term and sessions to discuss the annual reports in the Summer term. Teachers are always willing to talk to parents at other times. They always take the initiative to meet parents if there are problems and they are all very approachable.

69 Parents are pleased with the detail in the annual reports. These are of good quality and consist of computerised forms but with different styles between classes. Qualitative indications are given of levels of attainment and there is good detail of curriculum coverage and pupils' strengths and weaknesses. A final section gives targets for the following year.

70 The homework policy makes clear to staff, pupils and parents the aims and progressive growth of tasks from 10 minutes a day in reception to 30 minutes in the upper school. It stresses the role of parents and the importance of feedback. However, at the meeting parents were not always clear on homework requirements. In particular there was some uncertainty about the expectations in Year 1, which were significantly higher than in the Foundation year, but this has now been resolved. Most parents were happy with the quantity of homework, but a few parents of older children find the setting a bit erratic. Teachers write out the homework tasks for the younger children and the teachers of the older pupils have now decided to check that there is a clear written record of their specific homework tasks.

71 The home-school agreement is straightforward and outlines the rationale and the expectations of staff, parents and children. The agreement is discussed with parents at the induction meetings and almost all parents sign and return them. The few who do not sign disagree with the principle of such an agreement.

The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school:

72 There is very good support for children's homework and learning at home. The reading scheme is supported well with full parental participation. They, and the staff make regular comments on progress in the reading records. These are also used for general communication, particularly for the younger children.

73 Many parents give substantial support to the children in all classes by helping very regularly with reading, computing, supervising swimming, helping with gardening and cookery lessons. Two parents run the book club and others give a lot of time for self-help schemes such as the development of the grounds. Most parents are willing to support school events, village activities and church events with their children, including the village fete, quiz nights, Harvest Supper and Christingle.

74 The Friends of Ardeley School give excellent support raising substantial amounts of money for pupil-centred projects and needs. The parents and governors hold joint fund-raising events. There has been great consistency and strong commitment to follow through ambitious projects such as the building of the hall and classroom. In recent years the

parents have made three donations of £4,000 each towards the development of the buildings and £6,000 towards computing resources.

Partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs

75 The school reports that there is a good working partnership with most parents of pupils with SEN. They are kept well informed at parent teacher consultation evenings and are welcomed into school at other times to discuss their children's progress. In line with the recent national Code of Practice the school has highlighted its intention to involve parents, and where appropriate their children, more actively in setting and agreeing future targets

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

76 The school has maintained the very clear vision for providing 'an inclusive education of the highest quality within the context of Christian faith and practice', which was recognised by the last inspection. This is because the headteacher, staff and governors work very well together in the best interests of individual pupils.

Improvement since the last inspection

77 The school has successfully maintained the good provision noted by the last inspection in all areas of its work. At that time no areas were identified for further improvement. There has been a successful focus on raising standards in English and mathematics, with the recent fall back due to the special educational needs of some pupils. There have been significant improvements to the accommodation, with a new room for children in the Foundation Stage providing a very good learning environment for children as they begin school.

The leadership and management of the headteacher

78 The headteacher leads and inspires staff and governors very well. She provides a clear educational direction for the school and involves staff well in discussions about classroom practice. The focus for staff development in the coming year is related to teaching and learning styles, focusing the staff's attention on different ways in which children learn. The headteacher has excellent inter-personal skills and these form a good basis for her effective management of the job share arrangements. She is very supportive of both staff and governors and is careful to ensure that all have the resources that they need to undertake their roles and responsibilities effectively. She enables staff and governors to develop their skills by providing opportunities for further training as well as encouraging them to take on further responsibilities. She pays attention to detail and this ensures that the school runs smoothly.

The work of senior staff

79 The senior teacher has responsibility for work in English. She has served the school for many years and works together in a job share arrangement in Years 1 and 2. She provides sensitive support for the headteacher and other staff. She ran the school for a year while the headteacher was seconded to another school and managed this well. Other staff also take responsibility for managing subject areas. The leadership of art, ICT and music is particularly strong. There is scope for developing co-ordinators' monitoring roles in all subjects to ensure all pupils achieve as well as they can.

Leadership and management of work with pupils who have special educational needs

80 The headteacher has responsibility for managing the SEN provision and she undertakes this efficiently. Good systems were set up by the previous SENCO and the headteacher uses these well. She is strongly supported by the governing body and particularly by the designated governor who has a very clear view of the school's work. Governors are fully involved in planning for the future. Their priority is to provide the maximum support possible

for pupils with SEN and they allocate funds accordingly. The school has adapted its work well to comply with new regulations and all statutory requirements are met.

An inclusive school

81 The school's strong commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all of its pupils is reflected well in its work and the care it takes of them. It seeks by monitoring to ensure that all groups of pupils including boys and girls enjoy the same equality of opportunity and access to all areas of its life and work. A good example of this was a recent audit of disabled access.

Staffing

82 There is a very good number of experienced and mostly long serving teachers. They form a committed, hardworking and stable team. Most work part-time and are involved in job-share arrangements. The school sees these as positive features providing different styles and interests that help to motivate pupils. At the same time the headteacher acknowledges that communication with teachers as well as between themselves is an added challenge. Class teachers share a good range of individual strengths and areas of expertise. Additional staff are employed to teach music and physical education, provide support for pupils with special educational needs and to run a variety of programmes to help pupils catch up. Through these seemingly complex arrangements the school meets the needs of all pupils and covers the full requirements of the National Curriculum.

83 Teachers and pupils are strongly supported by well-trained and effective classroom assistants. They work closely with teachers, making a considerable contribution to pupils' welfare, their attainment and in particular to the progress made by pupils with special educational needs. In addition, an impressive number of committed parents, governors and friends of the school provide voluntary support on a regular basis. This is valued highly by the school and helps considerably to boost the favourable ratio of adults to pupils.

84 Teachers and classroom assistants attend a wide range of courses as part of the school's development programme. All have received computer training. In addition, individuals have received training that is particularly relevant to their roles. The impact on teaching and learning is evident, for example, in information and communication technology, design and technology and in Tracks sessions (a specialised literacy support programme). Statutory requirements for performance management are fully met and there are appropriate links to identify these training needs. The school welcomes students on teacher training placements and makes good provision to support them.

Monitoring how well teachers are doing

85 For many years the arrangements for monitoring teaching and learning have been informal. This has provided a sound starting point for highlighting areas needing development. Ardeley is a small school and because of the proximity of classrooms and job share arrangements, the headteacher and staff are clear about the work of their colleagues. With the introduction of more formal performance management procedures together with a commitment by all staff to improve their practice, the school is moving towards more structured arrangements. This will be a useful tool in raising the quality of teaching further. The headteacher usually has a part time class commitment and so arranging times for her to monitor work in classrooms has not always been easy to fit into the timetable. Subject co-ordinators have audited resources and looked at planning and pupils' work. They have fed back informally to colleagues on these areas. At the moment there is no overall timetable for the structure of the monitoring of planning, pupils' work and teaching and learning in order to make the whole process manageable for the school.

