

# INSPECTION REPORT

**Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School and  
Nursery**

Bushey, Watford

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117488

Headteacher: Mrs R Cooper

Reporting inspector: Alan Andrews  
6436

Dates of inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> February 2003

Inspection number: 247794

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 with a nursery

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 3 – 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Merry Hill Road  
Bushey  
Watford  
Hertfordshire

Postcode: WD23 1SU

Telephone number: 01923 493040

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Philip McDonald

Date of previous inspection: 8<sup>th</sup> December 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
6436	Alan Andrews	Registered inspector	English Art and design Design and technology Special educational needs	What sort of school is it? How high are the standards? How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9619	Bob Miller	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?
1359	Lyne Lavender	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to the pupils?
7694	Martyn Richards	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Music Physical education Educational inclusion English as an additional language	

32162	Adrienne Beavis	Team inspector	Foundation Stage	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Sacred Heart Primary is a Catholic school for children aged 3 to 11 years. It is situated in Bushey, Hertfordshire and serves the Roman Catholic parish of Bushey, Oxhey and Bushey Heath. There are 287 children on roll of whom 30 attend part-time in the nursery. There are 19 more boys than girls and this is particularly noticeable in Year 5. Children come from a wide range of backgrounds. The majority are from white British families, but some come from Irish and other white, mixed or black backgrounds. A few children come from Asian, Indian, African and Philippino families. Three come from traveller families. Twelve children have English as an additional language and two are at an early stage of English language acquisition. This is higher than in most schools. The languages spoken by the children are German, Spanish, Polish, French and Tagalog. Some children come from forces families. Few children are eligible for free school meals. The percentage of children identified as having special educational needs is below the national average. The majority have specific learning difficulties. There are no children with statements of special educational need. The school is popular and over subscribed. Attainment on entry is good.

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

Sacred Heart School is very effective. The headteacher and staff promote a really good climate for learning. Together with the governors, they work successfully to raise standards. The quality of music, in particular, is very high. Relationships are excellent and children undertake tasks with enthusiasm. Teaching overall is also very good. The work children do challenges them to think hard and use their initiative. Parents have a high regard for the school. It provides good value for money.

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

- High standards of attainment in English, mathematics, music and science at age seven and eleven.
- Very good teaching.
- Governors, headteacher and key staff provide very good leadership.
- Excellent opportunities to learn music.
- Behaviour and attitudes of the children are very good.
- Excellent relationships between the staff and children and between the children.
- Excellent provision for social development and very good provision for personal development.

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

- Standards and provision for information and communication technology.
- Arrangements for homework.

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

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

The school has made good progress since its previous inspection in 1997. The key issues have been dealt with well. The school's mission statement is reviewed regularly to ensure it is implemented fully. Relationships with the parents, parish and the wider community are now thriving due to a great number of initiatives by the school. Children are given a lot of encouragement to make decisions about their work and use their imagination. Performance management processes that are closely linked to the national guidelines have replaced staff appraisal systems and are impacting standards positively. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage 2000 has been implemented appropriately. The nursery is new and the school is working effectively to develop routines. In addition, the ethos of the school has improved so that there is a closer working relationship between staff, governors, parents and parish that benefits the children. Standards of attainment have risen. The quality of teaching is now very good. Resources, except in information and communication technology, are satisfactory. Improvements have been made in promoting children's multi-cultural awareness appropriately.

## 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	B	B	D
mathematics	B	A	B	C
science	B	A	B	C

**Key**

well above average      A

above average            B

average                    C

below average            D

well below average      E

\* schools with a similar percentage of children eligible for free school meals.

The 2002 results in national tests at the end of Year 6 were good in English, mathematics and science in comparison to all schools. They matched those of schools with children from similar backgrounds in mathematics and science. They were not as good in English. This is because two children did not take all of the tests and children speaking English as an additional language joined the school shortly before the tests were administered. That said, the number of children reaching the higher level of attainment, Level 5, in mathematics and science was much higher than in schools nationally<sup>1</sup>.

In the same year, national test results for children at the end of Year 2 were very good in reading, writing and mathematics in comparison to all schools nationally and in comparison to similar schools. The number of children reaching the higher Level 3 in mathematics and science placed the school in the top five percent nationally. Local authority and national data indicates that the children taking the tests in Year 6 made good progress between the infant and junior stages in mathematics and science and satisfactory progress in English. Over time, results in the juniors have been variable, but they have remained above average in all subjects.

In lesson observations, attainment in Year 6 is very good in science and good in English and mathematics. There is a higher number of children with special educational needs than is usually found in the current year group and so the school is not anticipating the high results it has achieved in the past. That said, the school has set challenging targets for attainment in 2003. In English, 88% of children are expected to reach Level 4 and above and in mathematics 91%. The school is on course to meet these. Children's attainments in English, mathematics and science are very good in Year 2. Children in the Foundation Stage are exceeding the early learning goals in all the areas of experience, especially personal, social and emotional development.<sup>2</sup>

Attainment in information and communication technology is unsatisfactory in the juniors because the progress of the children has been hindered by the lack of resources. Music, throughout the school, is excellent and plays a significant part in establishing and maintaining the ethos of the school. In art and design, history, geography, physical education and design and technology, children's attainments are good at the end of the infant and junior stages. Gifted and talented children make very good progress as they are challenged well. Children with English as an additional language or with special educational needs make good progress.

<sup>1</sup> Expected level of attainment at age seven (Year 2) is Level 2. The higher level of attainment is Level 3.

At age eleven (Year 6), the expected level of attainment is Level 4. The higher level of attainment is Level 5. Level 6 is a very high standard often found in secondary schools.

<sup>2</sup> Areas of experience are: personal, social and emotional development; communications, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development, creative development.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children are enthusiastic about learning. They settle to work quickly and make the most of their time in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. In assemblies, children's behaviour is exemplary. In the playground and during breaks from lessons, behaviour is good.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. There are many opportunities for children to take on responsibilities. Relationships are excellent.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

Children settle to work quickly and maximise their use of time and this brings about good standards. Teachers value their individual contributions to lessons and this helps to build confidence and to encourage full participation in lessons.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

Teaching is often very good and has contributed significantly to raising standards. It is particularly strong in music and science. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been introduced very effectively and are helping to raise standards in English and mathematics. The control and management of children in lessons is very good and ensures that time is used productively. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively and they support children who need it most very well so that they play a full part in lessons. Children are given very good opportunities to take responsibility and make decisions for themselves. The teaching of basic skills in each subject is very good. Teachers ensure that skills across the curriculum are built up systematically. Children are challenged to use their intellectual, creative and physical effort very well so that their interest and concentration is sustained. Teachers take care to ensure that tasks meet the needs of all children. This challenges the brighter children and enables those with special educational needs or English as an additional language to make good progress. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, with some good teaching in reception. The nursery is new and routines have yet to be established fully.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Provision for music and personal, social and health education are particular strengths. There is a good range of extra curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Children participate fully in the life of the school and make good progress.

Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good provision means these children make good progress in their learning and play a full part in the life of the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Provision for children's social development is excellent. It is good for spiritual and moral development and satisfactory for cultural. There is a strong school council and very effective group work in lessons. Children take responsibility for their behaviour.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its children well. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and reducing oppressive behaviour are very good.

Communications have improved significantly since the last inspection so that there is a good partnership between parents and the school. The curriculum is now good. The provision for music, both in lessons and in individual tuition, is a significant strength. Strong emphasis on personal, social and health education pays dividends in children's personal development. Children are encouraged to make important decisions about their work from an early age. Lessons often include opportunities for investigational work that develops children's thinking skills effectively. There is a high level of personal care and staff know children well.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. There is a determined commitment to raising standards in an atmosphere of the Christian values that are evident in all aspects of the school's work.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors are very well informed and have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school analyses its data thoroughly to identify the progress of different groups of children and areas for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Financial resources are directed very effectively to help raise standards.

The accommodation is good. New classrooms have been built and areas improved to meet the needs of the curriculum. Staffing and resources are sufficient, although there are not enough computers for children in the juniors to make good progress. The headteacher, governors and staff share a clear educational direction for the school. Priorities for improvement are identified and rigorous action taken to raise standards. The school applies the principles of best value very well.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• Teaching is good, children make good progress.</li> <li>• Behaviour is good.</li> <li>• They find it easy to approach the school with concerns.</li> <li>• Children are expected to work hard and become mature, sensible young people.</li> <li>• The school is led and managed well.</li> <li>• The school works well with parents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision for homework.</li> <li>• Information about how their child is getting on.</li> <li>• More activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agree with all the parents' positive comments and that the provision of homework is inconsistent. Parents do receive information about how their child is getting on. However, the end of year academic reports do not always identify areas that children need to work on or inform parents of levels of attainment in the core subjects. While some parents would like to see more activities outside of lessons, the inspection team judge that there is a good range of extra curricular activities.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Children's attainments on entry to the nursery and reception classes are mostly good for their age. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress and are on course to exceed the early learning goals in all the areas of experience, especially personal, social and emotional development by the end of the reception year. Children adopt a very positive attitude to learning at an early stage and this stays with them throughout their time in the school. The nursery is new and is open during the morning only. The afternoon session for the reception children, that caters for 40 children with one teacher and three learning support assistants, is being reviewed. The school is aware, and inspection evidence confirms, that the present organisation limits the depth of learning for some children.

2. Lesson observations show that children's attainments in Year 2 are very good. This reflects the high standards of the previous four years. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2002, were very good in reading, writing and mathematics when compared to all schools nationally and to schools with children from similar backgrounds. A very high percentage of children reached the higher Level 3 in reading, mathematics and science and this put the school in the top five percent nationally. Boys do better than the girls. These results are much better than at the time of the last inspection.

3. In the same year, 2002, national tests results for children in Year 6 were good in English, mathematics and science when compared to all schools nationally. They were below average in English and average in mathematics and science when compared to similar schools. That said, there is clear evidence that there was good progress between the infant and junior stages in mathematics and science and satisfactory progress in English. A much higher percentage of children reached the higher Level 5 in mathematics and science than in schools nationally. Girls do slightly better than the boys. This is better than at the time of the last inspection. The school has rightly identified writing as a priority for development across the school.

