

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST NICHOLAS, ELSTREE, C of E VA PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

Elstree, Borehamwood

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117431

Acting Headteacher: Mrs Jane Cogan

Reporting inspector: Dennis Maxwell
8798

Dates of inspection: 7th - 10th April 2003

Inspection number: 247781

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:	3 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	St Nicholas Close Elstree Borehamwood
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Appropriate authority:	Hertfordshire
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Nick Durward-Akhurst
Date of previous inspection:	2 nd February 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
8798	D J Maxwell	Registered inspector	Science Information and communication technology Physical education Foundation stage	What sort of school is it? School's results and achievement How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
13895	A Smith	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnerships with parents?
23054	G Johnson	Team inspector	English Geography History Special educational needs Educational inclusion	
7523	T Canham	Team inspector	Mathematics Art Design and technology Music English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Nicholas CE Primary is a voluntary aided church school for pupils aged three to eleven years. It is of a broadly average size for a primary school, with 186 pupils on roll and a further twenty-eight part-time children in the Nursery. It is situated centrally in Elstree and the community serving the school has similar socio-economic circumstances to those found nationally. The children's attainment on entry to the school is average. Fewer pupils than usual are known to be eligible for free school meals. Few pupils have English as an additional language and none is at an early stage. Around six per cent of pupils enter or leave other than at the usual time, which is broadly average. The percentage of pupils identified as having learning difficulties is broadly average, with most of them having moderate learning needs. One pupil has a Statement of Special Educational Need. The school gained an Investors in People award in 2001, and a School's Achievement Award from the DfES. It also gained a Healthy Schools Award in 2002.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education. There is a new climate of increased expectations for behaviour and standards. All members of staff have a high level of commitment to take things on and succeed. The school has made rapid improvements recently through the very good leadership and management of the acting headteacher. She has made a very thorough evaluation of school needs, building on the positive initiatives of the deputy headteacher. Overall, standards by Years 2 and 6 are average and pupils achieve as expected. The quality of teaching and learning during lessons is good. Pupils' progress over a longer period of time is satisfactory rather than good as a result of the lack of leadership by the permanent headteacher and the uneven quality of teaching that the school has experienced. The leadership and management of the acting headteacher and deputy headteacher are very good. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Children get a very good start in the Nursery, with many challenging and imaginative activities.
- The standard of pupils' behaviour is good overall, and most pupils work hard during lessons.
- The quality of teaching is good throughout the school so that pupils are now achieving well. There is a good system in place for assessing pupils' progress, including those for subjects such as design technology.
- There is a good choice of interesting and worthwhile tasks, adapted so that all pupils take a full part. The arrangements to support pupils' personal development are good.
- The provision for children with learning difficulties is very good, promoted by the highly committed support staff and very good management. Day-to-day procedures to ensure children's welfare, such as dealing with poor behaviour or for child protection, are good.
- The leadership and management of the acting headteacher and deputy headteacher are very good so that all aspects of the school receive proper attention.

What could be improved

- Standards in geography across the school, and in information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education by the end of Year 6, are below expectations.
- The recent initiatives to improve teaching and learning are not yet implemented fully.
- The curriculum structure requires further work, for example, to include useful links with pupils' personal, social and health education.
- Some policies and procedures, such as for pupils' behaviour, are not fully finalised and implemented.
- The work of subject leaders, particularly in checking standards, is not sufficiently developed.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1998. It has made satisfactory improvements in the issues identified at that time. The acting headteacher is providing very good leadership and she has identified a full agenda for action after the school suffered a period of lack of direction. The quality of teaching has improved, although the teacher's expectations have not been high enough in Year 6. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties shows very good improvement. Standards have improved in line with the national trend and are better in design and technology. However, standards in geography across the school and in ICT and physical education in the current Year 6 are not as good as at the time of the last inspection. The school is also at an advanced stage in planning for new classrooms for children in the Nursery and Reception classes, which are intended to lead to improved conditions.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	All schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	B	B	B	A
mathematics	C	A	A	A
science	B	A	B	B

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

Standards in the work seen are broadly average by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science, although there is evidence of uneven skill development in Year 6. Standards are similar to those reported at the last inspection in 1998, but lower than those suggested by last year's test results. This decline is partly the consequence of differences in the overall ability and effort of the two year groups. It is also the result of unevenness in teaching through the high turnover of staff and lack of rigorous monitoring and focus on maintaining high standards by the permanent headteacher. Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall through the school. By Year 6, the quality of writing is satisfactory, and there is a growing pattern of some good writing in other subjects. Pupils' skills in mental calculation are satisfactory and written calculations are usually set out correctly. In science pupils are gaining a solid body of knowledge on topics such as electrical circuits and how sound travels. These are reinforced through practical work, although pupils' enquiry skills are less well developed, particularly in Year 6 where there has been insufficient emphasis on practical investigations. By the end of Year 2, standards in English, mathematics and science and the other subjects meet the expectation apart from in geography. By the end of Year 6 standards meet the expectation apart from in geography, ICT and physical education.

The table above shows that in 2002 standards in mathematics were well above the national average. In comparison with similar schools standards were well above average in English and mathematics. Boys and girls performed similarly. The trend in standards has been broadly in line with the nationally improving trend over the past four years. On average, by Year 6 pupils made good progress from their prior attainments in Year 2. The school did not meet its own targets for English and mathematics in 2002, partly due to pupils leaving or joining the school during the year. It is unlikely to meet them in 2003. For 2004 there is evidence of pupils making good progress towards meeting the school's own challenging targets. Standards in the Year 2 national tests for writing were well above both the national average and the average for similar schools; and standards in reading were above both the averages. In mathematics, standards met the national average, but were below the average for similar schools.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most pupils take a good interest in their tasks. Many pupils, but not all, are keen to contribute to discussion and to respond to the good relationships with their teachers by answering questions and working hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Most pupils respond positively to the school's clear expectations. They develop their own self-discipline which supports learning. A few pupils have challenging behaviour that is handled firmly. They understand the school's clear system for rewards and sanctions.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. While many pupils are thoughtful and value friendships, a minority has not yet learnt to take personal responsibility for their learning. There are a few opportunities for older pupils to take responsibility, which they do willingly.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Most pupils want to be with their friends and attend regularly, although a few have frequent patterns of absence.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed during the inspection is good throughout the school, indicating good improvement since the last inspection. The teaching of English and mathematics is good. Pupils' recent work shows evidence of good learning and attention to skills. For example, the skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are taught well and increasingly applied in other subjects. There is, however, evidence of uneven quality of teaching over a longer period of time as a result of the previous lack of leadership and a high turnover of teachers in several classes. Pupils' learning was adversely affected during this time. The acting headteacher, now in post, is providing the necessary direction and support so that teachers can plan and teach effectively. There is a very strong sense of the teachers now working together to make improvements through self-evaluation.

Teachers provide good challenge in the tasks to meet the needs of all groups of pupils well. The teachers' management of the pupils is very good and they apply a wide range of teaching strategies. For example, in the Nursery children move between focused activities and child-directed play; in Year 1 pupils had plenty of opportunities to discuss in pairs adjectives to describe a daffodil; and in Year 4 pupils were encouraged to read aloud to the class their introductory sentences for an imaginary world for which they had brainstormed ideas and words together. Teachers give good attention to children's language development shown, for example, in the lively talk in the Reception class café. Most pupils respond to the high expectations by working hard, taking pleasure, for example, in learning about Victorian schooling in Year 5, in making an animal sculpture in Year 2 or in making a fraction domino chain in Year 3. In Year 2, the teacher's very good relationships with the pupils motivated them to learn about how to program a floor turtle, and her skilled questioning prompted pupils to think about the commands to enter. Several pupils, more particularly in Year 6 where the teacher's expectations are not high enough, have not developed independent learning skills. Their acquisition of new skills lacks confidence and they have difficulty in contributing to discussion.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall. All subjects are planned for and taught as required, including for pupils' personal and social development. The progressive development of skills in the various subjects has been less consistent until recently. There is scope for extending links between subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils are given perceptive support matched closely to their learning needs. The management of provision is very good. The support staff establishes very good relationships with children and is perceptive about their learning needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils take a full part in activities through the good planning and inter-active teaching. The school has good arrangements for specific support when required.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Pupils' spiritual development is promoted well through assemblies, special services, religious education and on occasions in other subjects. There is a strong relationship with the church, which includes sharing the key to the graveyard. Moral and social development are enhanced through clear expectations for considerate behaviour. Cultural and multicultural development is encouraged through visits and visitors to school, but is a less strong feature.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The happy school ethos reflects a good level of personal care for all pupils. Good procedures for welfare and assessment support pupils' progress. A few routines, such as the analysis of attendance figures, have only very recently been put in place and are satisfactory overall.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	There is good communication between parents and class teachers. A productive partnership is now developing between the acting headteacher and parents after a period of significant difficulty. A good number of parents comes into the school to help.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall, as a result of recent action. The acting headteacher provides very good leadership and management. She has taken a strong grip on the school which was lacking previously. The good perceptions and evaluations of the deputy headteacher helped to set a clear agenda for development, which the acting headteacher has used to put fundamental procedures and support in place.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good overall. The governors have good procedures to approve policies, visit the school and to check progress. A few routines which had slipped are being addressed.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The improvement plan for 2002/3 does not give sufficient direction. The recent evaluation by the acting headteacher and deputy headteacher is clear and realistic, and is providing a very good basis for forward planning through the 2003/4 improvement plan.

Aspect	Comment
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Teachers and support staff are deployed well for the benefit of the children. The acting headteacher and governors understand and apply the principles of obtaining best value in their decisions and consider the effectiveness of improvements with standards and children's needs in mind.

The level of staffing, accommodation and resources is satisfactory. There is a strong sense of teamwork amongst the staff. The staff in the school office provides a very friendly and efficient service, and the school site is kept in good order by the site manager. The accommodation has several good features, such as the library, but is satisfactory overall since, for example, the outside facilities for the Nursery and Reception classes are just adequate.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents think their children like school and make good progress. • They think teaching is good. • They feel comfortable about mentioning a problem. • They find the school helps their children to become mature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The standard of behaviour. • The amount of homework and information about their child's progress. • The leadership of the school and ways of working with parents. • The range of activities outside lessons.

The inspectors broadly agree with parents' positive views since they found the teaching to be good and an open relationship with parents is encouraged. Parents have a satisfactory opinion of the school now, although at the time of the parents' meeting and when the questionnaires were being completed there is evidence of significant concern about the leadership of the permanent headteacher and its effects on their children's learning. The inspectors agree with those concerns, but find good evidence of rapid improvement through the leadership of the acting headteacher and staff commitment. All the areas of concern in the questionnaires are now broadly satisfactory or good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards in the work seen in English, mathematics and science are average by Years 2 and 6. This maintains the position by both Years 2 and 6 since the last inspection, although there is evidence of the uneven development of skills in several subjects and classes. This is as a result of variation in the quality of teaching and lack of clear leadership prior to the appointment of the acting headteacher. The school's initial assessments of children as they enter the school in the Nursery and when they transfer to the Reception class, and inspection evidence, indicate that attainment on entry is broadly average. Children achieve satisfactorily from entry to the school to the end of Reception. Most children are on course to meet the expected standards of the Early Learning Goals for young children by the time they enter Year 1 and several higher attaining children will exceed them. Progress is satisfactory in Years 1 to 2, and also in Years 3 to 6. Overall, pupils are achieving as expected over time in the infant and the junior classes. Within lessons, pupils are usually learning well and making good progress through the impact of good teaching, the developing support by the subject leaders and the recently introduced monitoring procedures by the acting headteacher.
2. Standards in the 2002 national tests in Year 2 were well above the national average in writing, above average in reading, and average in mathematics. In comparison with similar schools, standards were well above average in writing, above average in reading, but below average in mathematics. The performance of boys and girls has been similar over the past three years. The trends in reading and writing have been in line with the national upward trend, while in mathematics the trend has dipped over the past two years. The school is aware of this, and has put support and planning systems in place to support teachers, and introduced popular additional literacy and numeracy support for the pupils.
3. Standards in the 2002 national tests at Year 6 were well above the national average in mathematics, and above average in English and science. In comparison with similar schools standards were well above average in English and mathematics, and above average in science. A higher percentage than usual exceeded the expectation in all three subjects, indicating that teaching and provision were good at that time. The standards observed during the inspection represent a decline in standards compared with the results of the national tests of 2002. This decline is partially the consequence of differences in the overall ability of the different year groups, but is also the result of less effective teaching in the present Year 6. Also, there have been disruptions arising from the high level of mobility of staff and the absence of the permanent headteacher so that the school has not been sufficiently focused on high standards. Pupils' progress over time is satisfactory, but more recent progress, noted both in pupils' work in the second half of the current term and in the lessons observed in the course of the inspection, is good overall. Standards by the end of Year 6 have been at least above the national average in English and science over the past four years. On average, pupils made good progress at Year 6 in the national tests of 2002 from their prior attainment when they were in Year 2. The performance of boys and girls has been broadly similar over the past three years, although girls have done a little better in English. The trend in standards has been broadly in line with the upward national trend over the past four years, indicating that the school has made at least satisfactory provision.