The work of the governors

86 Governors make a very good contribution to the work of the school. They undertake their responsibilities very effectively through the work of sub-committees and regular meetings of the full governing body. Many visit the school regularly during the working day. They have a clear picture of the strengths of the school and what needs to be improved. They are fully involved in planning for future developments and the strategic planning group works closely with the headteacher to draw up an annual improvement plan. At the moment informal procedures for monitoring how well the school is doing provide a sound basis for their evaluations. There is more scope for developing the monitoring of the curriculum through classroom visits. The chair of governors meets regularly with the headteacher to discuss the work of the school and provides very good support. Governors have utmost confidence in the headteacher and very good relationships between all staff and governors are evident. These very good relationships have not led to any lack of rigour in the approach of the governing body to their work. Governors are totally committed to school improvement and pose challenging questions about the school's work in order to tease out the effectiveness of the school's provision. Most statutory requirements in relation to the work of governors are met, with a few minor omissions in the governors' annual report to parents and the prospectus.

Financial planning

87 The school has good procedures and practices in place to ensure effective financial management and control. Educational priorities are supported fully through the school's financial planning. The school tries to ensure that the annual budget is used to give the maximum benefit to the current pupils. Although the budgets are tight there are additional grants during the year, which help the school to finance initiatives. Governors are active at each stage of development of the improvement plan and financial plan. There are no firm cost estimates in the initial plans but they are available in time for the preparation of the draft budget. The premises committee estimates the costs of any building developments. The additional funding for a Key Stage 1 teacher for the past three years has been beneficial in a number of ways. This has allowed the headteacher to reduce her teaching commitment to enable her to spend more time on the management of buildings developments, monitoring and managing the part-time arrangements. Pupil numbers are healthy and stable so that the current provision should continue for at least the next year. The reserve at the end of last year was rather small at a little over one per cent of the income but is likely to double by the end of this year. The part-time staff are very flexible in their willingness to increase or, if the need arises, to reduce their hours to meet the school's needs. This ensures that the salary budget can be adjusted to match income and the school roll. The school could take more older children but there is an established pattern of transfer at the end of Year 4.

Principles of best value

88 The school applies the principles of best value well in its financial management and decision-making. The staff and governors always seek best value in their purchases. For example, a local builder is used for the smaller maintenance jobs because he provides good value for money. The school uses the very good services of the county and Diocese to assist with the tendering process for larger contracts. Effective use is made of applications for capital projects under the dual support arrangements for voluntary-aided schools.

89 Service contracts are monitored closely and the school mostly buys back those operated by the local authority although an alternative arrangement for grounds maintenance provides a more cost-effective service. There is very good collaboration between staff, governors, parents, the local community, the Diocese and the local authority on capital projects – staff, governors, parents, wider local community all contribute. The local community is generous with its support. For example, a hard surface was laid by a local farm for additional car parking. Good use was made of county comparative data to alert the school to wider

expenditure issues. Governors and staff review the effectiveness of their expenditure to ensure that these match the expectations for improvement.

Financial control

90 There is good budget management. The finance contract with the county provides very effective support. The finance officer oversees and manages the accounts during her monthly visits. She also gives valuable advice to headteacher and governors on budget preparation. The secretary manages the order processing satisfactorily and maintains the manual records in good order. The school holds its own cheque account and was audited in May 2000. The overall judgement was that the general financial management, including budgetary control was good. The efficiency of administrative procedures would be improved by a greater use of the computing facilities and this is being undertaken by a part-time administrator. Specific grants and other funds are used for their intended purposes. Buildings and resources are used efficiently.

Value for money

91 The cost per pupil is higher than for most primary schools due to the smaller than average number of pupils on roll. This was inflated last year by building grants and generous donations from parents. Nonetheless, the school is giving good value for money.

Accommodation

92 The school's accommodation is very good. The original building dating from 1835 has been considerably extended and a continuous programme of maintenance and development is clearly well established. Recent buildings and extensions include a spacious hall, a useful entrance hall that doubles as a library and a well-used group teaching room. Since the last inspection further significant improvements have been made to provide a purpose-built classroom and outdoor area for the Foundation Stage class. The generous support of parents and the unstinting efforts of governors provided a substantial proportion of the funding for these projects. All of them have been carefully designed to preserve and to enhance the particular characteristics of the school within its attractive surroundings. The headteacher reports that they are having a significant impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of teaching and learning and this is confirmed by inspection evidence. However, they do draw attention to the relatively cramped conditions in Class 3 where the school reports difficulties in arranging practical and group activities.

93 The school occupies a large site. The extensive grounds include a good size playground and playing field with a very attractive and well cared for garden. The latter provides a variety of natural habitats that are used to support pupils' learning in science.

Learning resources

94 There are no significant weaknesses in the provision of resources for learning although the headteacher and staff continue to identify areas that need updating. As a result the quality of resources is good and they support all areas of the curriculum effectively. In all subjects resources are well organised and easily accessible. In some subjects there have been considerable improvements recently. For example in ICT where pupils' and teachers' access to computers and other items of new technology are continually being improved by the purchase of new equipment.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

95 In order to build on the many strengths of the school the headteacher, staff and governors need to:

- Raise standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 2 by:
 - increasing the challenge for higher attaining pupils;
 - monitoring teaching and learning more systematically;
 - ensuring more cohesive planning for the development of numeracy skills;
 - planning for the development of literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects;
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write for a purpose;
 - using ICT to support learning in mathematics.

(Reference paragraphs: 2, 3, 7, 13, 30, 32, 40 and 104 to 120)

The following areas identified for improvement are already on the school's agenda:

- Develop the use of information communication technology in other subjects.

(Reference paragraphs: 10, 39, 154 and 156)

- Develop teaching and learning styles by providing in-service training for staff with opportunities for discussion and for further development of teachers' expertise.

(Reference paragraphs: 61 and 78)

- Use assessment data more effectively to help pupils to improve by:
 - using analysis of the data to adjust the curriculum where necessary;
 - developing a whole school approach to target setting for individuals and groups.

(Reference paragraph: 61)

- Improve procedures for monitoring how well the school is doing by:
 - agreeing a timetable for headteacher, staff and governor monitoring;
 - outlining the different areas to be monitored;
 - providing training, where necessary.

(Reference paragraphs: 85 and 86)

The headteacher staff and governors might consider including the following minor issues for inclusion in the school's action plan:

- The marking of pupils' work.

