

## INSPECTION REPORT

**St MARGARET CLITHEROW RC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Stevenage

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117474

Headteacher: Mrs G A Cartwright

Reporting inspector: Mr T Richardson  
16500

Dates of inspection: 19 – 22 May 2003

Inspection number: 247791

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior school

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 4 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Broadhall Way  
Stevenage  
Hertfordshire

Postcode: SG2 8RH

Telephone number: 01438 352863

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr R Lenthall

Date of previous inspection: November 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
16500	Mr T Richardson	Registered inspector	Foundation stage; science; art and design; music; special educational needs	How high are standards; how well are pupils taught; how well is the school led and managed
11575	Mrs C Fish	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; how well does the school care for its pupils; how well does the school work in partnership with parents
31838	Mr M Williams	Team inspector	Mathematics; information and communication technology; design and technology; educational inclusion; English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils
30457	Mr D Evans	Team inspector	English; geography; history; physical education	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Margaret Clitherow is a Roman Catholic, voluntary aided primary school of average size for pupils aged 4 to 11. There are 204 pupils in seven classes, with slightly more girls than boys. The school has a below average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (9 per cent) and no pupils with English as an additional language. Most of the pupils are of White British origin and 13 per cent of the pupils have special educational needs (mainly for speech, communication and learning difficulties), with one pupil having a Statement of Special Educational Needs. Pupils come to the school from three parishes in Stevenage and baseline assessment shows that children enter the reception class with attainment below the average for their age. Since the last inspection, the school has been in temporary accommodation and rebuilt, following total destruction in an arson attack. All the school's resources and documents have also had to be replaced.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

The school is very effective, and makes outstanding provision for the pupils' personal, moral and social development. Pupils show good achievement year on year in their academic and personal development and gain high levels of self-esteem and confidence. The good quality of teaching enables most pupils to develop an above average knowledge and understanding in most subjects. The excellent leadership in school promotes outstanding relationships and an ethos where every individual is valued. There is a genuine atmosphere of love and friendship throughout the school and all adults and pupils give of their best as a result. The school gives very good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Has an outstanding ethos of valuing the worth and achievement of every individual. As a result, all pupils are fully included and their needs are met very well.
- Pupils show good achievement and above average standards in most subjects. They also gain above average skills in speaking, listening, reasoning and independent investigation. This is due to the good start they receive in the reception class and the good quality of teaching provided throughout the school.
- The quality of leadership is exemplary. This leads to a very high level of teamwork and staff, pupils and governors having a full share in school improvement.
- There are very good procedures for evaluating what the school does well, and what could be improved. As a result, the school is continually taking effective action to improve and has an excellent capacity for further development.
- The school is a very harmonious community. As a result, pupils are happy, have very positive views of their school, form excellent relationships and consistently behave very well.

#### **What could be improved**

- Pupils' attainments in design and technology, physical education and information and communication technology are average, and not as high as in other subjects.
- The school's provision for preparing pupils for life in multi-cultural Britain is effective, but could be further improved.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in November 1997. Since then, the school has made outstanding improvement. The previous key issues have all been fully addressed and the school has done very much more to improve. The school has been relocated twice, completely rebuilt and restocked, all policies and

procedures have been re-defined and rewritten, standards have remained high, the quality of teaching and learning has improved, relationships and inclusion have developed to exemplary levels, and the quality of leadership provided by all members of the school community is now exceptional.

## STANDARDS

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

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

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

The 2002 results in mathematics for Year 6 were not as good as in previous years. Detailed analysis shows that, despite these low test scores, each pupil achieved well in mathematics, compared with how they had done in Year 2. In the 2002 national tests for Year 2, pupils' results were above average in reading, writing and mathematics and matched the average of similar schools. Inspection shows that standards are currently above average at the end of Years 2 and 6 in English, mathematics, science, art and design, geography, history, music and personal, social and health education. Pupils also show good achievement in all of these subjects. Standards are average in Years 2 and 6 in design and technology, information and communication technology, and physical education. Currently, the school is expected to meet the challenging targets it has set for 2003. Base-line assessment shows that children enter the reception class with below average attainment, especially in their communication, language, literacy and mathematical development. Children achieve well and almost every child is likely to meet the early learning goals in all their areas of development by the time they enter Year 1. Good achievement takes place in Years 1 and 2 with the majority of pupils gaining above average standards by the end of Year 2. In Years 3 to 6, there is good achievement, as standards remain above average and pupils successfully gain higher order thinking and reasoning skills, and develop their speaking and listening skills very well. Pupils use these skills very well in lessons and understand the principles behind what they are learning. Also, pupils show outstanding achievement in their personal development. This leads to high levels of self-esteem and confidence, with pupils learning successfully to value one another and give of their very best at all times.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils love coming to school and are enthusiastic about learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils respect one another and take responsibility for how they behave.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Everyone is shown respect and understanding. An atmosphere of genuine love and friendship pervades the school.
Attendance	Very good. Pupils are keen to be in school and there are no unauthorised absences.





## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching and learning is good and has improved since the last inspection. English and mathematics are taught well throughout the school, the national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been implemented very well, and good use is made of subject specialists to teach music and aspects of physical education. Examples of very good teaching were observed in every class. During the inspection, every lesson seen was at least satisfactory, with the best teaching observed in reception and Years 2, 5 and 6. The inspection findings match the school's own evaluations, and work to ensure a greater consistency in teaching quality between classes is already being effective. Teachers value the contributions made by pupils and this encourages the pupils to work hard and learn more. There is good teamwork between teachers and assistants and this means that pupils, particularly those with special educational needs, are supported very well in their learning. In particular, teachers promote the development of speaking, listening and thinking skills very well. As a result, pupils learn to research, enquire and investigate topics for themselves and gain independence as learners. This also leads to pupils recalling and applying their knowledge very well. The school's emphasis on individuals means that all pupils are included exceptionally well in lessons and school life. However, there are occasions when more use could be made of the end of lessons for pupils to evaluate what they have learnt more thoroughly and consider how to make improvements.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school provides a good range of learning opportunities and fulfils the requirements of the National Curriculum well. The commitment to ensure that each individual receives the best that the school can provide, is exemplary.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils receive support that is very well matched to their needs so that they achieve well over time.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. There is very good provision for spiritual development in subjects other than religious education. Provision for moral and social development is excellent. There is good provision for cultural development, but the effective preparation of pupils for life in multi-cultural Britain could be strengthened.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. There is a calm, welcoming and harmonious atmosphere. All the staff go out of their way to guide and nurture the pupils to help them mature. As a result, pupils are confident to get on with their learning and be involved in all the activities offered by the school.

The school has a very good partnership with its parents and pupils benefit in their learning from the very good support given at home by their parents.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher has an exceptionally clear vision and ethos for valuing every individual. This has brought the school through the trauma of rebuilding whilst keeping standards high and improvement continuing. Leadership is devolved throughout the school community and results in a high level of teamwork with everyone doing their utmost for the benefit of the pupils.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors play a full and active role in shaping school improvement and function very efficiently and effectively in the support they give to everyone in school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Everyone shares in school evaluation. As a result, staff and pupils are confident about what is done well, what should be improved and the action that needs to be taken.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The budget is linked very well to the school improvement plan and the principles of best value are applied very well at all times.

The school has a good number of staff, good accommodation, and is well resourced.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What some parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>children like school, make good progress, behave well and are keen to attend</li> <li>individuals are valued and respected. Children grow in confidence, with high self-esteem</li> <li>there is good teaching. Expectations for children are high and there is a good range of homework provided</li> <li>the school has good leadership and parents find the school to be approachable and amenable to suggestions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the range of activities provided outside of lessons</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with all the positive views of parents and judge that the school provides a good range of activities outside of lessons.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. Pupils' results in national tests in English, mathematics and science have remained at a similar level since 1997, while results in the rest of the nation have gone up. Inspectors judge that, during the long period of significant trauma and upheaval after the fire, the school has done very well indeed to maintain these standards for the pupils. Inspection shows that standards are now rising and pupils show good achievement in their academic development in the reception class, Years 1 and 2, and in Years 3 to 6. In addition, the school is promoting high standards in areas not measured by national tests and all pupils achieve very well in their speaking, listening, reasoning and independent research skills. Also, pupils show outstanding achievement in their personal development, in response to the school's emphasis on valuing the contribution of every individual. The outcomes of these additional achievements are seen in lessons where, for example, pupils clearly demonstrate they understand the principles behind their mathematical calculations, evaluate the relative merits of sources of historical information, and use their scientific knowledge to speculate about activities that may or may not be possible in space. Also, pupils show self-esteem, confidence, and value one another so that the school is a harmonious community, with exceptional relationships, that lead everyone to give of their very best at all times.
2. The results of national tests in 2002 show that the pupils in Year 2 were above the national average in their reading, writing and mathematics. These results also matched the average of other schools with similar numbers of pupils with free school meals. Teachers' assessments also show that Year 2 standards were above average in science. The pupils in Year 6 in 2002 attained results in English and science that were above the national average, and in-line with the average for similar schools. However, their results in mathematics were not as good as in previous years, below the national average, and well below the average for similar schools. Detailed analysis of the school's data shows that, despite these low test results, the pupils in Year 6 in 2002 each achieved well in mathematics, when their test scores were compared with how they had done in Year 2.
3. Inspectors judge that standards for the pupils currently in Year 2 are above the national average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Pupils currently in Year 6 are also showing standards above the national average in English, mathematics and science. Base-line assessment shows that children enter the reception class with attainment below average, especially in their communication, language, literacy and mathematical development. Good achievement is evident in the reception class, as almost every child is likely to meet the early learning goals in all their areas of development by the time they enter Year 1. Good achievement takes place in Years 1 and 2 with the majority of pupils developing from average attainment on entry to Year 1 to above average attainment by the end of Year 2. Direct comparison of academic results would suggest satisfactory achievement takes place in Years 3 to 6 as pupils remain at an above average level of attainment throughout these years. However, inspectors judge that good achievement takes place in Years 3 to 6 as pupils also learn higher order thinking and reasoning skills, and develop their speaking and listening skills very well. Analysis of school performance data in English and mathematics shows that teachers are accurate in their assessments of pupils and that a good rate of progress is sustained in reception, Years 1 and 2 and Years 5 and 6, with consolidation of learning and satisfactory rate of progress in Years 3 and 4.
4. Inspection shows that standards are above average at the end of Years 2 and 6 in English, mathematics, science, art and design, geography, history, music and personal, social and health education. Pupils also show good achievement in all of these subjects. The following features were identified by inspectors:
  - In English, pupils are expected to learn and use new vocabulary from an early age. They do this very well and can discuss their understanding in other subjects with accuracy and depth. Very strong emphasis is placed on pupils learning how to question information and use their reasoning skills to reach conclusions for themselves. Also, teachers provide plentiful opportunities for pupils to talk constructively with one another and develop and extend their

communication skills. The outcome of this is that pupils apply their reading, writing and communication skills very well in all subjects and become successful as independent learners, able to research and find out more for themselves.