4. Over time, the results in the juniors have been variable, but they have always remained better than those found in all schools. Science results have risen faster than other subjects. Results have varied according to the number of children with special educational needs in the year group taking the tests. Also, some children with English as an additional language joined the school shortly before the tests were taken. In 2002, a number of children did not complete the tests as they were taken on holiday.

5. Lesson observations show that children's attainments are good in Year 6. Fewer children than in previous years are on course to reach higher levels of attainment, as the number of children in the year group with learning difficulties is more than usually found. However, the school has set challenging targets for achievement. In 2003, in English, 88 per cent of children are expected to reach Level 4 and above. In mathematics, the target is 91 per cent. The school is on course to meet these. Targets were exceeded in English in 2002, but not in mathematics.

6. The school is not complacent. It analyses all its data thoroughly to identify the progress of different groups and identify areas for improvement. Value added graphs indicate that some children with special educational needs make good progress and others, very good progress. This, together with close monitoring to raise the quality of teaching, has much to do with the high standards the children achieve. In addition, 'booster' groups are organised to give children extra help whilst in mathematics, children are taught for some of the week in groups that are set according to their ability.

7. Children in Years 2 and 6 have speaking and listening skills well above the national average. They are pleased to talk to visitors about their work and matters that interest them. They listen attentively in lessons, answer questions sensibly and communicate meaning clearly using a wide range of vocabulary.

8. Children enjoy reading and are encouraged to see it as a really worthwhile activity. Many Year 2 children read with confidence and fluency. Their reading skills are generally well above the national average. The importance of using letter sounds when tackling unfamiliar words is emphasised effectively by teachers and this helps children make good progress. In Year 6, children's reading skills are mostly above average. They read fluently and often with good expression.

9. The school has put considerable effort, successfully, into improving children's writing skills. Opportunities are provided to write for a range of purposes. By Year 2 and Year 6, children's skills are above those expected nationally. Ideas are developed effectively and sentence structure is good. Brighter children show a growing awareness of the need to write for different purposes. Those in Year 6 are able to put forward a point of view clearly and precisely.

10. In mathematics, children in Year 2 have a very good understanding of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. They use a range of skills, such as estimating, doubling and halving, effectively to calculate numbers accurately. A lot of work is covered in the time available so that the children have a very secure foundation of knowledge. They use good mental arithmetic and reading skills to solve written problems successfully. By year 6, children are competent mathematicians. Brighter children use advanced reasoning skills, drawing on all their knowledge of mathematics to solve problems. They calculate fractions and percentages accurately and use formulae to find the areas of triangles, rectangles and squares quickly.

11. Standards in science are very good in Year 2 and Year 6. The school challenges its brighter children well. They gain new knowledge and skills rapidly as they move through the school, so that they have in depth knowledge of each aspect of science. Children take part in experiments and explain confidently their hypotheses and their findings. By Year 6, children observe, measure and record their results carefully as well as formulate their conclusions.

12. Music is one of the school's major strengths as it permeates the daily life of the school and brings a wealth of enriching cultural experiences. High quality teaching means children attain very well in both the infants and the juniors. Children know a lot about famous composers and their works, sing with enthusiasm and subtlety and compose imaginative short pieces. They respond to evocative music, such as *Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition* and *Tchaikovsky's Nurcracker Suite*, clearly describing their feelings and the images they make in their minds. Many children play a musical instrument and belong to the school's two orchestras. This, along with English, mathematics and science, is an area where gifted and talented children are challenged particularly well.

13. In geography, history, design and technology and art and design, children's attainments are good in Year 2 and Year 6. This is because children have a good breadth of knowledge and skills in these subjects. They are encouraged to use their initiative so that much of the work is original. Swimming remains a strength in physical education, as nearly all children can swim the required 25 metres before they leave the school. Sports skills are promoted strongly in lessons and extra curricular activities, such as tennis, football and netball. Children in Year 2 showed good standards in gymnastics and dance in the lessons observed.

14. The weakness is in information and communication and technology. Standards are similar to those found in schools nationally in Year 2, but they are below in Year 6. The main reason for this is because there is a shortfall in learning from earlier years to make up. The new programme of work, improved skills in teaching the subject and increasing resources take time to impact children's knowledge and skills. Information and communication technology is not used often enough in subjects across the curriculum.

15. The percentage of children identified as having special educational needs is lower than in most other schools. The support they receive relies heavily on programmes of work provided by class teachers, but sometimes delivered by teaching assistants. The achievement of the children is good and the work of the teaching assistants is valuable in helping them to make progress. Traveller children and those with English as an additional language are supported well and they too make good progress.

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

16. Children's attitudes to their learning are very good and are a significant improvement since the last inspection. They enjoy school and are eager to learn. No time is wasted in lessons as children settle to their tasks quickly and achieve good standards. Children listen well to each other and to adults. They are always willing to answer questions and discuss their ideas. Their individual contributions to lessons are valued highly by staff. This helps to build children's confidence and encourage maximum participation in lessons.

17. Children show very good levels of concentration. For example, Year 5 children were completely engrossed in their work when making a model of a fairground ride. In a Year 4 dance lesson, children worked really cooperatively to carry out a maypole dance successfully. The children had to work together to create a 'double twist' on the 'crown pole' and then undo it without getting in a muddle.

18. Behaviour in class and around the school is very good as children respond really positively to teachers' high expectations. In assemblies, their behaviour is exemplary. They sit very quietly and this creates a special atmosphere in which to reflect. There were no exclusions from school last year. Children play and work really well together, sharing equipment fairly. No evidence of bullying or inappropriate behaviour was observed during the inspection. Children are polite and friendly to each other, staff and visitors. The buildings and grounds are cared for well and are free of litter. Children use resources with care.

19. Relationships within the school are excellent and it is a very harmonious community. This has a significant impact on standards achieved as children learn in a calm and positive atmosphere. In the playground, older and younger children play very well together.

20. Children are encouraged to reflect on their own values and beliefs as well as respecting those of others. As a result they have a very clear understanding of the impact of their actions on others. There are many opportunities for children to take responsibility and make important decisions about their work. They carry out research and often work independently of the teacher. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection.

21. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average for similar schools and is satisfactory. Some parents take children on holiday at important times in the school year and this impacts children's attainments and the school's results. A few children are persistently late, but lessons generally start and finish on time.

22. Children are respectful of each other's feelings and beliefs and respond seriously and sensitively when lessons call on them to reflect on issues of right and wrong. They are honest and unselfish in their dealings with each other and work well together on shared tasks. They take on responsibilities in a mature way and help each other without being asked. Most children have a sound understanding of our traditions of music, art and literature, but have less appreciation of the variety of cultures contributing to contemporary society.

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

23. The quality of teaching is very good, as it was at the time of the last inspection. It is better in the juniors than in the infants and Foundation Stage. Teaching is excellent in music. This high quality teaching contributes significantly to high standards. Children are managed very well throughout the school so that there is a very positive atmosphere for learning. They are trusted to use their initiative and make decisions for themselves. As a result children are highly motivated to work very hard, make the best use of their time and concentrate on their learning.

24. Teaching is satisfactory in the nursery and good in the reception classes. This is not as good as it was at the time of the last inspection, however there have been changes of staff and the nursery is new so that systems and procedures are still being developed. At the time of the inspection, most of the children in the nursery had only been in school a few days. The school rightly placed emphasis on settling children into new routines successfully. In both classes, the management of the children is very good, so that there are excellent relationships between staff and children. This means children settle quickly into activities and maintain their interest and concentration. They are interested in what they are doing, often working happily in groups.

25. In the nursery, children are helped to plan out their activities. They do this by placing their name on a picture of the activities they wish to take part in during the morning. In the reception classes, children wear a necklace with a picture of the activity. This enables the children to become independent and make decisions about their work. These are important skills that are developed throughout the school. However, records of these activities are not kept well enough to ensure that children cover the full range of the areas of experience over time. The teacher's planning is comprehensive, but makes insufficient reference to the 'stepping stones' set out in the curriculum for the Foundation Stage. This makes it harder for teachers to ensure that children of different abilities are challenged appropriately and track their progress.

26. In the reception classes, lesson plans contain clear learning objectives and activities that take into account the needs of children's abilities. Longer-term plans make very clear links across all the areas of experience and show how the Foundation Stage curriculum takes into account the early levels of the subjects of the National Curriculum. This is an important improvement since the last inspection. The teacher uses a wide range of strategies, such as puppets, songs and games to capture children's interest. Play activities often include tasks that allow children to apply their developing literacy and numeracy skills. For example, children take on the role of the veterinary surgeon's assistant, entering dates and appointments in a diary. In water play, the children explored a variety of 'ducks' finding out which ones floated and which sank. They had to explain the reasons why. A project about *numbers in the world around us* enabled children to link their learning in mathematics to the real world. In doing so, they collected a wide range of numbers on car number plates. They also identified two-dimensional shapes that they recognised from their mathematics lessons, out in nature. These imaginative tasks make learning real and fun. In the afternoon, the reception teacher has responsibility for more children as the youngest reception age children who are in the nursery in the morning, join the main reception classes for the afternoon. Two learning support assistants give help during the session. However, the large number of activities organised for this time, limit progress for some children.

27. The strongest teaching is in Years 5 and 6, where all the lessons observed were at least good and often very good. The rate of children's progress is also good and sometimes very good in these year groups and has a significant impact on standards. The characteristics of this high quality teaching include:

- very good subject knowledge and understanding of the needs of the ages of the children. This allows them to acquire a broad range of skills, knowledge and understanding across the curriculum and helps them to learn a lot;
- basic skills in all subjects, but especially English, mathematics and science are taught very well. This gives children the confidence to try things on their own, without constant reference to the teacher and to do their best;
- expectations of what children can do are high and they respond to this very well. Bright children are challenged really well so that achieve high standards;
- activities promote children's personal, spiritual, moral and social development. In addition, they challenge their intellectual effort capturing their interest so they concentrate hard;
- learning support assistants are used very effectively to enable all children, especially those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, to play a full part in lessons;
- thorough planning that makes provision for differing needs;
- very clear explanations and very good management of the children so that there is a very positive atmosphere in which to learn;
- lessons that build well on children's prior attainment;
- teachers asking probing and thought provoking questions that involve many children in contributing their ideas, especially in mathematics, and helping others to learn;
- teachers using assessment to enable children to make faster progress as work is planned to meet their needs. The feedback teachers give allows children to have good knowledge of how well they are learning and what they need to learn next.