(Reference paragraph:28)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	22
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	32

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	2	12	7	0	0	0
Percentage	5%	9%	54%	32%	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 about five percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR– Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	72
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0
Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	17
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	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.1
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
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	4	10	14

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	4	4	4
	Girls	10	10	10
	Total	14	14	14
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (85)	100 (85)	100 (77)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	4	3	4
	Girls	10	10	9
	Total	14	13	13
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 (85)	93 (77)	93 (77)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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	72	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	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	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19
Average class size	24

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	70

<i>FTE means full-time equivalent</i>	
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Financial information

Financial year	2001 - 2002
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	£
Total income	235723
Total expenditure	240915
Expenditure per pupil	3824
Balance brought forward from previous year	8383
Balance carried forward to next year	3191

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	0.3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0.3

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	70
Number of questionnaires returned	63

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	32	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	41	46	11	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	41	6	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	43	10	5	5
The teaching is good.	49	38	8	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	21	54	22	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	19	14	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	37	5	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	33	41	24	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	56	33	6	2	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	44	3	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	46	16	2	2

Percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest whole number and may therefore not total exactly 100.

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

96 The school has made good progress in improving its provision for children in the Foundation Stage since the last inspection. The new classroom and outside area has made a tremendous impact on the work in this area of the school. Children now work in a single year group with a teacher and assistant. Planning has also improved with the adoption of national guidance.

97 Children start school either full or part time in the September after their fourth birthdays. Most have had the benefit of some pre-school education in a nursery or playgroup. They quickly settle into school routines because of the gentle encouragement of the staff. Photographs of the first few weeks of the Autumn term, for example, show all happily engaged in learning tasks. The teaching in all areas of learning is at least good and is very good in the areas of personal and social development and in knowledge and understanding of the world. Most children are on line to reach the early learning goals in all areas of learning by the end of their time in the Foundation Stage. Some children have already reached them.

Personal, social and emotional development

98 Children make very good progress in this area because of the consistent and sensitive approach of the staff. The teacher is calm and quietly spoken and as a result the children listen very carefully in whole class sessions and settle sensibly to learning activities. They are confident and happy in their new surroundings and are gaining in independence. They cope well with the daily trip to the village hall for lunch, for example. They are forming very good relations with the staff and their peers. They play happily together, for example, and are learning to take turns. One or two find this more difficult in class discussions, when their keenness to contribute means that they forget to put up their hands. All understand the class rules and routines and clearly know the difference between right and wrong. Most have already reached the early learning goals in this area of learning. In some sessions there are opportunities for children to choose their own activities, but they are not encouraged to plan what they are going to do or review it at the end.

Communication, language and literacy

99 Children achieve well in this area of learning because the teacher plans a range of relevant and interesting activities. They enjoy collaborative tasks and communicate well with each other. In one session, for example, a group of girls enjoyed playing with the pink sequined water in the sink, talking about what they were doing and sharing the equipment well. Children also have opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills in whole class discussions, contributing well at these times. The teacher's very good questioning skills enables children to move forward quickly. Most speak confidently at these times, with some using quite complex sentence construction. One or two have difficulty in articulation. Children are developing a love of story and books. In one very good session the teacher read the class Eric Carle's *'The Hungry Caterpillar'*. The children were very involved in the story and extremely excited by the caterpillar in the story sack, which the teacher used to reinforce teaching about the life cycle of a butterfly. Good attention is also paid to the development of children's phonic skills. In one session seen the children learnt about the sound 't' and worked on identifying rhyming words. Some children already read simple texts confidently and use the information from the cover and first few pages to predict what might happen at the end. Children's progress in reading is fostered by a good attention to sharing books with them on an individual basis, both at home and in school. Good attention is also paid to helping children to develop their handwriting skills. Children work through a series of published 'workbooks' and are developing their pencil control well. Their work also shows

work on writing words in relation to work on letter sounds. There was less independent writing seen. Generally girls do better than boys in this area.

Mathematical development

100 Children achieve well in this area because the work is carefully planned. There is good attention to helping children to understand number. Consequently all are confident in using numbers to ten. In a session seen almost half of the children solved problems by using apparatus to count on to ten and recorded their answers. Two children counted on in their heads. The teacher and assistant supported the children well in this activity and this helped them to make progress. The school is using a published scheme to underpin the work and all children work through a series of well-designed workbooks.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

101 Children achieve very well in this area because of the teacher's very good planning and preparation. There is a rich and varied programme of work. Recently children have worked on topics as diverse as batteries and switches and the festival of Divali. Very good use is also made of trips out of school, such as the recent visit to the Pelham environmental centre. During the inspection week children were working on the life cycle of the butterfly and activities were planned to encompass all areas of learning. In one session seen the teacher used an electronic whiteboard very effectively to show children how a spider spun a web. The children were entranced and made rapid gains in their learning. They clearly understood that spiders have eight legs and this understanding was reinforced well by opportunities to make spiders from paper and pipe cleaners and to draw them from close observation. They use the computer confidently and have good control of the mouse, using it well to click and select their chosen options. All have good opportunities to work on the computer. A display in the classroom shows the work children have undertaken in relation to 'dressing teddy'.

Physical development

102 Children achieve well in this area because of good teaching. They move confidently about the classroom and the school. In physical education lessons they make good use of the hall space. In one lesson seen they worked on their throwing skills and by the end of the session all managed to throw over arm and most managed to aim their throws fairly accurately. Girls and boys achieved equally well in this activity. Children have opportunities to develop their physical skills in the outside area and although no sessions were seen because of the bad weather, there are a range of wheeled toys and other equipment for children to use. Children also handle tools and small objects carefully.

Creative development

103 Children achieve well in this area because of good teaching. There is a range of opportunities for them to explore different media. Children confidently experiment with paint, for example, using bold brush strokes and combining colours well. They respond well to more direct teaching, working with the staff to make three-dimensional 'spiders' from pipe cleaners and paper and printing white spiders' webs on black paper. They are developing painting and drawing skills well, but there are not enough opportunities for them to select and make choices from a range of papers and equipment. This half term the role-play area is set up as a veterinary surgeons and children make good use of this in their imaginative play. There is a weekly music session, which was not timetabled during the inspection. Children did not sing any rhymes or songs as part of their work in other areas.

Strengths:

- *quality of the provision, including teaching and the accommodation;*
- *good team work;*
- *a rich curriculum.*

Areas for development:

- *providing opportunities for children to plan and review their work.*

ENGLISH

104 The school has developed its provision for English since the last inspection and planning is now based on the National Literacy Strategy. In national tests, standards have risen overall since the last inspection in writing and high standards in reading have been maintained. This year standards are average in speaking and listening and below average in reading and writing at the end of Year 2. This is because there are a few pupils with special educational needs who affect the overall standards, there are also few pupils reaching higher levels. There have been no changes in the school's provision to account for this fall back, it is related to the make up of the particular year group. At the end of Year 4 standards are above average in all areas of English.

