

INSPECTION REPORT

ST NICHOLAS CofE (VA) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Letchworth

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117442

Headteacher: Mr R J Hopcraft

Reporting inspector: Mrs S Browning
1510

Dates of inspection: 10 – 13 February 2003

Inspection number: 247783

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

© Crown copyright 2003

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Norton Road Letchworth Hertfordshire
Postcode:	SG61AG
Telephone	01462 623322
Fax number:	01462 623355
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Colin Kilgour
Date of previous inspection:	26 - 29 January 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1510	Sheila Browning	Registered inspector	Art and design Music Educational inclusion	Standards of attainment and achievement Teaching and learning How good the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils are Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision Leadership and management
9370	Ros Wingrove	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well the school cares for its pupils Partnership with parents
30075	Mike Duggan	Team inspector	Special educational needs English Science Information and communication technology Design and technology	

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
19765	Pauleen Shannon	Team inspector	Nursery and reception English as an additional language Mathematics Geography History Physical education	

The inspection contractor was:

PkR Educational Consultants Ltd
6 Sherman Road
Bromley
Kent
BR1 3JH

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	12
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	15
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	17
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	19
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	20
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	21
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	24
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	25
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	30

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Nicholas is a voluntary aided Church of England Primary School situated in Letchworth. Catering for 202 boys and girls aged 3+ to 11 it is about the average size of primary schools nationally. Many pupils come from the immediate locality. The pupils come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is in line with that expected nationally. The percentage of pupils having special educational needs, at 21.2 per cent, is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is very low compared with the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, at 5.5 per cent, is below the national average. The percentage of pupils whose mother tongue is believed not to be English, at 9.5 per cent, is higher than in most schools. The school is vulnerable to significant fluctuation in numbers of pupils moving in and out of the local area. The school is popular and is often oversubscribed.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school showing all round improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils achieve standards that are above national averages. The majority of children are likely to reach the Early Learning Goals set nationally for the end of the Reception Year. At the end of Year 2, in the 2002 National tests standards in writing were well above average, in reading above, in mathematics below and in teacher assessments for science they were in line. In national tests in 2002, pupils reached well above average standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6. Inspection findings show improvement in standards achieved since the last inspection. Strengths are evident in singing, instrumental work and in the high quality work displayed. The school's friendly and very caring climate for learning, good teaching and learning and the excellent commitment to improvement, reflect the excellent leadership by the headteacher and key staff. Teaching and pupils' attitudes to learning are major strengths. As a result, behaviour, personal development and relationships are all very good. The provision for children in Nursery and Reception is very good as is the curriculum provision throughout the school. Enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities are excellent. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching, and pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour, are strengths. As a result pupils' achievement and their progress are good.
- Provision, teaching and learning for children in the Nursery and Reception Years are very good overall.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are well supported. As a result, they make good progress overall.
- The quality and range of learning opportunities including the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development are very good. Extra-curricular opportunities are excellent.
- Pastoral care, support and guidance for pupils are very good and parents are strongly supportive of the school.
- Leadership and management are excellent, all staff work well together. Finances are planned and managed well. The school gives very good value for money.

What could be improved

- This is a very effective school; there are no significant weaknesses.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has responded fully to the issues raised in the last inspection in January 1998. Assessment procedures are securely embedded in practice and are linked to target-setting and planning. Teachers are more responsive to ongoing assessment of groups of pupils, and this together with sampling of work is informing standards, teaching, learning and the curriculum. The health and safety issues noted have been fully addressed. The provision for nursery children to develop their physical learning is improved.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key

very high A*

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Most nursery children start with skills that are as expected for their age, although there is a wide range of ability. Because of the very good teaching they receive, most children are on course to reach the Early Learning Goals for children at the end of the Reception Year. A significant minority will exceed them.

The table above is based on the average points score achieved by pupils and includes those who gained the expected Level 4 or above in national tests and those achieving the higher Level 5 and above. The results of pupils in Year 2 in 2002 were well above those nationally in writing, above in reading and below in mathematics. When compared with similar schools, standards were above average in writing, average in reading and were well below in mathematics. As pupils enter school with below average ability in mathematical development, this represents some progress for the current Year 2. The results of the teachers' assessments in science were average when compared with national expectations and were below when compared with similar schools. Results at the end of Year 6 in 2002 in English, mathematics and science were well above those nationally. When compared with similar schools, results were well above average in science, and above average in English and mathematics. The school's results for pupils in 2002 showed a rising trend above the national trend. The schools exceeded the challenging targets set for improving standards.

Work seen by inspectors indicates that standards at the end of Year 2 are above expected levels in reading and science and are in line in writing, and below in mathematics. At the end of Year 6 standards are above expected levels nationally throughout the school in English, mathematics and science. Standards are above expected levels in all other subjects, with the exception of design and technology across the school, and music at the end of Year 2. In these subjects standards are at expected levels. It was not possible to secure a judgement on standards in physical education. Standards in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology across the curriculum are above expected levels. Religious education was inspected separately. For many pupils this reflects good progress from their prior attainment on entry. Higher-attaining pupils, those with English as an additional language and pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are keen to be in school and to take part in all the activities that are available to them, both in class and in the extra-curricular games and clubs.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The very good behaviour of the pupils is a strength of the school.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships with adults and pupils are very good. The school has a friendly, family atmosphere. Many opportunities are given to pupils to take responsibilities. Pupils are learning to respect and care for other people, and they are very kind and caring towards one another.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance levels are above the national average. Unauthorised absence is better than the national average for primary schools. Pupils are punctual.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Overall, teaching and learning are good. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Characteristics of very good lessons are: teachers show secure subject knowledge, planning is detailed and effective, the learning objectives are shared with pupils. The management of pupils is very good and there is very good use of time, support staff and resources. Teachers' expectations of what pupils know and can do are good. The quality and use of ongoing assessment is very good. Teaching in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is good. The teaching of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is good. Teaching assistants work well with teachers to support pupils' learning. Pupils acquire new skills, knowledge and understanding and they are very interested in learning and work hard.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. It encompasses the requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education. Provision for the children in the foundation stage is a strength of the school. Extra-curricular provision is excellent.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils are well supported and as a result they make good progress overall.

Aspect	Comment
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language is good. Pupils are well supported and as a result they make good progress overall.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school's overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development is very good. Good emphasis is placed on art, music, dance and drama.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school's procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare and the pastoral support provided by the school are all strengths. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance and monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are excellent. The personal, social and health education programme is having a very positive impact on the way the school cares for its pupils.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The leadership and management by the headteacher and key staff are excellent. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance and taking effective action are excellent. The shared commitment to improvement and capacity to succeed are excellent.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governing body plays an increasingly active role in shaping the direction of the school and in holding the school to account.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. Priorities for development and monitoring and taking effective action in terms of the school's performance are all excellent.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The principles of best value are applied very well. Educational priorities are carefully supported through the school's prudent financial planning.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The behaviour is good.• Children like school.• The school expects pupils to work hard and achieve their best.• The leadership and management of the school.• Children make good progress.• The school is helping children to be mature and responsible.• The range of activities outside of lessons.• Pupils make good progress at school.• The teaching is good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To be kept well informed about children's progress.• The amount of homework set.• The school to work more closely with parents.

The inspection team agrees with all of the parents' positive views but not with all of their other views. Parents receive good quality information about their children's progress. Homework is set appropriately. The headteacher has undertaken to monitor homework to make sure that it is set in line with the school's policy. The school works hard to involve parents in all aspects of school life.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The assessment of children on entry show that this year children enter nursery and reception at a level expected for their age, although there is a wide range of ability. Because of the very good teaching they receive, most are on course to reach the Early Learning Goals for children at the end of the Reception Year. A significant minority will exceed them. Most nursery children start with appropriate skills, with the exception of mathematical knowledge and understanding. As a result of the very good teaching, targeted support and provision, children with special educational needs, higher-attaining children and those who have English as an additional language make very good progress.
2. At the end of Year 2, national test results showed that, in 2002, pupils achieved standards well above those expected nationally in writing, above in reading, and below in mathematics. When compared with schools with similar characteristics, results in writing were above average, in reading average and in mathematics well below. It is important to note that pupils join the school with below average skills in mathematics. The results of the teachers' assessments in science were average when compared with national expectations and were below when compared with similar schools. The percentage of pupils who achieved the higher levels (Levels 3 and above) was well above average in reading, writing and science when compared with those nationally. In mathematics they were average. When compared with similar schools, the percentage of pupils reaching the higher levels was well above average in writing and science, above in reading and below in mathematics.
3. At the end of Year 6, the national test results showed that, in 2002, pupils achieved standards well above those expected nationally in English, mathematics and science. When compared with similar schools, results were well above in science, and above in English and mathematics. The data suggests that these pupils made well above average progress in science, and above average progress in English and mathematics in Years 1 and 2. At the end of Year 6, the percentage of pupils who achieved the higher levels (Levels 5 and above) was well above those nationally expected in English, mathematics and science. When compared with similar schools results were well above those expected in English and science and were above in mathematics. Achievement was high in 2002, with achievement at the higher levels being well in excess of national and county averages. Results in science have been consistently high in recent years. Standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 show good achievement over time. Based on the performance data, boys performed better than the girls, a reversal of the national picture.
4. Some caution must be noted, however, concerning performance data. There is a significant element of mobility within the community and it is important to note that the data is not necessarily matched to the same pupils and is therefore not always secure. Also the school's free meal quota is constantly on the borderline of the eight per cent threshold (one of the similar school indicators), therefore, the school is often compared with different groups of schools. The school has secure data that shows that in 2003 at the end of Year 6, more pupils are likely to achieve the expected level and fewer the higher level. This, however, reflects progress made for this particular group.

5. Since the last inspection at the end of Year 2 there has been a slight downward trend in achievement at Level 2, but this was reversed in 2002 and targets for 2003 show that performance will improve again. Performance at level 3 (the higher level) has always been above average, with the exception of mathematics in 2002. The school's analysis of results over the last 5 years shows that girls continue to perform better than the boys in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 2. The school has targeted writing successfully as an area for development and, as a consequence, writing results have improved dramatically in recent years. For example, girls outperformed boys substantially at the higher Level 5: more boys achieved level 4 (the expected level) than girls. Despite year-on-year variation, overall results at the end of Year 6 have risen steadily since the last inspection, showing good value added.
6. The school sets challenging targets for raising standards and tracks pupils' achievements on a regular basis. The targets were exceeded for English and mathematics in 2002 at the end of Year 6. The school has very useful value-added data based on its ongoing analysis of pupils' performance and this is being used effectively to inform predicted targets and curriculum planning.
7. Work seen indicates that standards at the end of Year 2 are above expected levels in reading and science and are in line in writing, and below in mathematics. As pupils enter school with below average ability in mathematical development, this represents some progress for the current Year 2. At the end of Year 6, standards are above expected levels nationally throughout the school in English, mathematics and science. Standards are above expected levels in all other subjects with the exception of design and technology across the school, and in music at the end of Year 2. In these subjects standards are at expected levels. This reflects good progress and is due to good planning and teaching. It was not possible to judge standards securely in physical education. Religious education was inspected separately.
8. The National Literacy Strategy is promoted well throughout the school. Pupils are transferring their literacy skills to other subjects; for example, the importance of listening to and carrying out instructions in physical education. Pupils are enthusiastic when contributing to discussions in class. In different subjects, pupils use specific subject vocabulary and express themselves well. They write up science investigations accurately, and read and act out Biblical scenes for assemblies. The focused and systematic teaching of literacy is evident in examples of extended writing, for example in history, geography and religious education, although this is an area still being developed. Spelling skills are developed progressively. Good opportunities are provided for research and pupils are confident using information and communication technology to support their learning. Although the majority of the pupils' writing is neat and formed well, there are some instances of less well-presented work.
9. The teaching of numeracy is implemented well. Mathematical skills are used appropriately to support other subjects such as science, history and geography. In a well-taught Year 4 lesson, pupils applied their knowledge of compass and direction work to extract information from a local map. Children enjoyed this opportunity to apply their learning to a real problem.
10. Pupils use the computer and various graphical programs to record data in the form of charts, block and line graph diagrams. In design and technology, pupils consolidate their skills of measurement.

