

INSPECTION REPORT

**SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL RC PRIMARY
SCHOOL**

Stevenage

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117498

Headteacher: Mrs Diann Ross

Reporting inspector: Fred Ward
18605

Dates of inspection: 10th – 13th March 2003

Inspection number: 247796

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Bedwell Crescent Stevenage
Postcode:	SG1 1NJ
Telephone number:	(01438) 729555
Fax number:	(01438) 358122
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs D Williams
Date of previous inspection:	2 nd February 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
18605	Fred Ward	Registered inspector	Foundation Stage English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
11566	Hilary Smyth	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?
10808	Alan Britton	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
26232	Christopher Grove	Team inspector	Science Geography History Special educational needs	
14511	Philip Whitehead	Team inspector	English Physical education Education inclusion	
22704	Gary Williams	Team inspector	Art Design and technology Music Travellers' education	

The inspection contractor was:

PPI Group Ltd
7 Hill Street
Bristol
BS1 5RW

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33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Vincent de Paul Roman Catholic Primary School is bigger than most primary schools. There are 419 pupils on roll including 52 who attend the nursery part time. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds with over a quarter from families facing social and financial challenges. Children join the nursery in the term they are four-years-old with a wide range of attainment, but broadly average overall. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average (14 per cent), including three with statements (below average), covering mainly moderate learning difficulties. The number eligible for free school meals is below average (five per cent) and falling. Sixty-two per cent of pupils are white British, eight per cent white European and seven per cent white Irish; five per cent are British Asians and four per cent Black African. The remaining 15 per cent come from a variety of backgrounds, including a few Travellers and 17 recent arrivals from the Philippines; eight per cent use English as an additional language and half are at an early stage in learning English. The school has identified 88 pupils with talents, mainly in music, dancing and sport.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Pupils enjoy coming to school and generally achieve well. Relationships and classroom behaviour are very good. The newly appointed headteacher, governors and senior staff are working very well as a team to maintain a caring Christian family atmosphere. Overall, teaching and learning are good and often very good. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in speaking and listening, art, singing and dance are above average in Years 2 and 6 and above average in reading in Year 6.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those with specific talents, including pupils who use English as an additional language, make good progress.
- Pupils behave very well in class and relationships are very good between the many different groups.
- Overall, the teaching and learning are good and often very good.
- Pupils' personal development is very good and they are provided with rich and varied learning opportunities, including making very good use of contributions from pupils with non-British backgrounds.
- Pupils' personal and academic progress is carefully checked and problems quickly tackled.
- Parents are very supportive and appreciative of the school, which they see as at the heart of the Catholic community in Stevenage.
- The school is very well led by governors and the newly appointed headteacher.

What could be improved

- Junior pupils' skills in scientific investigation, independent research and musical composition.
- The use of new technologies to support learning in the classroom.
- Ways of telling if planned actions to raise standards are working and money has been well spent.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1998 and has made good progress, completing all of the key issues raised:

- Teaching and learning are regularly checked.
- Teachers know what they need to do to develop professionally.
- Marking of pupils' work follows agreed guidelines.
- The curriculum is well planned.
- Teaching is good overall and none is unsatisfactory now. Pupils generally achieve well and standards in reading are better than they were and, overall, standards have improved in line with the national trend. The school looks as if it will continue to improve.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on National Curriculum test results.

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

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

Children in the current reception year achieve well and, overall, three-quarters are on course to exceed the early learning goals¹ by the time they start Year 1. In the 2002 tests for 11-year-olds, standards in English were well above most schools but the same as similar schools and were well below the national average in mathematics and below average in science. The school reports that pupils had particular difficulty with mental mathematics and scientific investigation, both areas being worked on with the current Year 6. Since 1998, standards in English have risen faster than the national rate and were doing so in mathematics and science until 2002. Results for Year 2 pupils in 2002 tests for reading, writing and mathematics showed standards were around the national average in comparison to all schools but below average compared to similar schools. Teachers' assessments in science were similar. Since 1998, standards for Year 2 pupils have fluctuated but overall have not fallen below the national average. The inspection found that pupils generally achieve well and standards in speaking and listening, art, singing and dance are above average for Year 2 and Year 6 and above average in reading for Year 6; standards in other subjects are average. Standards in writing, mathematics and science in Year 6 have improved as a result of changes to teaching and the way pupils learn. However, junior pupils are generally not confident in carrying out scientific investigations, independent study and research and musical composition. By the time they leave school aged 11, nearly all pupils can swim 25 metres and are aware of how to keep themselves safe in water. Standards achieved by pupils from non-British backgrounds and the few Travellers are generally similar to others with the same capabilities. The school has set suitable targets for the oldest pupils to reach in national tests in 2003.