28. Many lessons at the infant and junior stages have a clear structure and are prepared carefully. They usually begin with an explanation of what is to be learned and how this links with previous work. Relationships are excellent and appropriate resources are readily available when required. Teachers have an expectation that children will:

- work hard and consistently do their best;
- behave well and help to create a pleasant atmosphere in which to learn;
- listen attentively so that they know what they have to do;
- work together co-operatively.

Children respond positively to these demands and are pleased with their achievements.

In unsatisfactory teaching in art and design, the tasks are not sufficiently well matched to children's knowledge and understanding. This means their learning does not move forward fast enough in the time available. Overall, basic skills in literacy and numeracy are taught soundly. National initiatives in these areas of the curriculum have been introduced well.

29. Overall, staff provide good role models for trainee teachers. Since the last inspection, teachers' planning has improved and is now linked explicitly to the National Curriculum although information and communication technology is not used often enough in other subjects to enhance standards and skills across the curriculum. Individual education plans for children with special educational needs are now more specific. The targets for children to achieve are clear and used by teachers to enhance their rate of progress. The previous report indicated there were wide variations in practice in setting homework. Parents were unhappy that the school did not have a consistent approach to this. This remains the case and hinders the progress of children especially those who do not receive homework on a regular basis.

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

30. The school's curriculum is good and has improved substantially since the last inspection when it was satisfactory. A broad and balanced provision from Years 1 to 6 includes all the required National Curriculum subjects, religious education, personal, social and health education and citizenship. Music is excellent and helps to promote the aims and ethos of the school in assemblies, hymn practice and lessons. Science is also a strength in both infants and juniors. Assemblies and prayers during the day promote spiritual values and encourage children to reflect on their behaviour and attitudes to work. Information and communication technology is not as strong at present and whilst more substantial than at the time of the last inspection, still does not cover the required programmes of study in sufficient depth. The school is making efforts to improve this but currently lacks the necessary resources.

31. In the Foundation Stage, national guidelines have been implemented satisfactorily. This is better than at the last inspection when the under fives curriculum did not cover the required areas of study and it was a key issue for action. The nursery is newly established and children are admitted at a younger age than previously for mornings only. In the afternoons, the two reception classes combine and use the large nursery as a resource base. These arrangements are new and the school's evaluation is correct in that it needs improvement. The increase in the numbers participating and the numerous tasks on offer in the afternoon mean that not all activities are developed in sufficient depth.

32. In all subjects, there has been a concerted drive to develop opportunities for children to carry out research and become more independent learners. This was a key issue in the previous inspection report. The school has worked hard to provide a more realistic and exciting curriculum, one in which children use and apply the skills they have learnt in a meaningful and often practical way. Planning is thorough and lessons build on what has gone before. Of particular note is the way the national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been used as a basis for lessons in English and mathematics. Teachers have used the frameworks from these very well in their planning and also to ensure that lessons build on previous learning and experience. This very good implementation has helped to raise and maintain standards over the past four years. In addition, Year 6 children are taught mathematics in small groups, set according to their ability, once a week and this focussed input helps to boost attainment and children's confidence.

33. National guidelines and published schemes of work are used as a basis for planning lessons, particularly in science and subjects such as in geography, history, design and technology and physical education. The school has written its own policy documents that are kept under constant review and up-dated regularly to take account of new initiatives.

34. The care and well being of the children receive high priority. This is reflected in the successful personal, social and health programme that includes sex education. Visiting speakers form a vital part of this, including a drugs roadshow that highlights the use and misuse of drugs through drama and role play. Sensitive issues are discussed during 'circle time' and such is the strength of relationships within the school, that children do not feel inhibited discussing their emotions and feelings in front of teachers or classmates. Strong links with the local church and the community help everyone to understand the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Children are generous in raising money for charities nominated by the Catholic Church and those selected by the school, responding to the needs of others.

35. A good programme of after-school clubs supports the curriculum effectively. These are well attended and children learn additional skills in netball, football, tennis, homework, guitar and orchestra. Educational visits in the locality and to places, such as the Cabinet War Rooms and Whipsnade Zoo, are used successfully to bring the curriculum to life. A residential activity weekend in Shropshire enables Year 6 children to improve their physical prowess and develop skills in orienteering as well as learning to live and work together outside the normal school day.

36. The school makes good provision for children with special educational needs. The procedures for identifying such children are sound and comply with national requirements. They are overseen by an experienced coordinator who works closely with class teachers and teaching assistants. The school liaises appropriately with outside agencies and the children benefit from this. Children's individual education plans are up to date and written well. Targets for development show careful diagnosis of children's learning difficulties and how they might be addressed. The targets are incorporated effectively into the work that children do.

37. The school's provision for the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was found to be good by the last inspection. There were particular strengths in the arrangements made to promote moral and social development. However, there were weaknesses in promoting children's appreciation of what it means to live in a multi-cultural community and this became a key issue for the school's attention. This has been dealt with appropriately, but it does not receive as much attention as it might.

38. The school has sustained its very good work in spiritual and moral development. Its arrangements for social development are now excellent and even better than at the last inspection. Provision for promoting children's cultural growth is more variable, but satisfactory overall.

39. Reflection is an important component of many lessons. Children are encouraged to think about and discuss the feelings and beliefs of others and to refine their sense of what is right and what is wrong. They are moved by the plight of the less fortunate, in war or other tragedy, respond with feeling to the wonders of the created world and delight in each other's achievements. One Year 1 child wrote beneath his photograph of a tree in the school grounds, *I took my picture of a blossom tree. I picked it because it was really, really beautiful.*

40. Children are taught to explore moral issues and are expected to behave morally in accordance with the school's mission statement and its Christian character. They recognise and respect fairness and honesty, are truthful and trustworthy. In one class, the story of *Icarus* led to a discussion of the evils of pride and arrogance. The example of fairness and consideration set by their teachers underpins this teaching.

41. There is excellent provision for teaching the children social values and skills. They learn about the right conduct of personal relationships and about what it means to be responsible for others. In some lessons, they are encouraged to work independently and to develop the personal confidence that comes from this. Weaknesses in this area, noted in the last inspection, have been corrected. Similarly children work in pairs and small groups, learning to lead and to accept the leadership of others. Older children are expected to help younger ones in a variety of ways and the school council provides an invaluable early opportunity to learn about key democratic processes, such as representing others and accepting majority decisions. This is a good, practical way to lay down important principles of citizenship. The school's active support of charities teaches children about their wider social responsibilities.

42. The school's excellent music provision promotes the development of children's cultural awareness. Literature has a central role in the literacy programme and displays around the school excite children to become keen readers. The school welcomes visits by professional musicians and theatre groups and *Book Week* generates lively enthusiasm for books.

43. The school has tried to respond effectively to the key issue from the last inspection regarding provision for learning about Britain as a multi-cultural society. Children learn about people of other faiths and their festivals, such as the Chinese New Year. A visiting storyteller shared tales from overseas and Year 4 children enjoyed a Multi-cultural Day in the local community. Year 1 children have been enjoying Australian folk songs. However, the school's aims in this area are not precise enough to support a rigorous programme. While it is important for children to learn about the lives and customs of people in foreign countries, in geography for example, it is also important for them to appreciate the cultural variety and complexity of our British society today. While provision in this area has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory, more remains to be done for it to reach the level of other aspects of personal development.

44. The school is rightly concerned to ensure that all the different groups of children on roll benefit to the full from what it offers, both within the curriculum and in other aspects of school life. A good policy for equal opportunities guides its work in this area.

45. The particular needs of able and gifted children are recognised. Standards of work are very good and lessons are planned to ensure they are suitably challenged. The success of the school's approach is shown in the high levels of attainment of the brighter children in national tests and in school-based progress checks.

46. There are regular checks to make sure boys and girls do equally well academically and scrutiny of relevant data over several years confirms that neither gender is disadvantaged. All activities, including sports, are open both to girls and boys.

47. A substantial proportion of the children come from ethnic minority groups. A wide range of backgrounds is represented. A small number of children are from traveller families. For about 5% of the children, English is a second, or additional language. This is a higher proportion than is found in most schools. However, most of the children are well on their way to fluency in English and only two are still at an early stage. Provision for these children is generally good. They progress satisfactorily in English, although the school does not check their spoken English development as systematically as it should. Children take a full part in lessons and group activities. On rare occasions, for example when working at a computer, children with limited skills in English find difficulty in following instructions and need more support than they receive.

48. Staff are fully aware of the importance of ensuring that there is no racial discrimination in the school and good policies have been set in place to guard against it. The school is a tolerant and harmonious community, with no evidence whatever of racial tension. Checks are carried out regularly to make sure children from racial minority groups, including travellers, progress as well as others and good use is made of advice from specialist outside agencies to support this work. This said, it is important to put in place more systematic checks if the school is to be confident that ethnic minority children and their parents are able to take the fullest possible part in the wider aspects of school life. Such monitoring should include a range of home and school issues, such as:

- take-up of out-of-school activities such as clubs, outings, school trips and events;
- patterns of attendance and absence;
- allocation of responsibility roles in school;
- whether they have friends to play with at playtimes and lunchtimes;
- whether any parents need translation services for school notes or documentation;
- parental understanding of school arrangements for lunches, assemblies, school and sports dress;
- parents' understanding of how to help with homework;
- parental contributions to parent-teacher organisations, the governors, or help in school;
- the celebration of the rare bilingualism of some of the children and the varied cultural richness they bring to the school;
- the effectiveness of written guidance to staff on handling incidents with a racial undertone and the system for maintaining a racial incidents record.