11. The school is most successfully fostering the achievements of pupils with special educational needs. They have detailed individual education plans that focus clearly on areas for improvement and targets to be reached. All the pupils with special educational needs reach the standards expected relative to their individual abilities.
12. Pupils with English as an additional language make similarly good progress. Good examples were seen of dual language being used to explain learning and to make the very young children in the nursery and in Year 2 feel secure. The school analysis of data shows no significant differences in performance for pupils from ethnic backgrounds compared with other groups of pupils. During the inspection, nothing was observed to suggest that there is any significant difference in the achievements of boys and girls.
13. The school has identified higher-attaining pupils across the school. Formally planned opportunities for learning are still at early stages of development. Higher-attaining pupils are usually well supported and targeted in lessons and they make good progress as a result of the good teaching.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. The very good behaviour of the pupils is a strength of the school, as is their mature attitude to their lessons. They are keen to be in school and to take part in all the activities that are available to them, both in class and in the extra-curricular games and clubs. When moving around the school the pupils behave sensibly and are courteous to adults and to one another. They are careful with school property. They behave well in the dining hall, although it can become a little noisy. Pupils are aware of the school rules and of the behaviour, which is expected of them. One hundred per cent of the home/school agreements were signed by parents and pupils, and returned to school. In the playground, pupils can be very boisterous and there are the occasional collisions and tumbles, but there is no intentional harm or bullying. After break and lunchtime pupils are excitable for a short while but resume their seats and are quiet and ready for work remarkably quickly. There was one exclusion last year for unacceptable behaviour and this action was endorsed by the governors.
15. During the inspection, there was a class assembly led by Year 2 to which parents and grandparents were invited. The hall was, therefore, very full and all the young pupils were sitting on the floor for quite a long time. Behaviour was exemplary and during a brief performance of 'The Pied Piper', one could have heard a pin drop. The Year 2 performers did extremely well with their clear voices, knowledge of their lines, music and acting. Some of the Nursery children were attending an assembly for the first time. Not only did they enjoy what they were seeing, but also they behaved beautifully, following the example set by the older children.
16. Time set aside for reflection is used to talk about friendships and working together and it is clear that the pupils do make good friendships, work and play well together. All are included in every aspect of school life and have the chance to take part in sports clubs. Pupils with special educational needs are helped and supported so that they can make good progress. Relationships with the adults working in the school are also very good and pupils are respectful to their teachers who, in turn, show respect for them. The school has a friendly, family atmosphere. Many opportunities are given to pupils to take responsibility both for the work they do and in many small tasks around the school. They help with the

library and with the running of assemblies, and two pupils from each year group represent their colleagues in the new school council. They take this particular responsibility very seriously. Pupils are learning to respect and care for other people, and they are very kind and caring towards one another if someone is hurt or feeling ill.

17. The school's approach is inclusive and considers pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language as an integral part of the school community. Pupils adopt a positive approach to all subjects and activities, and work with real commitment, as noted in a Year 6 information and communication technology lesson. These pupils have opportunities to work independently, with support or in collaboration with other members of the class.
18. Attendance levels are above the national average and children are punctual. Even the youngest children say that they do not want to be late or to miss any of their school days. Lessons begin on time. They are interesting and stimulating so that children enjoy being with their peers, learning and achieving.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

19. Overall, teaching and learning are good throughout the school. In almost nine out of ten lessons teaching is good, and it is very good or excellent in nearly half. No unsatisfactory lessons were observed.
20. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, teaching is good overall. The teaching of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is good. As a result of the good teaching the needs of pupils with English as an additional language, pupils with special educational needs and higher-attaining pupils are met well. Teaching assistants work together in partnership with teachers. They provide well-focused support and help pupils to meet their learning objectives well. This contributes positively to pupils' learning and achievement.
21. Characteristics of very good teaching are:
 - teachers are well trained and show a good knowledge of the primary curriculum and subject knowledge;
 - lesson planning is effective, detailed and well informed by curriculum guidance;
 - learning objectives are shared with pupils ensuring that they are clear about the task;
 - structured questioning is used effectively to help pupils to consolidate and build on previous learning;
 - pupils are well managed;
 - the quality and use of ongoing assessment is very good.As a result of these strengths, pupils are achieving well.
22. Good features of teaching are: the teaching of basic skills and teachers' expectations of pupils' attitudes to learning and what pupils know and can do are good, teaching methods are used effectively and a variety of teaching methods are used to ensure that all learning styles are catered for. The use of time, support staff and resources is good. Teaching assistants are fully integrated and valued in the teaching process. The pace of lessons can be brisk with a good variety of well-chosen activities. The use of resources is well managed; in a Year 1 history lesson about different composers through time, the use and range of resources was excellent. They were well prepared to encourage, motivate and

capture pupils' interest. After consolidating pupils' previous knowledge of Tchaikovsky, the teacher introduced the music of the Beatles. She excited them through her excellent use of resources and enquiry skills such as photographs, maps, news clippings, word bankcards and records and by playing samples of music. Through careful questioning the teacher enabled the pupils to make many connections and as a result they learnt new facts and consolidated their learning. In a Year 5 science lesson, about the importance of muscles and how they protect and support the body when moving, the teacher made good use of the interactive white board to show differences between voluntary and involuntary muscle movement. The teacher used the pupils well to demonstrate movement.

23. Other good features of teaching are that teachers use subject-specific language consistently in lessons. Teachers assess pupils' work and share objectives with them. The 'I can' statements are successfully used in literacy and are being trialled in mathematics in Year 5. Assessment procedures and target-setting are well established in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and are developing in other subjects. The use of assessment is helping to secure teachers' judgement as to how well pupils are progressing. Teachers generally mark pupils' work regularly, although the marking of work in some year groups is inconsistent. In discussion with inspectors, pupils said they understand what they need to do to improve their work. There are some instances of less well-presented work that are directly related to teachers' expectation.
24. Tasks are well matched to pupils' abilities, as, for example, in a Year 6 information and communication technology lesson, when writing thank you letters to companies where pupils had work shadowed, the teacher provided work at different levels for the pupils to combine, present and research different forms of information. Some were encouraged to use a thesaurus, others to use spell check and all made good progress as a result of the dedicated efforts of the teacher. Some teachers are enthused and as a result they inspire pupils; for example, in a Year 5 art lesson the teacher's excellent understanding and knowledge of art excited and stimulated the pupils' interest. As a result they were fully engaged, understood the objectives well and consequently their abstract fabric designs and tonal paintings were of a high quality. Homework is set where appropriate. Parents expressed concerns with regard to homework being set inconsistently and there is scope for the school to monitor this in line with school policy.
25. The pupils with special educational needs are taught well. The teachers are involved fully with the special educational needs co-ordinator in writing individual education plans which clearly outline the way the curriculum is to be adapted to meet identified needs. A good example was noted in a Year 3 mathematics lesson on data handling. Teachers are skilled at briefing learning support assistants. The good support provided by these dedicated assistants makes a significant contribution to the pupils' good progress.
26. Pupils with English as an additional language are well supported and as a result they make good progress overall. Pupils in the Reception Year make very good progress as a result of the very good intervention and support provided by the dual language support teacher/assistant. For example, when using the computer they were guided in their home language as to how to operate the computer buttons and thereby extend their skills. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson, pupils again were well supported by the language support teacher/assistant when learning to tell the time and she explained the term anticlockwise in their home language.

27. Overall, good teaching meets the specific needs of the pupils well. Pupils acquire new skills, knowledge and understanding and they are interested in what they are doing and are often stimulated by the teacher's own interest and enthusiasm. They work hard and are eager to learn for themselves and they are given good opportunities to undertake research and independent study both at home and at school. Information and communication technology is used most effectively to extend pupils' understanding. Pupils are given good opportunities to discuss and share their views and opinions during plenary sessions and they are encouraged to use subject-specific vocabulary. As a result they are keen to articulate their findings and confidently express their views and opinions. Pupils interact well with each other. The school is also aware of the need to provide further opportunities for pupils to use the library, in order to increase their knowledge of books and to improve their referencing and research skills. The recent automation of the library will enable better access for all pupils. Pupils' intellectual, physical and creative skills are also developing well. All these factors underpin the good standard of teaching and learning throughout the school.

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

28. Curriculum provision is very good. The school provides high quality learning opportunities for all pupils. Strengths in the curriculum are: the very good provision in nursery and reception, which enables children to get off to a flying start, the quality and range of learning opportunities for pupils with special educational needs and for pupils who have English as an additional language, the equality of access and opportunity for all pupils, the personal, social and health education programme that successfully promotes awareness, care and respect for one another's feelings, involvement of the community in pupils' learning and the excellent extra-curricular provision. All the subjects of the National Curriculum, as well as sex education, drugs misuse and personal, social and health education and citizenship are taught. Year 6 pupils enjoyed studying the world at work first hand as they visited their parent's place of work - 'work shadowing for the day' - an established tradition in this school. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are firmly embedded and are having a good and positive impact on pupils' learning across the school.
29. Extra-curricular provision is excellent and a wide range of activities is provided both at lunchtime and after school. The quality of this provision has been recognised externally and the school has recently received the Activemark Award by Sport England. Both teachers and teaching assistants undertake extra-curricular activities. A further variety of activities are provided by external agencies. These include French, instrumental tuition and soccer. The school encourages pupils to feel part of the local community. This is achieved through joint fund-raising events with the local Church, and a full programme of sports fixtures with other local schools and annual involvement in music, dance and drama events. The school encourages, where possible, first-hand experiences for learning. These include a regular programme of visits and visitors to support the curriculum. Recent activities have involved 'Setpoint Hertfordshire' and extended residential visits for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 to Hudnall Park, Cuffley and Whitby, for example. The local community provides a very good contribution to the pupils' learning, particularly through links with the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation and the Church. The school takes part in Crucial Crew run by the police, a programme that gives practical support through experience about life choices and how to resist peer pressure. Links with pre-nursery, specialist schools and secondary schools are good. The school is currently embarking on

a partnership with a local school applying for specialist status in mathematics and information and communication technology. The school prepares pupils well for the next stage in their education.