4. By the end of Years 2 and 6, standards in art and design, design and technology and history meet the expectation. Standards also meet the expectation by the end of Year 2 in ICT and PE. Standards are below the expectation in geography by the end of Year 2; and also below by the end of Year 6 in geography, ICT and physical education. The school did not meet its own targets for English or mathematics in the 2002 national tests partly as a result of pupils leaving or joining the school within the cohort. The school is unlikely to meet its targets in 2003 since the permanent headteacher did not provide rigorous monitoring of standards. For 2004 there is evidence of pupils making good progress and higher targets are achievable. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress through the effect of perceptive support, as do those with English as an additional language. The acting headteacher has re-established a climate of high expectations for behaviour and achievement, focused clearly on strategies for positive behaviour management. These are having a clear impact on pupils' self-discipline and hence on standards.
5. The quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. This has improved markedly since the last inspection, when teaching and management in this aspect of the school's work were unsatisfactory. Across the school, these pupils now make sound progress in their work, especially in their acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills. Their rate of progress is similar to that made by higher- and average-attaining pupils. They are well supported by both teachers and ancillary staff. These pupils are offered work which provides appropriate challenge; the tasks they are set closely mirror those offered to other pupils so that they feel included in all of the activities of the class. Teaching assistants develop close working relationships with the pupils for whom they are responsible. They are well trained by the special needs co-ordinator and well briefed by class teachers so that the support that they offer enhances pupils' progress.
6. There are no significant variations in attainment among pupils of different ethnic groups, language, background or in relation to gender. The carefully planned activities and full participation in English during the day provides the pupils with English as an additional language with good support for them to develop knowledge and skills alongside their peers. The interactive approach to learning enables them to learn from the teachers, support staff and from other children.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

7. Pupils enjoy coming to school and have positive attitudes to their work. This boosts their progress and makes an important contribution to the standards achieved by many pupils. Pupils are keen to learn and work hard. They listen carefully to teachers and concentrate well in lessons. There is a small number of pupils who have difficulties with concentration and behaviour but they rarely disrupt lessons since, generally, teachers deal with these pupils quickly and effectively. Pupils respond well to the high expectations of teachers that they will make good progress during lessons. This is better than reported at the last inspection.
8. Behaviour is good and in many instances very good, especially in lessons where the good teaching stimulates the interest of all pupils in the class. The majority of pupils displays good standards of behaviour around the school. Teachers are consistent in their expectations of good behaviour and speak to pupils with respect and consideration. The school is inclusive and welcomes pupils equally from a wide range of backgrounds. There have been two recent fixed-term exclusions from school in order to reinforce the school's expectations for good behaviour but no bullying was observed during inspection.

9. Personal development is satisfactory. Teachers foster the development of the pupils' personal and social skills and pupils respond agreeably to opportunities to take initiative and responsibility. For example, the School Council has been re-established with two pupils from each year group meeting together at least once each half term. Many pupils take part in extra-curricular activities provided outside school time including the French Club, football, sports and booster classes. All pupils are involved in supporting charities such as the Marie Curie Foundation, RSPCA, Barnardo's and local charities. However, many pupils show little self-motivation to take initiatives that are without adult help and this holds back their personal development.
10. Relationships are good and make a positive contribution to the standards of good behaviour observed. Pupils are open and friendly, and courteous towards staff, each other and visitors. Pupils are given good opportunities to discuss and reflect on the impact of their actions on others during class discussions, assemblies and personal, social and health education lessons and their understanding in this is satisfactory. Many pupils are keen to work collaboratively, both in the classroom and in other aspects of school life. They co-operate well with one another during activities and are frequently supportive of each other's efforts. The pupils look after their school well and there is evidence of trust and a willingness to share between pupils. Pupils are supportive of those who are disabled. They are quick to make friends and to do what they can to help them take part in activities.
11. Pupils with special educational needs display good attitudes to their work because members of staff develop a close working relationship with them. As a result, most display no embarrassment at the additional attention they receive. The targets for pupils with learning difficulties are shared with them and this assists pupils in developing a strong sense of ownership towards their own learning. In consequence, many are highly motivated to do well and take pleasure in sharing their successes with others.
12. Attendance is satisfactory and compares with the national average for similar schools. The number of unauthorised absences is more than the national average for similar schools. A local agreement has been made which is intended to reduce the number of applications for leave of absence for holidays during term time. Most pupils arrive in time for the beginning of the school day and at the time of the inspection most pupils settled quickly and were ready for lessons to begin promptly. At the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions registration is quickly and efficiently carried out.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

13. The quality of teaching seen in lessons during the inspection is good throughout the school. It has a positive impact on pupils' learning so that they make good gains in knowledge and skills. Learning is usually good in lessons so that pupils make good progress. This indicates a good recent improvement, and also good improvement since the last inspection in terms of the arrangements made by the acting headteacher to support planning and improve the expectations by teachers for behaviour and standards.
14. The provision and teaching for children in the Nursery is very good and is a strength of the school. At the time of the inspection, teaching in the Reception class was shared by two supply teachers, and the teaching and provision, as seen, is satisfactory. The quality of teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes is good overall in all areas of the Early Learning Goals so that the children make good progress. The members of staff make good provision for the children's all-round development and education, including those with special educational needs or with English as an additional

language. They ensure that all children have full and equal access to the activities and choices planned for them. This inspection shows good improvement since the last inspection, and a few areas to develop or consolidate.

15. Thoughtful teaching is focused on providing a rich quality of experience for the children in the Foundation Stage. This is followed by interesting and well-planned tasks in Years 1 to 2, so that the children's learning builds on a good foundation. Teaching is good in Years 3 to 6 and results in pupils making good progress in their learning. Examples of good teaching were noted in almost all subjects and year groups, indicating a considerable strength in the quality of teaching across the school. The teaching of English and mathematics is good overall. Evidence from an analysis of pupils' work across the subjects indicates that teaching and learning over time are satisfactory through the school. However, there is clear evidence of recent good improvements in pupils' work in English and other subjects and this matches the quality of teaching observed in lessons to indicate that teaching and learning are now mostly good. This is because the acting headteacher has established improvements with a sharpened focus on raising standards and on raising expectations for high achievement.
16. Teachers take good account of pupils' prior learning gained from good target-setting procedures in their planning. Thorough lesson plans are based on national guidance as well as observations of the pupils. In English, teachers plan their work thoroughly, using their knowledge of pupils' attainment and matching the set tasks to the learning needs of each group. Most lessons contain a good balance of oral, practical and written work and proceed at a brisk pace. The teachers usually provide tasks that are suited well to pupils' differing abilities but occasionally there is insufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils. Teachers' secure knowledge of the national numeracy strategy, their lively and well-chosen teaching methods and their relaxed, friendly but firm management of pupils are strengths that lead to good learning. In science, the teachers lead very good discussions, with skilled questioning that enables pupils to share findings and reinforce learning. This was shown, for example, in Year 2, when a very well prepared task challenged all groups of pupils to identify a common property for groups of materials. The pupils decided that chocolate and butter were both smooth, while higher attaining pupils considered ice, glass and water all to be transparent.
17. The teachers give good, clear explanations and pupils are offered sufficient opportunity to discuss their work in pairs or small groups. Sometimes teachers offer too much direction to their pupils instead of allowing them time to assimilate their learning by working fully through the tasks they have been set. In many lessons, teachers engage actively with the pupils in their learning. They circulate effectively amongst the pupils, picking up through good observations about their understanding or difficulties, and asking them telling questions about their work to help them improve. The teachers' management of pupils is good so that pupils usually maintain good concentration and effort.
18. Teachers use information gained from their observations of the pupils to form good on-going assessments during lessons. These are used effectively in further discussion and questioning to help pupils improve the quality of their work. The teachers have a clear understanding of the work required to raise standards further and how to achieve this. There are thorough procedures for the diagnostic assessment of pupils which are used positively to set targets for pupils and to guide their daily planning. Daily marking of pupils' books is mostly up-to-date and includes suitable praise as well as questions and comment on how to improve. It is very good in three classes because the teachers enter into a dialogue with their pupils. However, there is evidence of varying and inconsistent practice that relates to the high turnover of teachers as well as ineffective

practice in Year 6. In general, teachers' daily assessments, as in English, mathematics and science, are perceptive and teachers' responses help pupils to overcome difficulties. Teachers provide suitable homework for pupils to consolidate their learning.

19. Lesson planning is based on a growing body of medium-term planning which is beginning to provide a good structure. Teachers give good attention to setting out how tasks are to be adapted for pupils of differing attainment, although there is less indication of the teaching strategies to be used. There is a good focus on pupils' first-hand practical experience. On occasion, there is some over-direction by the teacher which limits the opportunities for pupils to pose their own questions and experiments, as seen in some science lessons. In a few lessons the introductory sessions are too long or the final discussion sessions do not reinforce children's learning sufficiently. The teachers give good attention to the teaching of a wide range of basic skills, including literacy, mental calculations, ICT, and science investigation. The application of ICT skills in other subjects is under-developed, however.
20. Teachers have a good sense of the pupils' personal care which promotes pupils' personal development well so that they are ready to learn. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is very good. This has improved considerably since the last inspection when teaching was unsatisfactory. The pupils are supported well by both teachers and classroom assistants who develop close working relationships with the pupils. They are offered relevant work similar to that set for other pupils; as a result, all feel included in the activities of the class. Pupils learning English as an additional language are supported by useful classroom strategies such as placing a pupil with another child who can help.

HOW GOOD ARE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

21. At the time of the last inspection, the curriculum provided by the school was found to be broad and balanced, but there was a minor element of the statutory design and technology programme that was not being taught. This has been corrected.
22. The present curriculum is a varied and challenging one, of good quality overall. It complies with statutory requirements, although teaching time for pupils in Years 3 - 6 is slightly less than the minimum recommendation and this should be corrected. In addition there is evidence that, until recently, in geography and in aspects of other subjects, the curriculum was not broad enough because the teaching of geographical or other skills was not sufficiently developed and was too didactic. Literacy and numeracy are a priority for the school, and the national initiatives in these subjects have been pursued energetically and competently, but without putting at risk the broad curriculum of other subjects. While literacy and numeracy skills are usually applied well in other subjects, the use of ICT skills to support learning in other subjects is under-developed. The school has also set in place effective sex education and drugs misuse education within their Personal, Social and Health Education programme. This includes opportunities for sensitive discussion of personal relationships and problems in class discussion times which is at an early stage of development. The beginnings of learning about citizenship have been initiated by the establishment of the pupils' School Council which is composed of elected representatives of all classes. It discusses school issues and makes suggestions to management about school facilities and organisation.
23. The curriculum is enriched by a week or two each term when the whole school studies one topic in depth, involving many exciting activities for pupils, for example, the Victorians. Opportunities are also taken, when funds permit, for school visits to

museums, theatres and other places of interest, and for bringing into the school performers and others with special expertise or experiences to offer, for example, members of minority faiths. The local church makes a valuable contribution through the pupils' fortnightly visit for a service, and the priest-in-charge's visits to the school.