Speaking and listening

105 Pupils have a range of opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills, both in English and in other subjects. Frequently pupils are involved in class discussions at the beginning of sessions. In both classes pupils contribute enthusiastically, many speaking in extended sentences. Some pupils, especially the younger ones, find it hard to listen for long periods and sometimes become a little restless during these sessions. In some lessons pupils work together on shared tasks and at these times negotiate sensibly. In a science lesson seen, for example, pupils worked together well on an investigation that involved running cars down ramps. At other times pupils have the opportunity to speak to a larger audience. The weekly 'show and tell' session in the older pupils' class is a good example of this. Each week one pupil prepares a short talk about a hobby or interest and presents it to the class. The pupils, who enjoy listening to their classmates' presentations, enjoy this very good provision for the development of skills. Pupils speak confidently to a large audience in assemblies and in the Mass seen during the inspection several read out prayers very clearly. The school plans to develop a planning framework to ensure a consistent approach to the development of skills.

Reading

106 Reading has a high priority and pupils achieve well because of the attention paid to the development of reading skills, together with a good deal of individual and small group teaching. At Ardeley, parents also make a significant contribution to supporting pupils in reading, both at home and in school. It is clear from pupils' reading diaries that they regularly share books with their parents. There is more scope in the diaries for providing guidance for parents about helping their children at home. Consequently pupils are clear from Year 1 onwards about the ways in which difficult words can be worked out. In conversations with them they mentioned 'sounding out' the word, 'splitting it up' and seeing what word would make sense within the sentence. Pupils work through a structured reading scheme drawn from a variety of publishers and also have the opportunity to take home library books to share with parents and carers. In lessons seen there was good attention paid to work on sounds and word building. Extra help is given to pupils who are a little behind in reading and this helps them to move forward. Overall, more attention is paid to the development of skills than to encouraging a love of stories and books. There is an annual book week, when pupils engage in some interesting work about books, but there is less emphasis, day to day, on learning about writers. There are few displays of books by particular authors, for example, to grab pupils' imaginations and in the literacy hours there is more scope for using good quality writing as a basis for the work. A lesson in Years 3 and 4, based on Alfred Noyes 'The Highwayman', was an exception to this.

Writing

107 There is a similar picture in writing, with good attention paid to helping pupils to develop the crafting skills of spelling, handwriting, punctuation and grammatical accuracy. In lessons seen teachers explained new ideas clearly and set pupils to work on activities directly related to the teaching point. Often the activity involves an exercise from a textbook or published scheme. This ensures that pupils make steady progress in learning about different writing skills. There are fewer opportunities for pupils to regularly practise their skills through purposeful and interesting writing tasks, although sometimes writing is collected in a class book, such as pieces finishing the story of *'Jasper and the Beanstalk'* in Years 1 and 2 and some *'Junior Shape Poems'* in Years 3 and 4. In both classes opportunities are lost to develop writing in other subjects, such as history and geography. Younger pupils are beginning to write independently, but often their work is not dated and so it is hard to measure the progress that has been made. Sometimes the presentation of their work is not good enough. In Years 1 and 2 pupils have regular handwriting sessions, but the lined paper used is too narrow for some of the younger pupils, who find it hard to keep within the lines. In Years 3 to 6 pupils spend one session a week on an extended writing activity. In a session seen pupils worked on characterisation and crafted a 'wanted' poster for the highwayman from Alfred Noyes' poem. They were fully involved in the task, and made steady progress. Some wrote imaginatively. One pupil for example wrote *'dark, deep eyes drenched as black as midnight.'* Overall opportunities for pupils to write for a range of purposes and audiences in the older pupils' class are too limited. There is also scope for spending more time on drafting activities.

108 Overall the quality of teaching is sound, with some good features and this ensures that most pupils make steady progress. Work is planned carefully, with an emphasis on teaching the basic skills in relation to phonetical awareness, spelling, handwriting and grammar. Sometimes opportunities to relate this work to a good quality text or some purposeful writing are lost. Generally the job share arrangements work well, with different teachers taking responsibility for different aspects of English. Pupils have different books to record the work set by different teachers and although this arrangement is a practical one, it does make it more difficult for teachers to appreciate pupils' progress overall. All teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. One of the strengths within the teaching is the good support for pupils with special educational needs. They frequently work in small groups or individually to improve their skills. Marking is an area for development. Work is marked regularly and comments are often very positive, providing good encouragement for pupils. Marking does not usually relate to the objectives for particular sessions and does not give sufficient guidance to pupils about what they need to do to improve. In some cases the teacher's handwriting is not a good model for the pupils.

109 The very experienced co-ordinator has managed the subject successfully for many years. She supports colleagues well. She has a clear view of the strengths and areas for development.

Strengths:

- *levels of support for individual pupils;*
- *involvement of parents in supporting their children with reading;*
- *assessment procedures.*

Areas for development:

- *development of a speaking and listening policy;*
- *work based on good quality texts;*
- *writing for a wider audience;*
- *presentation of work.*

MATHEMATICS

110 In the 2002 tests all Year 2 pupils achieved the expected level 2. However, they were below the national average because only one pupil achieved Level 3. In the current Year 2 most pupils are working within the expected Level 2 but only a very small proportion are above this. As a result overall standards are currently below average. This is largely explained by the composition of the group with few higher attaining pupils and several pupils with special educational needs.

111 By the end of Year 4 standards are average and pupils have made sound progress or better since Year 2 when they were also average. The previous inspection found a similar pattern with standards average at the end of both Year 2 and Year 4 with average progress up to Year 2 and good progress to Year 4. Overall the school does well for its pupils but it could do better. In its quest to improve it has correctly identified the need to develop pupils' use and application of mathematical skills and knowledge to raise standards further and to focus more on its higher attaining pupils.

112 Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to their classmates because of the support they receive both from their teachers and the teaching assistants. They work at tasks that are suited to their needs and achieve success in their learning. Although there have been some variations in the attainment of boys and girls, these are due to the changing composition of the year group rather than other factors and there is no evidence that either group is treated differently.

113 By Year 2 pupils can order numbers to a 100 and are beginning to develop knowledge of place value. They add and subtract numbers to 20, double and halve numbers and count in 2's, 3's, 4's and 5's and begin to use these skills to solve problems including money. They know some of the properties of 2D and 3D shapes and compare the weight of objects and size of numbers. Apparatus and pictures in workbooks are used to reinforce these concepts and help pupils recognise for example that '4x3' is the same as '4 times 3'. Many go beyond this and can use continuous addition to solve the problem whilst only a very few know their multiplication table.