¹ Early Learning Goals are the nationally accepted levels in six areas of learning that children should reach by the time they leave reception classes.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy school very much, like learning and are very involved in activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave very well in lessons; occasional isolated, boisterous incidents at play times are dealt with quickly and firmly.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils are helpful, considerate and very responsible. They work and play very well with each other, regardless of backgrounds.
Attendance	Attendance is very high and in the top five per cent of schools nationally. There is no unauthorised absence. No time is wasted and there have been no exclusions.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Overall, teaching and learning are good in English and mathematics. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well in other subject lessons. Generally, teachers have high expectations, manage pupils very well and make very good use of assistants and learning resources. Consequently, pupils enjoy learning, work hard and are given the support they need and generally achieve well. However, new technologies are not widely used to support learning in the classroom, although pupils are achieving well in the new computer suite. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs and of those who use English as an additional language, is good. Talented pupils are encouraged and well supported.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Work throughout the school is well planned to provide many interesting experiences in and beyond the classroom. Links with the parish playgroup and partner secondary are very good. Insufficient opportunities are provided for junior pupils to follow up their own ideas in science, carry out research and compose in music.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The needs of pupils are identified early and they are given helpful individual support and fully included in lessons.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils, including those who have recently arrived from the Philippines, are well supported and make good progress in speaking and listening.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good and a special feature of the Christian family atmosphere. Pupils from non-British backgrounds make a valuable contribution and their different cultures are widely celebrated.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils are very well cared for. Staff know pupils very well and keep a very careful check on their progress in the early years and in English and mathematics and appropriately in other subjects. The few

	Travellers are well looked after.
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Parents and carers are kept well informed about school activities and their children's progress. They are appreciative of the school and raise significant additional funds from social events.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is very well led and managed by the newly-appointed headteacher, with very good support from staff and governors. Subject managers are becoming better at identifying and tackling shortcomings in teaching and learning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are committed, interested and know the school's strengths and areas for development, as they are kept well informed through termly reports, visits to classrooms, discussions with teachers and contact with parents.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Staff look carefully at how pupils are achieving in order to see how they can improve teaching and learning further. However, there are not enough measures to tell if planned changes are working and the time, effort and money used has been worthwhile.
The strategic use of resources	The governing body applies the principles of best value well and spends wisely. While funds held in reserve are small, there are appropriate safeguards to deal with unplanned financial demands.

Recruitment of qualified teachers has been difficult but the school has successfully overcome this problem by supporting the training of unqualified staff to take on class responsibilities. Resources, including new technologies, are generally good. Overall the accommodation is spacious and good. Facilities include an attractive, well-stocked library, new computer suite, practical rooms, areas for special educational needs and two large halls. The two playgrounds are well laid out and good use is made of the extensive playing field and nature area, as well as the adjacent park and sporting facilities.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is approachable. • Children like school. • Pupils are expected to work hard. • Pupils make good progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework. • The range of activities outside of lessons. • The behaviour of a few pupils. • Working with parents.

The inspection confirms parents' positive views and finds that the range of activities outside of lessons is good, the amount of homework is suitable and the school works well with parents. However, occasionally, a few pupils do behave inappropriately on the playground, but incidents are dealt with quickly and firmly.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

In Year 2 and Year 6, standards are above average in speaking and listening, art, singing and dancing; standards are also above average in reading in Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs, those who use English as an additional language, the talented and the few Travellers make good progress.