30. A strength of both nursery and reception provision is the excellent partnership with parents. In nursery, parents work every morning with their own children to help them plan their own curriculum. They make an enormous contribution. Early Years expertise is also evident in the Nursery. The reception teacher was recently involved in the 'Effective Early Learning Project', being awarded a mark of distinction, and the nursery has recently received the Hertfordshire Quality Standards Kitemark for excellence in Early Years provision.
31. Pupils with special educational needs have equal access to all areas of the curriculum, including extra-curricular activities. The school is particularly successful in the way it adapts the curriculum to ensure that the pupils with special educational needs make the best possible progress. Good planning and effective use of resources enable the pupils to work successfully towards their identified targets. Additional support is available for particular groups of pupils according to their need. There are catch- up/booster and additional literacy and numeracy classes. Higher-attaining pupils are identified and are suitably challenged; a formal extension programme is planned for, in the near future.
32. Overall, the school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual development are very good. Acts of worship give pupils opportunities to reflect on their own values and beliefs and on those of others. Although not formally planned for, opportunities occur incidentally and are developed in lessons. Teachers respond sensitively to pupils' thoughts and questions. The school celebrates mainly Christian but also various other religious beliefs. The school has strong links with local churches and different religious faiths including Baptists and Evangelists and Buddhists. In its wider definition there are plenty of opportunities for pupils to develop spiritual awareness through literature, science, art, dance and music.
33. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. Staff and adults working in the school provide good role models and they have a shared vision. There is an agreed code of conduct and staff apply this consistently. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good and reflects pupils' understanding of what is expected of them. Pupils are aware of those less fortunate than themselves and they have raised funds to sponsor children in India, and raised over £800 for a local Hospice. Pupils value the support they receive and write thank you letters to those who have helped them.
34. The school makes very good provision for pupils' social development. The wide provision of activities on offer provides many opportunities for pupils to interact with one another and develop their social skills. In lessons, teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to work together in pairs and in groups. Children in nursery and reception experience the Highscope programme (the approach for providing high quality education for children under five) through their personal social education. The pupils themselves suggested 'buddies' as a way to ensure that children were not excluded or isolated at play and lunchtimes.

35. The school makes very good provision for pupils' cultural development. Pupils of different abilities and of different backgrounds get on very well together. Teachers and support staff encourage pupils to work co-operatively and they respond well.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. The care and support given to pupils from the Nursery to the end of Year 6 is very good. There are good arrangements to inform and welcome new pupils and to support pupils making the change to secondary school. The teachers know the pupils and their families very well and are keen to see children make the best progress they can while they are in the school. Parents are full of praise for the way the school cares for their children. Inspectors were given many instances of this, for example, the way mild dyslexia was identified and the actions that were taken to help the children concerned with special work.
37. The governors' health and safety committee has a clear programme for improving the facilities and now wants the school to refurbish the pupils' toilets and to improve access for wheelchairs.
38. Pupils are given good information about a healthy lifestyle in their science lessons and the school nurse talks about important issues such as sex education. The curriculum contains personal, social and health education and circle time when pupils discuss matters such as friendships, caring for others and personal likes, dislikes and worries. This helps to build their self-confidence by talking openly to a wider group. Teachers carefully record the personal development of their classes and readily discuss any concerns with the parents. One of the teachers has responsibility for child protection matters and has had special training. All the staff are trained to be aware of any child who shows signs of distress or developing ill health. If necessary, the school will involve other agencies such as the education welfare officer or social services to help support one of their pupils. Pupils who have minor accidents in school time are very well cared for. Their condition is recorded in a book and, where necessary, their parents are informed. There is also an accident book for staff. Teachers are trained in the application of First Aid and also in the use of Epi pens for children with anaphylactic problems.
39. Although the local highway authority has provided flashing lights and coloured road surfaces where the children have to cross and there is a very capable school-crossing lady, the fact remains that this crossing is on a fast, blind corner. Local drivers obey the crossing patrol well, but during the inspection there was a foggy morning that caused additional problems, especially for the crossing patrol lady. Parking for the school is, by arrangement, in a private car park on the opposite side of the road to the school, and so many parents and children have to cross. During the day, when the crossing patrol is not present, this is even more dangerous for any children and adults, and parents are concerned. The school has recently had talks with the local authority and it is hoped that the crossing can be made safer.
40. Pupils were seen to care for and be considerate to one another. A new play-buddy scheme has just been introduced where the older pupils make sure the younger ones have someone to play with at break time. The school listens to pupils. The new school council has met only twice, but already good suggestions put forward by very young pupils are being implemented. Pupils know that their teachers and the other staff in the school are their friends and that they can talk to them about anything that is worrying them. The

result of this caring atmosphere is that pupils are very happy and stress-free in school and they can make good progress in their studies.

41. The school observes necessary procedures such as regular fire drills and the governors have authorised improvements in security. There are policies concerning good behaviour and the prevention of bullying. Teachers and governors have shared training about how to deal with behavioural problems. Attendance is good and above the national average. Pupils with a personal attendance of fewer than 90 per cent are carefully monitored and their parents are made aware of how absence may be affecting their progress. Pupils with 100 per cent and 98 per cent attendance receive certificates.
42. Since the previous inspection, a more advanced system of assessment and recording the progress of pupils has been introduced so that teachers are aware of any difficulties pupils may have in their learning.
43. The school has effective systems in place to identify, assess, support and monitor the standards and progress of all pupils. Progress is carefully monitored and predictions are based on both the teacher's knowledge and each individual's progress. Challenging targets are set and they have been exceeded. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported. Timely and appropriate support is given to all pupils. The introduction of 'Tracks', an intensive phonic and spelling programme, is already having a positive impact. The response to the pupils' requirements as outlined in their individual education plans is good. The school implements fully the Code of Practice.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

44. The good relationship between parents and the teaching staff and the support which parents give, are strengths of the school. Parents also value the helpfulness of the school secretary, the important work of the school-crossing patrol and the caring approach of all the other adults who work in the school. It is a happy place with a good family atmosphere and parents have confidence that their children will be well cared for and will make good progress.
45. Parents uphold the strong Christian ethos of the school and support its policies on a wide range of issues. Parents' views are taken into consideration and there are regular opportunities for them to meet teachers. The school has an open door policy. Before long, the governors intend to introduce regular questionnaires to test opinions of parents and children on school issues. Parents returned 100 per cent of the home/school agreements. At the parents' meeting, the school was unanimously given ten out of ten for the children's good behaviour.
46. Parents encourage their children to read at home and some feel that the children could have more homework, as it is inconsistent between year groups. The headteacher has promised to monitor the amounts of homework that are being given. Some parents are able to help in school on a regular basis and those who have children in the early years are encouraged to begin the day in the Nursery or classroom to see their little ones start the day's lessons.
47. The school's brochure and the governors' annual report to parents are well-written factual booklets. Parents also receive frequent newsletters telling them about school events. They are informed regularly about the curriculum and given opportunities to attend special

meetings to find out what their children are learning. End-of-year reports give parents plenty of information about how their child is progressing in each subject and set targets for the following year. The school has introduced an excellent web-site which gives information, takes the viewer on a tour of the school's site, publishes newsletters and generally gives parents and anyone else who is interested a full picture of the school's life. The web-site is particularly of interest to relatives of the children living elsewhere and to ex-pupils. It also helps to bring the school into focus in the community.

48. The parents of pupils with special educational needs are informed regularly about their children's progress and are involved fully, where appropriate, in the review process.
49. The local community supports the school very well. The parents raise very large sums of money through their organisation "SNAPS", and the school receives help from the local Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation. Local businesses co-operated in a day's work shadowing for the pupils. The company that owns the public house opposite to the school makes its large car park available because the school has so little parking space of its own and lies on a very busy road.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

50. The school benefits from excellent leadership and management by the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior manager and curriculum co-ordinators. The school's aims and values are promoted in all aspects of the work of the school. The headteacher's leadership underpins the clear and excellent educational direction that has successfully led to all-round school improvement. The headteacher is an excellent practitioner himself and leads by example.
51. The deputy headteacher is also an excellent practitioner. She is an advanced skills literacy teacher. She has an excellent overview of the school. Three examples: the deputy headteacher has developed and centralised the use of target-setting (that is becoming a well-established means of raising standards) and the use of assessment practices throughout the school, she has taken responsibility for putting into practice the revised marking policy, her expertise in 'publishing pupils books' ensures that pupils take a pride in their topic books. These most successfully demonstrate much of the high quality work that is evident in the school. The headteacher and she present a strong and effective team and she brings innovation to her role. The role of curriculum co-ordinators is well established. Subject co-ordinators are acutely aware of their responsibilities. Formal cycles are in place to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning first hand. Co-ordinators have audited resources, have clear action plans for subject development and several have portfolios in place to establish the levels of pupils' work.
52. Central to the successful developments and improvements in the school is the collegiate approach to strategic thinking and planning. They look at and see opportunities rather than difficulties. All have a direct input into the school development plan and consequently the shared commitment to succeed is excellent. High quality communication is evident between staff and as a result they are a cohesive team. The headteacher and deputy headteacher lead the priorities for school development intelligently and professionally. The identification, appropriateness and subsequent action taken to meet school priorities are excellent.

53. Good structures, systems and policies are in place. School documentation is of a high quality. Equality of opportunity and inclusiveness are central to the school and provision. The school's development plan is a well-focused working document. This is a self-evaluating school and practices of accountability are fully embedded. This is a school that acts on its findings. The whole school focus on raising standards, specifically in writing and in mathematics, resulted in effective measures put into place and in both areas there is a marked improvement. Staff are enabled and are involved at every stage, for example, the headteacher has collated manageable performance data and set up effective tracking systems. With staff he analyses the progress pupils make and identifies strengths and weaknesses in learning, to be actioned. This is analysed carefully against national and local data and with previous cohorts and this is used to inform value-added judgements.
54. All teachers are regularly observed. The headteacher and three other staff are trained mentors. There is very good evidence that the outcomes are informing school practices. Excellent procedures are in place to enable staff to discuss and determine future developments and they are receptive and open to new ideas. Good use is made of the advice and support from central services, for example, the school is about to be part of the local education authority's (LEA) supported school self review programme and is looking towards securing Artsmark.
55. The provision for the pupils with special educational needs and pupils who speak English as an additional language is managed well, because the liaison and relationships between the special educational needs co-ordinator, class teachers and learning support assistants are good. Identification, support and monitoring procedures are organised well. The co-ordinator for special educational needs is well qualified, experienced, and works effectively both alongside teachers and with small, withdrawn groups.
56. The governing body is much more involved and better informed than at the time of the last inspection. They receive detailed information from the headteacher and through their own first hand visits to the school and subject links, they are more informed when making decisions. With the headteacher they were instrumental in improving and securing the information and communication technology suite. The Chair of Governors is a frequent visitor to the school. He leads the governing body effectively. The usual structures and committees are in place. Governors provide strategic and secure management and act as critical friends. They are a cohesive group. Governors have benefited from training but they also have considerable experience and expertise. The governors meet their statutory duties. They are committed, proactive and increasingly make a valuable contribution to shaping the direction of the school.
57. There is sufficient and well-qualified staff. Their qualifications and experience enable them to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum fully. The members of staff are multi-skilled and amongst them there is considerable and shared expertise. Teachers and non-teaching staff show an outstanding commitment to the school; they are hardworking and dedicated. The good deployment and support of teaching assistants are contributory factors to the standards achieved. The members of the administrative staff are most welcoming and are very efficient and ensure that the day-to-day organisation of the school is smooth. Midday supervisors are friendly and are also well liked by the children.
58. The accommodation has significantly improved since the last inspection and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. The previous report recommended the new classroom should be provided to replace one that was considered unsuitable. The

governors and staff have made many improvements to the site in recent years, helped, in some cases, by funding from the local Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation and by voluntary effort. A new permanent classroom with separate toilets has totally addressed the previous key issue and removal of the mobile classroom has released more playground space. The main hall is well used and the dining hall is also used for teaching. The information and communication technology suite is the most recent addition and this contributes significantly to standards of teaching and learning. The library area is the hub of the school. It is attractive and is an ongoing area for development. Despite the good organisation by the class teacher, the reception class is cramped. The school is fully aware of this. The school lacks access for wheel chair pupils. The quality of display in public areas and in most Year groups is high and most certainly the school celebrates pupils' achievements. The school, extended playing areas and surrounding grounds are kept clean and the site is well maintained.