114 By Year 4 pupils are developing the speed at which they make calculations in their heads and the range of strategies that they use to solve addition and subtraction problems working with numbers to 1000. Most know their tables up to at least 6 and can use these to speed up their calculations. They are developing their knowledge of shapes, know about right angles and lines of symmetry and interpret and record work on a variety of charts and diagrams. Pupils are developing the ability to apply their mathematical knowledge to solving problems but this is not yet an established feature of the work being set and there are few examples in pupils' books of solving real-life problems.

115 There is strong and appropriate focus on the development of numeracy skills and although the other strands of mathematics are taught the school has recognised the need to ensure that pupils experience more practical applications of mathematics and its use to solve problems.

116 Teachers pay increasing attention to developing pupils' mental and oral skills as they progress through the school so that they are quick and accurate in their number work. They demonstrate different strategies and make good use of the starter sessions to develop pupils' understanding and speed of computation through the brisk pace set. This increases pupils' confidence and the pace and accuracy of their working. For example, Year 4 pupils quickly grasped the technique of rounding to solve sums such as $692 - 88$. The level of challenge was effectively increased and the security of pupils' understanding checked by looking at bridging the 100 as in $526 - 74$. However, teachers do not always exploit the opportunities these activities provide for discussing and exploring different methods for arriving at answers,

confirming the validity of other calculation methods or highlighting how some are more efficient than others. Some over reliance on the use of commercial workbooks and worksheets to meet the needs of the wide range of abilities, particularly with the younger pupils, compounds this problem and limits the opportunities for good teacher/pupil interaction that would raise the level of the learning and better meet the needs of higher attaining pupils.

117 As pupils move up the school they show an increasing ability to sustain concentration and to work without direct supervision and the school seeks to establish this as a desirable work pattern. In the younger class the teacher's time is often taken checking pupils' understanding and enabling them to progress to the next stage. This is also necessary to maintain their concentration as that, particularly of a small group of boys in Year 2, often wanders and needs to be directed back to the task. Pupils are generally attentive to their teachers and one another and enjoy completing the activities they are set.

118 In the lessons seen teaching was satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and good in Year 3 and 4. Teachers are careful to plan their lessons to the format of the National Numeracy Strategy for the different abilities and ages in their classes. However, the school needs to ensure that higher attaining pupils are suitably challenged and that expectations of their work and its presentation match their ability. Problems also arise when they do not consider sufficiently the implications of the division of topics between teaching partners and the timing of its delivery on the development of pupils' mathematical skills. During the inspection week this led to the daily alternation of multiplication and subtraction in Year 2.

119 Teaching assistants are well briefed and often support age or ability groups well in specific tasks as was seen in the weighing activity with Year 1 pupils.

Teaching is most successful when:

- questioning is well used to check pupils' understanding and advance their thinking
- teachers share the purpose of the lesson with pupils and revisit this in the end session
- tasks are clearly explained and teachers ensure that all pupils understand what is expected and how long they have to complete the task.

120 A good pattern of regular and on-going testing and assessing of pupils provides good information about pupils' progress and is supported well by informal assessments made through questioning and marking of work. There are few examples of pupils using computers other than for reinforcement activities using commercial software and the school has identified the need to address this. The co-ordinator monitors the subject through viewing teachers' planning and looking at pupils' work. There is a good range of resources in classes to support practical activities, well - maintained central storage of larger items and a recently updated commercial scheme of work to support learning.

Strengths:

- *teaching and pupils' progress in Key Stage 2;*
- *recognition of the need to focus on improving opportunities for the use and application of mathematics;*
- *assessment procedures;*
- *resources.*

Areas for development:

- *challenge for higher attaining pupils;*
- *use of ICT to support learning in the subject;*
- *monitoring of teaching and learning;*
- *continuity in planning in the job share classes.*

SCIENCE

121 Last year teachers assessed standards in Year 2 as average when compared to other schools nationally. These results were better than they had been for the two preceding years and showed a higher proportion achieving Level 3 than previously. The school has been working to raise standards and has identified a number of initiatives to support this. It has noted that although pupils achieve relatively well in areas of scientific knowledge there is a need to improve pupils' skills of scientific enquiry if it is to raise standards further and to increase the proportion of pupils attaining Level 3.

122 The previous inspection found standards broadly average with pupils making steady progress. This position has been maintained and standards are currently average in Years 2 and 4 in the work seen with pupils making satisfactory progress. The school is placing a stronger emphasis on practical tasks to improve observational, investigative and enquiry skills. However, computers are not used as often as they might be to support the recording of evidence or the presentation of work and there are some weaknesses in the way pupils record their practical work and approach investigative tasks.

123 Practical activities are being increasingly used to capture pupils' enthusiasm and focus their thinking. Teachers use these opportunities to encourage and reinforce a scientific approach to learning whilst extending pupils' scientific knowledge and understanding. Pupils in Year 2 have learnt how to create a simple circuit and light a bulb, can classify a range of materials, have tested fabrics to find which was waterproof and know that plants need water if they are to grow. A group of Year 2 pupils, in response to their teacher's questioning, suggested that to ensure the test was 'fair' the cars should be released at the same point on the ramp without a push. They had already encountered the notion of fair testing when investigating how quickly ice cubes melted and this, when their teacher reminded them, reinforced that understanding. One pupil suggested that the car would go further if the angle of the ramp was increased and was encouraged to explore the idea. Nor is it supported or extended, particularly for more able pupils, by the brief factual recording of work.

124 By Year 4 pupils know how to create a circuit using batteries, a switch and a bulb, and use symbols to represent them. In a lesson seen, they observed that the bulbs dimmed as more were introduced and whilst some suggested increasing the number of batteries others went beyond this and were aware of the difference between series and parallel circuits. They extended their knowledge of materials as they investigated which conduct and which insulate and began to realise that some are better conductors than others. They improved their understanding and developed their skills of enquiry as they predicted then tested their ideas. The opportunity this presented to refine this process by reminding pupils about ensuring a fair test and clarifying the distinction between a poor conductor and an insulator was not taken. Pupils recorded their predictions and compared these with outcomes but this brief recording did not challenge or extend their thinking. Similarly the methods of recording seen in their books did not lead to greater refinement of observation or promote more sophisticated use of measurement.

125 Pupils' work shows that they make satisfactory progress over time and that, as in their lessons, boys and girls achieve equally well. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by their teachers and the teaching assistants and make similar progress to their classmates. Pupils enjoy the practical tasks, work well with partners or in small groups to accomplish them and use apparatus carefully and safely. Most pupils listen carefully to instructions, try hard to answer questions and think carefully before they offer ideas.