1. Standards are above average in these areas because of the consistently good or better teaching and the many interesting and appropriate learning activities pupils enjoy. Despite some shortcomings in junior pupils' skills in scientific investigation, independent research and musical composition, standards in other subjects are average. All pupils can swim 25 metres and know the principles of water safety when they leave at 11-years-old.
2. Overall, there has been steady progress since the previous inspection. Standards fell below average in mathematics and science in Year 6 in 2002 but have now risen to average as the school has made considerable effort to raise achievement. Above average standards have been maintained in art, singing and dancing for the oldest pupils and risen in these areas in Year 2. Reading is now above average in Year 6.
3. Ninety per cent of pupils in Year R are on course to reach or exceed the early learning goals¹ in their personal, social, emotional and physical development by the time they start Year 1. Three-quarters are likely to reach or exceed the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world and in creative development.
4. Pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 generally achieve well as they find learning activities interesting and at an appropriate level of challenge. In Years 3 to 6, pupils also have positive attitudes to learning and generally achieve well. However, they are not very confident in following up their own ideas and carrying out research.
5. Pupils with special educational needs are identified early and benefit from individual and group support given by assistants and teachers working well together. They are fully involved in lessons and overall they make good progress. Pupils who are at an early stage of using English as an additional language are well supported, particularly in developing their speaking and listening skills, and make good progress. Pupils from minority ethnic groups and the few Travellers achieve as well as others with similar capabilities.
6. In 2002 tests for seven-year-olds, results were around the national average in reading, writing and mathematics but below average when compared to similar schools. Teachers reported that standards in science were also around the national average and below average in comparison to similar schools. Since 1998, standards for seven-year-olds in reading and writing have tended to stay above the national average but have been more variable in mathematics, dipping well below in 2000. but have risen steadily over the last two years. Overall, boys have performed better in reading and writing than girls but this is mainly because there were more high attaining boys in the 2001, and 2002 year groups.

¹ Early Learning Goals are the nationally accepted levels in six areas of learning that children should reach by the time they leave reception classes.

7. For pupils aged 11, 2002 test results showed standards in English were well above the national average but about the same as similar schools. Standards in mathematics were well below average overall and below average in science. The school reports that great importance had been given to raising standards in writing and that not enough attention was given to helping pupils improve their mental skills in mathematics and investigation skills in science. This has since been remedied. From 1998 until 2001, standards for 11-year-olds rose faster than the national rate, staying above average in English in 2002 but falling below average in mathematics and science. Overall, boys' results have tended to be higher than girls' in English and science but this is because there were more higher attaining boys in the 1999 and 2002 year groups.
8. The school has set suitably challenging targets for 2003 in English and mathematics. Particular attention has been given to predicting pupils' performance more realistically in mathematics as in 2002 these targets were not accurate.
9. The inspection found standards of speaking and listening in Years 2 and 6 above average. Pupils are confident communicators, listen attentively and show increasing maturity in their speech as they grow older. Standards of reading in Year 2 are average. While pupils have a good range of words and are able to work out how to say new words, around half do not always understand the meaning of what they have read. However, standards in Year 6 are above average with around half reading at above the level expected for their age. Standards in writing are around the national average in Years 2 and 6. The younger pupils write in sentences, putting capital letters and full stops in the right places and spell simple words correctly. In Year 6, pupils write easily but do not always suit their writing sufficiently for different audiences. Overall, pupils write legibly developing an appropriately joined handwriting style from Year 2 onwards.
10. Standards in mathematics are average in Years 2 and 6. Pupils in the infants have a firm foundation in number and use their skills well in solving practical problems involving measure, shape and handling information. By Year 6, pupils competently use written ways of solving calculations and have an appropriate knowledge and understanding for their age in mathematics. However, they still are not very quick at working out problems in their head, although they are showing much improvement following the greater importance given to this area by the school.
11. Standards in science are average in Years 2 and 6. Overall, pupils have good knowledge and understanding in science as they cover different aspects of the subject in depth. While younger pupils follow instructions and carry out experiments carefully, Year 6 pupils do not confidently suggest and test their own ideas using scientific methods.
12. Standards in information and communication technology are average in Years 2 and 6. Pupils are gaining an appropriate range of skills from lessons in the new computer suite but do not always use new technologies in the classroom as well as they could in following up their own ideas to support learning in other subjects.
13. Standards in art in Years 2 and 6 are above average as pupils have acquired and developed appropriate skills and techniques using a range of media. Standards in singing are above average in Years 2 and 6. Pupils take pleasure in singing together in class, in larger groups and in performing for others. Dance is a strength of the school and standards are above average in Years 2 and 6.
14. The school has identified 88 talented pupils, mainly in music, dancing and sport. Generally, they receive support outside of school but their achievements are

appreciated and valued, particularly in showing other pupils standards that can be reached. Overall, more able pupils are appropriately challenged in lessons and reach higher levels, apart from some junior pupils in mathematics. There are no gifted pupils currently identified in the school.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

Pupils respond very well to their school experiences. Their attitudes, personal development, relationships and behaviour in class are very good. Attendance is excellent. These are an improvement on the previous inspection. Junior pupils are not confident in developing their own learning independently.