24. Curriculum provision for the Foundation Stage is also good. The planned curriculum for all children in the Nursery and Reception classes is well structured and meets the expectations of the Early Learning Goals effectively for all areas of learning. The activities and work for children in the Reception class builds and extends well on that in the Nursery, providing an appropriate level of formality in the tasks.
25. The school offers a good range of extra-curricular activities. This includes a range of sports such as short tennis and football, and also study support, in the form of booster classes in literacy and numeracy, the latter provided voluntarily by teachers, to their credit.
26. In almost every respect, pupils have equal access to the curriculum regardless of their gender, race or disability. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds are well integrated, and the school works hard to ensure that every pupil may take part in each aspect of school life. Those with special educational needs make progress similar to that of other pupils, receiving good support in their efforts. This aspect of school life has improved significantly since the last inspection, when lower attaining pupils did not make the progress of which they were capable. Although pupils of greater aptitude and ability are sometimes not challenged sufficiently in geography and history, their learning needs in all other subjects are met well. The progress of pupils withdrawn from lessons for specialised tuition, for example in music, is not adversely affected over time. The school has focused much effort to ensure that boys perform as well as girls. Analysis of performance data and interviews with pupils revealed a need to interest older boys more in reading and, as a result, a more appropriate range of reading books was provided by purchasing appealing books and by setting carefully selected themes for writing. The school takes seriously the need to ensure that all the different groups of children for whom it caters can gain maximum benefit from its programmes. A child identified as gifted and talented has special provision made to ensure his talents are properly developed and valued. Higher attaining pupils who need specific provision to ensure they can reach the higher levels of attainment have a programme in the booster classes tailored for them.
27. The curriculum offered to pupils with special needs is adapted appropriately to their needs. Teachers are at pains to ensure that they are included in class discussions and that they share their work with others. During whole class sessions, teaching assistants closely support those for whom they are responsible, offering clarification of teaching or asking questions to check their understanding. In one lesson, the special needs co-ordinator offered very good teaching to one of her pupils, constantly changing strategies when the pupil encountered difficulties and rephrasing her explanations to aid understanding. All those concerned with the teaching of pupils with special needs have a good understanding of pupils' levels of achievement and of the specific nature of their difficulties. This enables teachers and support staff to plan well for the pupils' future learning. The constant flow of information between the special needs co-ordinator, staff and parents ensure that all have a good understanding of pupils' particular learning difficulties and are thus well placed to overcome them.
28. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are carefully assessed on entry and advice and support are available for teachers from local authority staff. Teachers adjust the work given to these pupils where necessary so that they can understand

tasks and learn as well as others. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator monitors pupils' progress and makes sure that their needs are met satisfactorily.

Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education

29. Overall, the school makes good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils, and has improved upon that reported at the time of the last inspection.
30. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. In school assemblies, pupils are regularly invited to reflect on the events surrounding the life and teaching of Jesus, or to pray silently to understand their meaning more clearly. Good opportunities are created for pupils to wonder at the mysteries of new life or to ponder on the contrasting feelings Christians experience when they reflect on the sadness of Good Friday and the joy of Easter Day. Symbols are used well to help pupils to focus their thoughts and feelings. Sometimes, leaders of collective worship make insufficient use of the very good opportunities they create by enlarging on the chosen theme and by encouraging pupils to ask questions or to express their own thoughts. Some acts of worship are of very good quality; in one, the leader evoked many images drawn from her own experience, and these helped pupils to clarify their own thoughts and feelings. In lessons, teachers sometimes use music purposefully to stimulate pupils' imagination for writing or artwork, or to create a particular atmosphere for drama or physical education. However, provision of this nature is not consistent across the school.
31. Informed by its strong Christian teaching and by the aims and values it espouses, the school makes good provision for the moral education of its pupils. As a result, pupils have a clear understanding of the differences between right and wrong and generally behave well. Pupils are taught to offer constructive criticism without giving offence, and to value the feelings and opinions of others. In an art lesson, for example, pupils were invited to state how they thought the work of others could be improved, and this they did with tact and thoughtfulness. In most lessons, pupils discuss their work sensibly with others, waiting until another has finished speaking before they make their contribution. The acting headteacher and staff are very good role models for their pupils. Because they know their pupils well, teachers and classroom assistants display a keen sense of respect and understanding for their feelings. When minor misdemeanours occur, members of staff are quick to deal with the pupils' behaviour and with the moral implications of its impact on others.
32. The school's provision for the social development of its pupils is equally good. Pupils are assigned tasks that progressively carry greater responsibility as they move through the school. Those in Year 1 take simple messages, for example, while pupils in Year 6 look after the welfare of younger pupils at lunch. However, staff are aware that they need to create more extensive provision for pupils to show initiative and accept responsibility. They are in the process of initiating new opportunities and re-establishing those that have lapsed, such as the School Council. The school promotes well the social awareness of its pupils, both by encouraging them to support the work of national and local charities and through its links with the church and community. For example, senior citizens are looked after by older pupils during their regular visits to the school, and those in Year 6 are involved in developing a nearby multi-sensory garden. Around the school, pupils are considerate in the use of their own property and that of others, and the school resources are generally well cared for.
33. Satisfactory provision is made for pupils' cultural development. Through their history work, pupils are offered a wide range of experiences that enable them to learn about

past cultures, and this learning is enhanced by visits to museums or to towns of historical interest such as St Albans. Pupils become acquainted with some aspects of the cultures of different countries, such as Mexico and India, and learn something of the lives of those living in different parts of the United Kingdom. Such learning is partially reinforced by the visits older pupils make to more distant localities such as Shropshire. However, not all of these residential experiences are strongly focused on geographical or cultural studies. The visit by Year 5 pupils was linked well to national guidance for science and geography. While the school makes some provision for pupils to learn about the practices and beliefs of faith groups through religious education, it does not offer them sufficient opportunities to gain an understanding of the different cultures present in today's society, for example, by inviting representatives to share their experiences with pupils. There is also scope to extend pupils' appreciation of the richness of the music and art of other cultural traditions. Good provision is made for pupils to experience the cultures of other ages through drama and historical workshops.

34. The school has useful links with the local community that add value to pupils' learning. Pupils sing to senior citizens at their Harvest Festival and at Christmas. There are football matches against other local schools, and parents and other members of the local community visit the school to provide help, for example, with design and technology.
35. Links with other schools are limited to some contacts with primary schools in the same group, and liaison visits in relation to preparing pupils for transfer to secondary education. Some development of links with partner primary schools is envisaged and these are intended to develop further the good teaching in the school.
36. Several aspects of the curriculum have been established recently. The school is aware of the need to ensure that all necessary skills and knowledge are covered fully and consistently, so is drawing up a cross-curricular map that includes personal, social and health education, and opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

37. Support for pupils' welfare makes a good contribution to improving educational standards. The school has a caring Christian ethos and sets out to make parents feel welcome. Teachers are supportive of both the academic and pastoral needs of pupils, including those with learning and other difficulties. Teachers and teaching assistants know the pupils well and are skilful at meeting most pupils' needs.
38. Child protection procedures are satisfactory and further training is planned. The designated teacher for child protection is the acting headteacher. The good use of teaching assistants contributes to the welfare and progress of many pupils. Midday supervisors receive training to help them in caring for pupils during the midday break. The arrangements and provision for dealing with first aid, sickness, accidents and emergencies are very good although there are no separate amenities for first aid personnel to use when administering treatment. There are good arrangements to ensure that pupils receive personal, social and health education.
39. The school has satisfactory procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour. Teachers have expectations of good behaviour. However, the school is reviewing the policy to give a stronger emphasis to positive behaviour management. Teachers are in the process of ensuring that all members of staff follow a consistent and effective approach to behaviour management. When there is a threat of bullying or other poor behaviour teachers take immediate action, talking through difficulties with

pupils. There have been two fixed periods of exclusion this year, to confirm the application of the clear expectations for behaviour, and the school deals appropriately with incidents of bullying and racial abuse.

40. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are good. The teaching assistants are very effective in supporting the teachers in taking very good account of the children's individual needs and character. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to discuss and share opinions on a range of personal, social, moral and health issues, through weekly class discussions and assemblies. Class teachers are efficient in monitoring pupils' overall personal development although they use no formal procedures to record pupils' personal interests and achievements gained in school or at home. The school celebrates pupils' achievements well through the award of certificates and sharing of work.
41. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are satisfactory. The school has recently introduced good changes to the procedures for collecting attendance data. It now has satisfactory procedures to account for all pupils during the course of the school day and to ensure that reasons for absence are received and recorded. The school works closely with the Educational Welfare Officer who supports the school in dealing with the attendance and welfare issues. Registers are maintained and stored in accordance with statutory regulations and the observed lessons started on time.

Assessment

42. Procedures for gathering and evaluating information about pupils' attainment are good. Although some of these systems had lapsed since the last inspection, the school has reinstated and improved them in recent months. Teachers are now keeping a much closer record of pupils' performance and are consequently developing a clear picture of the learning needs of each. Currently, the school assesses pupils' work formally twice a year, but is planning to arrange termly assessments. This information is being used to set individual targets for pupils in English and group targets for mathematics. These are shared with pupils and their parents so that pupils are beginning to develop a greater sense of pride in their own achievements and progress. Pupils' results in national and school tests are analysed carefully to determine trends and to identify areas where further improvement is needed. This information has been used well to establish booster classes for those pupils in need of specific support. The school has recently started to analyse the information it collects to compare the overall rates of progress of different year groups. The assessment co-ordinator is alert to the need to use this data more extensively to determine patterns of progress and make predictions, and is beginning to use computer technology imaginatively to make this task easier.
43. The school makes good provision to analyse achievement in subjects other than English, mathematics and science. The learning outcomes of a taught unit of work are assessed against one of three broad outcomes for each pupil in a class. This information could be still more helpful if these assessments were annotated with brief diagnostic notes highlighting the nature of any difficulties that pupils encounter in reaching the designated targets.
44. While these thorough procedures are helping staff to have much better knowledge of pupils' performance, their introduction is too recent to have an impact yet on teachers' long-term planning. However, they are being used to guide more systematically teachers' day-to-day planning. This is evident in the way in which teachers closely match the tasks they set in English lessons to the learning needs of pupils of different abilities. As a result, pupils find work sufficiently challenging and are well motivated to succeed. Teachers have agreed a policy that is promoting the more effective marking

of pupils' work. This is used well by some teachers who enter a genuine dialogue with their pupils, giving detailed advice on how they can improve, while justifiably praising their achievements. However, this high standard of marking is not yet employed consistently in every class.

45. Assessment procedures for those with learning difficulties are very good. These pupils are set precise targets that are realistic yet challenging, and are based on a thorough knowledge of the pupils' past achievements. Pupils' progress is under constant scrutiny. Their individual education plans are reviewed termly by the teacher and special needs co-ordinator. These plans are well maintained and are sufficiently detailed in their recommendations to be helpful to those offering support. There is a close link between the needs identified in the education plans and the course of action recommended to meet them. The parents of these pupils are invited to comment on their targets, and these are simplified and re-written in language that pupils understand so that they have a strong sense of involvement in the progress they are making towards them. The school is very alert to the need for the early diagnosis of special needs; this ensures that pupils receive early support for the learning difficulties they encounter.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

46. Overall, a significant number of parents and carers expressed concerns about several aspects of the school at the pre-inspection meeting and through the questionnaire, indicating an unsatisfactory view of the school at that time. This judgement is far less positive than that made at the last inspection. The latest evidence, gained from discussions with parents and members of the governing body, shows rapid improvement. The acting headteacher has taken decisions to stabilise the school and improve expectations and communication with parents. The school tries hard to work in partnership with parents and the community and has forged some valuable links that make a positive contribution to pupils' learning.
47. Parents feel their children enjoy school and are happy to attend. Many are pleased with the quality of the teaching their children experience and the progress their children are making. Parents also feel that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. Parents are comfortable about approaching the school with questions or concerns. However, the following areas of concern were noted by around a third of parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire. They would like to see improvement in the consistency of homework and the quality of information provided about their children's progress. Parents feel that the school does not work closely with parents and that the leadership and management of the school could be improved. They have concerns about pupils' behaviour and the range of activities outside of lessons. Inspection evidence indicates a period of lack of leadership but does not support the parental concerns currently. The chief explanation for this is that the recently appointed acting headteacher has been very active in addressing many areas of parental concern over the past few weeks.
48. Inspection evidence shows that there is a homework policy and that homework is mostly appropriately set and marked. Inspectors found that the school is now making a serious effort to work closely with parents. For example, the school has added extra parents' evenings, sent out a recent school-led questionnaire to parents and set up a Parental Forum. Inspectors are satisfied that the leadership and management of the acting headteacher and senior management team are effective. There is full commitment and dedication to the work of the school. Inspectors looked at the quality of information provided by the school about children's progress and find this to be of a

good quality. Behaviour during the inspection was good, and often very good, and the range of activities offered to pupils outside lessons is also good.