- In mathematics, pupils are secure in their skills because they understand the mathematical principles involved and can apply their knowledge to real life situations. For example, Year 3 pupils knew that they were carrying out the same operations as a shop till by calculating the differences between cost and cash offered and this motivated them to work harder. The school's approach was also summed up by a pupil who enjoys learning mathematics because, 'we don't use textbooks, we do real things'.
  - In science, pupils use their vocabulary and writing skills well to record their observations accurately and draw effective conclusions from their experiments. Year 6 pupils were observed applying their scientific knowledge to life on the moon and most of them were clearly operating within the higher Level 5 in their reasoning skills and the application of their knowledge.
  - In art and design, pupils show specific skills in observational drawing and design, with some sketches in Year 6 being of a very high standard.
  - In geography and history, pupils apply their reasoning, thinking and research skills and gain a secure knowledge of the curriculum.
  - In music, pupils are responding well to the recent initiative to employ a specialist teacher and standards are rising quickly, with Year 3, for example, currently showing Level 4 skills in understanding musical notation.
  - In personal, social and health education, pupils in all years gain confidence, make very secure friendships and gain high levels of understanding of why they behave and act as they do, as well as realising the full implication of their actions on others. As a result, the school is fully inclusive and everyone knows how much their contribution is valued.
5. Standards are average in Years 2 and 6 in design and technology, information and communication technology, and physical education. The school has already identified these subjects as areas for improvement and has appropriately planned to address the following.
- In design and technology, pupils are not routinely evaluating their designs and models to improve the end product.
  - In information and communication technology, development has been restricted by the re-building of the school and the incompatibility of much of the hardware and software currently in use. Pupils are, therefore, insufficiently used to having computers as routine to aid their learning in all subjects.
  - In physical education, a small number of pupils with the potential for higher attainment are underachieving because expectations are insufficiently high for what they can do.
6. The school's very strong emphasis on every individual results in full inclusion, with all pupils tolerating and respecting any differences between them. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported by their teachers, assistants and by their friends in class. This leads to these pupils achieving well and being confident to play a full part in classroom life. Pupils of all ethnic origins and gender do equally as well. Pupils with higher attainment are generally challenged well, and those pupils with lower attainment are also supported well in their learning. The outcome is that parents are, rightly, pleased with the standards, achievement and personal development that the school gives to their children.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

7. The pupils' attendance, attitudes to school life, behaviour and maturity are all very good and help to create the atmosphere of genuine love and friendship that pervades the school. It has successfully built upon the good levels at the time of the last inspection. All the staff are very good role models for the pupils. The excellent relationships that form across the whole school underpin a community that is at ease with itself and where everyone is shown respect and understanding. These outcomes reflect the very good provision made for their spiritual, moral and social development.
8. The pupils love coming to school. Both the pupils and their parents say that they are very happy and really enjoy all the school has to offer. They talk enthusiastically about their lessons and what

they are learning. All pupils come in eagerly and settle quickly. The youngest pupils are encouraged to chat amongst themselves before settling to the day's activities. The older pupils are proud of what they do in school and take on responsibilities willingly. Although there is no school council, the pupils' views are taken into account through discussions and questionnaires.

9. The pupils' attitudes to their lessons are very good overall. There is little variation across the whole school, but attitudes are more consistently high in Reception and in Years 2, 5 and 6. These very positive attitudes are shown through high levels of concentration, confidence, enthusiasm and attention. For example, in a Year 6 English lesson, the pupils provided very clear responses to questions because they had paid very good attention. They concentrated very well because the lesson moved at a brisk pace and the story – 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe' - was very well chosen to engage and interest them. Similarly in a Year 2 mathematics lesson, the pupils were confident to contribute because of the very good relations with the class teacher, who used praise very well to build self-esteem and self-belief.
10. Parents are rightly very pleased with the behaviour of their children. Throughout the school day and in all different contexts, the pupils are very well behaved. All pupils are encouraged to be responsible for all aspects of their development, including their behaviour. They are expected to behave well and rise admirably to these very high expectations. Thus the school is a peaceful, calm and orderly community. Very occasionally there are pupils in school who experience particular difficulties with their behaviour; they are very well supported through promptly implemented and effective strategies. There have been no exclusions for a number of years. Nothing in the way of any harassment or bullying was observed during the inspection. When the pupils were asked about this, they assured us that if it happens and is reported to staff, swift and effective action is taken.
11. The pupils' personal development is excellent. They are kind, courteous and trustworthy. The very good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has a particularly positive effect on this aspect. For example, during the inspection an assembly for the younger pupils focused on working and playing well together; the pupils were very attentive and made thoughtful comments and suggestions when asked. The pupils are encouraged from the first to develop self-respect and an understanding of and respect for others. This means that they develop very close and supportive relationships. From a very early stage they listen carefully to each other. For example in a Reception literacy class, although the pupils were a little restless at the start of the day, it was very noticeable how well they listened to what others were saying. Throughout the school the pupils develop the skills of learning - listening carefully, researching and thinking widely – that will stand them in good stead in the future.
12. Relationships across the whole school are excellent. All the pupils spoken to talked very enthusiastically of the friendships they develop across the school amongst the other pupils and with the staff. The pupils really enjoy each other's company and play together extremely well. In lessons they work very well together, gaining much from the sharing and discussion of ideas and observations. This was well illustrated in a Year 4 science lesson where all pupils worked well in groups to explore the nature of sound. They were confident to carry out the experiments and to discuss their observations with each other. Year 6 pupils show initiative in 'bidding' to run clubs for pupils in Years 3 and 4.
13. Attendance at school is very good. The level is above the national average and there are no unauthorised absences. Most of the pupils arrive on time and the school day starts promptly.

#### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

14. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection and is good throughout the school. The main reason for this improvement is that the headteacher has successfully strengthened the ethos of the school with all staff working as a team and wanting to improve what they do. The quality of lesson delivery is now routinely monitored and evaluated as part of the performance management of teachers. Subject co-ordinators review and evaluate the provision in their subjects, and also work alongside other teachers to improve their classroom practice. The

national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been successfully introduced and the school has sought to strengthen areas, such as music and physical education, by employing external specialists. During the inspection, every lesson seen was at least satisfactory, and the work in pupils' books over the year confirms that, in almost every subject and class the quality of teaching is predominantly good. Inspection findings show consistent and good quality teaching in reception and Years 2, 5 and 6. Examples of very good teaching were observed in every class with some variability noted in the quality of teaching in Years 1, and 4. These inspection findings match the school's own evaluations and appropriate action and support is already helping to further develop and improve teaching and learning.

15. A major factor in the effectiveness of the school and the quality of pupils' learning is the way all adults value and respect one another, the pupils and their parents. In reception, the outcome of this is that children settle quickly into school life, feel cared for and safe, and enjoy learning and playing together with their friends. As pupils move through the school, they continue to have lessons that take place without stress or poor behaviour and enjoy learning because others give praise and celebrate their achievements. Every pupil knows that they are expected to give of their best, and this takes place successfully because all members of the school community visibly give their best to the pupils. Another key strength is the skill of teaching assistants and their teamwork with teachers. This leads to pupils being very well supported and lessons continuing at a fast pace. For example, in a history lesson in Year 2, the assistant recognised when the attention span of a pupil was being reached and took that pupil aside to discuss again, the main points of the lesson. As a result, the pupil continued learning while the rest of the class kept up the fast pace of their discussion with the teacher. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good quality additional support and guidance and inspectors noted how successful this is in keeping these pupils fully included in classroom life and learning.
16. A major strength in the quality of teaching is the way that all teachers promote speaking, listening, reasoning, research and independent study skills for the pupils. This begins with the ethos of the school for valuing every individual and pupils soon learn that their ideas and comments are respected. As a result, pupils are confident to say more and to try out ideas they may have during lessons. Teachers expect pupils to learn and use increasingly complex vocabulary, including technical terms, and the climate of acceptance encourages pupils to do this in lessons and learn from any mistakes as they include new words in their sentences. Pupils learn to listen carefully, because others listen carefully to them. Teachers often make a point of leading pupils to discover concepts for themselves through questions and practical activities. For example, in a science lesson for Year 4, the teacher consciously avoided instructing the pupils on the nature of sound and led them instead, through experiments and reasoned argument, so that they deduced that sound was vibration that travelled over distance. Teachers also expect pupils to find out information for themselves and this leads to pupils developing above average skills of investigation and being able to use their knowledge in realistic situations. For example, in mathematics in Year 6, pupils needed to practise the rules of number but did this by solving real issues with travel timetables rather than just copying out calculations. In a history lesson for Year 2, the teacher led a discussion extremely well so that the pupils worked out for themselves which sources of information were likely to be more valid. This led to the pupils being excited and eager to find out more about the fire of London and they researched extracts from Pepy's diaries with enthusiasm. The outcome of this emphasis on speaking, listening and independent learning is that pupils develop above average skills in these areas and are very well prepared for secondary education.
17. In the lessons seen that were judged to be very good or excellent, the following points were noted:
  - Pupils develop very good independent learning skills through practical activities. For example, in a history lesson for pupils in Year 5, the teacher made a reconstruction of an archaeological dig with sand trays and this led the pupils to work as a team to catalogue and draw conclusions from the evidence, then transfer these skills to their study of Greek pottery.
  - Where teachers set 'open ended' activities, pupils enjoy finding out as much as they can. For example, in a science lesson for Year 6, the teacher set the task of writing a brochure for a holiday on the moon. This led the pupils to discuss together, in depth, the scientific reasons why, for example, a barbecue would not be possible on the lunar surface. As a result, the

lesson 'buzzed' with new discovery and the pupils delighted in sharing their knowledge with one another and their teacher.