15. Almost all pupils have great enthusiasm for school, they really enjoy taking part in the enriching and wide range of activities and are very keen to learn. They are very attentive in lessons and eager to participate; they work very hard and do their best. This is a result of the generally good or better teaching and the interesting well-prepared activities. At the end of a Year 2 personal and social education lesson dealing with conflict, pupils were still keen to put their ideas to the teacher as they were leaving the classroom.
16. Overall, behaviour in lessons is very good and generally good elsewhere. The school is an orderly and friendly community. Pupils respond well to the school's clear routines, such as when moving from their classrooms to the halls and computer suite and when lining up for lunch. On the playgrounds, boys and girls play happily together. Occasional incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour are dealt with quickly and firmly. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, including the few Travellers, mix very well together and show great interest in sharing their language and customs with others.
17. Pupils are courteous and polite to adults and respectful to each other. Visitors are very warmly welcomed. Pupils are generally respectful to property, belongings and resources. In a creative development lesson, pupils in the nursery handled equipment and fruit with great care. The atmosphere in school is very friendly, welcoming and caring, with very few incidents of oppressive behaviour or bullying. Pupils show great respect for other people's beliefs and cultures and understand how others feel. There is a very strong focus on independence and personal responsibility, which begins in the nursery. Pupils of all ages willingly take on a wide range of responsibilities, such as handing out resources in lessons. Year 6 pupils are expected to carry out more responsible tasks as part of the development of their leadership skills.
18. Pupils from the many different backgrounds form very good relationships with each other and with adults. They work very well in groups and pairs and appreciate each other's work. The very good relationships with class teachers and support staff have a very positive effect on pupils' learning and caring attitudes. Pupils respond thoughtfully to each other and to adults during discussions and, at lunch times, older pupils enjoy helping younger ones. Pupils identify with and feel part of the school community and older pupils are developing a sense of belonging to the wider community. Pupils enjoy learning about other cultures and beliefs.
19. Throughout the school, pupils show initiative, such as when they comfort each other when upset and helping others during daily routines. However, junior pupils' study skills are not well developed as they do not confidently follow up their own ideas independently.

20. Attendance is excellent and in the top five per cent of schools nationally. There is no unauthorised absence. Few pupils arrive late and no time is wasted. There have been no exclusions.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

Overall, teaching and learning are good and often very good. Pupils generally achieve well. Junior pupils do not confidently carry out scientific investigations, independent research and musical composition. New technologies are not yet widely used to support learning in classrooms.

21. During the inspection, 82 per cent of the teaching and learning was good or better and 15 per cent very good; there was one instance of excellent teaching and learning. Overall, the teaching and learning in English, mathematics and science are good. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection when eight per cent of the teaching and learning was unsatisfactory.
22. The consistently good or better teaching in the nursery and reception classes is because staff know their pupils so well and continually check their progress and provide them with what they need to achieve well. In Years 1 to 6, the strength of the teaching comes from teachers setting high expectations about the quality of pupils' work and behaviour and making sure lessons are interesting and very well managed.
23. There is very good teamwork between teachers planning and reviewing lessons together and with teachers and assistants making sure groups and individuals are well supported. This has been particularly helpful for pupils who learn at a slower rate as work is broken down into manageable steps and they receive appropriate support. As a result, pupils with special educational needs are well taught and make good progress. Pupils who use English as an additional language also benefit from this help and their communication skills are developing well. Teachers and assistants also make sure pupils from minority groups, including those from non-British backgrounds and Travellers, are fully involved in lessons.
24. Teachers place great importance on pupils developing good speaking, listening and literacy skills in all subjects. Pupils are encouraged to build up their knowledge and understanding of specialist words and use them correctly in discussions and writing. Similarly, pupils are often able to practise their numeracy skills when carrying out learning activities in other subjects, particularly in science, design and technology and geography.
25. Teachers are developing their information and communication technology skills well and are making good use of the new computer suite. However, the amount of equipment, resources and facilities in classrooms is limited and pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to follow-up their work using new technologies.
26. Generally, teachers do not provide pupils with many opportunities to explore their own ideas. This holds back their progress in developing study skills, particularly in undertaking research using different sources and carrying out investigations in science.
27. Not enough lessons in art and design, design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology, music and physical education across the school could be seen during the inspection to report on the overall quality of teaching and learning. However, teachers generally have good subject knowledge in these areas and plan interesting lessons well matched to the stage, rate and style of learning of pupils in their class. Junior teachers are not very confident in musical composition.