49. The quantity of information provided to parents is good. Newsletters are sent frequently to parents - at least once a fortnight. These keep parents informed about events, issues, forthcoming school trips and celebrate the school's successes. The parents of new pupils are informed about school life and expectations through meetings and visits to the school and the School Prospectus, although this lacks some information parents may find useful. The Governors' Annual Report to Parents provides more useful information for parents. To help parents understand the work done by their children the school arranges helpful Literacy and Numeracy evenings. The annual pupil reports give parents details of what their children have been learning. They give clear information about children's progress and what they now need to do to achieve the set targets.
50. The school operates an informal 'open door' policy for parents and carers wishing to discuss matters or to make complaints. Teachers are accessible and the headteacher is available to talk to parents and carers when not engaged in teaching. Parents are made welcome in the school. Parents attend consultation meetings for pupils with learning difficulties. There are good arrangements for parents of pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Need to receive appropriate information through annual reviews.
51. Parental involvement in pupils' learning, both at home and school, is satisfactory, although some do not give their children the support they need, such as listening to their children read. The school works at involving parents and, although some parents volunteer to help in classes, the school would welcome more. Many parents are happy to help with transport and are involved in supporting school activities such as school-led services in the parish church and school productions.
52. The school works closely with parents, friends of the school and the church through the active Parents and Friends Association to organise social events and raise extra funds through activities such as the Summer Fête, Christmas Bazaar, Pupil Discos and Easter Egg Hunt. Money raised is used to assist the school in providing extra equipment and resources such as books for the school library. The focus is currently on raising funds for staging and lighting equipment for the school hall.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

53. The acting headteacher is using her very good leadership and personal skills to give the school a clear sense of direction since her recent appointment. Prior to her appointment the school had experienced a long period of lack of direction which resulted in the postponement of decisions and a high turnover of staff. This has now been corrected and the acting headteacher has a very good and perceptive understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school, gained from a very thorough and realistic evaluation. She is using this knowledge very effectively to establish clear priorities and to give the school a strong sense of direction for standards and the range of improvements needed. She bases her decisions clearly on measures to raise standards, particularly the expectations for staff professionalism and pupils' personal development. She has helped establish a strong team spirit amongst the staff so that they are highly motivated to take things on and make improvements. The school management team provides good leadership and management, with the deputy headteacher, for example, demonstrating rapid development of management skills.

54. There is a good sense of community throughout the school, supported by the pupils, staff, visitors and the governors who express a clear vision for the development of the school. The school is committed to providing equality of opportunity for all pupils and staff.
55. The acting headteacher has a very good insight into the priorities of the school, building on the good perceptions of the deputy headteacher. With the governing body, she has raised expectations and made decisions that are having a clear, positive impact on standards. The school has made uneven improvements in the key issues identified at the time of the last inspection but satisfactory overall. The quality of teaching has improved and is now good, with clear procedures to monitor and discuss the quality of teaching. The provision for and management of pupils with learning difficulties are very good. Standards in design and technology in Years 3 - 6 have improved and now meet the expectation. The introduction of good monitoring and evaluation procedures of teaching is having a positive impact on the quality of provision and hence on standards. The acting headteacher has also established suitable procedures for performance management. She has prepared a thorough school improvement plan that covers all the main areas of school weakness, the plan for the previous year providing an inadequate tool for school improvement. She has been careful to ensure that all members of staff and the governors are included in discussions about forward planning so that the expectations and commitment are clear. The school recognises the need to develop further the effectiveness of curriculum co-ordinators.
56. The governing body has a good understanding of its responsibilities and fulfils them well, overall, although oversight of a few procedures had slipped under the leadership of the permanent headteacher. It ensures that the school meets all legal requirements, including having a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. They are committed to supporting the life and work of the school, and understand the links with the church as an integral part of the school community. With the support of the acting headteacher, governors give a good lead for the direction of the school and take an active part in making decisions. Governors have good arrangements to visit the school, through both formal visits, with a clear focus for observations, and informal discussions. In this way, they are active in fulfilling their role, being well informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses, and its related needs.
57. The governing body has appropriate procedures to monitor financial planning and members are clear about the educational priorities for the school, such as the plans for a combined Early Learning Unit. They take satisfactory account of the principles of obtaining best value in their decisions, linking them to benefit pupils' learning and standards. For example, the arrangements for the new library extension to the hall were considered in the light of the central role that library and research skills have for learning. The most recent auditor's report indicated good financial controls. The school budget is matched closely to the priorities set out in forward planning and the improvement plan. The larger than usual carry-forward figure in the last year's budget has a substantial sum earmarked for the Early Years Unit. The identified priorities are thoroughly costed and the school's financial planning is effective. The school secretary works well with the acting headteacher and governors to ensure that there is good oversight of the finances and budget. Funding from specific grants is used effectively for its designated purpose.
58. The school management team has a very good understanding of the need to establish a productive learning environment, with clear expectations for pupils' behaviour to support improving standards. They have produced a good outline curriculum that provides for the progressive development of skills through the school. There are

aspects that need further consideration, however, since it does not yet have useful links with pupils' personal, social and health education and the opportunities to exploit pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding are not explicit. Also, the time allocation is below the national recommendation in Years 3 – 6, so that the time available for the even development of pupils' subjects knowledge and skills year by year is tight. The level of co-ordination and influence of subject leaders are still at an early stage. Procedures for monitoring pupils' progress are good, although the information gained is not always used as effectively as it could be.

59. The management and provision for special needs provision are very good. The experienced co-ordinator, in post for eighteen months, works very closely with class teachers and teaching assistants to provide a tightly co-ordinated system of support, both inside the classroom and when pupils are withdrawn for specialist tuition. She provides training of good quality to support staff and offers specific advice and recommendations to colleagues, helping to pinpoint the nature of the difficulties that pupils encounter and offering support and reassurance to parents when this is appropriate. The school works closely with the external agencies offering specialised help for pupils with special needs and, generally, receives prompt assistance. Specifically designated funds are used appropriately; the school dedicates a larger than average proportion of its budget towards the provision of special needs support. These funds are well used because of the positive impact that staffing and other resources make on the quality of provision. The governors ensure that provision for special educational needs is fully in place.
60. There is good support for pupils for whom English is an additional language so that they learn well in lessons. Teachers and assistants provide all pupils with effective learning opportunities and access to the curriculum.
61. There is a satisfactory level of teachers and support staff to provide for the pupils' learning, although there has been a high level of teacher turnover. The school makes a valuable investment in specialist science teaching, particularly directed towards support of the higher attaining pupils in Year 6. The school secretaries provide a friendly and efficient service to the school. The accommodation is satisfactory, with several good features such as the new library. However, the computer suite can only hold around half a class which requires careful planning and management of pupils. The outside play spaces for children in the Nursery and Reception classes are limiting but this is expected to be resolved when the new Early Years Unit is established. The overall level and condition of learning resources are satisfactory. They are good in the Nursery, but unsatisfactory for geography. A few artefacts from different cultures complement some displays in the school but this is an aspect for further development.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

62. In order to raise standards and improve the quality of learning the governors, headteacher and staff should give attention to the following issues, some of which link closely with priorities identified in the school's improvement plan (indicated by *):

- (1) Raise standards, particularly in geography across the school and in ICT and physical education at Year 6 by:
 - Providing a wider variety of opportunities for pupils' speaking and listening skills as a basis for the confident use of language;
 - Increasing the opportunities for pupils to use their developing writing and ICT skills across the curriculum;
 - Making better use of non-fiction books and the library to support pupils' research and independent learning skills; *
 - Concentrating on the development of pupils' enquiry skills in mathematics and science; *
 - Ensuring that pupils' geographical skills and understanding are developed through a carefully planned and relevant curriculum, making good use of the locality and of visits to places of interest; *
 - Providing regular challenging opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their physical skills.
(Paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 81, 93, 95, 96, 101, 102, 111, 119, 120, 130, 141)
- (2) Implement fully the recent initiatives to improve the direction of teaching and learning by:
 - Giving pupils sufficient time to carry out set tasks;
 - Providing more opportunities for pupils to pose and investigate their own questions in science;
 - Making better use of assessment information for longer term planning.
(Paragraphs 85, 90, 91, 97, 100, 105, 106, 119, 123, 135, 145)
- (3) Review the curriculum structure and balance, and prepare a rigorous whole-school curriculum map to ensure full coverage of all subjects, with links to spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding and pupils' personal development, by: *
 - Giving attention to an appropriate time allocation for the different subjects;*
 - Ensuring that the overall teaching time meets national guidance and is used creatively; *
 - Reviewing its opportunities for links between and the application of skills across subjects.
(Paragraphs 90, 107, 119, 124, 129)
- (4) Improve the level of co-ordination and influence of subject leaders. *
(Paragraphs 90, 107, 119, 124, 129)
 - Establishing a clear understanding of effective learning;
 - Giving due attention to the level descriptors of the National Curriculum;
 - Ensuring that time is allocated to support curriculum planning;

- Putting in place suitable procedures for subject monitoring and evaluation, and for assessment;
 - Making regular reports to the governing body.
- 5) Finalise and implement consistently the policies related to health and safety, and to behaviour. *
- (Paragraphs 4, 7, 8, 13, 22, 36, 39, 47, 56, 58)

Minor issues

- Ensure that confident and productive links are established more fully with parents.
 - Ensure that planning and provision take full account of the learning needs of the higher attaining pupils.
- (Paragraphs 16, 84, 97, 122, 129)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	46
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	27

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	0	10	21	15	0	0	0
Percentage	0	22	46	33	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	14	200
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/a	19

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	29

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	11

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.2
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.5
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	14	15	29

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	14	14
	Girls	11	13	13
	Total	24	27	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	83 (90)	93 (90)	93 (100)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	14	14
	Girls	13	13	13
	Total	26	27	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (90)	93 (95)	93 (95)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	14	16	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	10	11	13
	Girls	14	13	14
	Total	24	24	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80 (78)	80 (85)	90 (96)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	10	11	11
	Girls	14	13	13
	Total	24	24	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80 (81)	80 (85)	80 (96)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

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

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	141	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	9	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	6	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	6	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2	0	0
Black or Black British – African	6	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	4	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	2	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.1
Average class size	26.2

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	29
Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	187
Number of pupils per FTE adult	9.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	10.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4.9

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	500,098
Total expenditure	493,547
Expenditure per pupil	2,306
Balance brought forward from previous year	41,346
Balance carried forward to next year	47,897

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	214
Number of questionnaires returned	79

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	36	39	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	29	40	6	3	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	15	40	13	8	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	33	22	5	1
The teaching is good.	36	29	7	1	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	17	38	17	6	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	39	31	6	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	31	36	11	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	14	41	16	5	2
The school is well led and managed.	11	37	19	8	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	22	47	6	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	13	31	22	6	4

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

63. The provision for children in the Nursery is very good and is a strength of the school. Good arrangements are in hand to establish a combined Nursery and Reception unit but at the time of the inspection the Reception class was taken by two supply teachers and provision, as seen, is satisfactory. The school has 30 places for Nursery children and admits them on a part-time basis after they have their third birthday. The children transfer to the Reception class in the September of the year in which they have their fifth birthday. The majority of children in the Reception class has attended the Nursery before entering school full-time. The children's attainment on entry to the Nursery is broadly average. The quality of teaching and of the curriculum is good overall in all areas of the Early Learning Goals so that the children make good progress. Teaching in the sessions observed was generally very good in the Nursery and satisfactory in the Reception class. Most children are likely to meet the expectations of all the Early Learning Goals by the time they enter Year 1, and a small but significant number is on course to exceed them.
64. The members of staff in the Foundation Stage classes make good provision for the children's all round development and education, including those with special educational needs or with English as an additional language. All members of staff ensure that all children have full and equal access to the activities and choices planned for them. The planned curriculum for all children in the Nursery and Reception classes is well structured and meets the expectations of the Early Learning Goals effectively for all areas of learning. The activities and work for children in the Reception class build and extend well on that in the Nursery, providing an appropriate level of formality in the tasks. This inspection indicates good improvement overall since the last inspection, although there are further areas to address and consolidate, which will be considered through the plans for the staff and building.
65. The management of the Foundation Stage is very good, with many imaginative and purposeful opportunities for children to explore their world. Very well chosen activities encourage children in the Nursery to experiment and to communicate with others. All members of staff have effective relationships with parents and carers which help promote worthwhile learning. Opportunities to enhance the children's experiences are taken where possible, for example, in inviting a mother to come with her new baby or another parent with a puppy. There is an entry assessment which helps to indicate children's early abilities. The procedures for observation are practical and help to build an overall picture of each child and to identify any area of concern. Record keeping is good and supports further planning. Parents have a good opinion of the support and work children do in the Foundation Stage.