- Where teachers present lessons with clarity and logic, pupils quickly gain new knowledge and understanding. For example, in a literacy lesson for Year 2, the teacher clearly stated what pupils were expected to learn in the lesson. She then introduced the word 'adverb' as a verb with a little extra added (ad+verb). This led the pupils to realise that by adding 'ly' to a verb they too could make adverbs.
- Pupils respond very well when teachers have high expectations and are prepared for some 'risk taking' in lessons. For example, in a numeracy session for reception children, the teacher introduced a challenge for children to count in fours and took a calculated risk to extend this beyond a hundred. As a result, the children were excited to work with large numbers and learnt to begin counting again at one hundred and one.
- Where teachers have very good subject knowledge they can extend the learning for the pupils. For example, in a history lesson for Year 4, the teacher led a discussion on why Henry VIII wanted a son. The pupils took part with confidence and the teacher took the opportunity to extend their general knowledge by asking questions and drawing parallels between King Henry and our current royal family.
- Where teachers make learning fun, and lessons have a good pace, pupils learn very well. For example, in a literacy lesson for Year 1, the teacher used word games and alphabet songs and kept the pupils busy with brisk tasks and activities. As a result, the pupils thought the lesson was fun and were unaware of how much they were learning.
- Where teachers show pupils how to study, they use these skills well to find out more for themselves. For example, in a geography lesson for Year 3, the teacher encouraged the pupils to be detectives and look at pictures of different locations to compare and contrast features. As a result, the pupils worked hard to retrieve as much information as they could from a picture and very quickly deduced the reasons for the similarities and differences they found.

18. Literacy, numeracy and basic skills are all taught consistently well. The school has already identified, for each teacher the areas of teaching and learning that can be improved. However, there are occasions when more use could be made of the end of lessons for pupils to evaluate more thoroughly and improve on what they have learnt. This approach could also be used to raise standards further in design and technology and physical education.

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

19. The school provides a broad and well-balanced curriculum and a good range of learning opportunities to meet the needs of its pupils. It fulfils the requirements of the National Curriculum well. As a Church school it follows the diocesan requirements for religious education and this provision is inspected separately. The school's commitment to ensure that each individual receives the best that it can provide is exemplary.
20. Provision for pupils in the Foundation Stage is good. They follow a full curriculum, with well planned activities that successfully help every child to meet the early learning goals in all their areas of learning. For pupils from Reception to Year 6 there are policies and appropriate schemes of work in place for all subjects, providing clear and consistent guidance to teachers. The good curricular planning, based on these, ensures that pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding develop well. Owing largely to limitations in resources, information and communication technology (ICT) does not figure in pupils' learning in all subjects to the extent that it should. This is fully recognised in the school's development plan and already action is being taken to address this shortcoming. The school adapts the national literacy and numeracy strategies very well so that they have a very good impact on pupils' learning and achievement over the time that they are in school.
21. The range of extra-curricular activities to support pupils' studies is good. There is a varied programme of visitors and educational visits both in the locality and local community and further afield to enhance learning for example in history and geography and broaden pupils' experiences. There are trips to activity centres every two years which for example enhance pupils' ICT skills.

Current after school clubs include science and gardening clubs, art club, computer club, and the archive club supporting history. There is a good range of sports clubs which help to provide teams for the regular competitions and matches the school plays with a variety of schools, both Catholic and many others within the area.

22. Equality of access and opportunity for all girls and boys, including those with special educational needs and those pupils identified by the school as 'more able', is exemplary. This is provided by teaching methods and materials which allow everyone to contribute and feel included in lessons, and by the very good monitoring and support of pupils' academic progress and excellent procedures for monitoring and supporting their personal development. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum. Appropriate role models are provided within the school by all adults so that both girls and boys have suitable examples to follow.
23. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. All procedures are securely in place and meet requirements. The main strength lies in the involvement of all teachers and teaching assistants in support for pupils. The special educational needs co-ordinator plans programmes for each child that are carefully designed to help them succeed. These programmes are implemented through very good quality individual education plans and pupils are supported very effectively in lessons, or in small groups outside the classroom, dependent on their need. Pupils with Statements of Special Educational needs are supported very well and benefit from the expertise of teaching assistants.
24. There are no pupils who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The needs of any who would still benefit from closer support for communication are met well through the normal provision for English as a core subject, and especially through the consistent focus given to speaking and listening and to key vocabulary in all subjects.
25. Very good provision is made for pupils' personal, social, and health education. Some of this is undertaken through religious education but there is also in place an appropriate programme of discrete lessons for pupils in Years 3 to 6. The governing body has decided that sex education should be part of the curriculum, delivered largely through the science and religious education lessons but also through additional sessions particularly for pupils in Years 5 and 6. All these studies make a very strong contribution to pupils' understanding of their own development and also of the responsibilities of being a member of the wider community.
26. The school has good links with the local community, especially through the Church, and these strengthen the range of opportunities available to pupils. The school has received help and support for science, and resources for ICT, from a local company and another important local employer has helped reinstate the grounds to provide a beautiful and constructive learning environment. Parents, and grandparents too, who have expertise in various areas regularly contribute to school life for example by helping pupils read and by assisting in lessons such as ICT, art and design and technology. These contributions reflect the ethos of unity in which each individual has a valued part to play and in consequence encourage and motivate pupils to do well.
27. The school has good relationships both with other Catholic primary schools, the Catholic secondary school to which most pupils move at the end of Year 6, and also with many other schools in the locality. The transition from primary to secondary school is made smooth because of regular liaison and sharing of information between establishments. Pupils develop sporting and social skills through a good programme of competitions and matches. At present a file of correspondence records the visits of numerous teachers and educational professionals to the school and their appreciation of what they have observed. The school feels that this goes some way towards expressing its own gratitude for the generous support received from so many which helped pupils' education to continue in the aftermath of the fire.
28. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good overall. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. There are opportunities throughout the day for pupils to engage in prayer and reflection. The outcomes of the school's provision in Religious Education are evident in the pupils' responses, showing appreciation of other faiths and the need



for quiet and calm. Assemblies provide very good opportunities for pupils to share and consolidate their spirituality. There is good use of music in lessons to promote a reflective atmosphere.

29. There is excellent provision for pupils' moral development. All adults are very good role models and provide clear moral messages through their excellent relationships with pupils and their expectations of behaviour. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong, and the emphasis upon positive, supportive attitudes, consideration and respect for others is maintained throughout the school. The impact of this provision is seen strongly in the friendships of children and their high level of co-operation, negotiation and maturity in the way they build relationships and care for one another.
30. The provision for social development is excellent. A School Council is at present only in the planning stage but the operation of the house system already gives pupils a strong say in the running of the school. Thanks to high expectations and consistent examples, everyone learns to co-operate harmoniously and value the worth of all who contribute to the school community, whether within the school itself or when participating in residential and other visits. In consequence the school is a community at peace with itself, with evident love between everyone.
31. The provision for cultural development is good. There is very good provision for learning about western traditions for example through literature, music and art, and about the cultures of other countries for example through geography and Indian dance in PE; but preparation for life in multi-cultural Britain, whilst effective, is not yet to this high standard. The school has already recognised this and, using the expertise of its governing body, has begun to audit its current provision and make a systematic evaluation of the areas it needs to improve.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

32. The school creates a calm, welcoming and harmonious atmosphere in which the pupils are able to develop both academically and personally because they are very well cared for and supported. All the staff go out of their way to guide and nurture the pupils to help them mature. The pupils know that the staff are approachable and will take any concerns seriously if they have any. This means that they are confident to get on with their learning and involvement in all activities offered by the school.
33. The school takes very good care of its pupils. There are very good child protection procedures; the headteacher is well trained and all staff have regular in school training in this area. The site is safe and very well maintained; very good measures are in place to ensure the pupils' safety when in school or out on trips or visits. Those pupils with specific medical conditions are well known to staff and appropriate provision is made for their care. Supervision at playtimes and throughout the day is very good.
34. The school has very good procedures for promoting and monitoring the pupils' behaviour; these also include ways of dealing with any form of harassment. The involvement of all sections of the school community in drawing up the behaviour policy means that all parties are agreed about the rewards and sanctions and the principles on which they are based. It works very effectively with the whole ethos of the school – the need to develop respect for oneself and for others. There is very good provision whereby any issues that may arise are discussed in assemblies or in 'circle time' - where the pupils take turns to have their say. When needed, appropriate records are very well kept.
35. The procedures to support and monitor the pupils' personal development are excellent. Not only do all the staff know their pupils extremely well, but the very good procedures for monitoring and supporting academic progress also cover personal development. A parent who works in the school commented that 'no child here is ever forgotten' and this is very much the case. The school follows the progress of its pupils into secondary school and beyond. The headteacher is particularly keen to set in place any support needed to further any pupil's personal development at an early stage. This helps to ensure the transfer to secondary school is smooth and effective – she also will often follow up on pupils who have had specific difficulties to see how they are doing.

36. Procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress are now very good. At the time of the last inspection, although the school's assessment procedures were judged to be satisfactory, it was felt that the school had not adopted a consistent approach to record keeping. Inspection evidence now shows that very effective improvements have been made to the assessment system. The school has very successfully introduced individual target setting for each pupil in English and mathematics, with detailed records of pupils' individual attainment passed from one teacher to another as the pupil progresses through the school. Assessment procedures in other subjects are generally based upon the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's schemes of work. The school uses a range of assessment tests to help judge pupils' standards and achievement, including baseline assessment, national tests at Year 2 and optional tests to gauge pupils' progress by Year 6. The results of assessments are used to identify which pupils would benefit from being given additional support through various booster groups and by the use of intervention programmes. The school also maintains a detailed register of more able pupils and actively seeks to meet these pupils' individual needs.
37. The use of assessment to guide curricular planning is good in English and mathematics. The process has been improved greatly since the last inspection and the evidence collected now provides a more precise insight into the development of each pupil. Although teachers generally plan their activities well and ensure that work is well matched to pupils' needs, the school recognizes that the use of assessment information to guide curricular planning in most of the foundation subjects is at an early stage of development. Marking is regular and of good quality in most subject areas. The assessment coordinator has worked well to formalize the assessment system and to identify current strengths and future areas for improvement.
38. Attendance is very well promoted and monitored. Registers are marked accurately so the school is well aware of who is on site. Parents generally inform the school promptly of any absences; the school and the head teacher know where there are the occasional concerns and follow up on these absences very effectively.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

39. The school has a very strong and supportive relationship with its parents. A very good proportion responded to the inspection questionnaire or attended the meeting with inspectors. These, together with discussions with parents during the inspection, show that they have very positive views of the school. They are particularly pleased that their children like school and are keen to attend. They consider that their children make good progress because the teaching is good, with high expectations set for them. Parents are particularly pleased that their children grow in confidence and develop high levels of self-esteem. This is because they feel that their children are valued and respected as individuals. Almost all parents consider that the school is well led and managed and that it is approachable, takes concerns seriously and is amenable to suggestions. These are particularly important in developing good relations. All these positive comments were fully endorsed during the inspection. The only area of concern was the range of activities provided outside of lessons. A fifth of parents indicated that there could be improvement in this area. However, inspection findings are that provision is good. Overall these very positive views shows that the school enjoys the confidence of all sections of the communities from which its pupils are drawn.
40. One of the reasons that the parents have confidence in the school is the very good links established with them through the provision of very high quality information. The governors' annual report to parents and the prospectus both provide very clear and helpful information. Newsletters sent each half term keep the parents up to date with the day-to-day information they need; other letters are sent out as needed. These include a letter at the start of the year that very clearly outlines the expectations and what each year group will cover. Most parents appreciate the annual report on their children because they consider them to be honest with no surprises. Inspection findings are that reports are very good because they cover all subjects, give clear details of what the pupils can do, comment upon the effort and achievement made, set some targets and give a refreshingly honest assessment of how the pupil is doing overall. Worthy of particular praise is the

comment upon homework and the reminders, where necessary, of the importance of support from home. Reports are supplemented by face-to-face meetings throughout the year, which most parents attend. The headteacher monitors the attendance of parents and encourages those unable to attend to come in to school at another time.

41. Parents make a very good contribution to the school and their work has a very positive impact on their children's learning. Reports show that most parents support their children's homework - an unusually high percentage of responses to the questionnaire (92 per cent) indicates that the amount of homework is about right. All parents have signed the home school agreement, setting out clearly the help and support they will give the school. The parent teacher association is very active, with a very good number of parents regularly involved in its running. It organises an interesting and varied range of events and activities for parents and children and annually raises impressive amounts of money, often for specific projects such as the junior playground equipment. Other evidence of the impact of the enhanced resources provided by parents' efforts, such as books, can be seen all round the school. Parents are very effectively involved in and consulted about any changes in school, for example, the move to an earlier start to the day and the provision of sex education. An impressive number of parents and grandparents come in to school to help in the classrooms, and also with small group activities such as cooking (food technology).

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

42. The headteacher and key staff provide excellent leadership for the school based on an exceptionally clear vision and ethos of valuing the worth and contribution of every individual. This leads directly to excellent relationships in school, with an atmosphere of genuine love and friendship, where all pupils and adults want to give of their best. The quality of leadership has a strong impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning which, in turn, is leading directly to higher standards and good achievement for the pupils. This vision and ethos has sustained everyone through the significant trauma of rebuilding and restocking the school following a major fire, as well as time spent in temporary accommodation. Throughout this period, standards remained constant and are now rising as stability returns to school life. The headteacher has used this opportunity very well indeed for re-defining the direction of the school and making sure that all policies, the curriculum and schemes of work were re-written to reflect the school's ethos. As a result, the school's aims and policy statements are seen in action in every class and at all times. In addition, the headteacher has developed very good procedures for evaluating what the school does well and what could be improved. All staff, governors, pupils and parents are involved in aspects of this work and the outcome is that everyone is clear and confident about their strengths and know exactly what it is they need to work at improving. As a result, action is continually being taken to improve all aspects of school life.
- Governors and senior managers have a very good strategic view for how the school should develop and are directing their efforts very well to making this happen.
  - Very good targets are set for school improvement and these are usually met.
  - All staff contribute to evaluating how well school improvements have been carried out and help to decide what should be worked on next.
  - Very good procedures for performance management are showing benefit in teachers working hard to improve what they do.
  - Subject co-ordinators are implementing relevant improvements to the provision for their subjects following their own self-review.
  - Teachers and assistants reflect daily on what worked well in lessons and what could be improved next time.
  - There are high levels of teamwork between everyone in school that enable strengths to be praised and supportive criticism to be received and acted upon.
  - Pupils know what they do well and work hard to meet their very clear targets in English and mathematics and enjoy gaining knowledge in all other subjects.
43. Since the last inspection, the school has made outstanding improvement. The key issues identified by inspectors in 1997 have all been fully addressed and the school has done very much more to improve. The high level of teamwork, and the way that leadership has been devolved, means that everyone in school shares a responsibility for recognising what works well and what

needs improvement. This leads to staff wanting to give of their best and, in turn, to pupils feeling the same. As a result, the school has an outstanding capacity to keep improving and be successful in its development work. The governing body is of very good quality and fully aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors play a full and active role in shaping the direction for development and function very efficiently and effectively in the support they give to everyone in school. Since the last inspection, some difficult decisions on building and staffing have had to be made and these have been faced successfully by the headteacher and governors, with determination to do what is best for the children. This continues to be the driving force for the governors and all staff and this desire to do the best for children motivates all the adults who work in the school or take part in classroom life.

44. School procedures and routines are managed very well so that day-to-day operations all function smoothly. The administration staff work hard and successfully provide a warm welcome for visitors to the school, as well as efficiently completing their tasks. More use could be made of new technology, however, for their routine operations. The headteacher is striving to reduce the workload for teachers, and everyone in school is being actively encouraged to suggest how routine tasks could be made more efficient. Continuing professional development is encouraged very well for all staff and influenced by the outcomes of performance management as well as the priorities in the very good school improvement plan. Adults are also perceived as learners in school and this influences the pupils to value learning as part of their life. The school is also carrying out the initial training of teachers very well and actively encouraging talented teaching assistants to gain qualifications that may lead towards qualified teacher status.
45. Governors and senior managers make very good strategic use of resources, specific grants and other funds (such as those raised by the parent teacher association) and all monies are used wisely for the benefit of the pupils. In all its dealings, the school applies the principles of best value very well and gives very good value for money. The school building is attractive and of good quality. It is very well cared for and the pupils show a clear pride and respect for their environment. The school has good resources for learning and subject co-ordinators successfully make sure that pupils have sufficient equipment, of the right quality, to aid their learning in each subject. The one shortfall is, currently, the supply of compatible computers and software but plans are already being implemented to address this.
46. A significant outcome of the headteacher's excellent leadership in school is happiness. Teachers and assistants enjoy their work, meal-time staff and caterers are pleased to do their best for the children, the site manager gives willingly of his time and effort and, most of all, the pupils are happy in their learning.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

47. The governors, senior managers and staff should now:

- Continue to improve the provision and raise standards in information and communication technology, design and technology and physical education (paragraphs 5, 18, 77-81, 91-96, 101-106)\*
- Prepare pupils more fully for their life in multi-cultural Britain (paragraph 31)\*

\*These areas have already been identified by the school for improvement and are currently being acted upon as part of the school improvement plan.

48. Minor issues:

The school should also consider further improvements to the procedures for assessment in subjects other than English and mathematics. (paragraph 37)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	50
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	34

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	16	25	8	0	0	0
Percentage	2	32	50	16	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 two percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	204
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	18

FTE means full-time equivalent.

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	27

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.7
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	11	19	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	8	8	10
	Girls	19	19	18
	Total	27	27	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (97)	90 (97)	93 (97)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	8	9	10
	Girls	19	18	19
	Total	27	27	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (97)	90 (97)	97 (97)
	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	14	28

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	8	11
	Girls	12	10	13
	Total	24	18	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	86 (78)	64 (81)	86 (100)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	12	11
	Girls	12	11	13
	Total	24	23	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	86 (85)	82 (85)	86 (100)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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



**Ethnic background of pupils**

**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	137	0	0
White – Irish	7	0	0
White – any other White background	11	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	3	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

**Teachers and classes**

**Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	27.9
Average class size	29.1

**Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	155

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Financial information**

Financial year	2001/2002
	£
Total income	459,554
Total expenditure	474,746
Expenditure per pupil	2,327
Balance brought forward from previous year	35,791
Balance carried forward to next year	20,599

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3.4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Results of the survey of parents and carers**

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	204
Number of questionnaires returned	93

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	81	15	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	71	23	3	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	75	23	1	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	54	38	5	1	1
The teaching is good.	73	23	2	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	63	26	6	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	81	14	3	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	80	19	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	63	31	4	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	81	16	2	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	74	23	0	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	33	18	2	8

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

**AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

49. The reception class gives children a good start to their education. The attainment of the children is generally below average when they begin, and this is particularly evident in their language and mathematical skills. During their time in reception, children show good achievement and quickly catch up, so that, by the time they enter Year 1, almost every child is meeting the early learning goals in all the areas of their development. This is because the quality of teaching is consistently good, the children feel happy and secure, there are very good relationships, and the children are provided with interesting activities. The teacher and assistant work well together as a team and praise and value what the children say and do. This makes the children keen to learn and to want to do well and they enter Year 1 with good motivation and ability to think, discuss and play a full part in school life. Since the last inspection, the quality of the provision has been maintained and developed, whilst relocating and rebuilding the school. This is a very good achievement, and the school is now in an advanced stage of planning to provide a nursery.

**Personal, social and emotional development**

50. The teacher and assistant make good use of regular routines so that children know what to do and this helps them to grow in confidence. For example, the children knew that first thing in the morning they had to find their name card and place it on a chart to show they were present. This led to children helping one another to recognise their name and to be pleased to see if their friends had arrived yet. This routine was extended so that, when a child wanted to play outside, the name card was placed on a space by the door. Children quickly learn, for example, to wash their hands after 'messy' activities and to tidy away carefully so that they can enjoy the toys next time they come out. During more formal sessions, children sit and listen carefully to their teachers, then cooperate well with one another when 'working'. Adults encourage and expect the children to learn to do things for themselves so that after a physical education lesson, for example, the children dressed with the minimum of adult help. Children develop well socially and emotionally so that they want to play together and really enjoy the friendship and company of their classmates. This is because the teachers create a welcoming and happy atmosphere and talk with the children about their own emotions, and the feelings of others.