59. Resources are very good and are used well. They contribute positively to pupils' learning. The library is frequently used and the school is aware of the need to provide further opportunities for pupils to use the library, in order to increase their knowledge of books and to improve their referencing and research skills. Resources for information and communication technology exceed the national target. Resources are carefully managed, well organised and accessible. The school makes very good use of outside resources, for example the local area, visitors and parents.
60. Educational priorities supported by the school's financial planning are very good. The use of new technology throughout the school is excellent. Governors and the headteacher manage the school's budget very effectively. Specific grants are well used for their specified purposes and special educational needs funding is put to very good use. Day-to-day financial control and administration are very efficient. Governors apply principles to ensure that they get the best value out of resources. An excellent example of this is the information and communication technology suite. Parents are regularly consulted, as are staff and pupils about any contemplated changes that may affect them.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

61. This is a very effective school; there are no significant weaknesses.

In order to raise further the standards of work and the quality of education provided, the governors, headteacher and senior managers should consider the following:

Minor weaknesses

Marking and presentation of ongoing work requires more consistency.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	56
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	5	19	22	6	0	0	0
Percentage	9	37	42	12	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)	14.5	202
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	11

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2	19

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	18

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	17
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	19

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.1
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
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	9	21	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	5	7	6
	Girls	20	21	21
	Total	25	28	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	83 (81)	93 (81)	90 (93)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	6	5	8
	Girls	21	20	20
	Total	27	25	2
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (81)	83 (93)	93 (96)
	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	17	31

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	13	14
	Girls	15	13	17
	Total	27	26	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	87(79)	84 (68)	100 (93)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	13	13
	Girls	15	12	16
	Total	27	25	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	87 (71)	81 (75)	94 (86)
	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	196	2	1
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	18	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	5	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)	8.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.9
Average class size	28.9

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	162

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.5
Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	37
Number of pupils per FTE adult	29

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1

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
	£
Total income	518,849
Total expenditure	514,419
Expenditure per pupil	2,317
Balance brought forward from previous year	9,408
Balance carried forward to next year	13,839

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	180
Number of questionnaires returned	67

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	73	25	0	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	64	33	1	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	61	39	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	42	40	12	4	1
The teaching is good.	64	29	3	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	39	12	6	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	83	14	2	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	30	1	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	64	22	10	3	0
The school is well led and managed.	73	24	1	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	30	1	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	70	23	2	0	6

Other issues raised by parents

Eight written returns were received. These were mainly supportive of the school, its standards, quality of leadership, teaching and curriculum offered. However, a few parents had concerns about communications for 'minded children' and they suggested a register could be made.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE NURSERY AND RECEPTION CLASSES

62. Provision for the children in the foundation stage is a strength of the school. Children in nursery and reception get off to a flying start. This is because they are very well taught in a welcoming, learning environment and provided with an imaginative and interesting curriculum. The key issue to provide suitable outdoor opportunities for under fives to develop their physical skills has been largely but not fully addressed. An excellent resource is available on a daily basis for nursery children, but not for reception children.
63. The main strengths are:
- the quality and range of the curriculum provided are very good;
 - teaching is consistently very good, as a result children make very good progress;
 - staff are very knowledgeable about Early Years and plan an exciting 2-year curriculum;
 - the partnership with parents is excellent and makes a big impact on the children's learning;
 - excellent use is made of assessment to plan children's learning;
 - children's social skills, literacy, numeracy and knowledge and understanding skills are very well taught.
64. In both nursery and reception, staff provide a calm purposeful learning environment. They have a very good understanding of the needs of young children. As a result, children are happy and work hard. All children, including the pupils who are identified as having special needs and children who speak English as an additional language, make very good progress.
65. The admission arrangements are effective and ensure children in nursery settle easily. The school works hard to create an inclusive atmosphere so that all children feel valued and safe. However, while the nursery is spacious, the reception room is cramped. More flexibility is needed to make the resources between nursery and reception equitable. For example, while both have outside areas, reception does not have any large climbing equipment. This means that daily opportunities are missed for them to further develop their physical skills.
66. The children who have English as an additional language make very good progress, particularly when they get their targeted specialist support. Good examples were seen of dual language being used to explain learning and to make the very young children feel secure. Children identified with special needs get good support and make very good progress with their learning. This is because there is good liaison between parents, staff and the school's special needs co-ordinator. The outcome is targets that are clear and helpful to the children.
67. A real strength of both nursery and reception is the excellent partnership with parents. Parents are made to feel very welcome. In Nursery, parents work every morning with their own children to help them plan their own curriculum. The sessions observed were truly impressive! Children love these sessions, which help them develop their independence. Reception staff provide time at the beginning and end of the day to talk to parents. Many parents give very valuable support by working in the reception class on a regular basis.

They make a very good contribution to practical aspects of the curriculum such as mathematics and art. Excellent use is made of photograph folders to share children's learning with parents.

68. Another real strength is the excellent system in use for assessing children's learning. As a result, all staff know the children very well. Teaching assistants are used effectively to assess children's learning. Staff use information provided by parents and their own detailed assessments to plan further learning. This contributes significantly to the very good progress that children make. The authority baseline assessments show that this year children enter nursery and reception at a level expected for their age. Because of the very good teaching they receive, most children are on course to complete their early learning goals by the time they leave reception. A significant minority will exceed their early learning goals.
69. The foundation stage is very well led by a knowledgeable and enthusiastic Early Years practitioner. She has recently received a distinction for her training in the Effective Early Learning Project. Early Years expertise is also evident in the nursery. This has resulted in the nursery receiving the Hertfordshire Quality Standards Kite mark for Excellence in Early Years Provision. The members of staff work closely together although they are not yet an Early Years Unit. Resources are currently better in nursery than in reception, but are good overall.

Personal, social and emotional development

70. Most children start nursery with appropriate social development. Nursery staff help them to settle in quickly. The school's system of giving children choices in their learning, helps build up children's confidence. Children clearly enjoy the range of activities and most stay with the tasks they have chosen. Well-established routines such as registration, group and juice time help build the confidence of quieter children. By the time they join reception they have established good routines and have a good level of independence in their learning. All children have regular opportunities to be class helpers. They choose activities and are encouraged to take responsibility for putting away any equipment they use. Most reception children work well in small groups and alongside each other.
71. There are very good relationships between the staff and children. The teaching staff make sure the children know what behaviour is expected. The support staff in nursery and reception also give very good praise and encouragement. The children respond very well. Most children enjoy learning, behave very well and work hard. Children's attitudes to learning are generally very good.
72. Liaison between the reception teacher and the Year 1 teacher is very good. This helps children settle easily in Year 1. Teaching is very good and children make very good progress. By the end of the reception year the majority of children are likely to exceed their early learning goals.

Communication, language and literacy

73. Most nursery children start with appropriate skills in reading and writing, with better skills in speaking and listening. There is a wide range of ability. Nursery staff identify some children who require more help in expressing themselves. The few children who are early users of English as a second language get good support, with dual language books

available to take home. They make very good progress because they are so keen to share their ideas.

74. A strength of teaching is the time all staff give to promoting children's speaking and listening skills in all activities. Children have plenty of time to talk about their learning with their parents and with staff. Children respond well and enjoy sharing their ideas. Both outdoor areas and the role-play areas are used very well to encourage language. Very good use is made of familiar nursery rhymes and books such as 'Humpty Dumpty' and 'The Three Bears'. These promote children's interest and understanding of words and sounds. A few younger children in reception find it harder to concentrate and would benefit from smaller groups to help them concentrate and use their language.
75. The quiet room in nursery is spacious and comfortable and while the seating area in reception is smaller it has a cosy atmosphere. Some children choose the reading areas independently, but this could be further encouraged. Most children handle books sensibly because they are taught to look after books. A commercial scheme in use in nursery and reception makes learning sounds and words fun. As a result many children in reception are making very good progress. They are developing their knowledge of sounds and words to help them read.
76. Handwriting skills are very well taught from nursery onwards. Teachers provide many opportunities for children to trace and form letters in different media, such as playdough and sand. Supplies of paper, pencils and crayons are readily available. Great care is taken to develop children's ability to form letters correctly. This is an enormous asset to them when they join Year 1. Many reception children can write their names without help. In a very good lesson to develop writing skills the teacher made sure that the learning was interesting. As a result, the children were totally engrossed and made very good progress.
77. Teaching is very good. As a result most children make very good progress. They are on course to achieve their targets in writing and reading, with a significant majority exceeding their targets. Most children are on course to exceed their goals in speaking and listening skills.

Mathematical development

78. Most nursery children start with skills that are below those expected in mathematical knowledge and understanding. Many mathematical learning opportunities are provided on a daily basis. These include number rhymes such as 'Ten in the bed', or the very popular fishing game. All of these help children develop their number awareness. Water and sand are in daily use and staff interact well to help children practise mathematical language.
79. A strength in nursery and reception is the development of mathematical skills through a whole range of practical experiences. For example, in a very good lesson in nursery, a baker's shop was used really effectively to stimulate the children's interest. During the session a parent also spent time helping children use their mathematical language. Again, in another very good practical session (in reception), staff and a parent volunteer provided time for children to talk. As a result they improved their knowledge of shapes and patterns.
80. The reception teacher works hard to develop children's mental and oral skills, providing daily opportunities to explore numbers. Good use is made of specialist support and dual language in nursery to help children clarify their ideas and practise new concepts.

Teaching is very good and as a result children make very good progress. Most children are on course to achieve their targets in mathematical development by the end of reception. However, a significant minority will remain below because they start with lower mathematical skills.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

81. Most nursery children start with skills that are as expected in their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. They can talk about themselves and their families. Reception and nursery are taught very well through a whole range of interesting topics. Many opportunities are provided for children to undertake local trips to further develop their geographical understanding. Resource boxes on aspects of weather, together with a science box, further promote their understanding of simple scientific experiments.
82. The staff very successfully develop children's' knowledge of different cultures through books, music, dual language notices and the resources available. In an excellent lesson, nursery children tasted and described breads from all around the world. Some children could name croissants, pitta bread and Nan bread. Over the 2 years children also learn about many festivals including Chinese New Year and Diwali.
83. Information and communication technology skills are very well developed from nursery onwards. Computers are in daily use. Very good use is made of the computer suite. For example, in a very good reception lesson the teacher used the interactive white board to extend children's knowledge of spiders. A computer art package extended their creative skills as they designed their own spider's web. The children work sensibly both independently and in pairs. Girls and boys have positive attitudes to using computers.
84. Teaching is very good and most children are on course to achieve their targets in knowledge and understanding of the world by the end of reception. A significant minority are above expectation for their age, particularly in their use of computer skills.

Physical development

85. Most nursery children start with physical skills that are as expected for their age. The current nursery children have slightly better developed physical skills than the current reception children. Children enter reception with their skills about as expected for their age, with some above. Nursery and reception children have sessions in the school hall to help them learn how to use their bodies for movement and dance. Staff made good use of a scheme to develop children's physical and creative skills. Most nursery children respond enthusiastically and can follow simple instructions to be 'jumping beans', 'broad', 'flat' and 'tall beans'! By the time they reach reception many confidently use the hall. Some younger reception children find it difficult to stay on task.
86. Girls and boys in nursery also have daily access to climbing frames with regular opportunities to play with three-wheeled vehicles. Reception children do not have this opportunity, even though some have less developed physical skills. All children have access to large and small construction equipment. The staff also provide many opportunities for children to practise their skills in cutting, sticking and painting.