126 In the two lessons seen teaching was good in one and satisfactory in the other. It is stronger in Years 3 to 6 than in Years 1 and 2 and this is reflected in the greater gains that the older pupils are making in their learning. Teachers make good links to previous work and are

careful to plan their lessons to provide good opportunities for practical reinforcement. Where subject knowledge is stronger good questioning focuses pupils' thinking and clarifies their understanding as was seen in the discussion in the Year 3/ 4 lesson on the effects of increasing bulbs in a circuit. However, opportunities to maximise understanding and refine enquiry skills are not sufficiently exploited and recording of work often lacks the focus that would reinforce and extend the value of practical activities. Older pupils are well supported by the use of extension activities and the matching of work to their age and level of ability. The ends of sessions are used to revisit the purpose of the learning and check and confirm pupils' understanding. Where pupils lose concentration, as was seen with a small group of younger boys, their teacher quickly corrected them.

127 The subject is jointly co-ordinated by the headteacher and the Key Stage 1 leader, who each assume responsibility for a key stage. Regular end of unit assessments are well supported by ongoing assessment of understanding through teachers' questioning and marking of work. Information from this is well used to plan the next stages of learning and record pupils' progress. Planning for the subject has been well developed from recent national guidance and local authority advice and a two-year cycle of topics prevents repetition in the mixed age classes. There is a good range of well -maintained resources to support practical activities. The extensive and well cared for school grounds provide a good range of habitats for study.

Strengths:

- *use of practical activities;*
- *increased focus on developing scientific enquiry;*
- *recognition of need to raise standards further.*

Areas for development:

- *standards in the subject;*
- *developing pupils' skills of scientific enquiry and the quality and focus of their recording;*
- *challenging and extending more able pupils;*
- *teaching of practical activities;*
- *use of ICT to support learning in the subject.*

ART AND DESIGN

128 There has been good improvement in this area of the curriculum since the last inspection. Standards remain average at the end of Year 2, but have risen to above average at the end of Year 4. The reasons for this improvement include:

- an enthusiastic and knowledgeable subject leader;
- good support from an enthusiastic and skilled Foundation teacher.
- very good teaching in Years 3 to 6;
- improved planning.

129 The school's own planning framework ensures good coverage of the use of a range of materials and processes, with scope for more details about the skills pupils cover year on year in relation to drawing, painting, printing, collage, three-dimensional and textile work.

Pupils' work shows good attention to the development of drawing skills, with pupils in the oldest class making good use of sketchbooks to practise their skills. There has been a focus on weaving recently and good links have been made with a design and technology project on 'Joseph's Coat of many colours' in Years 1 and 2. Recently the Foundation class and Year 1

visited Pelham environmental centre and pupils create some interesting studies by weaving natural materials into fabric.

130 Artists' work is regularly used as a starting point for pupils' own studies. Older pupils have worked in pastel or paint, for example, to copy work by artists such as Modigliani and Toulouse-Lautrec. The work is of high quality. Younger pupils have looked at work by Franz Marc to weave material strips through plastic frames, showing a good use of colour. A trip to the National Gallery has been arranged for this year and again will provide a good opportunity for pupils to learn from the work of famous artists. Good use is made of events like the annual art exhibition to celebrate pupils' work, which is also available for sale.

131 Only one lesson was seen during the inspection, in which the quality of teaching was excellent. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 worked with oil pastels to extend a coloured photograph stuck in the middle of a large sheet of sugar paper. They were fully involved in the task, taking care to experiment with the pastels in order to produce the right effect. They were all, including those with special educational needs, totally absorbed in the learning task. There were several elements in the teaching that resulted in this very good achievement and high standards. They included:

- excellent planning and preparation;
- excellent resources, every pupil has his or her own box of oil pastels;
- very good teaching of skills;
- very good encouragement for individuals.

Pupils' work and teachers' planning in Years 1 and 2 indicates that teaching is at least sound.

132 The subject leader provides strong leadership and has a clear vision for giving pupils a life long love of art. She has very good subject knowledge and is clear about what needs to be improved. She offers good support to colleagues, together with the knowledgeable Foundation Stage teacher. She manages resources well and all classes have access to a good range of materials and equipment.

Strengths:

- *standards in Year 4;*
- *subject leadership and expertise of some staff;*
- *resources for the subject.*

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

133 Although no lessons were timetabled during the inspection other evidence shows that standards in Years 2 and 4 are average. This is similar to the judgements made at the time of the last inspection. Since that time a well-balanced framework that takes account of national guidelines has been introduced. It ensures that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and the older pupils in Years 5 and 6, work with a good range of different materials and tools at suitably challenging tasks that include food technology. These effectively enhance their practical, making skills. However, there is less evidence of pupils, particularly in Years 3 and 4, developing their knowledge and understanding of the design element of this subject. Too few instances were seen of pupils planning a design before carrying it out.

134 In Years 1 and 2, pupils competently designed a coat for Joseph. They used a graphics program on the computer to decorate it and to explore a variety of repeating patterns. Using templates they marked and accurately cut and joined the pieces of fabric. Their design sheets mounted alongside the well-finished coats show that they have considered the tools and materials to be used and identified the different stages in the making process. They are currently engaged in designing and building a playground using construction kits, pipe

cleaners and other everyday materials. The work is appropriately planned to teach them about different methods of joining to create a stable structure.

135 In Years 3 and 4, pupils use their well-developed artistic skills and take great care when replicating the colours, shapes and textures of Egyptian jewellery. Good cutting, joining and finishing skills are evident in the samples displayed in the entrance hall. Photographs of earlier work show that they have investigated a range of methods of moving vehicles and toys including wind, electric motors, cams and pneumatics. Again, they are constructed with great care and finished to a good standard.

136 Pupils are eager to talk about their earlier work and are enthusiastic about the subject. However, it is clear from talking to them and to the co-ordinator that designing skills are not as advanced. Although pupils discuss and refine their work as they go along the more formal recording and evaluation of design is not yet firmly established as a regular feature. This limits their understanding of the design process.

137 The analysis of pupils' work and teachers' plans show that the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory. Their plans cover a good variety of techniques, skills and materials with valuable links to other subjects such as history and science. They provide well for pupils of different ages within the same class. However, they do not ensure that pupils have a real grasp of the requirements of the subject and particularly the overlap between design and technology and art.

138 The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and knowledgeable. As part of her intention to raise the status of design and technology in the school she has planned an afternoon workshop for older pupils with a visiting specialist. She has also identified the need to continue to develop the use of ICT within the subject. There is a good range of resources to support pupils' learning. They are of good quality, well organised and easily accessible.