**Communication, language and literacy**

51. There is a good emphasis on children developing their communication, language and literacy skills. Teachers take every opportunity to help children recognise words and also to improve their vocabulary and conversation skills. For example, while children were changing after physical education, the teacher used the letter chart on the wall for children to sing a rhyme about each letter and to also place letter cards in the correct alphabetical order. The children thought this was fun and did not realise how much they were learning. Children are provided with good opportunities to talk to one another and to listen and value what others say. As a result, the children are confident to tell the class what they have learnt and what they have done. The teacher involves children and parents well by sending a teddy bear home with a different child each day and sharing the diary of his adventures the next day. Parents contribute well to this diary so that the children are eager to find out what teddy has done and the 'host' is pleased to talk to the others about his experiences. Teachers use books well so that children enjoy listening to stories and want to look at the text for themselves. During the inspection, the children learnt about 'information' books and tried hard to use the term 'non-fiction' to describe them, as well as knowing that these books could be found in the class, school and town libraries. Children are keen to write and enjoy the routine of having a class post box that is opened each day at 3.00pm. As a result, they write letters to one another, copying names and words from wall displays, to post them for discovery later in the day. Teachers also keep reminding the children about writing conventions and, as a result, most of the children know that a sentence ends with 'a dot' and can also write common words such as 'in' and 'the' without help.



### **Mathematical development**

52. Children show joy in learning and discovering more about numbers. This is because the teachers have high expectations and provide challenges that excite the children and take them to new levels of learning. For example, in a lesson seen, the children were sitting and counting round the circle in turn. The teacher introduced a challenge of each child counting on four. As numbers became larger, the children helped and corrected one another over boundaries such as 59 to 60 and became excited that they may pass 100. When this happened, all the children gave 101 as the next number and listened very attentively as the numbers rose to 110. Children are also keen to investigate and find ways for themselves of recording what they find out. For example, children were asked to estimate how many beads they could hold in their left hand, and whether this would be the same as in their right hand. As children took turns and counted their beads, others revised their estimates and also wrote the number of beads held on their paper at the left or right side to match their hands. These numerals were often reversed, but recognisable, and the children could see the purpose of recording their findings.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

53. Children are interested in their environment and want to find out more. This is because the teachers stimulate their interest through meaningful activities. For example, after a visitor had talked with the children about his life on a house-boat, a group at a time played with a plastic lock mechanism in the water and were interested to see how water levels could be controlled. Other groups made origami boats and tested them to see how many play people they could hold before sinking. The teacher then followed this with a story about 'Who sunk the boat' and all the children showed appreciation that the weight of the mouse in the story, when added to the boat, would be sufficient to sink it. The children enjoy finding out information from books and through their own observations. For example, the teacher brought snails into class and the children watched them carefully, then looked at and discussed the pictures of snails in reference books. As a result, the children were able to recall and tell others the next day what they had learnt about snails. Children are familiar with technology and show the skills expected for their age, for example, in controlling items on a computer screen with a mouse. They use tape recorders and headphones effectively and use these to listen to the story tapes provided.

### **Physical development**

54. Children use pencils and scissors with the skills expected for their age as a result of regular practise at colouring and cutting shapes. The opportunities provided by teachers for the children to develop their letter and numeral formation also promote successful development of fine control. Good use is made of the outdoor play area for children to run, climb and use wheeled toys. In addition, teachers use the school hall effectively for the children to use large apparatus. In a session observed, the children were giving a lot of effort to balancing, climbing and jumping off apparatus and were confident to demonstrate to the class how well they could jump and land. The children also showed a good awareness of the safety implications of their actions and waited their turn at equipment and made sure everyone had sufficient space for their activity.

### **Creative development**

55. Wall displays show that the children paint and draw as expected for their age. They have an appropriate repertoire of songs and rhymes and sing with a reasonable sense of melody. Children enjoy using the computer to create and colour pictures and choose their colours and shapes with care. Good opportunities are provided for children to pretend and take part in imaginative play. This is encouraged by the way adults value the children's ideas and extend their thinking. As a result, the children talk to one another as they play and develop their roles, whilst also extending their skills in conversation.

## ENGLISH

56. Standards in English are above average by the end of Years 2 and 6. In national tests at the end of Year 2, pupils' attainments in reading and writing have been above the national average for the last three years. The performance of pupils at the end of Year 6 has also exceeded the national average for the last three years. Achievement in Years 1 and 2 is good, with pupils making consistently good progress in lessons. Achievement is also good in Years 3 to 6, and this is because pupils develop higher-order speaking, listening and investigative skills in addition to improving their ability to read and write. They learn to apply these extra skills very well and use them to reason and develop their concepts in a wide range of other subjects.
57. Pupils' attainments in speaking and listening are above average by the end of Year 2 and well above average by the end of Year 6. Pupils respond well to the opportunities provided in lessons and speak with lively interest. They engage very well in whole-class discussions and when explaining their topics of study to visitors. Pupils listen intently to each other when working in pairs and small groups, unravelling their tasks methodically and comparing ideas in an independent, pensive way. Pupils of all abilities are confident, fluent and have a very well developed vocabulary. They are able to pose their own questions and they give considered, lucid and detailed explanations. They are not afraid to challenge their own initial responses and to weigh the merits of different interpretations. Pupils in one exuberant Year 2 lesson were very inventive when asked by their teacher to produce 'tongue twisters'. In Year 6, pupils talked animatedly in groups about their recent studies in school. Lower-attaining pupils are confident and secure enough in their views to challenge the opinions of the higher attainers. Cheerful, constructive and rigorous discussions are part of the natural order in classrooms throughout the school, and pupils are actively encouraged to challenge the opinions of one another, as well as those of their teachers. Pupils are able to use language persuasively in role play and they enjoy taking the 'hot seat' in all manner of subject discussions. A predominant feature of school life is the way in which pupils are willing to apply higher-order speaking, listening and deductive skills to explore and penetrate the concepts and methods of many different kinds of subjects.
58. Attainment in reading is above average throughout the school. By the end of Year 2, all pupils are reading independently and are able to extract information easily from books. Higher-attaining pupils read fluently from more demanding texts and display good understanding. They have extensive vocabularies. For example, one pupil explained that 'alternatives means other kinds of things you can do'. Pupils soon learn the skills of working out new words at an early stage and they apply the methods taught quite systematically. They progress quickly from reading simple stories to reading longer and more challenging books. Pupils enjoy poetry and they use rhyming words to great effect. They take their reading books home regularly and parents support their children's reading well. By the end of Year 6, pupils of all abilities and ages select texts and reference materials from the well-positioned library, which is amply resourced and meticulously organized. All pupils treat the library stock and their class books with a rare degree of respect and maturity. Pupils know how to use wordbooks, dictionaries and thesauri. They are particularly adept at burrowing through research and reference texts in a range of subjects across the school. Lower-attaining pupils, and especially those with special educational needs, benefit greatly from the structured and sensitive support they receive in individual and group sessions. They clearly value the opportunities to work with a teaching assistant on specific programmes, which are designed to meet their learning needs. Every opportunity is taken to extend pupils' reading abilities, especially when they participate in educational visits. This was observed during the inspection when Year 6 pupils enthusiastically and methodically prepared for their history day school in Stevenage museum.
59. Attainment in writing is above average. By the end of Year 2, higher attaining pupils write with increasing accuracy and fluency, employing variations in sentences. Pupils of all abilities achieve well over the year in the accuracy of their punctuation and spelling, letter formation and handwriting. Pupils write for a range of purposes and for subjects such as science, geography and history. Year 1 pupils write poetically about their playground, 'In our playground, children run, they skip, we all have lots of fun, in our playground.' By the end of Year 6, high-attaining and average pupils write elegantly and persuasively for a range of purposes including narratives, interviews and

for journalistic outlets. In the summer term the enterprising Year 6 pupils organize and run clubs for pupils in Years 3 and 4. They carefully prepare application letters, outlining their business propositions in meticulous detail, and skilfully craft their advertisements in such a way as to attract as many younger pupils to their clubs as possible. They learn at an early age to adapt their language and styles well for particular genres. For example, one pupil writes merrily of winter snow: 'I am a snowman, I used to be a pile of bright white snow, but now I know I'm a snowman glistening in the stifling sun.' Lower-attaining pupils write with cheerful expression and a growing sense of confidence, adapting their forms and styles for different purposes. By the end of Year 6, pupils have developed a clear, legible style of handwriting and their workbooks and projects are neat and clearly presented. Across the school, pupils' attitudes towards the subject are very good. They behave very well and show great interest and motivation towards their writing. They are quietly proud of their written work and want to continue to improve their writing styles. A particular strength is the way they listen to and read each other's writing with enjoyment and appreciation and they give each other genuine praise, constructive criticism and encouragement.

60. The quality of teaching and learning is good, with several examples of very good teaching throughout the school. Where the teaching is very good: there are very good preparations to meet the needs of all pupils in the class; the teachers have high expectations of their pupils; there is a variety of teaching methods to challenge all the pupils; the pace of learning is brisk; finally, the assessment information which has been collated is used very effectively to inform teachers' planning. Teachers possess very good knowledge of how to teach English and they are particularly effective when teaching basic skills. A strength in the teaching of English is the emphasis that teachers place on the importance of developing higher-order speaking, listening and investigative skills. Throughout the school they are very good at promoting these higher-order skills in many other subjects such as science, history and geography. There are many occasions when pupils are given opportunities to consolidate or extend their reading and writing skills across the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well, both in class and in groups, and teaching assistants provide good quality support. However, although teachers strive to ensure that pupils understand how well they are doing, the last parts of lessons are not consistently used well to review learning and to indicate the steps for improvement. Marking is applied well, but it does not always show pupils how they could improve their work. Homework is generally used well to help pupils consolidate their learning.
61. There has been very good improvement in the subject since the last inspection. The subject is well led and the co-ordinators ensure, with an infectious enthusiasm, that staff have a clear, shared commitment to improving standards in their work. Teachers are very well supported by good resources which are available to help them provide variety in their teaching. The subject has been well monitored and good use has been made of data in the identification of areas for improvement. Results have been scrutinized for differences between, for example, boys and girls. The National Literacy Strategy has been fully implemented and a number of additional initiatives have been successfully introduced to raise standards in literacy. The assessment of pupils' progress is now very good. Particular strengths include the use of pupils' records to track the progress in different aspects of literacy. Although the use of assessment information to inform curriculum planning and pupils' learning is not fully consistent across the school, pupils' attainment is above average and this is because the teaching is good throughout the school and the teachers promote pupils' higher-order skills very well. Information and communication technology is used soundly to encourage pupils to word process their written work and to research for information on a variety of topics. The school recognizes, however, that it is not used well enough to support pupils' learning in literacy. English however makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## **MATHEMATICS**

62. The national test results for 2002 were not as high as in other years. Inspection shows that this has now been reversed and last year's results in part reflected the upheaval caused by relocation as well as reflecting the ability in mathematics of the particular cohort of pupils. Although the results for the pupils in Year 6 in 2002 were below average, school data indicates that these pupils achieved well in relation to their prior learning. In work seen during the inspection, standards now



are above average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, matching the broad trend of previous years. The well-structured implementation of the numeracy strategy and consistent good teaching meet pupils' needs well, especially in the development of their investigative and analytical skills. Pupils think deeply and at an early stage show signs of grasping the mathematical principles which lie behind the calculations they make, and the problems they solve. In consequence, throughout the school, all pupils achieve well.