87. Teaching is good and by the end of reception most children are on course to achieve the early learning goals in their physical development, with some above. Some will remain below because they do not have daily opportunities to develop their physical skills in climbing, swinging and using three-wheeled vehicles. Some children also have difficulty using scissors, tools and manipulating small equipment.

Creative development

88. Most nursery children start with their ability to express themselves creatively as expected for their age. They learn to develop their skills through exploring colours and textures. Children are encouraged to experiment freely when mixing paints, printing or using materials. Children in nursery and reception are taught to take care when using equipment. Staff encourage attention to detail through lots of praise. For example, reception children showed real pride and worked carefully when making spiders from glue and play dough. However in both nursery and reception at times activities are either over directed or a completely free choice. This means that sometimes the activities are too prescribed or that some opportunities are missed to discuss what the children are doing to help them improve their skills.
89. Nursery and reception staff use indoor role-play areas and outdoor areas well to extend children's use of language and further develop their creativity. Good use is made throughout the year of visitors such as nurses, police, fire officers etc to stimulate children's imagination in role-play situations. Good use is made of rhymes and singing, with musical instruments readily to hand. When they join any special assemblies, children attempt to join in the singing enthusiastically!
90. Teaching is good and children make good progress in their learning. By the end of reception most children are on course to achieve the early learning goals in their creative development, for their age, with some above.

ENGLISH

91. Standards by the end of Year 2 in speaking and listening and reading are above the national average. Writing is in line with expected levels nationally. At the end of Year 6 standards are above the national average in all these aspects of English. This is an improvement on the last inspection in 1998. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys or girls or pupils from different ethnic or cultural groups. All these pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. They also achieve well, due to good overall teaching and a willingness on their own behalf to learn. A pleasing feature is the high standard of writing in Years 5 and 6 and higher order research skills in the Years 3 to 6 range.

Speaking and listening

92. The pupils start in Year 1 with skills in communication, language and literacy which are about average for their age overall. They continue to develop as confident communicators as they get older. At the end of Year 2 for example, the higher-attaining pupils demonstrated good speaking and listening skills when responding quickly to the teachers' questions about the main characters and events in stories such as 'Mr Liang and the Magic Brush'. The average and lower-attaining pupils explain their work well and give reasons why there are school rules or pick out rhyming words in a text. Very good

foundations are laid in Year 1 where, for example, the pupils are encouraged to speak about fiction texts, for instance 'Chicken Licken', using appropriate language. They read aloud in assemblies and dramatise stories, which increases confidence and self-esteem, while others listen attentively, as observed during a Year 2 dramatisation of the 'Pied Piper' in assembly.

93. At the end of Year 6, standards in speaking and listening are good. The majority of pupils are attentive and are eager to contribute to classroom discussion. Many of the pupils are articulate and venture opinions about the text, which they are studying. Such an example was noted in a Year 5 lesson on the use of impersonal and figurative language in explanation writing. Opportunities for independent discussion and formal debate arise when issues such as self-esteem are central to the text, as observed in a Year 6 lesson. Similarly a group of pupils from the same class expressed confidently their preferences or dislikes for characters and plots in plays such as 'Macbeth', or books, for example 'The Hobbit'. While discussing aspects from 'Macbeth', higher-attaining pupils explain well Lady Macbeth's decline from an ambitious, scheming woman to the depths of despair and eventually suicide. In some classes, on the odd occasion, the pupils' listening skills are not tuned so finely. They are usually eager to contribute but the rule about signalling their intention to speak is not always established firmly, and they do not listen consistently to each other.

Reading

94. Reading is promoted strongly within the school. All the pupils are supported well by a high quality system for encouraging reading at home. At the end of Year 2, the pupils have more advanced skills than most pupils of this age. They read a wide selection of literature, and express their opinions about stories that they have read. They use a variety of strategies when reading, such as knowledge of letter sounds, prediction and the context of the story to establish meaning. Most pupils are enthusiastic about books and enjoy reading simple narratives such as 'The Enormous Crocodile', 'Little Red Riding Hood' and 'The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig'. In lessons they show curiosity about features of non-fiction, for instance 'glossary' as observed in Year 1. Teachers' records indicate the progress which pupils make towards their set reading targets.
95. At the end of Year 6, the majority of the pupils read fluently, with expression that reflects the meaning of the text. This was exemplified well in a Year 3 lesson using the text of 'Little Red Riding Hood'. Most use their knowledge of letter sounds and blends well to tackle unfamiliar words, as observed while listening to a Year 4 pupil reading 'Snow Queen'. Whilst the most able use the context of the story to figure out new words, the less able find this difficult, as witnessed during a Year 6 reading session. Most pupils locate routinely information books in the library with ease, for example about rocks or fish. They use the Internet with confidence to access information about topics, which they are studying. During many lessons they use a thesaurus and dictionary efficiently to enhance their vocabulary skills. Most of the pupils in Years 5 and 6 understand how increasing their vocabulary skills add to one's enjoyment of reading and writing. For example, many pupils in Year 6, having studied the poem 'Catherine Wheels', explain clearly how the use of similes and metaphors enhance writing. They read a range of literature, which includes poets, for instance Robert Nash, Roger McGough, female authors such as Berlie Doughty and Jacqueline Wilson, and stories from other cultures, for example 'The Raja's Big Ears' told by Niru Desai. Many of the higher-attaining and average pupils select challenging books including such classics as 'Macbeth', 'The Tempest', 'Lord of the Rings'

and 'The Pilgrim's Progress'. All the pupils benefit from group reading sessions, and many discuss plot and characterisation fluently.

Writing

96. At the end of Year 2 the pupils are beginning to write in a number of different forms—recipes for menus, lists of clothes they wear, and accounts of stories and poems. Year 1 writes simple stories re-telling features of 'Little Red Riding Hood'. They are beginning to construct simple sentences, using appropriate grammar, vocabulary and spelling to express observations. The pupils in Year 2 use imaginative vocabulary while reviewing the books 'Tigger the Cat' and 'The Selfish Giant'. The focused and systematic teaching of literacy is evident in examples of extended writing, for example in history, geography and religious education, although this is an area still being developed. Spelling skills are developed progressively. Although the majority of the pupils' writing is neat and formed well, there are some instances of less well-presented work. By the end of Year 2 punctuation is becoming more accurate and words are often chosen carefully, especially by the higher-attaining pupils, as observed in a Year 1 lesson on identifying sentences and characters in a big book text.
97. At Year 6 all the pupils write for a range of purposes, for example play-scripts, instructions, reports, biographies and book reviews, as well as creative and descriptive passages. The pupils in Years 3 and 4 understand the use of tenses, metaphors, similes and adjectives. The skills of dialogue and paragraphing are developed steadily in Years 5 and 6, demonstrated effectively in a Year 6 word-processing letter-writing lesson. Pupils have opportunities to improve their work by drafting, editing, proofreading and then presenting the final form. The quality of creative and extended writing is continuing to improve and for many pupils reflects a good depth of reading experience. This was especially noticeable while reading some Year 5 work which referred to passages in the myth 'Daskow and Megdusa' when they wrote sentences such as, 'A door opened and a grey hand appeared. A cackle of laughter echoed from deep in the dungeon.' In Year 6 the pupils in studying passages from 'Macbeth' learn about personification and imagery, and begin to use these features. They learn how short sentences grasp the reader's attention and write accordingly, 'The coast is clear.' Such interpretations and their own subsequent written work reinforce in the pupils the importance of language as a means of communication. The same pupils include colourful analyses of character, and sensible and thoughtful writing when comparing 'Macbeth', the text, with the animated film of the same title. Pupils continue to learn how to spell more difficult words. Many have developed legible handwriting in a cursive, flowing style, using ink. However, there are still examples of untidy presentation by some pupils.
98. The pupils' attitudes are good overall and in many classes very good. This, combined with effective teaching, ensures that learning is good in all lessons. Pupils are generally well motivated, enthusiastic and eager to learn. The vast majority enjoys the activities. They show interest in what they do, sustain concentration well and most take pride in their work. Resources are handled with care and pupils are beginning to develop a capacity for personal study, as seen in a Year 4 lesson on identifying prepositions in the text of 'Snow Queen'. The pupils are well behaved and courteous, relate very well to adults and work well both independently and collaboratively when required.

99. Teaching is good overall throughout the school and includes instances of excellent and very good teaching. Key skills are taught very well, which makes a major contribution to the pupils' learning. The teachers generally make the most of spontaneity to develop language from the pupils' own interest, seen to very good effect in a Year 1 lesson on the use of punctuation and capital letters in sentences. The teachers introduce the pupils systematically to a wide range of writing, as observed in a Year 6 lesson about the use of 'official' language in business letters. Where teaching is outstanding, lessons are planned effectively, time is used well, and expectations are high. Instructions are clear and questioning is skilled in reviewing the pupils' prior knowledge and understanding, and challenging their thinking about a new topic. This was illustrated well in Years 1 and 4, using 'Chicken Licken' and 'Snow Queen' respectively to answer questions about plot and characters. The teachers' close liaison with learning support assistants has a positive impact on the quality of learning, as observed in a Year 4 lesson where the special educational needs co-ordinator invested valuable time in supporting a group working on sentence structure and letter sounds.
100. The co-ordinator is energetic, enthusiastic and manages the subject well. The curriculum is planned well, which ensures that good coverage and balance ensues. The policy and scheme of work reflect the requirements of the National Literacy Strategy. The planning is thorough and is reviewed regularly by the co-ordinator. Teaching and learning has been monitored in some classes with verbal and written feedback offered to teachers. A check is kept on the pupils' attainment and progress through the use of statutory tests at the end of Years 2 and 6, and optional tests in Years 3, 4 and 5, as well as other termly reading and spelling tests. The school analyses the results of these tests carefully and then sets appropriate targets for each year group. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The co-ordinator has clear ideas about the strengths and areas for development in the subject, and has introduced strategies to improve extended writing in the early years. The central library, which contains a wide range of non-fiction, is maintained and supervised well. Overall the co-ordinator promotes the subject keenly and is committed fully to raising standards even further.

MATHEMATICS

101. At the time of the previous inspection, attainment was above average at the end of Year 2 and in line with national expectation at the end of Year 6. The most recent results of 2002 present a different picture, reflecting the prior attainment of pupils on entry to the school. Standards at the end of Year 2 are below national expectation and low compared with similar schools. At the end of Year 6, standards are high compared to the national average, high compared to their prior attainment and well above similar schools. There are no significant differences in the standards of girls and boys.
102. There is a steady upward trend in results for pupils by the age of seven. Over the past three years they have moved from well below national expectation to the current Year 2 being in line. As pupils enter school with below average ability in mathematical development this represents good progress for the current Year 2. The current Year 6 pupils are on course to exceed the national expectation. Again, while these results are lower than in 2002 tests, this represents good progress based on their prior attainment. Overall, the majority of pupils, including pupils with special needs and English as an additional language make good progress. Higher-attaining pupils do well at seven and eleven. Year 1 and Year 5 are on course to be well above expectation. The current Years 3 and 4 while only at the national expectation, have made good progress from the test

results when they were seven. Some lower-attaining pupils have made very good progress in those two classes.