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

49. The school cares for its children well. There is a high level of personal care. Children are provided with a caring, happy and supportive environment. Parents are really pleased with this and say that their children like school. The good provision for welfare and guidance identified in the previous inspection report continues to be a strong feature.

50. There are sound systems for safeguarding children's health and safety. There are regular safety inspections and appropriate action taken. Arrangements for first aid and dealing with accidents and illness are appropriate. There is a consistently high standard of pastoral care. A good programme for children's personal, social and health education has been introduced since the last inspection. The small number of health and safety issues that were raised in the last report have been addressed successfully.

51. There are satisfactory arrangements for dealing with child protection issues and staff training has been undertaken to keep them updated. Mid-day supervisors are kept well informed where there may be concerns about a child and links with outside agencies are effective. Clear written procedures are now in place and this is an improvement since the last inspection.

52. There are good procedures for promoting attendance and punctuality. Registration procedures are satisfactory, but unexplained absences are not always followed up quickly enough. Registers meet statutory requirements.

53. The procedures for monitoring behaviour continue to be very good, as they were at the time of the previous inspection. Children have helped to draw up their *class promises* and these are kept. Rewards and sanctions are used sensibly to promote very good standards of behaviour, excellent relationships and motivate pupils to do their best.

54. Continuously high results show that the school's assessment procedures are working well and that they are much improved since the last inspection. Years 3, 4 and 5 undertake tests at the end of the year. The school analyses the results of these very critically to see where, if necessary, improvements need to be made in order to raise attainment. Results of national tests taken by children in Years 2 and 6 are also analysed in detail and compared to all schools nationally and to schools in similar circumstances. This shows how well the school is performing and indicates areas that need improving. For instance, writing has been identified, rightly, as an area of development in the curriculum. Teachers set targets for children to achieve each half-term, not only for literacy and numeracy, but also in personal, social and health education. The assessment of the foundation subjects is less well developed and has not improved significantly since the last inspection.

55. Teachers check children's progress during lessons effectively and keep good records on children who do significantly better or worse than expected. Lesson plans are then adapted to take note of this and additional time is built in for additional challenges or more reinforcement. Children's progress in the main subjects, English, mathematics and science is recorded each week as well as the results of spelling and multiplication tables tests. Teachers' *mark books* also contain details about those who have taken part in school events. Samples of work have been collected, for example in writing, to show the expected National Curriculum levels. This is helpful, particularly for new staff who can quickly check the standards that are required at each stage. Children's work is marked satisfactorily. These thorough procedures do much to enhance the rate of children's progress.

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

56. Parents are right to regard Sacred Heart as a good school. Their perceptions and concerns, identified in the last report, have been successfully addressed. They feel very welcome and find it easy to approach the school with suggestions and concerns they may have. Parents state that the school works closely with them and they are very happy with the communications they receive. However, the policy for giving homework continues to be implemented inconsistently across the classes as it was at the time of the last inspection. This is an important issue for the school to deal with as the progress of some children is held back. In addition, it limits the contribution parents can make to their child's education.

57. The parents who returned the questionnaire or attended the parents' meeting held prior to the inspection are very pleased with many aspects of the school. They are particularly pleased that their children like school and that they are expected to work hard and become mature, sensible young people. Some say that they would like more information about how their children are getting on and more activities outside of lessons.

58. The vast majority of parents attend consultation evenings and a good number help in school in a wide range of activities. They also help with design and technology and information and communication technology lessons. There is an active parent teacher association that raises substantial funds for learning resources, such as computers and playground equipment. The good arrangements for informal and formal contacts between staff and parents, enables parents to be informed effectively about their child's progress.

59. The quality and quantity of information for parents is good. Information includes letters and newsletters from the school and parent teacher association. The school prospectus and the annual governors' report are informative. The end-of-year reports are written well and clearly outline the academic and personal targets for the children to achieve in the ensuing period. They do not always contain the levels of attainment children have reached. The reports identify each child's strengths in a subject but do not always record the areas for development. Improvements to the reports would give more information to parents about their child's progress.

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

60. The previous inspection judged the leadership to be good, although there were some concerns about communication with parents. Five terms after the inspection a new headteacher was appointed and the school has been taken forward energetically and effectively. The leadership provided by the headteacher, governors and key staff is now very good and enhances the school's capacity to improve. Clear direction is given and there is a successful emphasis on the need to raise standards. Results are analysed carefully so as to identify priority areas for development. Targets for improvement in the school's performance are challenging and everyone is determined to work together to achieve them. Communication with parents has been improved, although homework arrangements are not always clear.

61. The governing body is knowledgeable about the school's strengths and weaknesses and has become increasingly influential in helping to raise standards. It has appropriate committees that meet regularly. The relationship between governors and staff is good and has a positive impact on the school. The chair of governors acts as a critical friend to the headteacher and this is appreciated. Governors receive reports from subject coordinators and make regular visits to the school as part of their monitoring responsibility. This is good practice because it helps build an effective partnership between governors and staff.

62. Day to day management of the school is very good and enables everyone to get on with their tasks. Visitors are made to feel really welcome. Staff and governors are rightly proud of the learning environment in which the children work. The school's general ethos of treating children as individuals, valuing their efforts and supporting them in areas of difficulty are reflected successfully in its daily life and excellent relationships.

63. The headteacher rightly places strong emphasis on the importance of monitoring, evaluating and improving the quality of teaching and learning. In addition to scrutiny of children's work, a programme of lesson observations has been put in place that includes feedback to teachers and points for action. This is part of the ongoing drive to maintain high standards, but is particularly important for new members of staff.

64. Coordinators are enthusiastic about their roles, although some are relatively new to such responsibility. Most have clear ideas about the action needed to improve provision and raise standards in their subjects. They help prioritise developments and give guidance to colleagues. Some are involved in observing lessons, either in partnership with the headteacher or on their own. This fosters a sense of teamwork and helps to spread good practice.

65. The school's approach to the teaching and management of children with special educational needs is good. The children are supported with skill and sensitivity. The special educational needs coordinator is experienced in teaching children with learning difficulties. She liaises closely with the link governor for this area of work. Similarly, the school's approach to traveller children and those with English as an additional language enables them to make good progress.

66. The school has an appropriate number of teachers, although some have not been in post long. Since the previous inspection, the number of teaching assistants has been increased and shared across all classes. Their contribution to the general life of the school, as well as to children's attainment and progress, is substantial. High priority is rightly given to staff training and the induction of new teachers is good. A system of performance management is in place and is being extended to include support staff.

67. New classrooms, including a nursery, have been built since the previous inspection and accommodation is now good. It is maintained well and helps to create a pleasant working environment for children and staff. Resources overall are satisfactory, although the provision for information and communication technology is limited and hinders the children's progress in the subject. The school is aware of this and is seeking to improve the situation.

68. The staff and governors produce a very good annual development plan which identifies clearly the key priorities for development and spending. They base the plan on a clear-sighted evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses and on what is needed to raise standards further. Parents are consulted about school initiatives and children too can put forward their views through the school council. Governors have a very thorough appreciation of the academic and pastoral standards achieved and how the school's test results compare with those of schools with similar children on roll. Recent expenditure has wisely sought to maintain a good level of staffing and particularly to ensure sufficient learning support assistance in the classrooms. Some additional expenditure has been required for the new buildings and to improve resources for information and communication technology. Funds allocated to meet the needs of particular groups of children are correctly applied and the recommendations of the most recent audit have been implemented.

69. The current budget forecasts a deficit at the end of the financial year, but this will be absorbed by a good sum of money carried forward from last year. While the school is therefore likely to end the year in budget surplus, the carry forward anticipated for next year is very low. Expenditure next year is unlikely to be sustainable at the present level, but by good forward planning, governors have identified a range of options to meet this circumstance.



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

70. The governors, headteacher and staff should build on the school's many strengths to

- (1) Raise standards and increase resources in information and communication technology;

Paragraphs: 14, 29, 58, 67,68, 97,107,142 – 150;

- (2) Improve the arrangements for homework and ensure that they are implemented consistently through the school.

Paragraphs: 29, 48, 56, 59.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	72
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	26

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	11	33	22	1	0	0
Percentage	7%	15%	46%	31%	1%	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	6	257
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	15

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	26

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	14

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	15

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.4
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2002	20	17	37

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	19	20
	Girls	16	17	17
	Total	35	36	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	95 (97)	97 (97)	100 (97)
	National	84 (86)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	19	19	20
	Girls	16	17	17
	Total	35	36	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	95 (97)	97 (97)	100 (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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2002	16	18	34

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	13	12	11
	Girls	18	15	17
	Total	31	27	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	91 (88)	79 (82)	82 (100)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	13	12	13
	Girls	18	14	18
	Total	31	26	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	91 (88)	76 (85)	91 (88)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

***Ethnic background of pupils***

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

***Exclusions in the last school year***

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
191	0	0
14	0	0
24	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
5	0	0
11	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
6	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
3	0	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.4
Average class size	29

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	123

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	11
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	14
Number of pupils per FTE adult	11

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	545,791
Total expenditure	514,245
Expenditure per pupil	2,016
Balance brought forward from previous year	40,109
Balance carried forward to next year	31,545

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5.7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4.9

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

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	287
Number of questionnaires returned	81

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	67	32	1	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	60	37	2	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	41	52	4	1	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	37	41	17	1	4
The teaching is good.	54	41	1	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41	46	11	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	38	4	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	36	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	37	52	6	1	4
The school is well led and managed.	44	48	7	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	55	43	0	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	48	16	2	12

## **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**

71. The nursery is new and was established in September 2002. Children aged three and four years attend five mornings a week. 19 children aged three years joined an established group of 11 four year olds, in the nursery, at the start of the spring term 2003. Children start in the reception classes in the September or January in the year of their fifth birthday. 22 children joined the reception classes, from playgroups in the area, in January 2003. 17 children, who were already established in the reception class, transferred to a new class with 10 Year 1 children.

72. On entry to the nursery and reception class most children have attainment above that typical for their age. Their personal and social skills and in some cases language skills are particularly well developed. The majority soon become confident members of the school community.