Personal, social and emotional development

66. The quality of teaching and learning is good. There is a strong focus on the promotion of children's independence in the Nursery where the well-planned environment offers many opportunities for children to make choices. Members of staff create an atmosphere of interest and help children to become actively involved. There is a particularly good emphasis on helping children to communicate with each other, for example, in the baby clinic in the Nursery or the café in the Reception class. Children are encouraged to collaborate in their play, whether in building a brick tower or in

weighing their baby. The adults provide good role models for positive relationship as they treat children politely and thoughtfully. They value their ideas and contributions.

67. Children quickly understand and follow the routines and make good progress in developing their personal and social skills. They are confident in making choices and most are keen to explore the activities outside; for example, a large cardboard box became the focus of imaginative play. Children know to take turns during discussions and most have learnt to listen to others. Most children concentrate well on the activities. For example, in the Reception class children maintained good interest in finding words beginning with 'ch' helped by the class teacher's good selection of objects such as 'chocolate' and 'chain'. In this way, children continue to make good progress in their personal development through the Reception year. The child with English as an additional language is fully included and makes a lively contribution to activities. Children understand several routines such as taking the register to the school office with a friend. By the time they enter Year 1 most children are likely to meet the expected levels in the development of their personal and social skills. The school has maintained and extended this aspect of children's development successfully since the last inspection.

Communication, language and literacy

68. The quality of teaching and learning for the children's development of communication, language and literacy skills is good. The overall provision is good, with a good selection of books and language material to meet the needs and encourage the interests of the children. The members of staff in the Nursery read books regularly to the children, modelling well the way to hold and handle books. In this way, the children understand that the pictures and text hold information.
69. In the Reception class the teacher uses appropriate elements of the National Literacy Strategy to develop children's awareness and understanding of letter sounds and word building. For example, in a well-planned and resourced lesson the teacher presented the children with a wide range of objects, whose names all began with the sound 'ch'. The children recognised several of the objects and the higher attaining children searched their minds for words with 'ch' to start. The activity provided good opportunities for children to experience word building and linked with early skills for reading. In the Nursery much incidental talk helps children to develop their language, as seen with the playdough shapes or the café in Reception where there is lots of talk: 'I'm the cleaner' or 'I haven't got no grapes but I have bananas'. These situations encourage children well to express their ideas and to relate language to the activities. Children's language and communication skills improve steadily and are broadly average by the time they start Year 1, and a few higher attaining pupils exceed the expectation.
70. The good level of support enables children who may have learning difficulties or who have English as an additional language to develop confidence in speaking English. The children learn to hold and use pencils correctly. For example, in the activity washing babies, the children weighed the babies and the higher attaining made purposeful marks and recorded numerals in their early writing. Children improve their early skills for writing by taking part in a wide range of activities that encourage finger control and good hand and eye co-ordination. The school has developed this aspect of children's development successfully since the last inspection.

Mathematical development

71. The teaching and learning for children's mathematical development are good. Children enter the nursery with broadly average skills and understanding of early mathematical ideas. There is a very wide range of activities in the Nursery that relate to their mathematical understanding and provision in the Reception class also supports it well. For example, children hear the sequence of the days of the week and are beginning to know the names and which day is next. Many activities encourage spatial understanding, such as making playdough pancakes or filling bottles with water. There are large building blocks and children usually build confidently and know the meaning of 'taller'. A computer program encourages children to learn how to control the mouse and move the cursor to a position.
72. Within the Reception class, several children have the skills to put numerals such as 5 8 and 12 in order, although others still require objects to count. The Reception children are introduced to appropriate aspects of the numeracy strategy through counting activities and early ideas of addition and subtraction. They are beginning to record their answers and build their early numeracy skills. The higher attaining children understood how to count on from 6 to 12 in finding how many more eggs were needed to fill the egg carton. The lower attaining children were challenged by a similar task with counting on eggs to six; most had the skills to do this correctly, some in their head, although others were still reliant on real objects to count. Further mathematical ideas included drawing up a menu for the café in which children demonstrated a growing understanding of spatial patterns and number. In the Nursery, children have good access to sand and water play to develop their ideas of capacity. This is provided outside for the Reception class.
73. There is a good focus on number language. This provides a good level of support for all children, including those who may have learning difficulties in both classes or English as an additional language. Most children are likely to reach the expectation by the time they enter Year 1 and higher attaining pupils are on course to exceed the expectation. This indicates a similar level of attainment to that seen during the last inspection and the school has maintained this aspect of children's development successfully since the last inspection.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

74. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In the Nursery, there is a good emphasis on children's independence to encourage them to question and explore, to experiment and discuss the many well-planned activities where children have opportunities to choose. The carefully planned sessions are designed to provide a very wide range of experience of materials and their properties, of everyday working things and of modern inventions. Children use a computer and are learning to control the mouse. Children learn about how water or paints behave when poured or spread on paper; how sand, playdough or glue stick together but change shape; or how plastic and wooden building bricks fit together. They have gained a broad knowledge of these materials and the skills to use them productively in their play. There is a purposeful atmosphere of confident engagement in the activities that encourages children to learn, often with well-considered adult participation. For example, the children weighing babies learnt more through adult talk, and in the Reception café children enjoyed the adults' presence and extended their imaginative play through conversation.
75. Children in the Nursery have good access for outdoor play, although the conditions are not ideal. This enables them to explore their wider world and how the larger toys work. Children in the Reception class also have opportunities for outside experience but

these are generally limited to sand and water play or materials that are easily transported. Children have some knowledge of how plants grow. In the Nursery they have had visits by a mother with a young baby, and by a mother who brought a puppy - both providing opportunities for discussing early ideas of growth and care. They have an early understanding that people, animals and plants need water, food and warmth to grow. The children know how to ride the trikes safely.

76. There is good progress in the children's development in all areas of this aspect of learning. Most children are likely to meet the expectations of the Early Learning Goals by the time they enter Year 1, indicating a broadly average level of understanding for their age. This indicates that standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

Physical development

77. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The Nursery makes good provision for children's physical development through a very wide range of experiences, covering both gross motor and fine motor control. The children make good progress as a result. The children have opportunities to use pencils, for example, in making marks as an early stage of writing or recording their own version of the weight of a baby. They use crayons and paint brushes and by Reception have the fine control required to produce early letter shapes or to draw a picture. Several children produce light and fluent brush strokes during their painting. They also have the early skills to use scissors with satisfactory control and skill.
78. Access to outdoor play is integral to the planning for children in the Nursery. They have the skills to ride trikes, steering them around corners and showing reasonable balance. Children in the Reception class also have opportunities for outside experience but do not have a safe area where they may climb or ride wheeled toys. Improved facilities are planned in a major building programme. The children have access to a selection of apparatus, although the range of large equipment is not sufficient. There are good planned opportunities in the Nursery for children to develop their gross motor skills, such as running, jumping or climbing. The children also develop their climbing, balancing and co-ordination skills in the school hall. The children generally make good gains in their physical development in the Nursery but it is just satisfactory in Reception. Most children are likely to reach the expected standards by the time they enter Year 1. This indicates a similar standard to that found during the last inspection.

Creative development

79. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In the Nursery very good organisation and imaginative ideas make for a stimulating and attractive environment. This, together with the good emphasis on children's independence encourages the children to explore and experiment with the materials. There is a particularly strong emphasis on imaginative play that helps create an imaginative world for the children to develop their creative skills. In the outside area each day a different, often simple, resource is set up. This may be a large cardboard box or a set of mats so that children may create their own form of play. Inside, the members of staff and all adult helpers support ideas for children to explore materials or situations as a rich part of their experiences. Each day there is a good mixture of carefully planned and supported activities, such as the weighing babies context, making an Easter card to their own design or printing with cut vegetables. Others occur incidentally, as when children explore the properties of sand or playdough. Adults are very quick to notice opportunities to extend the children's experiences and, for example, encouraged them to fill a sock with sand and then to feel the sand inside - how it moved and changed shape. In the Reception class, there is

also a good focus on children's creative development and ideas. This was shown particularly through the class café which promoted much imaginative talk. There is also evidence of artwork and simple constructions as a natural part of the organisation.

80. The perceptive and thoughtful support given by all staff promotes the children's creative development and results in good learning. All adults have a good understanding of the creative dimension in children's activities which helps them to value and develop the ideas. In general, children make good progress as they gain a variety of skills in using materials. The children enjoy artwork and explore the effects of colour mixing. The good teaching ensures that children learn well and understand how to shape and assemble materials, such as the large building blocks. The teachers provide suitable opportunities for children to develop their creative skills in music. Planning includes regular opportunities to enjoy and experience music. The children also sing together - helped by a taped recording - such songs as 'Ten Green Bottles'. In this way they are learning the repeating patterns of songs as well as gaining language and mathematical skills. Most children are likely to reach the expectation by the end of Reception year and standards are average. The school has maintained and extended this aspect of children's development successfully since the last inspection.

ENGLISH

81. By the end of Years 2 and 6, pupils attain average standards in English. Standards at Year 6 are similar to those reported at the last inspection in 1998, but lower than those suggested by last year's test results. This difference is partially the consequence of differences in the overall ability of the different year groups, but is also the result of a high turnover of teachers which led to unevenness in teaching. It is also because disruptions arising from the absence of the permanent headteacher meant that the school was not sufficiently focused on the maintenance of high standards. Pupils' progress over time is satisfactory but more recent progress, noted both in pupils' work in the second half of the current term and in the lessons observed in the course of the inspection, is good overall.
82. Over time, the rate of pupils' progress is consistently sound between Years 1 and 2, but more uneven for pupils between Years 3 and 6. Here, it is satisfactory in Years 3 and 4 and good in Year 5 because pupils are offered a particularly wide range of interesting tasks and are constantly shown ways in which they may improve their work. However, progress is barely satisfactory in Year 6 because many pupils are not doing their best all of the time and because expectations for their achievement are not consistently high. For example, there are considerable variations in the quality of marking: some pieces of work are annotated in an objective and helpful way while others remain unmarked. Recent progress is noticeably better in almost every class, and this is the result both of carefully planned and well-structured teaching by an enthusiastic and committed staff and of the current leadership that is now clearly focused on raising standards in the subject. The rate of progress of those with special educational needs is similar to that of other pupils because they are well supported in their efforts by both teachers and teaching assistants.
83. Standards of speaking and listening are above those expected among pupils between five and seven. From Year 1, pupils are encouraged to contribute to class discussions, and to share their ideas or views in pairs or small groups. This they do sensibly, waiting for others to finish speaking before making their own contribution. This good work is continued in Year 2, where the teacher constantly urges pupils to express their views and to explain what they understand. As a result, pupils often display a very good knowledge of their own learning; in history, for example, pupils begin to justify their

reasons for the occurrence of events surrounding the Great Fire of London. Generally, pupils listen well, both to the teacher and to others; their attentiveness is improved because teachers intersperse direct teaching with periods of discussion, ensuring that pupils remain alert and focused on what they are learning. Between Years 3 and 6, standards of speaking and listening are satisfactory. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes towards learning are generally good, but sometimes teachers speak for too long, monopolising a conversation with pupils when they already understand what is expected of them; this limits the opportunities that the pupils themselves have to speak. Sometimes, pupils are more confident in using technical terms in their writing than when they are encouraged to explain their meaning orally. In Year 6, for example, the teacher often has to work hard to encourage pupils to give full and reasoned answers. Across Key Stage 2, there are sufficient opportunities for role-play and drama, and teachers are generally aware that pupils need to have time to express themselves at length. Pupils usually listen well but on a small number of occasions teachers have to interrupt what they are saying because of lapses in concentration.