103. There have been a number of improvements since the time of the previous inspection. The national numeracy strategy is securely in place. Mathematics has been a major focus of the school improvement plan over the past two years. Staff have had extensive training in specific areas. The use of the beginning and end of lessons has improved. Pupils' oral and mental mathematics is also improving. This is having a clear impact on pupils' learning. The school has identified the need to increase pupils' opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge and is increasing pupils' opportunities to problem solve. A new published scheme has been adopted specifically to address this need. It provides regular opportunities for mathematical investigations and problem solving. As a result there is a better balance between the different aspects of mathematics.
104. At the end of Year 2 the majority of pupils can order whole numbers within 100. They can count forward and backwards in ones and tens from two-digit numbers. They understand that subtraction is the reverse of addition. They have appropriate understanding of measuring and weighing and can match flat and three-dimensional shapes.
105. The current Year 6 pupils have a very good grasp of place value. They use a range of mental methods to multiply and divide whole numbers up to 10,000, estimating accurately. They are learning to use addition and subtraction as inverse operations to check the accuracy of their answers. Most can use informal pencil and paper methods to record their calculations. Some opportunities are provided for pupils to problem solve.
106. Throughout the school, pupils respond very well to the teaching they receive. Pupils' attitudes are very positive, and behaviour is good. They generally co-operate well and use practical equipment sensibly.
107. As at the time of the previous inspection teaching is good. Teaching in Years 1 and 5 is very good. Generally in lessons, pace is good and teachers target questions well at different groups. Time is usually given at the end of lessons for pupils to reflect on their learning and discuss aspects that are difficult for them. Some teachers do not expect enough of pupils when they record their work. As a result some pupils have very untidy books. Generally the work is marked. However some pupils would benefit more from some helpful pointers as to how to improve their work. Currently pupils do not have individual or group targets. However the school has plans to introduce them. Currently the Year 5 teacher is trialling the use of 'I can' statements and personal targets. These are really helpful to pupils and would also give parents a clearer picture of how to help their children at home.
108. Staff have worked hard to make mathematics interesting and practical. Pupils in Year 1 and 2 build on from the very practical first hand experiences that children experience in nursery and reception. In an excellent lesson observed in Year 1, the pace was crisp, the questions focused and extension work provided for particularly able pupils. The teacher's excellent subject knowledge and exceptionally high expectations made the lesson really interesting and fun. As a result the pupils were enthusiastic and totally involved in their learning.

109. Pupils who use English as an additional language are given good support. For example while learning to move clockwise and anti-clockwise a group of Year two pupils made good progress. This was because some of the instructions were explained in Punjabi before they undertook their work. Pupils with special needs get good support although they do not have mathematical educational plans. Care is taken to include less confident pupils. Specific questions are used and these pupils are chosen to demonstrate their learning. In a Year 3 lesson the teacher had a clear picture of a group of less able pupils' learning needs. This is because the classroom assistant working with them kept a detailed booklet, which she shared during the lesson. Higher-attaining pupils are challenged well.
110. Scrutiny of pupils' books shows that the work is not always matched closely enough to the needs of different groups. While work is pitched at a good level, there is less evidence of work being modified to reflect differing ability and greater challenge or extension work. Work scrutiny shows that most pupils have regular homework. As there is not a progressive system across the school, some parents are unclear about how much homework their children should have.
111. Teachers build in opportunities for information and communication technology to support mathematics. In a very well planned Year 5 lesson (that had to be adapted) the teacher organised opportunities for pupils to use the web-site to work on three-dimensional shapes. Generally information and communication technology is used more with younger pupils. The co-ordinator has identified a need in her action plan to increase its use and the range of web-sites available to support mathematics. Teachers give pupils opportunities to extend their speaking skills by encouraging them to explain their thinking. In an effective lesson, Year 6 pupils were encouraged to use correct mathematical language. As a result most pupils used the term 'breadth' correctly when calculating the area of a compound shape.
112. The subject is well led by the co-ordinator. She has a good grasp of the priorities for the subject. She has observed teaching and learning and has an overview of planning. Currently she does not look at pupils' workbooks. The co-ordinator has an appropriate and effective plan for continuing to support mathematics, which remains a priority in the school development plan. The head and deputy analyse the school's results rigorously. They provide very good support in relation to staff training to help the co-ordinator achieve her subject priorities.

SCIENCE

113. Standards in science at the end of Year 2 are in line with the national average. At the end of Year 6, standards are above the national average. This judgement reverses the findings of the last inspection, which reported attainment above the national average at the end of Year 2 and in line at the end of Year 6. The range of abilities in different year groups and a high mobility rate are the main factors contributing to these variations. In the 2002 Year 2 teacher assessments, the results were comparable with those recorded nationally. In the National tests for Year 6 pupils in the same year, 100 per cent reached the expected level or above, which was well above the national average. Since the last inspection, the trend in the Year 6 National test results has been steadily upwards. A pleasing feature is the good factual knowledge and understanding that the pupils acquire and then apply successfully to set questions. Experimental and investigative work is developing.

114. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, make good progress throughout the school. They also achieve well due mostly to good overall teaching, positive attitudes and an eagerness to improve. By the end of Year 2 they know that light comes from a variety of sources including the sun. They explain in simple but accurate terms how force makes things speed up, slow down or change direction, as noted in part of a Year 2 lesson on programming a robotic toy. Higher-attaining pupils explain clearly the classification of materials, for example into wood, metal and plastic, and illustrate vividly how materials change when heated, cooled or have another substance added to them. They talk readily about seasonal changes and explain that sounds get fainter as the person travels away from the source, as noted in a Year 1 lesson on learning about vibration while plucking stringed instruments. Although pupils set up investigations and experiments, their knowledge and understanding of what constitutes a fair test is still underdeveloped as the opportunity for 'discovery' is limited by following set instructions.
115. At the end of Year 6 pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of scientific facts, including representation of series circuits in drawing and diagrams, and balanced and unbalanced forces. They use precise scientific names for the skeleton, major body organs and the function of the solar system, as noted during an analysis of a sample of Year 6 work. They discriminate successfully between solids, liquids and gases, and determine which changes are reversible and which are not, and what constitutes a soluble and insoluble substance. The majority knows the difference between conductors and resistors, and how these are useful in everyday life, noted in a Year 3 work sample. During experiments they begin to understand the process of filtration, as evidenced in a Year 5 display about separating mud from water. Creatures such as carnivores, herbivores and omnivores are classified accurately as pupils work on life processes and living things. The pupils in Year 6 know about the part played by evaporation, condensation and precipitation in the water cycle, and the reproduction process of humans and other animals. They learn to record their work in a variety of ways, including tables and graphs to represent their results. The pupils build well on their knowledge and understanding of science, as they get older. For example, in Year 1 the pupils examine and draw root systems of different plants and fruit in relation to healthy eating. This is developed further in Year 5 as the pupils study the life cycle of flowering plants and seed dispersal.
116. The pupils' attitudes to science are good, especially when they are motivated to sustain concentration. This was particularly noticeable in a Year 4 lesson on studying the habitats of woodlice. During the task the pupils, through discussion and activity, enjoyed predicting and then investigating the conditions, including damp, darkness and light, which suit these mini beasts. They listen well to the teacher and each other, and work purposefully both collaboratively and independently during lessons, as observed in a Year 5 lesson about the function of muscles in body movements. Most are eager to explain how and why they have carried out experiments, illustrated well in a Year 2 lesson about the effect of salt being added to ice cubes.
117. The quality of teaching throughout the school is good, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Specialist teaching of science is having a positive and significant impact on the standards achieved. Consistent planning helps the teachers to set up learning objectives for each lesson. When these are shared with pupils at the beginning of lessons and their success evaluated during and at the end of the lesson, then good progress ensues. For example, in a Year 5 lesson taught by the science specialist teacher the pupils had to predict which main muscle groups would be used in certain body movements

and at the end of the lesson the majority backed up their choices sensibly. Many of the teachers assess the pupils' responses well and target supplementary questions to extend their thinking, seen to good effect in a Year 1 lesson about sound. The best teaching combines problem solving, discussion and explanation, high expectations and the maintenance of good pace. This was demonstrated well in the Year 1 lesson and in the Years 4 and 5 lessons about habitats and human muscles respectively. In lessons where teaching is less effective, the pace slows and pupils' enthusiasm diminishes due to over-extended time on tasks. Assessment of day-to-day work is good overall. Marking is inconsistent. It is evaluative occasionally, which helps the pupils to see where they can improve.

118. The co-ordinator provides effective leadership in the promotion of the subject. The medium and short-term planning is detailed. It contains precise learning objectives and an effective assessment and recording system. The results of tests are analysed rigorously and form the basis for individual and class target-setting. Monitoring includes the moderation of pupils' work and lesson observations with written and verbal feedback to teachers. The co-ordinator reviews the teachers' plans on a regular basis and is kept up-to-date about current science 'thinking' by attending appropriate in-service courses. She organises a weekly science club affiliated to a national scheme, which awards grade merits to pupils reaching certain standards. Many pupils have received the bronze award. All these initiatives contribute positively to the quality of teaching and learning.

ART

119. At the end of Years 2 and 6, standards are above nationally expected levels. This is similar to the standards judged at the last inspection. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress. Progress overall is good. Work on display is stimulating and is often of a high standard, successfully demonstrating pupils' knowledge and experience of a wide range of different media. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils explored line, colour, tone, shape and movement whilst extending small reproductions from magazines. They used specific language well and with good understanding. They improved their pencil control and extended their knowledge of composition. Pupils in Year 2 recognised well-known paintings of Monet's garden and they discovered facts about the artist and how he painted. As a result of the good teaching they understood words such as 'reflection, daub, Impressionists and haystacks'. The class teacher brought the lesson alive by sharing photographs of her visit to the garden. Pupils asked her if she had met Monet and were intrigued to learn that he died about eighty years ago. They are developing good critical and observational skills. They went on to produce their own imaginative versions of drawn and painted landscapes inspired by their knowledge of Monet's work.
120. At the end of Year 6, pupils are more confident and use a range of media and equipment. Pupils in Year 4 consolidated their knowledge of the Egyptians and the afterlife. Having already made some super clay canopic jars they knew the background and purpose of Shabtis. They were enthralled and excited when the teacher brought in some examples made by a friend and quickly set about designing their own. They proceeded to mould these in clay and were quite able to describe why they were 'pulling' and 'moulding' the clay, and how they could join clay and use scaggffito techniques to decorate them. Their classroom displays show lots of carefully produced drawings of hieroglyphics, papyrus pictures and illustrated stories of Osiris. Pupils in Year 5 draw from still life and improve their first hand observational and recording skills, for example, they draw and design

textile appliqué tomatoes. In their art lesson they continued to work on their abstract cushion designs that they had enlarged from small drawings and had transferred onto fabric and applied dye. Other pupils drew and painted in limited colours to effect tonal work. Due to the excellent explanation by the teacher they were able to use specific terms confidently and talk about lighter and darker shades of the same colour and experimented mixing and blending colours. They looked at black and white reproductions and appreciated the tonal qualities and set about producing their own tonal interpretations.