Strengths:

- *well balanced planning framework;*
- *subject expertise of the co-ordinator.*

Areas for development:

- *more attention to the design process;*
- *the use of ICT to support and extend pupils' learning.*

GEOGRAPHY

139 Geography was not taught during the course of the inspection. Evidence is therefore drawn from work in pupils' books and on display, talking to teachers and pupils and viewing teachers' planning. The previous inspection found work in Years 2 and 4 to be average and on the basis of work seen it continues to be in line with standards expected for pupils of this age.

140 There is a strong emphasis on the use of fieldwork and visits to advance pupils' geographical knowledge and enquiry skills. Mapping skills are being progressively developed. Good use is made of the school's immediate surroundings, the village and further afield as a resource for learning. The annual residential visit for all pupils provides a valuable opportunity for pupils from Years 1 to 6 to study and experience an area very different from their own. The change of venue each year, from the coast of Norfolk last year to Ironbridge Gorge this year, further supports and extends this process.

141 Work in geography is often linked to work in other subjects and is particularly helpful in extending pupils' knowledge and understanding of other cultures. Teachers make good effort to make the learning as practical as possible. Year 2 pupils recalled how they drew maps of the local children's playground when designing playground equipment in design technology. Their books showed how they had recorded their route to school, and they remembered how they had walked round the village before recording key features on a plan using symbols and a key. Their understanding of other places is extended through 'Barnaby Bear's' visits. They remembered where he had been: Dublin, the seaside, France and London, but were less clear about the main features of these places or how they differed from where they lived. As a result of the school's link with Runyenjes and the Blue Peter water appeal they recalled that many people in Kenya had no clean water.

142 By Year 4 pupils are developing greater understanding of the world in which they live and the diversity of its landscape and climate. They knew that Indonesia had a tropical climate and that this was reflected in the vegetation and animals of its tropical rainforest. They suggested how this made communication and travel difficult, that cocoa was a main crop for export and talked of finding Sulawesi in an atlas. Their books showed that they had learnt about the geology and formation of the British Isles and the major climatic regions of the world. They remembered class trips to London and spoke of the contrast they had noticed in traffic and the density of buildings.

143 Teachers make good use of recent national guidance and the schools' own plans when preparing their lessons. The cycle of topics ensures that pupils in the mixed age classes experience the expected range of studies. However, all pupils in each class tend to follow the same tasks, the quality and quantity of work recorded dependent on their age and ability.

144 A good range of resources is well used to support learning in the subject. The subject is jointly co-ordinated by the headteacher and the head of Key Stage 1 who monitor provision in the subject through their close involvement in its delivery. Assessment procedures are well developed to ensure that pupils' understanding is regularly checked and recorded. The use of ICT to support learning in the subject is at the early stages of development.

Strengths

- *visits, visitors and use of the local area to support learning;*
- *annual residential visit;*
- *good range of resources;*
- *contribution to pupils' understanding and appreciation of other cultures.*

Areas for development

- *systematic and planned use of ICT to support learning;*
- *monitoring of the subject.*

HISTORY

145 Work on history was not timetabled during the inspection period. Based on teachers' planning, discussions with pupils and their work, standards are average at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make steady progress through the school. At the time of the last inspection pupils made satisfactory progress and reached above average standards. This does not necessarily mean that standards have fallen since that time, but that the evidence base for this inspection was more limited than previously.

146 It is clear from the planning and photographic evidence that teachers plan interesting experiences for pupils. Very good use is made of trips to bring the subject alive. Pupils in Year 2, for example, recalled a trip to Letchworth museum, when they dressed up as Tudor children. They were fascinated by the idea of stocks for miscreants and were equally engaged by the night-time lavatory arrangements.

147 Good use is also made of local buildings and artefacts to learn about the past. Year 2 pupils were quite clear about the differences between Victorian schooling and education in the twenty first century from their work on the Victorian period. They identified features within the school that had been added since Victorian times, for example. They showed a good understanding of change over time and explained that electrical equipment would not have been used in the past because electricity had not been invented then.

148 Good links are made with other subjects, especially art, to help pupils to consolidate their understanding of cultural traditions. Pupils made necklaces in relation to their work on the Egyptians, for example, and clay crosses in connection with their study of the Anglo-Saxons.

149 Currently the written recording of pupils' knowledge and understanding is not as developed as it might be. In Years 3 and 4, for example, pupils' work relates to their study of the Egyptian and Tudor periods. A good deal of it is based on published work sheets, with an emphasis on building up a bank of information about the different periods. There is little opportunity for pupils to recall, select or organise the information for themselves and no apparent expectation for older, more able pupils and those in Years 5 and 6 to undertake more complex tasks.

150 The subject co-ordinator is enthusiastic and works closely with the teachers in Years 3 to 6 to plan a balanced curriculum. The school uses its own planning framework as a basis for the work and covers the required study units. At the moment assessment is not sufficiently developed to track pupils' progress in the five key areas of chronological understanding, knowledge and understanding, historical interpretation, historical enquiry and organisation and communication.

Strengths:

- *interesting activities planned, with trips used well to engage pupils' enthusiasm;*
- *good links with other subjects.*

Areas for development:

- *breadth of recorded work;*
- *planning for pupils in Years 5 and 6;*
- *assessment.*

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

151 Standards at the end of Years 2 and 4 are average. All groups of pupils achieve satisfactorily, including boys and girls and pupils with special educational needs. This is similar to the judgement at the time of the last inspection. However, this represents good improvement as the school has kept pace with the rapid developments in ICT and is responding well to the raised national expectations. Many of the improvements since the last inspection are quite recent. They include:

- better resources;
- training for all staff;
- better leadership of the subject;
- better guidance and support for teachers.

These are already beginning to have a positive impact on raising standards and the school is well placed to make further progress.

152 No full lessons were seen during the inspection although there were a number of shorter observations of pupils working with classroom assistants, and occasionally the class teacher, either individually or in small groups. These, and other inspection evidence, show that pupils are making satisfactory progress. Standards in each strand of the subject are in line with expectations. This includes word-processing, graphics, accessing the Internet and modelling and control.

153 In Years 1 and 2 pupils are introduced to basic editing skills. They use the backspace to delete and the shift key for capital letters and to insert speech marks correctly. They use a word bank to help them to write stories and to develop their mouse and keyboard skills. Using a paint package they create pictures, and with adult support they save, print and retrieve their work when designing a coat for Joseph. They make choices when 'dressing Teddy' and in these ways are learning the rudiments of modelling and control. Finding out about swans, for example, helps to extend their awareness of the different ways that information can be presented and communicated.