73. National guidelines for the Foundation Stage have been implemented satisfactorily. The school now uses the curriculum for the Foundation Stage and the relevant parts of the Literacy and Numeracy strategies to plan work for the children. This is better than at the time of the last inspection when the under fives curriculum did not cover the required areas of study.

74. The accommodation is new. The nursery is bright and colourful with easy access to an outside play space. The outdoor area was completed a few days before the inspection. The school has good plans to develop the outside play space further so that all accommodation is used fully and effectively.

75. Teaching in the nursery is satisfactory and good in the reception class. All the staff involved have worked with determination to get the nursery off to an effective start and plan a wide range of activities. The nursery planning sheets are complex. Plans do not yet link the learning objectives and activities to the “stepping stones” towards the early learning goals clearly enough. This means the needs of different children are not always taken into account. Records need to show the activities children choose during each session so that they do not always choose the same task. In addition, it would allow the staff to record and evaluate children’s progress more effectively.

76. Reception children from the Year 1 class join the reception class in the afternoons and use the nursery as a resource base. The high number of children participating and the wide range of tasks planned means that not all activities are developed in sufficient depth. These arrangements are new. The coordinator knows that this organisation is not as effective as it should be and is looking at different ways to improve it.

### **Personal social and emotional development**

77. The children start school with very good personal and social skills. Sound teaching in the nursery and good teaching in the reception class develop these skills so that many children are on course to exceed the early learning goals at the end of the reception year.



78. In the nursery, some children need reassurance when they arrive at the start of the day, but most are confident and enter the room independently to join the group. Children are happy, confident and pleased to be in school.

79. All adults in the nursery and reception classes ensure that children maintain the expected standard of behaviour. Children are trusted to work independently and move sensibly to their choice of activities. They choose the items and the materials they wish to use appropriately, for example, when making models or playing with construction toys.

80. Children concentrate well and are often engrossed in their tasks. They work cooperatively and help each other. Children are polite, take turns, listen to each other and move about the school sensibly and quietly. Adults encourage children to take responsibility from the start. For example, in the nursery, one child collects the name cards each day. All children manage their drinks well at playtime, opening cartons or flasks and putting rubbish in the bin. In the nursery, *snack time* is a social occasion and a chance to introduce the children to new tastes, such as prawn crackers. Relationships are very good between children and adults and this gives them confidence to speak up in group discussions and complete tasks successfully.

### **Communications, language and literacy**

81. Children start school with skills above that expected for children of similar age. By the end of the reception year most are on course to have exceeded the early learning goals in speaking and listening, reading and writing.

82. Teaching in all classes is satisfactory. Speaking and listening skills are taught through stories, rhymes, role-play, practical activities and discussions, including *snack time*. In the nursery, many children speak confidently, others are less so and need adult encouragement to talk more. Children in the reception class are confident in joining in discussions and answering questions.

83. Children are encouraged to use their imagination, especially in role-play activities, such as *The Vet's Surgery*. Teachers use questioning effectively to extend children's vocabulary. However, throughout the Foundation Stage, observations show that some opportunities are missed to use questioning and discussion to encourage the children to talk about what they know and have learned.

84. Children are encouraged to read from the moment they start school. There is an area in the nursery where they can choose to read books on their own or share one with a friend. Storytime is organised to cater for the needs of the older and younger children and is enjoyed by all. The children participate where appropriate and predict what might happen next. In one lesson, they were observed supplying rhyming words to complete verses in the rhyming story *Sometimes I like to curl up in a ball*. Children in the reception class are keen to read to adults. They know how to use simple word-building skills to check unknown words and use picture cues well to make sense of the text. Some are fluent and need to be given the opportunity to extend their skills.

85. In the nursery, children have regular opportunities to develop writing skills, drawing, colouring and making patterns. There is a designated writing area. Children choose to go there during activity time and do their best to apply their developing literacy skills. The reception class builds on children's writing experiences. Children were observed using white boards to practice writing letter shapes and sounds, some using a model to copy. Adults supported this activity well to ensure that letters were formed correctly. Work scrutiny shows that older children use their knowledge of the letter sound system in developing their writing

skills. They make books, write simple sentences and have used a word processor to write a message in their Christmas card.

## **Mathematical Development**

86. The teaching of mathematical development is satisfactory in the nursery and good in the reception class. Children are on course, and some to exceed, the early learning goals in mathematical development. In the nursery, stories and rhymes are used effectively to support learning. In one activity observed, the story of *Noah's Ark*, children were able to count, with their teacher, animals to 20 and beyond. Mathematical development is planned as part of small group work. For example, two children selected pairs of animals from a collection of models and tried to count in *twos*.

87. In the reception class, clear planning shows that teachers consider the systematic development of skills. Resources are used well to encourage the children to participate happily. Adult help is used effectively to support teaching. Children recognise and name numerals to nine, they count reliably to 10 and sequence numbers. Adults encourage the use of appropriate mathematical language, such as *bigger* and *smaller*, *above*, *below*, *square* and *circle*. Scrutiny of work shows that mathematics is linked to other areas of learning and children's experiences. For example, children make number patterns in artwork, find numbers in the world around them and use the computer to draw and describe shapes.

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

88. Teaching is satisfactory in the nursery and good in the reception class so that children are on course to exceed the early learning goals at the end of the reception year. Children in the nursery have good opportunities to explore their world. During the inspection, as part of a Chinese New Year theme, they experienced what happens to noodles when they are cooked. They described how hard they felt before they were cooked and how soft they were afterwards. They enjoyed eating them and used chopsticks extremely well. Children explored many aspects associated with the Chinese New Year, making dragons, listening to Chinese music and running a Chinese restaurant in the role-play area. In other activities, children use construction toys well to make models. They find out about objects and materials using their senses, use dough to make pretend food and investigate the 'wet' and 'dry' properties of sand. Two computers are a recent addition to the nursery. These have yet to be used fully.

89. In the reception class, children discovered the waterproof properties of materials and can say which ones are best to keep out water. Children build, construct and select materials they need without the constant supervision of an adult. For example, a child was observed making a trap to catch *the wolf in the little pigs' house* from recyclable containers and sticky tape. Computers are used appropriately to enhance literacy and numeracy. Children show skill in using the equipment, clicking and dragging with the mouse as well as using the direction arrows to instruct the computer.

## **Physical development**

90. Teaching in physical development is satisfactory and much is good. The children are on course to exceed the early learning goals at the end of the reception year. Nursery children can remove their shoes and socks and put them on again without help from an adult. They move with confidence and control in the large space in the hall. They negotiate the stairs on the way back to the nursery confidently. Outside the children enjoy playing on a range of wheeled toys, steering them carefully. There is a new play house as well as small games equipment and sand and water to promote children's speaking and listening, social and physical skills. There will be more opportunities for climbing activities when the new play space is completed. Many of the four year olds have good hand control and use scissors to cut out carefully.

91. In the reception class, children move about the school and classroom with confidence. The children have different levels of skill in making different movements, some have very good body control. They enjoy physical education lessons. In one lesson, the teacher used a poem, *I wiggle with my fingers...* to warm children up for movement. Later, the children stretched and curled their body into different shapes, moved like a bear and worked cooperatively with a partner. They moved with confidence and agility.

## **Creative development**

92. Teaching is satisfactory throughout the Foundation Stage and children make sound progress in this area of learning. The children are provided with an appropriate range of opportunities to develop their creative skills.

93. In the nursery, children explore colour and shape in painting, drawing and making models, such as Chinese dragons. They use their imagination in role-play situations and enjoy singing simple songs and rhymes. They respond well to music and show pleasure when playing un-tuned percussion instruments. Some children tap their knees and clap their hands, following a sequence of rhythms and keep in time.

94. In the reception class, children continue to develop confidence as they try out new ideas, exploring colour, texture, shape and sound. They use different materials and tools to make three-dimensional models, such as snowmen. Children move appropriately in response to poems and use their imagination effectively in role play. Construction toys, story boxes and puppets all contribute to the activities that enable the children to use their imagination and promote speaking and listening skills.

## **ENGLISH**

95. The previous inspection in 1997 found standards to be average at the end of the infant stage and above average at the end of the junior stage. The school monitors its performance carefully and this is paying dividends. Its reading and writing results in national tests for children age seven have been very high in recent years. They have been more variable for children aged eleven, but mostly good compared to the national scene.

96. Scrutiny of work and lesson observations during the inspection, show that all children, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. At the age of seven, their attainment is well above average. It is not as high at age eleven, although still above

average. The variation is because of differences in abilities among the cohorts of children taking the tests.

97. The National Literacy Strategy is firmly established and is helping to raise standards. Class texts are chosen well and appeal to children's interests. Teachers ensure that literacy skills are reinforced and developed in other lessons. For example, in their design and technology studies about packaging, children in Years 2 and 3 were introduced to the use of words such as *logo*, *font* and *graphics*. Not enough use is made of information and communication technology in lessons. Homework is used to reinforce children's learning, but there are inconsistencies between classes and expectations are not always clear. Parents are right to express some concern about this.

98. Children's speaking and listening skills are very good. Most children speak confidently and communicate meaning clearly. They listen attentively, answer questions sensibly and contribute well to class discussions, sometimes using their own experiences to help illustrate a particular point. Children are pleased to talk to visitors about their work and matters that interest them. They are polite, respectful and show pride in their achievements. By the age of seven, many children are able to offer opinions and preferences. Examples of this were seen in a lesson about constructing the opening paragraph of a traditional tale. Children put forward sensible suggestions and showed an awareness of the importance of introducing main characters and describing the setting. Junior children often express ideas fluently. Their answers to questions show they have listened carefully to what is being asked. By the age of eleven, their use and understanding of vocabulary is very good. For example, when discussing persuasive terminology one child said that the word *alternative* means *something else*.

99. Children are enthusiastic readers and enjoy listening to stories. Appropriate time is given to the development of reading skills and children are encouraged to see it as a really worthwhile activity. Their individual reading books are chosen well and this shows good teacher direction. Most children take reading books home regularly and reading record books are used effectively as a means of dialogue between parent, child and teacher. This encourages children to read and helps them to know how to improve. By the age of seven, children's reading skills are generally very good. Many read with confidence and fluency. They can recall the details of stories they have read and show a good understanding of main characters and story lines. The importance of recognising and using letter sounds when tackling unfamiliar words is emphasised effectively by teachers and children benefit from this. It is particularly helpful for children with special educational needs. By the age of eleven, children's reading skills are mostly above average. They read fluently and often with good expression. Many have favourite stories and authors. They use dictionaries well and their library and reference skills are good.