121. There is good evidence that pupils modify and improve their work and undertake research. Pupils, in Year 6, study Picasso's weeping woman. Links with other subjects are particularly good; for example, the study of Tudor portraiture in Year 4. Information and communication technology is used very well to enhance their knowledge and understanding. Pupils in Year 2 use computers to produce beautiful pictures in the style of Mondrian. Pupils in Year 3 use computers to illustrate and support work, and Year 6 undertake research. Sketchbooks are used across the school for drawing, painting, recording and collecting creative ideas to support further work.
122. The quality of teaching and learning ranges from good to excellent. Teachers are secure in their knowledge and understanding of art. They enjoy art and the pupils benefit from specialist art teaching. Learning objectives are always shared with pupils and are reinforced throughout lessons. Expectations of what pupils can do are high, tasks are challenging and pupils are encouraged to be creative, explore and try out different ideas and media. Teachers use correct terminology and ensure that pupils use it too. Oral evaluation of work is a very good feature of all lessons and as a result pupils develop their critical skills well. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of art from different periods and cultures. In planning documents there is evidence for opportunities to study different cultures.
123. Pupils' attitudes are consistently very good. Pupils really enjoy art and are inspired by the very good and at times excellent teaching. Pupils are encouraged to use equipment safely, try out their ideas and take risks with their art work. Pupils work well together and help one another.
124. Leadership of the subject is very good. The co-ordinator has undertaken an audit of resources and she has adapted planning. The co-ordinator has an overview, but has not yet monitored teaching and learning. An excellent portfolio and photographic evidence is in place. These help teachers to moderate and compare good work. Resources are good. Art continues to have a high profile throughout the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

125. At the end of Years 2 and 6, standards in design and technology are in line with national expectations. This judgement is similar to that of the previous inspection. Evidence is based on one lesson observation, discussion with the pupils and their teachers, and an analysis of past and present work. The pupils' learning, including those with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, is satisfactory. When prior attainment is considered these pupils also achieve well, due to good planning and their own interest in the subject. The pupils' efforts are acknowledged by displaying the work from nearly all classes prominently throughout the school.

126. Pupils in Year 1 have designed and made a variety of scraping, hitting and plucking musical instruments using boxes, card, drinking straws and adhesives. By the end of Year 2 they have planned, designed and made pop-up Humpty Dumpty cards, using different materials such as wood and fabric and techniques including pushing, pulling and opening. The most able in the same year group have investigated how levers work, for example when they examine the function of nutcrackers, cork openers and how a model of a mechanical digger works. Such activities develop their manipulative and thinking skills well and also enhance numeracy when they are required to select tools and calculate measurements respectively.
127. Pupils in Year 3 have used a combination of wood, elastic, plastic and adhesive to design and construct a model catapult in conjunction with their study of Roman warfare. Evaluation processes were developed in Year 3 when pupils had to consider the role of angles in designing a stable structure prior to making picture frames. Technical skills included measuring, marking out, and shaping card and wood, and the choice of adhesives to combine components of the finished product. Pupils in Year 5 have sufficiently well-developed skills to design and make models of water-wheels. For this activity they use their knowledge and understanding of forces well while they select resilient materials and secure joining techniques to withstand the flow/force of water. Throughout the school there is little evidence of assembling or disassembling techniques being employed.
128. Overall the pupils' attitudes to work are good and they talk excitedly about the projects, which they have done. For example, a group of Year 6 pupils explained in detail how they planned, designed and eventually constructed a one metre high model clock tower from paper, using different geometric shapes, and then installed a mechanism to lower and raise a model mouse. They work together sensibly, sharing equipment, materials and tools, as observed in the Year 1 lesson on designing and making musical instruments. All are aware of health and safety requirements during all lessons including food technology. They sustain concentration and continually try to improve their work, as noted in the lesson observed.
129. The teaching in the Year 1 lesson observed was very good. It was planned very well, which allowed the work to be built sensibly on the skills that pupils had already acquired. As a result of well-chosen tasks and skilful questioning by the teacher the pupils' understanding of the steps required to complete set work was enhanced. For example, the pupils in this lesson, designing and selecting materials for musical instruments, probed by the teacher, continually evaluated their work and made suggestions for improvement. In the lesson, praise and encouragement were used very effectively, thus establishing self-esteem among these young pupils whose immediate response was to improve performance.
130. The co-ordinator provides satisfactory leadership and management, and is aware of the areas for development now being addressed. The policy is detailed and the scheme of work follows the national and local education authority's guidelines. Teachers' plans are monitored on a regular basis and the co-ordinator is always available to support colleagues. As a result of a recent audit she has introduced construction kits into all classes. The resources are adequate and are easily accessible to pupils, teachers and other adults.

GEOGRAPHY

131. Standards are above national expectations at the end of Years 2 and 6. This is an improvement from the previous inspection when both were in line. The majority of children, including pupils with special educational needs, pupils who use English as an additional language, and higher-attaining pupils make good progress.
132. Due to timetable arrangements only two lessons were observed. Therefore judgments about the standards, progress and teaching are also based on scrutiny of work and discussion with pupils. There have been a number of improvements since the time of the previous inspection. Standards are higher and pupils make better progress. As at the time of the previous inspection, teaching is good.
133. The planned curriculum develops geography skills progressively. Pupils in Year 2 have opportunities to develop and use their mapping in the local area and from Year 4 onwards, through residential experiences. Most of the planned geography work is undertaken in the spring and summer terms.
134. Work scrutiny shows that by the age of seven, pupils are covering the planned curriculum. Pupils in Year 2 have undertaken an in-depth study of Baldock based on a school trip. Most have retained a good amount of factual information. They can talk about the features of the local area. They understand and can explain the differences between a village and a town. They have some factual geographical understanding of features in Baldock and Letchworth. More care could be taken with presentation of pupils' work in their folders. While work is pitched at a good level, there is less evidence of work being modified to reflect differing ability.
135. The quality and depth of work covered in Year 3 is good. In a very well-taught lesson the teacher delivered the topic in an interesting way. She used good quality resources including maps and work sheets. Pupils had good factual knowledge. They knew that a ford is a river-crossing, with shallow water. From discussion they could give appropriate 'happy or sad' reasons why people might move or settle. The class teacher sensitively followed a train of thought by some pupils. They considered the difficulties that refugees might face in countries with wars, drought or famine. This contributed very well to pupils' appreciation of different places.
136. The history-based topics in Years 4, 5 and 6 also call on and allow pupils to develop and extend their geography skills. They study maps and identify key features, such as rivers, of different countries. Throughout their time at school there is a progressive build-up of skills. Research skills are well developed as pupils get regular opportunities to use texts, photos, and access information from the Internet. In a very well-taught Year 5 lesson, pupils used the Internet during their work on water conservation.
137. From discussion with Year 6 pupils, their speaking and listening skills are very well promoted. They enjoy discussing their learning. They can use a compass and ordnance survey maps. Pupils have secure understanding of some of the geographical features of Letchworth. Additionally many understand the significance of the road system and the difference between being a town or city. They understand some differences between living in a hamlet, village, town or city. They have good general knowledge and can name major rivers, oceans, cities and continents across the world.

138. A feature of the geography curriculum is the very good use that is made of the locality and residential experiences. This helps them learn, practise and consolidate their skills. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 all have residential experiences. These provide good opportunities to extend and practise mapping and orienteering skills. The planned curriculum makes a very good contribution to pupils' knowledge and understanding of different cultures and countries. For example, the in-depth studies of India and world environmental issues such as the rainforest.
139. Geography is well led. Since the previous inspection the policy and scheme have been updated. The co-ordinator has an overview of planning and has observed teaching and learning. However pupils' written work is not yet checked. Resources are good and include good quality maps, including a world map in the playground for informal exploration. Information and communication technology sites are being built up to match topics. Currently there is no assessment system in place.

HISTORY

140. Standards are above the national expectation at the end of Years 2 and 6. This is an improvement from the previous inspection when both were in line for their age. The majority of pupils, including those with special needs, those who use English as an additional language and higher-attaining pupils, make very good progress. Teaching overall is very good.
141. Due to timetable arrangements only two lessons were observed. Therefore judgments about the standards, progress and teaching are also based on scrutiny of work and discussion with pupils.
142. There are a number of improvements since the time of the previous inspection. Standards are higher. Pupils make better progress and teaching has improved. A scheme is now in place and the school has addressed the issue of lack of skills progression previously identified. The history curriculum delivered has many strengths. It is rich and stimulating. The teachers present it in a lively and interesting way. Very good use is made of local visits as starting points to topics. There are very good links with other subjects including geography, art and information and communication technology. Very good use is made of literacy skills.
143. Work scrutiny shows that at the end of Year 2, pupils have covered the planned curriculum through a range of practical experiences. Pupils in Year 1 build up a sense of history by learning about events and people in the past and present. When comparing and contrasting the lives of music composers such as Tchaikovsky and the Beatles. In a very good lesson, pupils made very good progress because the teaching was lively. They had access to a range of materials including photos, music albums and books to gain factual information.
144. Work scrutiny shows that pupils in Year 2 have undertaken an in-depth study of Baldock following a school trip. In this topic geography and history are incorporated well. There is a good body of factual information. Discussion with pupils shows that they enjoy history. Most have retained an impressive amount of factual information about their topic. They can talk about the lives of people in Baldock at different times in the past and some similarities and differences in travel, transport and housing now and then. However, pupils'

work folders tend to be untidy, as the teacher has not required pupils to take enough care with their work.

145. The quality and depth of work covered from Year 3 to Year 6 is impressive. Year 3 pupils had covered work on Anglo-Saxons and the Romans as part of their work on settlements. Year 4 pupils had learnt about the Tudors and Egyptians. Pupils in Year 5 studied Ancient Greece. Year 6 studied Victorian Britain and World War two. A strong feature throughout the school is very attractive displays. These demonstrate to pupils that their work is valued. Older pupils also produced very attractive folders for each topic. These really bring the subject to life.
146. While work is pitched at a good level, there is less evidence of work being modified to reflect differing ability. Some particularly able pupils could make even better progress if they had more challenge or extension work. There is good emphasis on developing research skills. Pupils are taught to use books, the Internet and artefacts (objects) to interpret information. For example pupils in Year 5 looked at images from Greek pottery and made decisions about everyday life. In a well-taught lesson they had to separate out what the Egyptians knew about, were not sure of and did not know. Pupils were very surprised that Egyptians did not know about tomatoes!
147. From discussion with Year 6 pupils, their speaking and listening skills are very well promoted. They are clearly enthusiastic about discussing their ideas. They have undertaken independent research as homework. They can reflect on the validity of factual information through primary and secondary sources. For example, they can interpret information from Victorian times concerning education, leisure, work and industry.
148. A strong feature of the way history is delivered is the links made with other subjects to bring the subject to life. Literacy and numeracy skills are reinforced and used well to develop historical understanding. Time is given to extended imaginative writing. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on the lives and experiences of people in the past. For example pupils in Year 6 wrote touchingly about life as servants in Victorian times and Year 3 wrote about their excitement and fear as Roman soldiers going to war. Pupils' artistic talents are well developed during their history projects and in turn enhance pupils' appreciation of events in history; for example, the Year 6 war pictures created in the style of Picasso's Guernica, and the very detailed Year 4 portraits of men and women in Tudor times. History makes a very good contribution to pupils' appreciation of people who live in different times and places. The extensive programme of visits furthers the children's imagination and cultural application.
149. History is well led. Since the previous inspection the policy has been updated and a scheme put in place that draws on the richness of local history. The co-ordinator has an overview of planning and has observed teaching and learning. However pupils' written work is not yet checked. Resources are very good and include high quality resources from the local education centre and the local area.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

150. Attainment in information and communication technology is above national expectations at the end of Years 2 and 6. This judgement is similar to that of the last inspection. The impetus for further improvement has been the recent installation of a new information and communication technology suite that has provided specific focus on the development of

pupils' computer skills. Inspection evidence indicates that the dedicated use of this facility is already having a positive impact on the pupils' attainment in all classes. The pupils, including those with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, make good progress overall. Achievement is also good, due mainly to confident teaching and pupils' enthusiasm.