154 Pupils in Years 3 and 4 develop their skills further and extend their understanding of how the computer can be used to improve their work. They have been introduced to databases and design Yes/No questions to organise information about particular mammals. Links with other subjects are beginning to develop. For example, using the computer to generate a variety of graphs and charts including block, line and pie effectively supports pupils' learning in mathematics as well as developing their ICT skills. Pupils are competent at controlling a screen turtle by writing and operating a series of commands causing it to rotate through a given number of degrees to create hexagonal and circular shapes.

155 Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Classroom assistants provide good support for pupils of all capabilities, reinforcing the school's strongly inclusive approach. Pupils work well in small groups and this collaboration successfully promotes their social and personal development. Teachers successfully promote pupils' positive attitudes to the subject. They are highly motivated by developments in the subject and discuss their work with great enthusiasm. Teachers have benefited from training through the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) and now have more confidence and growing subject knowledge. However, they do not consistently evaluate pupils' progress sufficiently well to form the basis for their planning. For example, the written records of pupils' work on the computers outside Class 3 do not link closely enough with the intended areas of learning to show pupils' gains in knowledge and skills. Nonetheless, they are a good indication of tasks covered and they include comments relating to their attitudes.

156 The co-ordinator provides good leadership, manages developments well and provides good support and guidance for her colleagues. She has a clear view of strengths and weaknesses and has identified the need to develop and extend the use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum. She has designed useful and manageable assessment and recording sheets that are about to be introduced to the staff. She agrees that they would benefit from being more clearly cross-referenced to the National Curriculum. Resources for learning are good and are regularly updated and improved. The good financial investment in resources is having a positive impact on pupils' learning.

Strengths:

- *good subject leadership providing good support and guidance for colleagues;*
- *improving staff expertise;*
- *good resources;*

Areas for development:

- *continuing to develop an accurate and manageable assessment system based on National Curriculum descriptors;*
- *developing the use of ICT in all subjects.*

MUSIC

157 The school has maintained the good provision for this area and the above average standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 4 since the time of the last inspection. Two teachers with specialist skills teach music to pupils from Year 1 upwards. One takes class lessons and the other teaches all pupils to play the recorder.

158 Standards in singing are above average. Pupils sing tunefully in assemblies. In one, for example, they sang 'Colours of Day' without accompaniment. They enunciated clearly and sang thoughtfully. In the weekly mass, one pupil sang a solo very confidently, while his peers listened sensibly. In the lesson seen in Years 3 to 6, pupils worked on the tonic sol-fa. They followed the signing of the teacher carefully and sang tunefully. During the lesson they worked on a two-part harmony and sang to a high standard.

159 In the two recorder groups seen during the inspection pupils worked hard to follow simple tunes by reading a musical score. Most managed this well. Older pupils have mastered correct fingering and most play simple tunes accurately.

160 Pupils are building up a good understanding of musical language and understand terms such as canon, crochet, quaver and harmony. During the course of the inspection no work on developing work on composing skills was seen and so it is not possible to make a judgement in this area.

161 Teaching was good in all sessions seen. Strengths in the teaching, which account for pupils' good achievements are:

- very good subject knowledge;
- high expectations of what pupils can achieve;
- very good teaching of skills;
- small group arrangements for recorder lessons.

In all sessions seen, although pupils behaved well overall, there was a tendency for some to fidget and chatter when they were not actually performing.

162 Pupils have opportunities to perform in school productions, such as the Christmas nativity, the annual summer musical and in local musical festivals. Last year, for example, a group of pupils took part in the St Albans diocese festival of light.

163 The subject manager is an accomplished musician and has great enthusiasm for the subject. She teaches in both of the older pupils' classes and so has a good view of standards and provision throughout the school. She has a clear agenda for further improvements, including more work on percussion and assessment. There is a good range of musical instruments, including some from other cultures.

Strengths:

- *standards in singing and recorder playing;*
- *knowledge and expertise of music teachers.*

Areas for development:

- *assessment;*
- *development and improvement of pupils' roles as listeners as well as participants.*

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

164 Overall standards in both Year 2 and Year 4 are average in physical education and high in swimming. This is a similar position to that found by the last inspection. All aspects of the subject are planned during the year, including outdoor and adventurous activities for all year groups, both as part of the annual residential visit and within the locality. Swimming at the Ward Freman School is for all year groups and by the time they leave most pupils are competent swimmers with two thirds swimming over 1000m and half of those managing over a mile. Boys and girls achieve equally well, as do pupils with special educational needs, who participate fully in lessons. A qualified instructor, who worked with individual year groups on games skills, took all the lessons seen.

166 In sessions seen, pupils in Years 1 and 2 worked enthusiastically to improve the accuracy of their throwing. They enthusiastically and quickly retrieved their ball, taking account of the available space and other people as they tried to hit the targets to complete their individual contribution to the game. They observed the rules of the game, working hard to improve their aim and the speed of their delivery. Most refined their over arm throws but some, particularly boys in Year 2, reverted to other methods in their quest for speed.

167 Pupils in Year 3 work hard to complete the circuit activities as quickly as possible whilst their partners recorded the results and gave encouraging feedback. Whilst these activities clearly increase their stamina and will support games activities, they do not, of themselves, increase pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding or improve the quality of their overall performance.

168 There is good attention to safety with all pupils suitably changed and in one Year 3 session all worked barefoot. Pupils understand why they warm up at the start of the lesson and cool down at the end. They are very enthusiastic about the activities, clearly enjoy their PE lessons and apart from some slight inattention as a result of over exuberance amongst a small group of Year 2 boys, listen carefully to instructions. When given the opportunity they work well in pairs and make suitably supportive comments to their partners.

169 Overall the teaching seen was good. Well-planned and prepared activities coupled with clear explanation of the task and suitable demonstration kept pupils on task and ensured a brisk pace to the activities. Coaching and timely reminders of the nature of the task supported this well and ensured a good level of challenge. Introductions reminded pupils of previous work and end sessions were well used to highlight areas for improvement. Increasing group and paired work and providing greater opportunities for observation and evaluation during the lesson would raise the level of attainment further.

170 The subject is co-ordinated by the headteacher and good support is provided by the detailed commercial scheme used as a basis for planning in the subject. Ongoing assessment of pupils by observation during the lessons against clear criteria provides a good basis for recording pupils' progress. There is a good range of equipment that is well stored and in good condition. The large modern hall and the extensive well-maintained grounds are a particularly valuable resource. Good use is made of outside providers to supplement the range of skills and activities on offer and there is a good range of after school clubs including football, netball, gymnastics, country dance and keep fit which extends this further.

Strengths:

- *resources;*
- *planning for all aspects of the subject;*
- *range of specialist expertise;*
- *pupils' enthusiasm.*

Areas for development

- *increasing opportunities for evaluation and observation of performance;*
- *more paired and group work.*