100. The school has worked hard successfully to develop children's writing skills and by the end of both the infant and junior stages they are above the level expected nationally. Opportunities are provided for children to write for a range of purposes, including stories, letters, poems, reports and playlets. In Year 2, children have learned about the features of a traditional tale and have written part of *Rumpelstiltskin* as a play. Their efforts show a good understanding of speech and the role of a Narrator. They have considered the importance of story settings and show a secure understanding of sequencing events in the right order. Work is set out well and full stops and capital letters are mostly used correctly. In stories, children's ideas are usually developed effectively with appropriate and often interesting vocabulary. Brighter children show a growing awareness of writing for different audiences. Year 6 children plan their writing well. Ideas are sometimes lively and thoughtful with imaginative use of vocabulary. Sentence structure, spelling and presentation of work are mostly good. Brighter children are able to put forward a point of view clearly and precisely,

for example when writing about the use of mobile phones in school. When undertaking research, most children show the ability to locate, extract and organise information effectively.

101. The structure provided by the literacy hour has given teachers clear guidelines about the organisation of lessons and this is proving beneficial. Teaching is good and sometimes very good. Resources are prepared well and lesson plans are clear about what children are to learn and how. This is often explained to them at the beginning of the lesson so that they know what they are going to do and why. Relationships are very good and help to establish a positive climate for learning. Children have very good attitudes towards the subject and behave really well. The best teaching stems from:

- high expectations of what the children can achieve in the time available;
- reminders about previous work and how it links with the tasks to be undertaken;
- skilful use of questions that assess what children understand and challenges them to think hard;
- ensuring that children know what to do next and how to improve;
- the ongoing reinforcement of basic skills, such as the identification of nouns and adjectives;
- group work that is matched very effectively to children's needs;
- a sense of purpose and direction that enthruses children to give of their best.

102. Resources, overall, are satisfactory. The subject coordinator is a part time teacher who is committed to the ongoing raising of standards. She has scrutinised children's work, monitored their individual targets and rewritten the school's policy statement. Children's literacy experiences are broadened and enriched successfully through a *Book Fairs* and occasional visits from theatre groups, writers and poets. Such activities help to enliven children's interest in the subject.

## **MATHEMATICS**

103. Since the last inspection five years ago when attainment was average, standards in mathematics by the end of Years 2 and 6 have improved remarkably. Inspection evidence shows that attainment is well above average by the age of seven and above average by the age of eleven. A significant number of children are expected to reach the higher National Curriculum levels. This is as a result of good teaching, very successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy and target setting to ensure that children reach at least the expected National Curriculum level. All children, including those with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well.

104. Results in national tests at the end of Year 2 in 2002, were very good compared to all schools nationally and to similar schools. In the same year, national test results for children in Year 6 were good in mathematics in comparison to all schools but average when compared to similar schools. There was good progress between the infant and junior stages in mathematics. Boys do much better than girls in the national tests at the end of the infant stage but by age eleven girls do slightly better.

105. At the end of Year 2, almost all children have a very good understanding of number bonds to well beyond 20. They use a range of skills, such as estimating, doubling and halving in calculations effectively and explain patterns of multiples on a 100 square confidently. Teachers place strong emphasis on enabling children to solve written number problems accurately. Children tackle the work with enthusiasm and energy, concentrating well even when tasks become challenging and require deep concentration. Some exchange useful ideas with a partner and together manage to calculate the correct answers. In a good mental arithmetic session, a child explained his way of reasoning, *"I counted in my head and then used my fingers to see if I was right."* Past examples of work show good progress in numeracy over time as a result of thorough teaching of basic skills. Children identify two and three-dimensional shapes, such as *triangles, rectangles, circles and cubes, cuboids and cylinders*, naming their properties correctly. When telling the time, they know *o'clock, half and quarter hours* and measure lines and shapes accurately using centimetres.

106. By the end of Year 6, many are competent mathematicians and use and apply their skills and knowledge well. The brighter children use advanced reasoning skills in problem solving to hypothesise and calculate answers using a simple algebraic formula. All groups work consistently well and have developed a good understanding of place value. Children handle and operate large numbers with confidence. Mental skills are well developed and where appropriate, those with special needs are given good support to enable them to take part in quick-fire oral sessions. When calculating answers to written problems children select the quickest method suitable for them. They respond well to questioning and explain their chosen process in a clear and concise way. Very little time is wasted in lessons with most children showing a strong commitment to their work. Children volunteer confidently to write on the board, modelling the teacher's role when giving explanations.

107. Previous work shows good understanding in other aspects of mathematics. Children calculate fractions and percentages accurately and use formulae to work out areas of triangles and rectangles in square centimetres and metres efficiently. They draw, measure and name different types of angles and find out the angles using a protractor. One class has gathered and interpreted data representing the findings on computer block graphs, such as one on seeds eaten by birds. Presentation is mainly neat as most children take pride in their work and this reflects their considerable enjoyment of the subject. The use of information and communication technology in mathematics is at an early stage, as older children have still to learn how to represent data in line graphs and pie charts.

108. Teaching is of a high standard overall. It is very good in Years 5 and 6. Lessons are led at a brisk pace and children are kept on task by stimulating activities. The aims of each lesson are written clearly for children to see and teacher and class together decide whether these have been achieved at the end of the lesson. All children are expected to do well and emulate the good examples set by staff. The correct mathematical vocabulary is taught consistently and this helps children express themselves well in discussions and in mental arithmetic sessions. Sufficient time is allowed for explanations on their methods and for them to evaluate other possibilities suggested by their classmates. In oral work, white boards are used effectively for jottings and enable children to try out and select the most appropriate number operation for a set problem. This means that they quickly become active participants in lessons and develop independent learning strategies from an early age.

109. The management of mathematics is good. There is a consistent approach to teaching the subject throughout the school. The National Numeracy Strategy is used effectively in planning and several staff use the Internet to get more ideas to extend their teaching. Lesson formats are similar from class to class and much emphasis is put on reasoning and using and applying skills already learnt. Assessment during lessons is good and children's progress is monitored effectively. National test results are analysed for any differences between boys and girls in achievement. Areas for development are identified and determined action taken to improve standards. Classrooms have dedicated display areas for mathematics including a large 100 square, bright numeracy and shape posters and vocabulary prompts. Children refer to these when they are working. In the infants, colourful *teddy* number lines are used as a resource at the start of lessons to capture children's interest and help them to learn. Homework tasks are given but not consistently across the classes.

## SCIENCE

110. The school's last inspection found above average standards in science at the end of the infant and junior stages. Throughout the school, children progressed well in learning the subject and showed good understanding in all aspects of it. The school has gone from strength to strength since then and standards have risen still further. The attainment of the seven and eleven year olds is now well above average for their age. This represents a very good rate of improvement since the last inspection.

111. Brighter children do particularly well and those with special educational needs or at an early stage in learning English, receive the help they need to make good progress. There is no significant difference between the achievements of boys and girls.

112. The school's national test and assessment results since 1999 provide further evidence of this improvement. They show standards rising year-by-year. A slight dip in 2002 results for eleven years olds is explained by the absence of two able children on the day of the test. The tests show standards in 2002, compared with national expectations, have been very high among the seven year olds and above average among the eleven year olds, despite the *dip* mentioned previously.

113. Importantly, the tests also illustrate the particular strength of the school in challenging its brighter children. Among both seven year olds and eleven year olds, the percentage of children scoring higher levels of attainment for their age was well above average.

114. By the age of seven, most children have a very good appreciation of the range of materials in daily use and how they are suited to their purposes. They know, for example, that coats need to be flexible, but that rainwear needs to be both flexible and waterproof. By making toast and applying simple tests of taste, smell and colour they learned that materials can be changed under different conditions. Some children appreciate that some of these changes cannot be reversed, while others can. They have learned what plants and animals need to grow healthily and can suggest reasons why a simple electric circuit, lighting a bulb, might not work. Under teacher direction, they conduct simple experiments and record their results in words and pictures with care.

115. In the juniors, these attainments are built upon effectively. By the time they leave the school, most children have a very good understanding of forces and their application in daily life. They can explain why a parachute falls more slowly than a stone and why a heavy metal boat floats while a metal ingot sinks. They have experimented with rolling balls down slopes coated with different surfaces, noting the timings of descents and learning about the effects of friction on moving objects. They can explain the processes and procedures necessary to separate different mixtures of liquids and solids. Brighter children can also describe the use of evaporation to separate some solutions. Children have a very good appreciation of the safeguards necessary to ensure that an experiment is a fair and valid test. For example, they listed the variables needing control in their ball rolling experiment. They observe, measure and record their results carefully and the brighter children formulate conclusions from their findings.

116. When the school was last inspected, the science lessons seen were nearly all good, or very good. They encouraged children to make fast progress. However, the inspection noted some unnecessary over-direction of work that limited the opportunity for children to develop independent research and learning skills. Lessons observed in the current inspection, in both the infants and the juniors, were also of a good, or very good standard, showing that the school has successfully sustained its high teaching quality. There were no unsatisfactory lessons. In the best of the lessons, children are encouraged to take some decisions for themselves and to make suggestions about how experiments can be carried out. Lessons are no longer over-directed and children have more opportunity to develop personal independence than previously. Lessons now set complex challenges for the children, making them think hard and as a result their learning progresses very well. In one lesson, in Year 2, children made simple circuits with batteries and bulbs. When these worked, they were challenged to try out alternative connections and to suggest reasons why each of these failed to light the bulbs. This is a very good level of challenge for children of this age. The lesson was lively and interesting and the children's learning progressed very well.

117. In some classes, the brighter children are still required to work through tasks which do not extend them, before moving on to the good extension work planned for them. Lessons make minimal use of available computer technology to extend and enrich the work, although children's written work in science does make a valuable contribution to their literacy learning.