63. By the end of Year 2, lower attaining pupils add and subtract competently, having a good grasp of place value. They sequence odd and even numbers competently to 100. Average attaining pupils also multiply and divide using two-digit numbers and higher attaining pupils round up correctly where appropriate. The vast majority of pupils doubles and halves accurately and gives the right change in simple money calculations. Lower attaining pupils describe common two and three dimensional shapes well, and grasp some of their properties such as reflective and rotational symmetry. Average attaining pupils extend their range from cubes and cuboids to more complex polygons. Boys and girls of all abilities show very good competence in measuring and drawing angles, the highest attaining pupils correctly making the sum around a point. Pupils sort well, using various criteria such as the number of corners or values more or less than ten. Although there were no examples of graph work seen in their books, class displays show satisfactory production of bar and pie charts.
64. By the end of Year 6, the good teaching ensures that most pupils have very secure skills in using and applying mathematics. They use mathematical vocabulary well as they are provided with many opportunities to explain their reasoning and calculations. For example, in a very good Year 6 lesson using various data in chart and table form to solve transport and travel problems, the teacher insisted that they explained and justified their work. This increased the pupils' self-confidence, interest in mathematics and their ability to work independently. In their books, lower attaining pupils do not always show all their workings and within lessons tend to need a prompt or two or they might miss a step. Even so, they multiply and divide high numbers well, estimate and work out fractions carefully, and are starting to use co-ordinates in all four quadrants. They make some slips, for example in the calculation of areas of different shapes, because they are not absolutely sure of the formulae, but tend to be more successful than not. Pupils produce graphs well and draw simple conclusions. Average attaining pupils obtain more complex information from such sources, and in word problems and estimates combine information from different sources in order to justify their conclusions better. They check their work through inverse calculations to be sure. Higher attaining pupils estimate and predict very well, coping well with changing variables and explaining their reasoning in clear and accurate language.
65. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs receive a high level of effective support that enables them to join in class discussions and play a full part in lessons. They achieve well in relation to their identified targets. The higher attaining pupils, including those identified as more able are consistently provided with challenging work to meet their specific needs. This was made clear in last year's national tests where several pupils attained Level 6, well above the national expectation of Level 4. During the inspection, no significant differences in performance between boys and girls were noted.
66. The quality of learning reflects the quality of teaching. Overall it is good, with some very good and even better teaching observed. Lessons move at a brisk pace, stimulating mental agility. Probing questions and detailed feedback mean that both teachers and pupils know how well they are doing and what to do to raise standards further. A direct result of the good teaching is the way in which pupils think and reason so that they successfully transfer their skills to other subjects. Numeracy in a range of subjects across the curriculum is hence taught well. The pupils use bar charts or line graphs, if appropriate, to represent collected data in science. An example was seen in a Year 5 science lesson, where pupils were presented with a graph and then given the intriguing challenge to work out the experiment that led to it. Time calculations in history and measurements in design and technology both support and extend pupils' skills. The school is making use of information and communication technology (ICT) satisfactorily to support work in mathematics. For example in Year 1, pupils used a number finding program in turn to help them work out totals. This use of ICT is still under-developed across the school, mainly because of the limitations in resources. Year 3

pupils had no suitable software to support their particular tasks using money. Thanks to the teacher's explanation they were clear that they understood the principle by which a till calculated change and were then fascinated to be "acting like a till" themselves. All teachers and the support staff respect and value their pupils' contributions. This ensures that the pupils concentrate well and enjoy their work very much. A key factor in engaging and sustaining pupils' interest was encapsulated very well by one pupil in Year 5. When asked why she liked mathematics so much she explained: "We don't use textbooks, we do real things".

67. The school has done well since the last inspection to maintain high standards in very difficult circumstances. Subject co-ordination is very good. Monitoring of teaching and of pupils' work is thorough and the school's self-evaluation is critical and detailed. This ensures a very good understanding of strengths and areas for improvement. It is very well supported by comprehensive assessment systems and tracking of each pupil's performance against his or her targets.

## SCIENCE

68. The results of the 2002 national tests show that the pupils' results were average, and in-line with the average for similar schools. These results also show good achievement for the pupils in the 2002 Year 6, when compared against their own results when they were in Year 2. In addition, more than half of all the Year 6 pupils attained the higher Level 5 and the school's results show a steady improvement each year since 1998. Inspection shows that the pupils currently in Year 6 are likely to improve their results in national tests. Analysis of pupils' work, along with discussions and lesson observations, shows that standards are above average throughout the school and that the pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of all the different areas of the science curriculum. Pupils enter Year 1 with scientific knowledge appropriate for their age. By the end of Year 2, most pupils are attaining above the national average. This shows good achievement takes place in Years 1 and 2. By the end of Year 6, pupils continue to attain above average. They also show good achievement over their time in Years 3 to 6 because, in particular, pupils demonstrate that they can apply their knowledge to think and reason at an above average level. For example, in a lesson for pupils in Year 5, the teacher gave the pupils the results of an experiment and they used their reasoning to work out what the experiment was for, how it was done and whether it was a fair and valid test.
69. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a good knowledge of healthy eating and can draw graphs of their favourite foods. They know basic directional forces and show an understanding of the effect of friction upon movement. The pupils know the differences between materials such as plastic, metal and wood, and can make basic electrical circuits to include a bulb and a switch. Higher attaining pupils express their findings well and record, for example, that a battery is 'an electricity store' and that 'power goes round all the wires in a house'. By the end of Year 4, in addition to having an above average level of scientific knowledge, pupils are using a good quality scientific recording system, listing apparatus, methods, their observations and drawing conclusions. In addition, pupils' books show that they are applying higher level reasoning and thinking skills, and using scientific vocabulary with confidence. For example, one pupil wrote in conclusion to an experiment on solubility, 'sometimes tiny solid particles spread out in the water so it looks as though they have dissolved – but they are just suspended in the liquid and are really insoluble'. By the end of Year 6, most pupils show a clear factual knowledge of the science curriculum and know, for example, that trapped air adds to the insulation properties of materials. The pupils also demonstrate that they can use their knowledge well and apply it in other situations. For example, in a lesson for Year 6, the teacher asked the pupils to write a brochure for a lunar holiday and to think of the activities that may or may not be possible. This led the pupils to discuss the effect of low gravity and no atmosphere to conclude, for instance, that a kite could not be flown as there was no air and no possibility of lift and upthrust.
70. Since the last inspection, there has been very good improvement in the subject. The fire and relocation of the school has led to the curriculum being completely reviewed and re-planned, with new resources provided. The teacher responsible for science has evaluated the subject and now reports routinely to staff, headteacher and governors on the effectiveness of the provision, and the action taken to improve it. Good work has taken place on helping all teachers be equally confident

in teaching the subject through the co-ordinator working alongside colleagues and demonstrating how to improve lessons. Despite the upheaval of temporary premises and rebuilding, standards are continuing to rise and pupils are routinely achieving well.

71. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school and leads directly to the good achievement of the pupils. A particular strength is the way teachers use a range of methods in lessons and challenge pupils to use their knowledge and express themselves with accuracy and reason. As a result, the pupils learn to become independent thinkers and to base their conclusions on their observations and knowledge. This leads the pupils to enjoy discovering facts and wanting to find out more about science for themselves. For example, in a lesson for pupils in Year 6, the teacher expected the pupils to first of all list the facts they already knew about the moon before researching to fill in any gaps in their knowledge. As well as improving the pupils' study skills, this led to pupils pooling their knowledge and discussing in depth with one another the leisure activities that may be possible on the moon. This lesson 'buzzed' with new discovery and pupils delighted in sharing their thoughts with the teacher about, for example, whether conventional plumbing systems would be effective on the moon. In a lesson seen in Year 4, the teacher provided the pupils with well designed experiments and deliberately avoided instructing the pupils about the nature of sound. However, by using questions well, the pupils were guided to observe more closely and apply logic and reason to explain the effect, for example, of increased string tension on the efficiency of a 'paper cup telephone'. As a result, most pupils deduced for themselves that sound is vibration that travels over distance. There is some room for further improving the quality of teaching and learning through teachers making more accurate assessment of what pupils know, and of using this information more often in lessons to provide different levels of work matched to the differing abilities of pupils in the class.
72. Good leadership is provided for the subject and the co-ordinator has already identified what is done well and what could be improved. Appropriate action is planned for further developing the subject This is already being implemented and includes raising the quality of assessment and making better use information and communication technology.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

73. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, pupils' standards are above average, especially in observational drawing and design. Pupils enter Year 1 with average creative skills and show good achievement in Years 1 and 2. Good achievement also takes place in Years 3 to 6. This is because pupils not only develop above average skills, but also apply their artistic knowledge in other subjects and discuss and explain, intelligently, the reasons behind their work. By the end of Year 2, most pupils sketch well and know how to work at their drawings, add basic shading and overlay pencil strokes to show texture. These skills are also seen in pupils' paintings where brush strokes are used effectively to represent, for example, a bush or a thatched roof. By the end of Year 5, some pupils are painting with highlights and shadow and representing textures such as velvet and silk effectively in their water colour observational paintings of shoes. By the end of Year 6, pupils are familiar with a range of two dimensional techniques and plan carefully to use the technique that would help to realise their intent. For example, in a lesson seen, pupils used a photocopied portrait of a pop star to develop interesting designs and considered whether collage or repeat copying (in the style of Andy Warhol) would be best. They thought carefully, then refined their ideas until they were happy with the result. The pupils then worked systematically at completing their portraits with a good quality finish. During this lesson, a small number of pupils made observational drawings of gas masks with very good line, proportion and shading, at a level usually seen in secondary schools. However, in three dimensional work, pupils using clay were modelling faces at the level usually expected for their age.
74. Good improvement has taken place since the last inspection, standards have risen, and the subject is now very popular with the pupils. This is because the subject co-ordinator now monitors and evaluates the provision well and takes effective action to make improvements each year. Teachers have benefited from training and professional support and have improved their own artistic skills, which are seen in the consistent good quality of display around the school. The views of the pupils have been taken into account in improving the provision and the subject co-ordinator has

shared with governors a quote from one of the pupils last year who stated, 'It's like the art door of our brain has been opened'.

75. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Teachers help pupils to observe with accuracy and to discuss their artistic intent. As a result, pupils quickly learn to improve their drawing skills and gain confidence in talking about their work. For example, in a lesson in Year 3, the teacher's discussion with a group of pupils led one to draw 'overlapping' ears on a cat because 'that's how they look from this angle'. Another pupil learnt to represent the texture of fur with chalks and was pleased to state that, 'my teacher taught me how to do it'. Teachers demonstrate skills effectively to the pupils and this leads to clear improvements taking place within the space of the lesson. For example, in a lesson in Year 2, the teacher stopped the class to demonstrate how a drawing of a cylinder would have a circular line for its base and most pupils tried successfully to include this in their drawing of an African hut. Also, in a lesson for Year 6, the teacher used a flip-chart well to demonstrate the proportions between facial features and this led the pupils to improve their portraits and work hard at keeping all the features in proportion and scale. However, further improvements can be made in making more use of computers in the subject and in helping pupils, through assessment, to know how well they are doing.
76. The subject is well led, and the areas identified for improvement above are included in the subject co-ordinator's current action plan, which is steadily being implemented.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

77. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, in work seen, are average. Owing to the school's timetabling arrangements it was not possible to observe many lessons during the inspection. Judgements are therefore based largely on an examination of pupils' work, photographic evidence, discussions with staff and pupils and the examination of planning documents and records. This presents a similar picture to the findings of the last inspection and the achievement of boys and girls of all abilities remains satisfactory.
78. Pupils in Year 2 have been working in textiles, taking their theme of "Joseph's Coat" and thereby supporting studies in RE. The vast majority of pupils join work together with satisfactory stitching, that of lower attaining pupils being rather large. Pupils' plans are generally satisfactory although a small number of the designs emerging are very complex and, realistically, difficult to put into practice. Average attaining pupils describe the processes they follow but do not consider ways of improving their work unless directly questioned about them. Higher attaining pupils are starting to make their own simple evaluations, for example by suggesting the use of more colourful materials for toys. In general, pupils know what they have done but are less clear about describing the sequence of their work and how they could do it better. They have only limited ideas of whether their creations are actually fit for a specific purpose.
79. Pupils in Year 6 have produced ideas for footwear taking inspiration from various sources and producing a good range of "prototypes". They have considered the user's need to some extent, (for example a golfer's shoe needing to be far more weather resistant than a fashion shoe), but on balance the skill of evaluation is still underdeveloped. Average attaining pupils concluded that the "heel should have been bigger" without explaining why. Only higher attaining pupils had any clear idea of the constraints of materials and available resources. No evidence was seen that any products were tested. Pupils have not yet used motors but this is planned for later in the summer term. Displays show satisfactory food preparation by Year 5, who made biscuits and designed suitable packaging. Information and communication technology was used to support this, in the form of word-processed and desktop-published wrappers and labels containing the necessary information, for example ingredients and shelf-life. Additionally, digital photographs of these activities were taken by other pupils to create a record of the processes involved and to help future revision.
80. Too few lessons were observed to make a secure judgement about the quality of teaching and learning. Planning documents show that the needs of all pupils are carefully considered. In those lessons seen, lower attaining pupils and pupils with special needs in particular played a full part

thanks to appropriate support material and adult help. Pupils' attitudes towards their work were positive and they enjoyed learning. They related well to all adults and when engaged in group tasks co-operated well with each other.

81. The management of the subject is satisfactory because the subject co-ordinator checks teachers' planning to assure its quality, and samples pupils' work to make sure of the outcomes. There is no regular monitoring of the teaching of design and technology but the evaluation of pupils' work has shown that teachers need to give greater attention to the development of pupils' own skills of evaluation and revision. In-service training in these areas has already been planned for later in the year. There is no formal assessment system in place beyond general observations on outcomes of pupils' work to help determine precisely how well pupils learn and hence to support future planning in the most effective way. Since the last inspection, and in the aftermath of the fire, the subject has not been a priority for development, and other areas, understandably, have had greater claims to attention. The school has made satisfactory progress in ensuring that standards have been maintained. Design and technology has already been identified by the school as a focus of development planning for 2004.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

82. Standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are above average. Since the last inspection, standards have risen in Years 1 and 2, and been sustained in Years 3 to 6. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well by the end of Years 2 and 6 because of their very effective speaking and listening skills, their very good attitudes to learning and their very good research and deductive skills.
83. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a good understanding of basic geographical skills and they are able to apply these throughout their work. In Year 2 for example, pupils are enthusiastically encouraged to ask perceptive comparative questions when they study their own area in relation to Gambia. Pupils in Year 3 have undertaken a detailed survey of their routes to school, of leisure patterns in the locality and of the growth and development of Stevenage. As a result, they have a good sense of location both within Greater London and the British Isles. Many are able to pinpoint such places as Edinburgh, Cardiff, Plymouth and Manchester on maps and they are also able to show where Africa and Russia are to be found on the map of the world. By Year 6, pupils have a good knowledge of the major continents and of different climatic zones. They know the factors that contribute to particular climates. They are able to compare the climate, food, occupations, and homes of a contrasting area with Stevenage. They have had very good experiences of researching information in geography and they know the various sources from which this emanates. They have appropriate knowledge of maps and map symbols, and they have undertaken detailed surveys of water cycles and established very good historical links in the process. In discussions with visitors, their very well developed speaking and listening skills enabled them to converse with ease and fluency about a range of topics. For example, they exuded enormous enthusiasm as they explained the process of erosion and the effects of meandering river patterns on the surrounding landscape.
84. The quality of teaching is good overall and this leads to good learning within lessons and over time. Lessons are carefully planned and teachers ensure that classroom activities motivate the pupils and captivate their imagination. Teachers consistently encourage the development of very good higher order speaking and listening skills. They also actively promote research and investigative approaches to learning. These were clearly demonstrated in one very successful Year 3 lesson when the teacher consistently emphasised the importance of detective work as the pupils methodically and thoughtfully searched photographs of their localities for significant geographical clues relating to change and contrast. Their skilful approaches to learning were consistently and enthusiastically reinforced by the challenging teaching strategies. As a result the pupils achieved so much in the lesson time. Teachers make good use of a wide variety of resources. Information and communication technology is used to research information on climates, physical geography and contrasting areas. Good quality wall displays in classrooms are used effectively during whole-class discussions and strong links are forged with history, science and art. The subject also makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

85. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The curriculum is broad and balanced and supports learning well by a good range of visits and practical experiences that motivate pupils well. Assessment procedures are being developed appropriately, but the use of assessment to impact on learning is still at an early stage of development. The coordinator has a clear understanding of strengths and areas for improvement in the subject.

## HISTORY

86. Standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are above average. Since the last inspection, standards have risen in Years 1 and 2, and been sustained in Years 3 to 6. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well because of their very good standards in speaking and listening, their very good use of vocabulary and their very well developed research, investigative and deductive skills.
87. By the end of Year 2, most pupils show their developing sense of chronology by placing events and objects in sequential order. For example, pupils in Year 1 are able to talk sensibly about seaside holidays in the past. Most pupils in Years 1 and 2 exhibit a good knowledge and understanding of the changes brought about by famous people as they compare people from the past with contemporary figures. In Year 2, pupils learn how to find out about the past and they begin to appreciate which forms of communication were available in 1666 at the time of Samuel Pepys. By the end of Year 2 they are beginning to use a range of sources to find their information.
88. By the end of Year 6, pupils have acquired a rich factual knowledge and a wide range of deductive and investigative skills, which they apply with increasing maturity to their studies. In Year 6, pupils have studied the Jarrow marches, the depression years of the 1930s and successfully researched the history of the Second World War. During the inspection they dressed as evacuees, walked from their school to the nearby Stevenage museum where they were met by the museum ARP Warden and spent a very productive day engaged in a range of stimulating activities and role play that demonstrated the depth of their understanding. In Year 5, pupils have produced detailed and evocative studies of the Ancient Greeks and enhanced their research projects by employing a variety of archaeological data and techniques. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 make very effective use of their very good speaking and listening skills when discussing such emotive historical topics as living and working conditions in the Victorian period. The pupils' folders and the wall displays of their written work testify to the breadth and depth of their research studies. For example, they are able to talk intelligently about schools and different aspects of children's work in mid-Victorian Britain. In Year 4, pupils have effectively engaged with the Tudor period. They have a thorough and perceptive understanding of the King's Great Matter and they are able to compare this with present-day issues.
89. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers' planning is good, and conversations with pupils show that work has been taught as planned. Resources are good and teachers often supplement these with imaginative materials. A striking feature of the history lessons is the way in which teachers very effectively promote the pupils' literacy skills. As a result, pupils have enquiring and searching minds as they behave for truths in every period of study. Historical skills, such as research and deductive methods of enquiry, are very effectively promoted throughout the school. This was very well exhibited in one outstanding Year 2 lesson when the teacher very effectively took the very enthusiastic pupils on a voyage of discovery, explaining how news would be disseminated in the year 1666. It was further illustrated in a very good Year 5 lesson when the pupils were taught that the past is represented and interpreted in a variety of ways. These lessons totally captured the imagination of the pupils and brought the subject to life in an interesting and enchanting manner. The discussions with pupils made it clear that this excitement for history had been communicated in many lessons. Teachers use information and communication technology appropriately to promote research skills and further develop teaching and learning in the subject.

90. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The leadership and management of the subject are good and the coordinator effectively monitors samples of pupils' work and teaching to ensure that standards are being maintained. The school is appropriately developing assessment procedures for history. Pupils are being provided with a good range of visits to enhance their learning. For example, pupils have visited a local church, the National Gallery and Hitchin British Schools. Members of the community often visit the school talk to pupils about their lifetime experiences and about the history of Stevenage. This has a positive impact on standards and supports pupils' learning well.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

91. The previous inspection judged standards to be average and achievement satisfactory. Since then, not only has the subject has been broadened nationally but the school has also been through the traumatic experience of a fire in which all information and communication technology (ICT) resources and planning were destroyed and for some time pupils were in temporary accommodation and had little opportunity to use ICT in their work. Funds were sufficient to provide only limited replacement hardware and software. Although the ratio of pupils to computers at the school is better than the current national average it is below the government's target. Moreover the raw statistics do not show that the machines vary greatly in design and specification, they are not linked together in a network and much of the equipment is dated and hence prone to malfunction. These factors limit their effective operation. In the face of such obstacles the school has done well to maintain standards as they are. At present, by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, standards are average and all groups of pupils show satisfactory achievement. The school is well aware of what it needs to do to raise standards, and a detailed development plan is already being effectively implemented.
92. By the end of Year 2, the vast majority of pupils word-processes work competently. When using a drawing and painting program, control of the mouse is good for higher attaining pupils but less developed for others so that the resultant images are not so readily identifiable. Pupils have made copies of simple maps, saving amending and printing work. There was insufficient evidence to suggest that they have used ICT for investigations beyond the charting of the results of classroom surveys and producing simple graphs. They can give examples of everyday devices such as photocopiers which rely on control programs for their operation but have only recently made use of the limited resources available to observe the operation of a floor robot. In a lesson in the school yard, pupils learned the need for precision in instructions by carrying out marching drills but there was no opportunity to discover how well they could use this knowledge to program a robot for themselves.
93. By the end of Year 6, pupils who were interviewed confirmed that they had no further experience of using computers to control events either on screen or off other than the use of a floor robot. They looked forward to their forthcoming visit to an activity centre where they would be exploring this area amongst others. They have, however, used equipment to sense physical data, seemingly as a matter of course in science lessons because they were more intrigued by the operation of the spreadsheet used to log the data generated. They have also combined information from spreadsheets with word-processed and desktop-published documents. Both Year 5 and Year 6 pupils have used a digital microscope in science experiments, exploring images for example of shells and feathers then importing them into a publishing program. They have created simple models through an object-based program but pupils recalled no experience of exploring the effects of changing variables.
94. On balance, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Within lessons, however, pupils are not always provided with tasks which match their needs, especially when recognising gaps in their knowledge as a result of their limited experience in previous years. In a Year 6 lesson for example, using formulae within spreadsheets, all pupils undertook the same tasks. Good questioning explored previous work well but the outcomes revealed that only the higher attaining pupils handled the tasks successfully. For many, the skill of copying cells required much more revision than was first apparent. This is not a problem for younger pupils who have had more consistent experiences. In a good lesson in Year 3, seven of the school's computers were used

both inside and outside the classroom. The teacher set tasks in computer simulations at different levels according to the skills of each group of pupils so that they moved forward well, to reach above average standards in this strand of work.

95. Observation of lessons, analysis of work and displays round the school indicate that pupils do not use ICT in other subjects to the extent that they should. They have, however, used spreadsheets in science, copied simple maps in geography, and undertaken simple research using the Internet in history. Pupils confirmed that they were aware of the dangers attached to the Internet but that they knew the appropriate safety procedures and were protected by the school's use of security software. Pupils were unable to give demonstrations of some of their work because the machines available did not support the version of the program in which it had been created. This inconsistency in resources weakens the school's provision because it hinders the systematic development of skills. ICT appears in teachers' medium term planning but its use in specific lessons is limited by available resources. Where for example the computer projector was available, learning became vivid and engaged pupils well. There are plans in hand to purchase more hardware, especially laptops, in the near future. In all lessons, however, with whatever level of resources, all pupils show good levels of attention and behave well because they are interested in their work.
96. Subject co-ordination is good because there has been a thorough evaluation of the present picture and detailed, costed plans for development, which are already being successfully put into practice. Teachers have received training through the New Opportunities Fund but the school is aware of the need to build up their expertise by further training to help take pupils forward faster to make up for time lost in earlier years, and also to integrate ICT into the full range of the curriculum. The current assessment system is informal and therefore lacks the precision and detail necessary to track pupils' learning as well as it should. The school never the less enriches the pupils' curricular opportunities, by running a computer club. Volunteer helpers include parents and grandparents who provide support in lessons and also occasional technical help in addition to the commercial technical service bought in. A new member of the governing body has significant professional ICT expertise and has generously offered to make this available to the school. After significant reversals since the last inspection the school has made good progress. It formally recognises in its planning that there is still much to do, and the capacity for improvement is therefore very good.

## **MUSIC**

97. Standards are just above average throughout the school, and are rising quickly. This is a direct result of the school's decision to employ a specialist teacher for one day per week from September 2002. All classes now have a weekly lesson from this teacher who brings rigour, challenge and high expectations consistently to every class. As a result, the pupils in each class show good achievement over the course of this school year, and are likely to continue to achieve well and attain higher standards. By the end of Year 2, most pupils sing in tune and can choose instruments carefully to accompany the songs they write. Almost all of the pupils listen well and make good suggestions to improve the arrangement of a piece, as well as appreciating its overall musical quality. Pupils in Year 3 gain information from standard musical notation and can see which musical phrase has a high pitched ending and which is low. They give good attention to detail and work with success at singing with accurate pitch. Pupils in Year 6 work together well to quickly agree compositions and perform them for one another. They also repeat these performances and evaluate them for each group with good comments that help to improve the performances. Recordings show that pupils in Year 6 can play accurate accompaniments and follow a score to accompany their singing in two part harmony. Pupils with higher attainment are encouraged to learn to play a musical instrument and develop appropriate technical skills as well as improving their sight reading of musical notation.
98. Since the last inspection there has been satisfactory improvement in the subject. Until recently, each teacher was responsible for the music lessons for their class and this resulted in a variable quality of experience for pupils as they moved through the school. However, the recent employment of a specialist teacher is good value, resources are now being used well and there is a consistent quality of teaching and learning for every pupil.



99. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. The teacher has very good musical knowledge and skills and has high expectations for what pupils can do. Lessons are rigorous and at a fast pace and the teacher makes sure that pupils, each week, are steadily building on what they already know and can do. The teacher generally sings unaccompanied and this leads the pupils to focus on their pitch and vocal tone and they all show a good awareness that they are learning how to sing better. Lessons begin with a clear definition of what pupils are expected to learn that day and reference is made to what was learnt in previous weeks. Pupils are then led in small logical steps to achieve the teacher's expectation within the time of the lesson. For example, Year 3 pupils were challenged to learn an arrangement of the Banana Boat Song by the end of the lesson. They responded well by concentrating on their music, analysed where differences and similarities occurred, and were spurred on by the teacher's praise at their success to give a successful performance just before the lesson ended. The teacher makes regular observations of how well pupils are doing and identifies pupils who have the potential for higher attainment.
100. The subject is being developed well by the headteacher and specialist teacher. Appropriate plans are being implemented for pupils to be able to take part in performances outside of school. The regular school performances are well liked by parents and provide, along with the annual talent competition, a good opportunity for pupils to extend their vocal and instrumental performance skills. Whilst pupils do have some opportunities to use modern technology to enhance their music making, more could be done to help pupils develop their skills with computers and recording equipment.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

101. Pupils attain average standards by the end of Years 2 and 6, as they did at the time of the previous inspection. Over time most pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily as they move through the school. Observations of potentially higher attaining pupils indicate that some could perform at higher levels if expectations were higher, and opportunities for pupils to evaluate and improve their work were more consistently offered.
102. Teachers' plans indicate that the full range of activities takes place and the statutory programmes of study are taught. A properly balanced programme has been devised that meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Practically all pupils are agile and able to maintain sustained physical activity. Swimming skills are taught satisfactorily and there are planned strategies to ensure that any under-achieving pupils will have extra swimming lessons at the end of the summer term. Extra-curricular activities at different times of the year also effectively enhance standards and achievement.
103. During the inspection, pupils in Year 1 exhibited sound skills in exploring contrasting movements linked to a dance theme. They were given sufficient time to experiment and practise movements and then to develop sequences as they responded to music. Year 2 pupils were observed practising their ball skills appropriately in a lively and competitive lesson. Pupils in these years begin to build up their basic skills satisfactorily because they recall simple actions well, but their control and accuracy are less well developed. From Year 1 they demonstrate an awareness of safety and dress properly. When moving around the hall, pupils show an awareness of space available to them and usually maintain an appropriately safe distance between themselves and others. They are beginning to understand the effects of exercise on their bodies and note the need to cool down.
104. By the end of Year 6, pupils are able to perform a range of basic skills such as throwing, catching, balancing and travelling in a variety of ways and directions with appropriate suppleness, control, accuracy and safety. They work well in teams and groups, taking particular roles and occasionally showing quite innovative movements. The majority show control and coordination as they refine their performance, paying particular attention to flow, speed and overall quality of movement. In Years 4 and 6, the majority of pupils demonstrated good body control and responded well in athletics and gymnastics lessons. This was mainly due to the expertise of the external coach, the

clarity of the instructions and the effective demonstrations provided to ensure that all pupils gave of their best. Pupils' attitudes to learning in physical education are positive throughout the school. They are motivated, keen to participate in lessons and understand the importance of listening and following instructions.

105. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory, with good lessons provided for some pupils by an external coach. When the lessons are good, teachers identify clear objectives, brief pupils about the skills to be practised and generally use effective demonstrations and interventions to enable pupils to improve their performance. Where teaching was less effective, there was no change to the pace of lesson, instructions did not stimulate imaginative movement and pupils were not encouraged to evaluate and improve their performances.
106. The subject co-ordinator has evaluated the provision and has a good understanding of strengths and areas for development in physical education. As a result, the subject now features prominently on the school's development plan. Facilities and resources in physical education are now good. Assessment procedures, however, are in the process of being developed further.. The subject contributes well to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and this was clearly demonstrated through team games, dance routines and extra-curricular activities.