84. Standards of reading are average across the school. Building on the sound start they receive at the Foundation Stage, pupils in Year 1 acquire a surer understanding of the way in which letters represent particular spoken sounds when they are either written alone or in combination. They begin to build up an appropriate sight vocabulary of common words that do not conform to regular spelling patterns. In one lesson, pupils enjoyed experimenting with the constituent sounds of the word 'star', and this helped to deepen their understanding of the range of sounds that the letters suggest. By Year 2, a number of pupils are beginning to gain pleasure from books, and are no longer focusing on individual words but are moving their eye along the page, deriving meaning from whole sentences. The progress of these younger pupils is frequently monitored, both at home and at school, so that teachers develop a good understanding of their achievements. Between Years 3 and 6, pupils continue to make satisfactory progress so that, by the time they leave the school, many pupils read fluently, express a reasoned preference for a particular author or type of book, and have good reading habits born of a genuine enthusiasm and a desire to explore a range of literature. However, a number of older pupils do not practise their reading sufficiently at home. While teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to read aloud from group texts, older and higher attaining pupils are not heard often enough to read from the books they have chosen for themselves, and so the school cannot be sure that these pupils are fully understanding what they have read. The reading progress of those with special educational needs is regularly monitored and these pupils are well supported in their efforts.
85. Pupils attain average standards in writing by the age of seven. In Year 1, higher attaining pupils are already beginning to record personal experiences or to recount a simple story, while lower attainers write captions to pictures and attempt to communicate a single idea. By Year 2, many use their writing skills to relate or comment on events or facts that they have learnt in science or history lessons, sequencing events accurately and offering simple explanations or justifications for the statements they make. Between Years 3 and 6, pupils' progress over time is more uneven. It is satisfactory in Years 3 and 4, and good in Year 5 because the teacher has high expectations for her pupils' success. Marking here is used very well to enthuse pupils and to exhort them to higher achievement. Progress in writing is much more variable in Year 6: periods of sound improvement in the content and presentation of written work are interspersed with those where the rate of progress is unsatisfactory and where there is little insistence on the right standards. Across the school, pupils write on an extensive range of themes and practise the skills of writing for a wide variety of purposes. However, in most classes there is too great an emphasis on the

practice of techniques and insufficient opportunity for pupils to experiment with them and to implement them in their own way. In this respect, teachers sometimes intervene with too many of their own suggestions instead of allowing pupils sufficient time to work out their own ideas. Overall, writing is used satisfactorily to support learning in other subjects. It is used well in history but not sufficiently in geography. Writing makes a satisfactory contribution to learning in science and religious education, and older pupils are confident to use specialist terms correctly, such as 'conduction' and 'insulation'. Pupils with special educational needs make progress similar to others; they receive good support from teaching assistants who are well briefed on the nature of support they are to offer.

86. Standards of spelling are satisfactory. Pupils learn to spell systematically in school but the practice of expecting pupils to learn lists of words at home has recently been reviewed. It is too early to judge whether this change in policy is having a positive or negative impact on standards. Younger pupils receive a good start in learning to spell because they are given a thorough grounding in learning the value of sounds that groups of letters represent, and are encouraged to attempt words of which they are unsure. This is a good strategy that develops confident spelling. Older pupils use dictionaries or ask for help with words when they encounter difficulty. By Year 4, many are familiar with the likely combinations of letters that comprise units of sound and make reasonable attempts at unknown words.
87. Handwriting is taught and practised systematically in most classes, so that many pupils join their writing confidently by the time they leave the school. However, teachers do not consistently ensure that the skills pupils learn are transferred to their everyday writing. As a result, a few pupils in Year 3 already write in a neat, cursive script while a number in Year 6 still print their letters.
88. An analysis of pupils' work indicates that teaching and learning over time are satisfactory across the school. However, recent improvements in pupils' work and the quality of teaching observed in lessons strongly indicate that teaching and learning are now mostly good. This is because recent improvements in the leadership of the school have led to a sharpening of the focus on raising standards and on ensuring that pupils are well motivated to high achievement. One of these improvements is in procedures for assessment. Teachers are now more acutely aware of the next steps that pupils need to take in their learning because they are setting them individual targets for improvement, and the pupils themselves have a much clearer understanding of what is expected of them.
89. In the observed lessons, all the teaching in Years 1 and 2 and half of that in Years 3 to 6 was good or very good. Using their knowledge of pupils' attainment, teachers plan their work thoroughly, carefully matching the tasks they set to the learning needs of each group. Expectations are generally high. Explanations are clear, and pupils are offered sufficient opportunity to discuss their work in pairs or small groups. The management of pupils is good, and lessons almost always proceed at a good pace. Sometimes, however, teachers offer too much direction to their pupils instead of allowing them time to assimilate their learning by working fully through the tasks they have been set. In one very good lesson for young pupils, the teacher's explanations were brief but succinct, and the pupils were quietly offered help and advice as their individual progress was checked. Pupils were offered plenty of time to complete and reflect on the task, with the result that they made very good progress in their learning. The quality of marking is generally sound, and in three classes it is very good because the teachers enter a dialogue with their pupils, motivating them well towards further improvement. In the best lessons, teachers circulate effectively amongst their pupils, asking them telling

questions about their work, and suggesting improvements for ideas or sentence construction. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is consistently good, and sometimes very good. These pupils are well supported by able teaching assistants, and are offered relevant work similar to that set for other pupils; as a result, all feel included in the activities of the class.

90. All aspects of the English curriculum are taught in sufficient detail. The school makes good use of the national literacy guidance. Nevertheless there is scope to allow pupils more time to explore for themselves the literacy skills they have acquired and for them to consolidate their learning. The management of the subject is good. The subject co-ordinator, a good practitioner, offers advice to colleagues on planning and standards of work, but has not yet monitored the quality of their teaching. Teachers have a clear understanding of what they need to do to raise standards further and are strongly committed to providing their pupils with the best possible learning opportunities. An example of this commitment is the number of after-school classes offered to those requiring particular support in certain areas of their understanding. There are thorough procedures for the diagnostic assessment of pupils; these have resulted in the setting of individual targets and lead teachers to adjust their daily planning to meet pupils' needs. However, they are too recently introduced to yet have an impact on the longer-term planning for learning. The special needs co-ordinator works closely with class teachers and teaching assistants, ensuring that the management of provision for those with educational needs is closely co-ordinated with the management of the subject as a whole.
91. Pupils sometimes use word-processing skills to present their work but these are not as widely deployed as they could be because computers are not available in the classrooms. However, the Internet is employed as a source of information for research skills, for example, for history and the new library facilities are beginning to be more frequently used as a centre for group teaching and investigative work. There is a good supply of non-fiction books, many of which are carefully graded to aid pupils' selection, and resources for non-fiction are sufficient. Drama and role-play are often used to enhance opportunities for pupils to speak at length, and pupils often experience live drama, either from invited troupes or theatre visits.

MATHEMATICS

92. Attainment at the end of Year 2 matches national averages, both in the national tests and as seen during the inspection, but in earlier years it was above national standards. At the end of Year 6 performance in the 2002 national tests was well above national standards, but the current Year 6 is performing at the level of national standards. This is largely explained by differences between the two year groups of pupils, and recent staffing difficulties.
93. Since then, much effort has been put into analysing data to find reasons for trends so that standards can be improved. As a result, booster classes after school have been established to raise standards in Years 2 and 6, with particular attention to areas identified for improvement. This is very creditable.
94. By the age of seven, children can count to 100, divide two figure numbers by single figures and multiply single figures together. They can identify simple fractions and add coins accurately. They measure successfully with simple units, know the names of solid shapes and can compare numbers of faces, edges and corners, recording their findings in a table. They can weigh objects simply using a balance, and can read numbers of grams off a scale. Their problem-solving skills are developing satisfactorily,

for example, in organising numbers on a Venn diagram according to the teacher's specification.

95. By the age of 11, most children have satisfactory competence in most aspects of mathematics, and some are very competent. They can carry out four-figure addition and subtraction, long division, and calculate percentages and the area of complex shapes but rapid mental recall of tables is not sure enough for many pupils. They understand probability, can plot graphs and draw conclusions from them. They can measure and calculate angles round a point and create conversion charts for metric and imperial measures. They have some experience of open-ended problem-solving exercises but would benefit from more. Although in lessons pupils explain their calculations satisfactorily, they do not provide sufficient explanations in their written work.
96. Pupils do not have sufficient experience of ICT, apart from calculators, in mathematics. There is little evidence of the use of ICT to promote pupils' understanding of mathematical ideas, for example, the use of investigations involving spreadsheet modelling. Pupils have used spreadsheets, however, which provide useful support for their understanding and skills in data handling.
97. Teaching of mathematics is good overall in both key stages, often very good and always satisfactory. Lesson plans are thorough and are based mainly on the national strategy and on good use of careful assessment. Most lessons contain a good balance of oral, practical and written work and proceed at a brisk pace. Teachers make sure pupils are very clear about what is expected of them as the learning objectives are written on the board and referred to during the lesson; this was an aspect criticised in the last inspection. Most teachers provide a good range of tasks suited to differing abilities but occasionally differentiation is not sufficient to challenge higher attaining pupils. Some teachers are particularly good at challenging pupils with mental calculations, which they develop astutely. Teachers' secure knowledge of the National Numeracy Strategy, their lively and well chosen teaching methods and their relaxed, friendly but firm management of pupils are strengths that lead to sound learning.
98. The last inspection found progress to be erratic through Years 3 - 6. This has been improved. All pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons and over time, including those from ethnic minorities, speakers of English as an additional language, those from disadvantaged backgrounds and pupils with special educational needs, who are very effectively supported by well briefed and competent teaching assistants. Pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons, settle down quickly to tasks, concentrate hard for long periods of time and work well together in pairs and groups. In most classes, they listen well, are eager to answer questions and offer observations.
99. The subject co-ordinator has carried out a thorough audit of strengths and weaknesses in mathematics in the school and has established a well judged and realistic set of priorities for the subject's development. He is making good arrangements for monitoring teaching and learning which have already led to some improvements. Homework of a suitable level of difficulty is usually set.
100. Good use is made of speaking and listening aspects of literacy in mathematics but not enough of writing to explain how problems were solved. Because of the little use of ICT, mathematics does not currently contribute significantly to pupils' ICT competence. However, one interesting example was noted in an ICT lesson where pupils calculated the angle of a polygon so that they could enter the commands for a screen turtle. Most pupils had the skills to work out the correct angle.

SCIENCE

101. Standards in the work seen are broadly average by Years 2 and 6. Pupils' previous work indicates average standards across the differing aspects of science and that pupils achieve satisfactorily overall through the school, but there are elements of good progress in Years 2 and 5. Here pupils are given more opportunity to draw conclusions from well-founded investigations. There has been an over-emphasis in Year 6 on pupils' subject knowledge and there is little evidence of pupils carrying out investigations. Current standards are similar to the teacher assessments for Year 2 in 2002 where the school's performance was at the national average. Performance in life processes and in materials and their properties was judged to be very high. Compared with similar schools the school's performance was average. This maintains the position at the time of the last inspection at Year 2 which judged that standards were broadly average.
102. Standards of the work seen in Year 6 are broadly average, although pupils' enquiry skills are less confident than their knowledge of the subject. This is a decline on the national tests for 2002 which were above both the national average and the average for similar schools. Standards are similar to those reported at the last inspection in 1998, but lower than those suggested by last year's test results. This change is partly explained by the differences in the overall ability of the two year groups. It is also the result of staff turnover leading to unevenness in teaching and lack of focus on maintaining high standards in the absence of the headteacher.
103. A well chosen activity for pupils in Year 1, to find out which material would make a good rain hat, caught their interest well. The pupils tested each material - tin foil, paper, and plastic - with satisfactory skill, explaining their observations of materials and results clearly but in simple terms. They demonstrated satisfactory enquiry skills, recording their results in a table. In Year 2 a very well prepared task challenged all groups of pupils to identify a common property for groups of materials of their choosing. This created very good interest and effort as pupils decided that chocolate and butter were both smooth, while higher attaining pupils considered ice, glass and water all to be transparent. Other identified properties included solid, opaque, returns to shape after squeezing, and squidgy. The teacher led a very good discussion, with skilled questioning, that enabled pupils to share their findings and reinforce their learning.
104. Pupils in Year 3 know that sound is caused by vibrations. They were keen to design and carry out an investigation on how sound may be muffled. The class teacher's positive relationship with the pupils encouraged them to suggest ideas, such as keeping the distance the same by placing a ruler against their ears, which she brought into the discussion. Pupils also investigated the pitch of sounds and the way pitch may be changed. Good preparation by the class teacher enabled pupils to understand aspects of pitch, for example, by changing the tension in elastic bands or comparing the bars on a glockenspiel. The teacher's good planning in a lesson in Year 4 focused well on early enquiry skills to control the conditions for testing. As they dropped parachutes of differing size, pupils applied some of their considerations to the experiment but few groups obtained reliable observations. One group dropped parachutes in pairs, deducing correctly through a logical sequence, that the larger canopy produced more air resistance and was slower. The class teacher encouraged good learning and investigation by allowing pupils choice but emphasising good skills.
105. In a Year 5 lesson using cup telephones, the teacher was well prepared with clear learning objectives. She provided a good introduction to help pupils recall previous work on sound and prepared them well for their own investigation - to investigate how

differing strings passed the sound. The actual outcomes varied considerably. The higher attaining pupils were well organised with a clear watch alarm, agreed how to grade the loudness of sound and moderated their own results, agreeing a group average. Other groups were less successful in hearing a quieter sound and in agreeing on their observations but showed good interest as they worked, usually collaborating well to agree procedures. Pupils in Year 6 planned and carried out an experiment to test which materials are good insulators of heat. The teacher covered the basic ideas well for setting up a controlled investigation. With careful prompting, most pupils understood how several factors contributed to obtaining reliable results, such as keeping the amount of water the same in all vessels and having them in the same conditions. The pupils showed satisfactory attitudes and behaviour, with several reluctant to contribute and lacking confidence in explaining and reasoning about their designs. In carrying out their experiments, most pupils arranged to keep the times between measurements the same and agreed that the quantity of water and insulation material should be the same. The higher attaining pupils demonstrated good enquiry skills and understood that the temperature drop was less at lower temperatures. Overall, pupils made a satisfactory record of their observations and early interpretation of their results. However, their lack of regular experience in setting up investigations showed in the general uncertainty and lack of confidence with enquiry skills.