118. Children still have the good, positive attitudes to their work in science noted in the last inspection. They enjoy suggesting ways tests might be carried out and have the confidence to predict likely outcomes. They behave well and work very effectively in small groups for practical activities.

119. The science coordinator gives good support to her colleagues. Lively enrichment activities such as a recent *Science Week* when children had the chance to meet people in the community whose work is scientific have been arranged together with an opportunity to join in a dramatic activity with a visiting actor. The school has been involved in a project about science for brighter children and this is having a positive impact on standards in the school. The overall management of science is good.

120. The school has sustained the many strengths of its previous inspection and has raised standards even further.



## ART AND DESIGN

121. Four lessons were seen during the period of the inspection, three of them at the junior stage. Judgements were informed by an examination of teachers' planning, scrutiny of children's work and displays around the school. The programme of activities is sometimes lively and interesting. There are examples of very good work and, overall, the children's achievements are better than those expected nationally at ages seven and eleven. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous report.

122. Children's learning over time, including those with special educational needs, is good at both the infant and junior stages. They build up their skills in a systematic way and this too is an improvement on the previous inspection that found some inconsistency in skills development. Interesting ideas are generated and children show increasing confidence in experimenting with a range of media.

123. Children show good skills in drawing, painting and colouring. They often use these skills to help them illustrate work in other subjects, for example in their history studies of Ancient Greece. As they move up through the school, their creative development is good and they show growing confidence in the ability to represent what they see through pictures. Their regular use of sketch books helps them to do this. Children mix and apply paints with increasing skill and make good progress in their understanding of line, shape, pattern and texture. Their work includes printing, collage, weaving and the making of computerised pictures. Children in Years 3 and 4 have produced some particularly pleasing prints based on butterfly shapes and the Tudor Rose. Appropriate emphasis is given to observational skills. In this regard, children from Years 2 and 3 have studied patterns found in the environment and have produced some good drawings of leaves. Appropriate attention is given to the work of well-known artists. For example, children in Year 6 used paintings by Claude Monet in their work on landscapes. In another example, Year 2 children have drawn twigs, leaves and cones linked to a consideration of designs by William Morris. These studies help children to be more aware of the ways in which different artists represent what they see and feel.

124. The teaching observed ranged from very good to unsatisfactory. Lesson planning is usually good and resources are prepared well. Teachers begin by reminding children about previous work and explaining what is to be done. This helps build children's confidence and has a positive impact on their progress. Relationships are often very good and questions are used effectively to help children know how to improve. During practical sessions, teachers sometimes stop the whole class in order to share a child's success and to give ideas to others. This is good practice because it helps children feel their efforts are valued and enables them to learn from one another. Children's attitudes towards the subject are good and they behave well, although noisy at times. In the best teaching, expectations of what children can do are high, the work moves forward quickly and there is a sense of real purpose. In unsatisfactory teaching, the tasks are not sufficiently well matched to children's knowledge and understanding. As a result, their learning does not move forward enough in the time available.

125. The coordinator for the subject is a part-time teacher who has held the responsibility for some five years. She has recently rewritten the school's scheme of work to include national guidelines. A useful portfolio of children's work is maintained and helps teachers to understand what can be achieved. Resources are satisfactory and stored well.

126. Displays of art and design work around the school are often of a high standard. This helps build children's visual awareness and encourages their creative development.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

127. Four lessons were observed involving children from Years 1 to 5. Additional evidence was collected from an examination of teachers' planning and scrutiny of children's work displayed around the school. A broad and balanced programme of activities is offered and there are examples of very good work. Overall, their achievements at age seven and eleven are better than those expected nationally and this is an improvement since the previous report.

128. At both the infant and junior stages, children's learning, including those with special educational needs, is good in lessons and over time. They build up their knowledge and skills in a systematic way and their work benefits from this. Many exercise choice and undertake responsibility well when designing and making products. They show growing confidence in using equipment and handling a range of different materials and media. Their manipulative and control skills are often good, for example when cutting, gluing and joining materials together.

129. Children show good attitudes towards the subject and behave really well. They generate interesting ideas and plan the design and making of products with increasing imagination, some of which have moving parts. For example, children in Year 5 have made model fairground rides and used motors successfully to make the parts move. They have constructed the models skilfully and are rightly proud of the results. In another example, children in Year 1 illustrated the story of *Little Red Riding Hood* well by making pictures that included simple sliding mechanisms. Many children have a growing understanding of the importance of refining what they make in order to bring about improvements. They think carefully about the order of their work and the suitability of materials and tools. Particular attention is given to safety and children are aware of its importance, for example when using scissors or glue.

130. Teaching overall is good and in the lesson about the construction of fairground rides it was excellent. Activities are prepared thoroughly with appropriate resources easily to hand, including reference materials. This helps to ensure that time is used productively because children can get on quickly with their tasks. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and very good relationships with the children. This has a positive impact on their progress. Lessons begin with reminders about previous work and questions are used effectively to draw out what children already know and understand. Good opportunities are provided for them to work together and this helps build their social skills. An example of this was seen when children from Years 3 and 4 were working in pairs to plan the making of biscuits for a particular person or event. They listened to one another and shared ideas well. In the very best teaching, children's imagination is fired and their creative development is really good. There is an insistence on very high standards of achievement and behaviour. Children become fully engrossed in the tasks and are challenged to think hard. As a result, they produce work of high quality.

131. The coordination of the subject is held temporarily by two young members of staff who are relatively new to the school. This is a good opportunity for them to support one another and to grow professionally. They have started to produce a portfolio of children's work, including photographs. The programmes of work undertaken by the children follow recent national guidance, but the school's written policies do not yet reflect this. Resources are satisfactory and available as required.

132. Displays of work around the school are often of a very good standard, for example those linked to studies of packaging. They encourage children to think carefully about what they are doing and help develop their visual awareness.

## GEOGRAPHY

133. Attainment at the end of the infants is above that expected in Year 2. Children know about different maps and can identify which give the most detail. Most were able to place the maps in order of detail, for example a town, the county of Suffolk, East Anglia, Great Britain, then the world. One child wrote a simple definition about a *big scale* as *something with lots of detail in it*. Another explained confidently how to use coordinates to find certain places, such as those ending with *ham*. They know about life in India and compare it well with their own. Children list similarities and differences such as both wear school uniform but one travels to school by car and the other by rickshaw. Year 1 children planned a holiday and many showed awareness of destinations beyond their own locality. Teachers used this knowledge effectively, drawing on experiences of places they had previously visited, including Preston, Hungary, France, Spain and Australia.

134. No lessons were seen in the juniors during the inspection but discussion with a group of older juniors and scrutiny of planning shows that attainment is good in Year 6. Children talked positively about work they had covered in different years. For instance, when in Year 5 they compared life in Bushey with life in St. Lucia. They visited shops in the locality and carried out a traffic survey and discussed whether cars should be allowed to park in the High Street. The contrasting effects of exhaust pollution on the environment were weighed against people's need for cars before the children took a vote. Children put together a tourism brochure on St. Lucia and drew lots of maps, so much so that one boy commented that, *It was quite weird at the end. I knew the exact structure of the whole island – beaches on one side, mountains on the other*. The group showed particular interest in map work and could locate facts about countries and continents often using the Internet. Videos helped them to understand how life in Kenya is affected by the weather and the water supply.

135. Teaching in the infants is good. Extension work is planned for the brighter children and those with special educational needs are given work that matches their ability level. All make good progress and this reflects the care teachers take in planning lessons. Children are asked to comment on how well they have done and if they have achieved the aims of the lesson. This helps to reinforce success and provides the opportunity for everyone to evaluate their efforts. Resources are well prepared and used to stimulate interest and a desire to learn more. Behaviour is good and children participate well in practical activities, keeping the pace brisk whilst concentrating on their work.

136. The coordinator is new to the post. A good start has been made and areas for further development have been identified once resources become available. National guidelines are adapted to suit the school's needs in planning the curriculum.

## HISTORY

137. No lessons were seen in the infants and there was insufficient written work to make judgements about standards. Scrutiny of teachers' planning and discussions with children confirm that the programme of work is covered. The lives of famous people, the Fire of London and a chronological time line formed part of the curriculum. Worksheets focussed on Florence Nightingale and children responded appropriately to questions such as *do you think...?* when writing about her life and work. One child gave the reason why they should remember her *because she was a very good lady*. When trying to compare her life with that of Mary Seacole, a Black Nurse, children experienced difficulties as they lacked enough knowledge to do this effectively. The topic on the Fire of London drew some sympathy from the class, with one child stating, *With this very strong wind and dry wooden houses people stand no chance but to die. I wish I could help in some way*.

138. Standards at age eleven are good. Children in Year 6 have been studying history topics over a term and a half. Currently they are studying Britain since the last war using relevant materials, such as 1950's newspapers, to note the main events of the time. Discussion with a group about previous work showed that children had learnt more than their writing showed. They recalled earlier in the year that members of their class brought war items to school, such as a *gas mask*, *RAF hat*, *soldier's pay book*, *stamp collection* and a *World War 2 biscuit* that helped them to understand more about the times. One granddad had kept a range of newspapers from between 1940-45 which he loaned for display and which the class found fascinating. Another child's grandmother thought being evacuated was *an adventure and everyone was singing*. Children recalled reading *Goodnight Mr. Tom* and could describe evocative scenes in this story about a child evacuated from London to the country.

139. Lessons in Year 5 on the Victorians and Year 4 on the Ancient Greeks are linked closely with literacy. Secondary source material was used to make comparisons between rich and poor people over a hundred years ago. To gain more information about Greek heroes, children looked at Homer's account of the fate of *Odysseus* as he met the giant *Cyclops*.

140. Teaching is good in the juniors and lessons are made interesting with different approaches. Staff use a range of resources and collect items of interest, often from children themselves, to enhance the topics. In one lesson on the Victorians, effective use was made of porcelain dolls brought from home to explain about the costumes of the period. Responses are mainly positive. Classes are well motivated they are keen to do research and extend their knowledge and understanding. Videos are used effectively to provide visual stimuli and to provoke discussions about the past. Children are expected to carry out their own investigations and often teachers grade this independent work. Year 6 were proud to say they had gained A\* for their work in the past. Much effort is put into displays that are bright and contain interesting photos, posters and charts of the period to reinforce children's learning.