151. A pleasing feature is the use of information and communication technology across other areas of the curriculum. For example, the pupils in Year 1 visit web-sites to access information about habitats during science. Pupils in Year 2 use programs to find out about the living habits of the luna moth, tarantulas and timber rattlesnakes. They use word-processing to type up simple sentences such as the school rules, and generate graphs about their favourite crisps. In Years 3 and 4 pupils combine text and appropriate graphics in poetry writing and animal stories. Pupils in Year 4 using a digital camera, photograph individual members of the class, input them to the computer and engage a mathematical programme to generate a human image graph relating to height.
152. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 learn mouse control and use the space bar, delete and arrow keys. Higher-attaining pupils use word-processing to write simple stories, and the majority calculates successfully simple addition and subtraction by following instructions. At the end of Year 2 they save, retrieve and print their own work. They also use click and drag skills effectively to create patterns and pictures, often incorporating colours.
153. At the end of Year 6, average and higher-attaining pupils are competent in a wide range of skills and are familiar with a variety of programmes. They combine text and pictures, working independently, using help sheets when necessary. Older pupils use the Internet to make multi-media presentations, as observed in part of a Year 5 lesson researching water as a non-chronological writing feature. Their ability to handle graphics to enhance writing is good, as noted in a Year 3 history display where the text about the Romans contained appropriate imported pictures and illustrations. The majority of pupils in Years 4 and 5 type, edit, align, save and retrieve work as well as changing colour, font and size. At the end of Year 6 most have a good knowledge of word-processing, handling data and using spreadsheets. Higher-attaining pupils highlight, change text, import pictures and place emphasis on layout. Pupils access and send emails routinely. All aspects of the information and communication technology programmes of study including control, modelling and the use of sensors are covered.
154. The pupils enjoy information and communication technology lessons and their attitudes are good. They talk enthusiastically about the subject and are eager to show what they can do, for example animate, compress and boomerang images, as noted in a Year 5 lesson. A high proportion of the pupils have computers at home and these are very happy to help their peers in class, observed in a Year 6 lesson where a pupil explained to his partner how to move a block of text. They are very well behaved and sustain concentration, well exemplified during a Year 2 lesson on using programmable robotic toys.
155. The teaching is good overall, with many very good features. The teachers have good subject knowledge and lessons have a clear focus on the skills being taught, with assessment continuous throughout lessons. For example, in a Year 3 lesson, pupils were encouraged to vary their questioning while trying to establish the residency and migratory habits of birds while using a database. Classes are managed effectively which ensures that the pupils experience appropriate handling and communicating of data over a range

of topics as, for example, in a Year 4 class using the decision tree model to answer questions and import pictures to a series of text boxes. The teachers are confident and through appropriate intervention ensure that the pupils are kept on task, as witnessed in a Year 6 lesson where they used a variety of programs to support their writing of an official 'thank you' letter.

156. The subject is led and managed very effectively by the headteacher who is an enthusiastic advocate. He provides very good support for colleagues, especially during lessons, and helps to raise their competence through in-service courses and helpful documents. The school policy is detailed and translated into practice as all pupils have equal access to all aspects of this subject, especially those that are skills based. He monitors teaching and learning on a regular basis and has built up a comprehensive portfolio of pupils' work that indicates the standards they have reached. Apart from the designated funding he has raised a considerable extra amount through his networking with the parent-teacher association and the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation. He ensures that the subject, while contributing to others, has a prominent profile throughout the school.

MUSIC

157. Standards are at least in line with nationally expected levels at the end of Year 2 and at the end of Year 6 they are above expected levels. Standards in singing and instrumental work are high and are strengths throughout the school. In assemblies, pupils thoroughly enjoy singing. The school choir is also very popular. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and higher-attaining pupils, make good progress. These are improvements since the last inspection.
158. Pupils have good opportunities to listen to music from different periods, for example pupils in Year 1 pupils study The Nutcracker Suite by Tchaikovsky. They can record graphic scores depicting high and low notes and understand that music can convey expression and mood. In a very good Year 1 lesson pupils recognised and explored ways in which sound could be made from different instruments such as scrapers, sleigh bells and tambourines. As a result of the very good questioning by the teacher they were able to make links with the Sri Lankan dancing they had watched previously and the ankle bells worn by the dancers. They described their own musical sounds, 'it sounds like a giant walking, or woodpeckers, it sounds like the rain and the wind.' They listened to each other carefully and started to identify simple repeat patterns. They used their knowledge well of the story 'Peace at Last' and made sounds that could accompany the sequence of events and main characters. Pupils in Year 2 performed the 'Pied Piper' in assembly to visiting parents and several played a variety of instruments to represent snow.
159. All pupils build on their repertoire of new and familiar songs and hymns. During hymn practice, pupils sang and mimed to the Spirit of God, Cross Over the Road and Down By the Riverside. They followed directions and sang most enthusiastically. Following the co-ordinator's comments they improved their voice projection and diction and as a result the quality of singing improved overall. Other pupils accompanied them playing classical guitar and recorders. Some of these pupils are very talented and the standard of performance high. During lunchtime, pupils played classical guitar to 'Three Ways To Go', and they showed they were most proficient performers.

160. Pupils experience a balance of practical music-making skills and techniques. They recognise long and short sounds and use and follow both graphic and standard symbols. They confidently perform, and when it is their turn to be the audience they are attentive and supportive. Pupils in Year 3 explored and recognised ways in which sounds could be combined expressively. Inspired by their knowledge of Saint-Saëns' 'Carnival of the Animals' they played together. They performed short pieces representing different animals, such as dolphins swimming and snakes and lions moving in the jungle. They played individually and as part of a group developing short simple rhythmic pieces. They organised themselves, improvised, followed directions and repeated musical patterns. Pupils listen to music from different periods, as in Year 4, pupils listen to and sing Tudor songs in costume during an educational visit. In a good Year 6 lesson, pupils developed their compositional skills using the words 'work shadowing'. In groups, they developed short compositions with increasing accuracy, using a range of instruments: recorders, tambourines, classical guitars and keyboards and together, they maintained their own part whilst performing with others. They explained and understood specific terms such as crescendo and diminuendo. They used graphic scores and standard notation to record their compositions.
161. Pupils' attitudes are consistently very good. Pupils really enjoy their music lessons, they are keen to play instruments and many enjoy the opportunities for performance. When working in pairs or groups they are considerate, wait their turn and handle instruments with care. Listening skills are well developed. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
162. The overall quality of teaching in music lessons ranges from very good to satisfactory. Teachers are confident and enthusiastic, and, as a result, they inspire pupils. Lessons are extremely well planned and learning objectives are shared with pupils and are reinforced throughout lessons. Teachers use very good questioning techniques to promote and consolidate further learning. Good opportunities are provided for pupils who wish to learn to play instruments. Peripatetic lessons are offered for brass and classical guitar and about 30 pupils receive lessons in school. The standard of tuition is very good. Pupils also have good opportunities to perform with other musicians. As part of the Letchworth city centenary celebrations the school has planned for over sixty pupils to take part in 'The big noise' in the summer term where they will make and play their own instruments.
163. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic and hard-working co-ordinator. She has a detailed action plan and recognises that opportunities for raising pupils' awareness of music from different cultures need to be formally planned in the curriculum. She also has plans to develop the use of information and communication technology within music. The co-ordinator has a good understanding of pupils' skills. Resources for the subject are good. Accommodation on occasion is not practical. For example, the acoustics in the old hall and in some classrooms are not helpful for instrumental work, and it is difficult for pupils to hear one another when playing in groups.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

164. Due to constraints on the timetable only three full lessons were observed. No secure overall judgment can be made about the standards pupils attain or about the overall quality of teaching and learning based on this limited evidence. However, evidence, including the extra-curricular activities and the award of the Active mark, indicates they are

at least in line with nationally expected levels. Swimming is not undertaken in this term. Records show that pupils generally reach at least the necessary standards.

165. In the lessons observed teaching was good in two lessons and satisfactory in the third. In all three lessons attainment was at least satisfactory. All pupils, including girls and boys, pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language made at least satisfactory progress.
166. There have been a number of improvements since the time of the previous inspection. The school has appointed an enthusiastic co-ordinator who has updated the policy and introduced two new schemes. The curriculum planning is good and ensures that the skills acquired are built upon. The school has recently been awarded the Activemark by sport England for its promotion of a healthy lifestyle through physical education.
167. Only one lesson was observed at the end of Year 2. In this dance lesson the teacher made good use of a commercial music tape. Pupils had plenty of opportunity to express their creativity. They listened carefully to the music and made their own suggestions while creating their own 'ripple and wave' movements. Most could plan and combine movements and many showed confidence. Pupils worked sensibly in pairs and used the hall space well. Pupils demonstrated standards above those expected for their age.
168. Pupils in Years 3 and 6 attain the expected standards for their age in gymnastics. Year three pupils can balance using different combinations. They can move smoothly from a medium, high or low position, demonstrating appropriate control. By Year 6, pupils can create and perform fluent sequences. They can keep to a beat and follow each other's actions. In a satisfactory lesson in Year 6, pupils put together a sequence of movements of increasing complexity. They enjoyed both demonstrating and then evaluating each other's performance. Pupils made satisfactory progress. However, some pupils could have made even better progress had more been expected of them and aspects of their performance extended further.
169. Pupils in Year 4 demonstrate satisfactory standards in their bowling and batting skills. In a well-taught lesson, pupils made good progress. This is because the teacher maintained a good pace and made good use of demonstration and questioning. As a result pupils made good gains in their technique. Pupils showed development in their control and co-ordination. The teacher had high expectations and that, together with frequent praise, ensured pupils played safely. Pupils showed real enthusiasm and enjoyed the challenge. Teachers have some effective strategies. For example, good attention is paid to the beginning and end of the lessons. Good links are made between health and exercise. Teachers make good use of questioning. This helps pupils extend their understanding of which tactics to use. Pupils are used effectively in all lessons to demonstrate skills. Pupils are encouraged to comment on each other's actions in positive ways. This helps them improve each other's performance.
170. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic and hard-working co-ordinator who has made many improvements to the subject in the time since she joined the school. She has a detailed action plan and a clear sense of direction to take the subject forward. She monitors lessons and co-ordinates a range of sporting events, making good links out of school. The school's system of using subject expertise means she teaches all classes on a regular basis. Therefore she has a good understanding of pupils' skills.

171. The school has an inclusive approach to developing pupils' sporting talents and interest. Care is taken to involve all pupils and some lessons are modified to include pupils who have physical disabilities. The school also ensures that pupils with particular talents are encouraged. Pupils are regularly put forward to try out for various sports at county level. Many pupils have above-average skills in sports. For example pupils have had good successes in football and netball at inter-school level.
172. A real strength is the range of sporting events and extra clubs that are available to pupils. These are well taught and are well attended. From discussion, pupils clearly enjoy the choice available. They like the opportunity to both compete and to participate as team members. Physical education (including the wide range of clubs) makes a significant contribution to the pupils' social development.
173. The resources provided for physical education are very good. The equipment is in good condition. There are two halls and the grounds also include an activity area and tunnel for further informal development of skills through play experiences. These are in regular use and are appreciated by the pupils.