106. Most pupils enjoy science lessons and take part well. They handle resources responsibly and want to complete their experiments with usable results. Their good interest supports their learning well. The quality of teaching is good overall through the school but there is evidence of insufficient attention given to developing pupils' enquiry skills, particularly in Year 6 where the emphasis has been on subject knowledge. Teachers prepare well and ensure all pupils take a full part, including those with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language. The support staff makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning. Teachers demonstrate their good subject knowledge through lively demonstration, discussion and skilled questioning so that pupils learn the subject matter well and make good progress in lessons. There is evidence of uneven development of enquiry skills through the school that is now being addressed actively in many respects - helping pupils to think about a good design for an investigation, for example. There is, however, still a tendency for teachers to over-direct the investigations and limit the pupils' choices, sometimes determining precisely which resources will be used. The teachers understand the need to review the approach to experimental science in order to strengthen pupils' enquiry skills.
107. In the absence of the subject leader for science, the acting headteacher has taken on the role temporarily. She ensures that teachers plan to the agreed curriculum framework which meets statutory requirements. Several procedures are in place to check planning and the quality of provision, and there are suitable arrangements to observe lessons. The school has good assessment procedures for science, and these are followed to provide evidence of pupils' progress. There is less evidence of the information being used directly to help adapt planning for further lessons. There is also little evidence of the use of ICT to support pupils' understanding in science. There is a satisfactory selection of resources which are used well to support pupils' learning.

ART AND DESIGN

108. Only two lessons were seen, one in each key stage. A discussion with Year 6 pupils, scrutiny of past and present work and displays show that standards meet the expectation at both Years 2 and 6. This was so at the last inspection.

109. Pupils' learning, including those with learning difficulties and with English as an additional language, is satisfactory in lessons and over time. In Years 1 - 2 and Years 3 - 6, pupils use materials and equipment sensibly and show increasing confidence and imagination in experimenting with different media: for example, Year 2 use their sketchbooks to test colour samples. They show satisfactory skills in drawing, painting and colouring. They can print and use collage, including pleasing mosaics, to produce pictures. They use digital cameras to record work but little evidence was seen otherwise of the use of computers to produce digital images. As they move up through the school, their ability to observe is growing and they are more effective in representing what they see through pictures. For example, Year 6 pupils, working in pairs, produced recognisable Tudor portraits, each copying a half of a picture and experimenting to get the right skin tones.
110. Some three dimensional work is carried out. Pupils at the end of Year 2 have made animal sculptures using natural and reclaimed materials, with careful attention to recording their plans and setting out the process they are going to follow. The oldest pupils have made a wedding or party hat in pairs, using a wide range of materials such as felt, feathers, wire and confetti. They make sound use of sketch books, exploring people's needs and wishes, showing their intended artefact from several viewpoints and evaluate the outcome with simple comments.
111. Although standards overall match the subject expectations, there is scope for the further refinement of pupils' knowledge and skills, for example, in graduation of tones through shading and in getting ideas from looking at the works of famous artists.
112. Teaching is good overall. Strengths in art teaching are good organisation, management of pupils which is purposeful but unfussy, and good use of discussion. Teachers promoted effective learning by drawing attention to ways of improving pupils' work, either by using pupils' suggestions or their own, and concentrating on key learning points. This resulted in better quality of work by pupils. Teachers make sure that opportunities are provided for pupils to select materials and equipment for themselves which builds their sense of responsibility. Pupils have good attitudes towards their work, behave well and maintain concentration on what they have to do.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

113. Three lessons were seen during the period of the inspection, all in Years 3 - 6. Judgements were formed by a review of previous work, teachers' planning and discussion with older pupils. Sufficient time is given to this area of the curriculum and the programme of activities is often lively and interesting. Overall, pupils are achieving at the level expected for their age. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection, when attainment at the end of Year 6 was found to be below national expectations, due to poor quality designing and planning work and inconsistent evaluation.
114. Pupils at the end of Year 2 have the skills to itemise, in simple terms, what they are going to use for their product, produce a drawing to illustrate their intentions and show how they will finish it. They have the practical skills to construct model vehicles and planes using cardboard, paper, paint, tape and glue, that show a good likeness to the real thing. Pupils show that they want to make a product where the finish is attractive.
115. Pupils at the end of Year 6 have the skills to draw up a design for an electrical vehicle that can travel in different directions at variable speed. They began by assembling alternative ideas and, having decided on their preference, set out in labelled diagrams the necessary steps to completion. They designed the required electrical circuits to

achieve the different requirements satisfactorily, and discussed with their partners options for the improvement of the product.

116. It is evident that all pupils enjoy design and technology lessons, and work hard to achieve a good result. They take care with tools (for example, chopping up cucumber and tomatoes for sandwiches) and materials, listen well and work co-operatively with each other. However, the quality of the oldest pupils' work currently lacks the imagination and polish of those a year below them. There is a lack of rigour in some of the basic elements of their designs, for example, too much acceptance of materials as they are. This is largely explained by the lack of development of pupils' independent skills and staffing difficulties. Although the school has tools for hard materials, no evidence was seen of their use or of use of ICT to support the subject.
117. Progress in learning is satisfactory through all year groups and for all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties, speakers of English as an additional language and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Skills of cutting, joining, choosing and using tools and materials are clearly developing, as is their sophistication in the design and evaluation process.
118. Teaching in both Years 1 - 2 and Years 3 - 6 is satisfactory overall, with examples of good teaching. Teachers demonstrate confidence about the topic being undertaken and use teaching methods that were quickly adapted to emerging needs, for example, talking in pairs about a problem that cannot be solved by class discussion. This promoted good learning. The strategy of using questions designed to get pupils to see for themselves how to overcome a difficulty was effective in promoting further good learning. The management of pupils is always good, aided by well chosen tasks that are pursued without undue fuss or wasting time. Sound use of the school's chosen scheme of work, coupled to teachers' familiarity with the National Curriculum, also contributed to successful outcomes in pupils' learning and ensured that the subject meets the statutory requirements - failing when the school was last inspected.
119. The subject is managed by a teacher who has only recently taken on responsibility for it. She has already carried out some monitoring of teaching and pupils' work. The school is planning to review and develop its work in the subject next year. There is scope for products to be of better quality and finish.

GEOGRAPHY

120. Standards in geography are below those expected by both the end of Years 2 and 6, and have declined since the last inspection. Although some aspects of the curriculum for pupils between Years 1 - 2 are taught well, they are not given sufficient opportunity to practise fieldwork skills, nor to investigate the features of the locality in sufficient depth. Between Years 3 - 6, pupils do not acquire the skills expected, for example in using or drawing maps of varying scales, nor do they make more than superficial comparisons between different environments and locations. In consequence, pupils' progress across the school is unsatisfactory.
121. By the end of Year 2, pupils know that people's lives in other countries may be different from their own. They appreciate that landscape and scenery change according to the locality, and begin to understand that climate and weather vary in different parts of the world. Pupils in Year 1 learn that the route to school may be represented on paper in symbolic form. Some show that they understand the differences between town and country and begin to make some broad distinctions between the functions of local buildings. In Year 2, pupils learn about the life of children in other localities, such as

western Scotland and Mexico, and explain how life here differs from their own. They understand that some places are more distant than others but are not always able to select a suitable means of transport by which they may be reached. Pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to examine their own environment, nor to make sense of it by drawing maps and plans of the neighbourhood or by commenting on its attractive or less appealing aspects. In Year 2, pupils are sometimes well challenged to explain at length the amenities available in a Mexican village. They show this by writing an imaginary letter of complaint to the government, but often pupils' efforts are limited by worksheets that encourage them to produce superficial answers or lists rather than the more detailed explanations of which they are capable.

122. Between the Years 3 - 6, pupils continue to make unsatisfactory progress overall. While they study some aspects of the curriculum in sufficient depth, for example, comparing life in an Indian village with their own in Year 4, or learning about the water-cycle or the formation of mountains and their environments in Years 5 and 6, they do not practise the skills of geographical enquiry sufficiently. Nor do they use field or map-work adequately to consolidate their understanding. Much of the written work in some classes is either copied or heavily influenced by the words of the teacher. There is an overuse of photocopied sheets that limit both the length and depth of pupils' answers. Sound work is carried out in Year 5. Here, work on rainfall and evaporation is linked clearly to environmental themes such as water conservation, and is enhanced by fieldwork. Sometimes, moral and social issues are explored well through geographical themes, such as the effect of tourism on alpine environment. However, there is scope to extend further pupils' understanding of topical issues through geographical enquiry. Across the school, pupils with learning difficulties progress at a rate similar to that of average-attaining pupils, but those of greater aptitude and ability are not generally challenged sufficiently by the work they are set.
123. No overall judgement may be made about the quality of teaching as only one lesson was seen, but an analysis of work and discussions with pupils have allowed general conclusions to be drawn about some aspects of teaching and learning. The teaching of geographical skills is unsatisfactory; these are occasionally practised, but there is no systematic provision for pupils to acquire them progressively as they move through the school. Pupils build up an adequate body of knowledge about certain locations. In a few classes they are challenged well to explain or enlarge on the information they have acquired, such as in Year 2, but often the learning is too heavily teacher-directed so that pupils do not fully make that knowledge their own. On some occasions, older pupils are required to undertake independent research using text-books or the Internet, but too frequently the text is directly copied and there is little evidence that pupils have been questioned to ensure that they have understood what they have written. Generally, pupils display an enthusiasm for the subject, evincing an interest in what they have learnt and linking this to their own experiences of travel or television documentaries.
124. The curriculum is not broad enough because the teaching of geographical skills is not sufficiently developed and because learning is too heavily dependent on didactic teaching. The co-ordinator has very recently assumed responsibility for the subject. She has a good understanding of how geography needs to be developed and has accurately identified many of the shortcomings noted in the course of this inspection. Procedures for evaluating pupils' progress are good, but there is scope to use these assessment results more rigorously in the planning of teaching and for brief diagnostic notes to be made to explain the nature of the difficulties pupils encounter when they fail to meet the identified targets. Computers are sometimes used judiciously to support learning, although occasionally there is the indiscriminate use of text downloaded from the Internet. Resources for the subject are in need of review; some materials are old and insufficient to meet the demands of the curriculum. Visits are sometimes used to

support learning, although greater use could be made of the local environment to enhance pupils' understanding.