141. The subject is managed well. National guidelines are now used and this has changed the pattern of teachers' work. More emphasis is placed on developing the skills of enquiry and computer programs are used effectively to help children with special educational needs. This approach was evident in the lessons observed. Visits to places of historical interest, such as the *Imperial War Museum* and the local memorial, provide realistic experiences to support class work. Children dress up in period costume and workshops, such as those on Tudors and Victorians broaden the curriculum and provide meaningful experiences of life in those times. Children are asked to complete unfinished work at home.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

142. The previous inspection painted a mixed picture of the school's information and communication technology provision. While children's attainment in the subject was found to be in line with national expectations, a number of weaknesses were identified. There were aspects of the teaching programme in the infants that received too little attention and there were weaknesses in staff subject knowledge and confidence.

143. The school has been seeking to address these issues and has made satisfactory progress. A nationally approved programme of study is being followed and most staff have now had substantial training in the subject. Teacher knowledge and confidence is no longer a concern. Some new computers have been obtained, but several of the machines still in use are out of date and in need of replacement. There is a satisfactory range of software and this has recently been reviewed to ensure it meets the requirements of the new teaching programme. The school has struggled with the technical problems related to maintaining computer systems in good order. Its appointment of a part-time information and communication technology technician had not been altogether successful and alternatives are being researched. The school accepts that the possibilities offered by information and communication technology to extend and enrich learning across the full curriculum have not yet been taken. The staff and governors are fully aware that more needs to be done to improve provision and to raise standards and they have sound plans in place for this purpose.

144. Information and communication technology is timetabled to provide half an hour a week of whole-class teaching and a similar amount of time for cross-curricular applications. However, shortages of hardware make for difficulties in achieving this. Although each class has a small number of computers and can call on some high-quality new laptops, whole class lessons do not give enough children the time they need at the keyboard for their skills to be fully developed. In addition, too little use of information and communication technology possibilities in support of lessons in other subjects also reduces the practical, *hands-on* time available to each child.

145. Children's attainment in information and communication technology at the end of the infants is in line with expectations for children of that age, but it is below expectations at age eleven. This is because the new programme of work, recently enhanced teacher skills and improving equipment take time to have their full impact on children's knowledge and skills. There is a shortfall in learning from earlier years still to be fully made up. The achievements of children with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language are in line with their abilities. On rare occasions, however, children with limited English need more support when working at the keyboard if they are to understand the task set.

146. Most seven year olds, including those with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language, use the keyboard confidently to enter, save and retrieve their work. They can operate a simple graphics programme to make and print designs based on the work of famous artists, such as Mondrian. They can suggest some of the ways computers are useful in everyday affairs.

147. Most eleven year olds can operate word processing and graphics programmes confidently and independently. They can load and use CD ROMS to research information for

work in subjects, such as history and have also downloaded project information from the internet, using a search engine. They are beginning to appreciate the potential of email to speed communications. A recently purchased computer driven microscope has allowed them to examine small objects and minibeasts. However, few are yet at ease with more complex operations, such as desktop publishing, the production of graphs, charts and spreadsheets and using computers to monitor and control events and appliances.

148. The quality of information and communication technology teaching is satisfactory in both the infants and the juniors. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. In good lessons, teachers enthuse children about the subject and relate learning to work in other areas of the curriculum. They organise the class effectively so that as many children as possible gain keyboard experience while others work at related pencil and paper tasks. They demonstrate new techniques well. There are weaknesses, in particular the work undertaken by children while others are at the computers, is not always appropriate, or challenging enough and the children do not progress as quickly as they could. Overall in lessons, there are too few chances for children to spend time practically at the keyboard as there are not enough resources.

149. Children invariably enjoy work in information and communication technology, especially when they are at the keyboard. Many bring skills from home and all are confident to try out new tasks. Most computer access is shared and the children collaborate well in these circumstances. They are well behaved and always do their best.

150. Information and communication technology has recently been and remains, a priority for development through the school development plan. This has called for skilled management and leadership in implementing new work programmes, helping some less confident staff and dealing with technical problems that inevitably arise in this area of work. The information and communication technology coordinator has been successful in these tasks and in bringing about improvements in the subject since the last inspection.

## **MUSIC**

151. At the last inspection, the standard of music of children in Year 6 was found to be good. There was a lack of evidence about the attainment of Year 2 children. Teaching in the juniors was good and children responded to their lessons in a positive and engaged way.

152. The school now sees music as one of its strengths. It is right to do so. Standards are very high at the ages both of seven and eleven. Music permeates the daily life of the school, promotes the social relationships of the children and brings a wealth of enriching cultural experience. The programme is of a very high quality. Not only are classroom lessons lively and challenging, but the children enjoy a very good range of opportunities to learn to play instruments, such as the piano, clarinet, violin, viola, flute and guitar. There are two orchestras providing the chance for beginners to enjoy the experience of ensemble playing. The orchestras contribute to assembly, to some church masses and to school concerts and performances. Although at present there is no separate school choir, the whole school is in effect a choir, rehearsing and singing together with enthusiasm and subtlety. The quality of orchestral and choral music in assembly is exceptionally good. Children are encouraged to join the church choir and enjoy the opportunity to listen to visiting musicians.

153. Most seven year old children know a little about great composers and their works. They describe their feelings as they listen to work such as Tchaikovsky's, *Nutcracker* and develop listening and music appreciation skills. They sing and play together, using pitched

and percussion instruments very effectively, maintaining rhythms and expressing the varied senses of the songs through vocal tone and colour.

154. By the age of eleven, this early learning has been extended and most of the children read music competently and sing with gusto and skill. They can sing in harmony, holding parts effectively. Their appreciation of the music of others has developed well and they can respond imaginatively to compositions, such as *Mussorgsky's, Pictures at an Exhibition* - which evoke strong images in the mind. They compose short pieces of their own and enjoy playing then together.

155. The quality of music teaching is excellent. A part-time music specialist with exceptional skills and dynamism teaches lessons that are challenging in terms of difficulty, but also presented in ways that motivate the children to give their best efforts. Consequently they learn quickly and take pride in their own progress. Many lessons create excellent links with work in other subjects. In one lesson in Year 1, children learned a little about Australian songs, linking with geography work. They learned and sang *Waltzing Matilda* with great enthusiasm and tried to make some sounds on a didgeridoo. They also listened to short extracts from the selected composer of the term and commented on their feelings about the pieces. All the lessons seen had these qualities of challenge, variety and fun. Music skills are built up systematically week-by-week and all children, including those with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language, make very good progress.

156. Children thoroughly enjoy their music programme and respond very well to the opportunities provided. They are confident in their own performance whether vocal or with instruments. They are happy to improvise, to devise their own original systems of notation and to work in small groups. Musical activity in school helps the children learn to work and collaborate together.

157. The coordinator for music works closely with the specialist teacher. Their very good teamwork in leading the music programme brings a real commitment to high standards and a rich, varied and challenging programme of work that enriches the ethos of the school.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

158. When the school was last inspected, the standard of children's work was found to be in line with expectations for their age. Swimming was an area of strength, with nearly all the children meeting the 25 metres national expectation by the time they leave.

159. Four lessons were seen during the inspection, but none of these were in Years 5 or 6. This means it is not possible to evaluate overall standards of work at age eleven. However, the school's records make it clear that nearly all children swim the expected 25 metres by the time they leave the school and this remains a strong aspect of the physical education programme. Attainment at the end of the infants exceeds the national expectation in dance and gymnastics. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

160. Most seven year old children are well coordinated for their age. They hold balances well in movement and stillness and think carefully about how they use space, levels and speed in their work. They develop simple sequences of movement and improve them

through practice. Their skills are developed systematically in the early junior classes where they also learn some traditional English dances. Children with special educational needs progress satisfactorily in physical education as do those learning English as an additional language who are helped by learning support assistants when necessary.

161. The quality of physical education teaching was satisfactory at the time of the last inspection and is now good in both the infants and the juniors. In the good lessons, teachers set interesting but challenging tasks for the children. Rather than prescribe them in too great detail, they encourage the children to think for themselves and to respond in a variety of different ways to the instructions given. Children set out apparatus carefully and safely and concentrate very well on the activities set for them. Teachers provide an opportunity for children to reflect on their own performances and to think of ways in which they might be improved. In one good lesson, in Year 2, children explored a range of ways of balancing using different parts of the body for support. The teacher extended this work by having the children move from one balance to another, holding positions in stillness between each movement. Children then extended their balances to make short sequences of movement onto and over, small apparatus. All the sequences were different and the teacher helped children discover ways in which their individual efforts might be improved. Lessons like this engage the interest and thinking powers of the children and they learn quickly. In some lessons, teachers do not encourage children sufficiently to reflect on their own work, with a view to improving it. It was remarked in the last inspection that some staff did not wear appropriate sports kit. All teachers seen during this inspection were suitably dressed for physical education.

162. The physical education programme covers all the required areas of the National Curriculum, swimming, games, gymnastics and dance. The annual Year 6 school journey to Shropshire allows for a range of outdoor activities, such as walking, cycling and abseiling. Clubs operate at lunchtime and after school and offer children the opportunity to develop their skills in games, such as short tennis, football and netball. Children play rounders in the summer and the school takes part in a range of inter-school sporting activities.

163. Children continue to behave well in lessons. They enjoy the work and put their best efforts into it. When they have a chance to devise a movement sequence for themselves, or to make other small decisions about their work, they respond very sensibly. They listen carefully to instructions and are aware of the importance of safety. When tasks call for working in pairs or small groups they collaborate very well indeed.

164. Two teachers share responsibility for leading physical education. Both have only recently joined the staff and this temporary arrangement is a very sensible one. It permits essential oversight of the subject without overburdening new staff. It also provides a valuable opportunity for their further professional development. They monitor some of their colleagues' planning and give advice and support effectively whenever necessary.