HISTORY

125. As at the time of the last inspection, standards in history by both the end of Years 2 and 6 are similar to those expected nationally. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall in their learning as they move through the school but there are elements of good progress in Years 2 and 5. Here, pupils explore in greater depth the links between different elements of the history they have learnt so that they are able to explain simply some of the reasons for particular occurrences.
126. Pupils in Year 1 understand that people change over time and that the circumstances in which they live today are different from those experienced by children of the past. They have compared their own toys and pastimes with those enjoyed long ago and learnt the rules of games such as quoits and hoop-la. They appreciate that certain events, such as birthdays and religious festivals, are celebrated annually. Those in Year 2 begin to understand the significance of Remembrance Day and some can explain why this is symbolised by the wearing of poppies. They learn about famous figures of British history and about the significant events with which they are associated. For example, many pupils in Year 2 offered several reasons why the Great Fire of London spread so rapidly, and imitated the style of Pepys in describing its progress.
127. Between Years 3 - 6 pupils continue to make satisfactory progress. Those in Year 3 examined the everyday lives of the ancient Egyptians, investigating hieroglyphs and deities, while pupils in Year 4 studied life in Celtic and Roman Britain. Although much of the work completed is sound, there is an over-reliance on the use of photocopied exercises that sets a limit on the detail of explanations that pupils can offer. There are elements of good progress in Year 5. Here, pupils often work with copies or transcripts of original documents so that they gain a real flavour of life in Victorian times. In addition they acquire sufficient background information to begin to interpret these with some accuracy and to offer reasonable explanations of the circumstances in which certain events occurred. Pupils in Year 6 have studied Tudor England, noting some of the milestones in the reign of Henry the Eighth and comparing the living conditions of the rich and poor. Here, pupils make satisfactory progress overall but some of the work is unnecessarily copied and too little is sometimes expected of pupils who are clearly capable of expressing their own thoughts fluently. Across the school, pupils with learning difficulties progress at the same rate as other pupils. In the lessons seen, they were offered good support and consequently coped well with the tasks they were set.
128. Only two complete lessons were seen, one in each of Years 1 - 2 and Years 3 - 6, and in both of these the teaching was of good quality. Sufficient additional evidence was acquired by analysing work and discussing the subject with teachers and pupils to form the judgement that teaching and learning over time are satisfactory. Teachers display sound subject knowledge and basic skills are taught adequately. Despite the good use of primary sources in a minority of classes, this aspect of work is underdeveloped and too many written activities are based on closed questions printed on photocopied sheets. These anticipate the length and range of pupils' answers and do not give higher and average attaining pupils sufficient opportunity to demonstrate what they know and understand. Teachers motivate pupils well, with the result that most manifest a real interest for the subject and have a good understanding of what they have learnt. In the good lessons, teachers constantly encouraged pupils to explain and justify their answers; the work was adapted according to the aptitude and ability of different groups

of pupils and the teachers circulated well, asking supplementary questions or offering further clarification when this was required. Teachers and their assistants give good support to pupils with learning difficulties, questioning at the right level to aid their understanding.

129. The history curriculum covers a sufficiently wide variety of themes in enough detail for most pupils, although in some classes there are insufficient opportunities for those of greater aptitude and ability to find out and interpret information for themselves. The subject co-ordinator is new to the post and, although she has not yet had the opportunity to make an impact on the quality of teaching and learning, she has a clear idea of where improvements need to be made. There are good procedures for assessing pupils' progress, although these could be used more helpfully to record briefly the nature of difficulties encountered by those pupils that do not meet the criteria for successful learning. Teachers' planning is generally thorough. School-based resources for the subject are satisfactory, and the school has access to a much wider range held by the local authority; in the best lessons, these are used imaginatively. The school makes good use of the local and more distant visits to enhance pupils' understanding; they visit Verulamium and Victorian Elstree, for example, and explore the churchyard and the immediate vicinity of the school.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

130. Standards in ICT meet the expectation by Year 2 but are below the expectation by the end of Year 6. The subject has not been a focus for development until recently and the application of ICT skills in other subjects is still being established. The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good in Year 2 and good in Years 3 - 6. Pupils are achieving satisfactorily. A few higher attaining pupils demonstrate good understanding and skills, gained through a mixture of good application to the tasks and increasingly good opportunities in the school. Standards have been maintained at Year 2 since the last inspection but have fallen at Year 6. This is largely explained by the lower level of independent learning skills of pupils in the current Year 6 and the lack of focus on standards by the permanent headteacher. Pupils who have learning difficulties and those who have English as an additional language generally achieve in line with their peers.
131. The deputy headteacher has ensured that planning and learning are effective through his good monitoring procedures. The central computer suite provides satisfactory opportunities and facilities for half a class at a time. The good arrangement of time-tabling all classes for one session a week is helping to promote the progressive development of skills and to ensure satisfactory subject coverage. The deputy headteacher as the subject leader is providing colleagues with clear curriculum guidance for suitable tasks. He also provides staff training both informally and in staff sessions which is leading to increased confidence.
132. Pupils in Years 1-2 build well on their informal experiences in the Nursery and Reception classes, where they learn to control the mouse and to enter simple commands. In a very well planned lesson in Year 2, for example, pupils were challenged to record the instructions for a floor turtle to move from one location to another. The pupils were highly motivated and collaborated well in deciding commands for the turtle to move around the large treasure island map. The majority of pupils understood the basic steps and how to enter the commands, although pupils made several specific errors. These included entering L1 instead of L90 to turn a right angle left, and not understanding how to decide left or right. The task generated a high level of interest amongst the pupils, particularly the sense of excitement when groups pressed

the 'GO' button. Overall, the pupils demonstrated understanding that met the expectation, with the teacher providing very good learning through her skilled discussions and analysis of pupils' difficulties.

133. In a well-managed lesson in Year 3 in the ICT suite, the teacher established pupils' attention well and provided a clear explanation of the steps needed to search records. This prepared pupils well for the information workshop where they had to search data on preferred sandwiches. Pupils demonstrated satisfactory skill in finding and reading the records, extending their skills through thoughtful interventions by the teacher in the use of specific commands. In Year 4, most pupils took on the task well of drawing a regular closed shape using a screen turtle. The task built well on the experience in Year 2 and linked with their mathematical understanding of polygons. Most pupils explained correctly the method for calculating the angle of turn, and were motivated well to solve the problems. Standards in the required skills were satisfactory. In Year 5 pupils demonstrated satisfactory knowledge about the composition of a database and had the skills to search a database and to find and correct errors in the records. Good interventions by the teacher, demonstrating confident subject knowledge, helped pupils to apply their skills to the problem. The pupils' satisfactory standards indicate that they will reach the expectation by the end of their Year 6. By contrast, the standards of the pupils in the present Year 6 are below the expectation. In an interesting and worthwhile task with geographical links, preparing an advertising leaflet about a mountain of their choice, Year 6 pupils demonstrated early skills at making a search on the Internet. Several pupils, particularly the higher attaining, located photographs, for example of Snowdon, and imported these into their leaflet. They also added headings and text, and began the process of making an attractive design by placing photographs for best effect and adapting the colour and presentation of text. Standards are below the expectation overall, however, since many pupils lack confidence and the skills to make an efficient search of the Internet. They have poor keyboard skills and are over-reliant on the mouse. Their word processing skills for entering text are slow and they lack the skills to edit and redesign text confidently.
134. The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons seen was very good in Year 2 and good in Years 3 - 6. The teachers demonstrated good subject knowledge and used this to good effect in their demonstrations and exposition about the skills needed for the tasks. They manage the pupils very well, encouraging them to maintain their interest and effort. Most pupils have good attitudes and behaviour which helps promote good learning. A very small minority of pupils, more particularly in Year 6, have not yet developed self-discipline. Most pupils were motivated well by the tasks and co-operated well with a partner when this was arranged. A strong feature of the teaching is the active engagement with the pupils in working out what to do so that pupils have good experiences and learn well.
135. The school is beginning to link computer use to other subjects, such as mathematics or geography, to help pupils recognise the value of applying ICT skills and to improve their understanding of other subjects. This application of skills was shown, for example, when pupils in Year 6 logged onto the Internet to collect the information on mountains. Overall, the application of ICT skills in other subjects is at an early stage. A computer club is planned to meet pupils' wider interests. The subject leader provides good leadership. He is working hard to support colleagues and to improve the use of ICT facilities. Curriculum planning for the subject meets statutory requirements. The school has made substantial improvements in resourcing the subject, although only having space for half a class requires careful preparation for the other half. This is not always successful. There are suitable assessment procedures for ICT, and there are plans to improve the resources for control and the sensing of physical data.

MUSIC

136. Too little music was seen to form judgements on the standards achieved by pupils across the school. However, a Year 1 lesson, the quality of singing in assemblies and discussion with some Year 6 pupils indicate that pupils enjoy interesting music lessons and develop their skills and knowledge progressively.
137. In the lesson seen, the pupils invented musical 'stories' to illustrate a postman's daily activities, using tuned and untuned instruments to represent different elements of each activity. They made use of learning about long and short notes and experimentation with a variety of instruments, to develop musical patterns that held meaning for them. They handled the instruments with care and learnt how to use them correctly.
138. The lesson was well structured, so that learning was progressive and there were lots of opportunities for pupils to participate. Pupils, instruments and other resources were very well organised. A brisk pace, very good knowledge of the pupils and a sense of humour led to fun and good learning of the key points the teacher wanted to cover. The pupils responded enthusiastically, had constructive and mature discussion with their groups and co-operated well with instructions.
139. Whole school singing is good. Pupils sing with spirit, reasonably in tune and in time. Interest in music is supported by the availability of instrumental lessons (which a good number of pupils take up) with pupils playing during assembly from time to time and events where pupils sing to old age pensioners and others.
140. The deputy headteacher is co-ordinator for music, amongst a number of other roles, and has spent some time reviewing progress in the subject against the management targets set for it. A new scheme of work has been introduced which fully covers the National Curriculum. Although there is the normal range of instruments, the school has no keyboards and is not able, therefore, to use ICT to support parts of the curriculum.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

141. Standards in physical education in the lessons observed meet the expectation by Year 2 but are below by Year 6. This maintains the standards noted at the time of the last inspection at Year 2, but is a lowering of standards in Year 6. These lower standards are largely explained by the higher number of pupils who find concentration difficult and the lack of direction in the absence of the permanent headteacher.

142. Within Years 1-2, the teachers give the pupils well-chosen warm-up activities such as to walk, then change direction on command or with body swings. In a well-planned and organised lesson in Year 1, the pupils achieved noticeable improvement in skills and performance in throwing beanbags into a hoop through the teacher's skills in sharing their experiences. The pupils joined in well, watched closely while two demonstrated and applied the evaluation to make improvements. In an imaginative and challenging lesson for pupils in Year 2, the task was to design and try out an activity that included specific targets. Most pupils created a reasonable sequence of moves, such as dribbling a ball around markers. They were keen to take part and most collaborated well in the design of the activities, often one pupil taking a clear leading role. They maintained good attitudes and behaviour throughout, taking some pleasure in others' attempts and trying hard to control the ball. Pupils demonstrated satisfactory skills and at the same time showed personal development in responding to the teacher's challenge.
143. It was not possible to observe formal lessons in physical education in Years 3 - 5 because pupils in Years 3 and 4 have swimming on Fridays during the Spring term and the Year 5 lesson coincided with the whole school service in Church for the end of term. In Year 6 the teacher provided good opportunities for pupils to acquire and practise ball skills. During a suitable basic activity pupils threw and caught a ball between partners, but the level of skill and control in both throwing and catching was below the expectation. Only a minority of pupils demonstrated a confident and fluent throwing action with a suitably judged strength and moved to anticipate the flight of the ball on its return, taking it neatly. In a modified ball game, similar to rounders, the teacher provided good opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their skills in a game setting. Some groups of pupils were not able to organise their game without adult intervention. Few pupils properly understood the tactics of the game and most pupils did not catch and then throw the ball to the first post as required. Overall, the pupils demonstrated unsatisfactory skill and understanding of the game.
144. The pupils enjoy physical activities and are keen to take part. Most pupils have good behaviour which enhances the quality of their learning so that they make satisfactory, and sometimes good, progress both in lessons. There is no significant difference in pupils' learning by different groups of pupils. Those with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language are supported carefully and make sound progress. The quality of teaching is good through the school. Teachers make a good choice of task to provide challenge and skill development. The teachers' good relationships with the pupils encourage them to work hard. Teachers use good strategies to include all pupils so that they all learn well. Their good practice of inviting pupils to demonstrate and evaluate their work helps to raise standards by thinking about their own performance. The teachers are very aware of health and safety issues.
145. The school offers a good range of experience and activities in physical education and the subject meets statutory requirements. The majority of pupils are able to swim 25 metres by the end of Year 6. There is a satisfactory selection of resources and the hall provides a suitable space for gymnastics and other activities. The acting headteacher has taken over the role of subject leader temporarily and she provides suitable direction. There are helpful assessment procedures to record pupils' skills, although their use in further planning is at an early stage.