28. Pupils' progress is regularly checked in lessons and staff are good at helping individuals overcome difficulties and learn from their mistakes. Homework is used well to give pupils practice in reading and spelling. Some parents felt their children were given too much homework and others not enough. The inspection found the amount was appropriate.
29. As a result of the high proportion of good teaching, pupils are being well prepared for the next stage of their education when they move to secondary school at 11-years-old.

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

The curriculum and other learning opportunities are generally rich and varied. Provision for pupils' personal development is very well catered for and all pupils are able to take full advantage of what is on offer. Relationships with other schools and the Catholic community are very good.

30. Overall, the curriculum has improved since the previous inspection. The national literacy and numeracy strategies have helped make sure standards in English and mathematics have risen in line with the national trend. There are insufficient opportunities to develop junior pupils' skills in scientific investigation, independent research and musical composition. The programmes for speaking and listening, art, singing and dance throughout the school and in reading for the juniors are especially good and are a key factor in the above average standards that pupils attain in these areas. Although pupils are given opportunities to use new technologies to support their learning when using the new computer suite for lessons, they do not often follow up this work in the classroom.
31. All pupils are able to take part in a variety of rich experiences with useful links made between subjects. The programme in the nursery and reception is well matched to pupils' stage of development and interests and gives them plenty of appropriate practical experience. However, they do not always have enough opportunities to use large wheeled toys and outdoor climbing equipment. Pupils of all age groups are involved in musical and dance performances for the rest of the school, parents and members of the community. The curriculum is also enriched by visits to local and regional places of interest, annual music and dance festivals and intensive swimming tuition in Year 3 and 4. The range of activities organised outside of lessons is also good, contrary to the views of a few parents.
32. Planning for all curriculum subjects is thorough and emphasis is given to the teaching of basic literacy and numeracy skills. National guidelines are followed and teachers are clear about what needs to be taught. Curriculum planning is used well by teachers working in teams to make sure that pupils of the same age, but in different classes, are given the opportunity to participate in similar learning experiences.
33. The school is very good at making sure that all pupils are able to take advantage of what is being offered inside and outside classrooms. Pupils from minority ethnic groups and the few Travellers are able to join in fully and achieve as well as others of the same capability. The work and support given to pupils with special educational needs is very appropriate and they make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. The support given to pupils who use English as an additional language is good. Talented pupils receive much of their tuition and coaching outside of school but they are much appreciated, encouraged and given opportunities to demonstrate their expertise to other pupils.

34. As part of the science curriculum and the personal, social and health programme, pupils are encouraged to develop good attitudes towards healthy living and eating and learn about the dangers of drug misuse. The school also provides for sex and relationship education in a sensitive and supportive manner.
35. Links with the community are good, including local sports clubs. Good use is made of the local area and teachers make full use of opportunities to broaden and enrich pupils' experiences through a wide range of visits and visitors. Links with local commerce are limited; however, there are very strong links with the church and two other parishes.
36. The school has very good relationships with its partner institutions, an improvement since the previous inspection. There are particularly good links with the parish playgroup and other primary schools. There are very good links with secondary schools and transfer procedures are smooth.
37. The school very successfully cultivates the personal development of its pupils. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strong feature of the school, reflecting the Christian family atmosphere. This broadly reflects the findings of the previous inspection, with an improvement in social provision.
38. There are very good opportunities for pupils' spiritual development, supported by the strength of religious belief and practices. Opportunities are provided many times a day for guided prayers, and for silent reflection. Staff make sure that pupils feel they are valued as individuals and as members of the school community so that they can grow and flourish. Pupils' self-esteem is consistently promoted throughout the school by use of praise and acknowledgement. Staff value pupils' ideas and questions, enabling them to make clear links between subjects and allow them time for their own thoughts. Staff help pupils respond sensitively where appropriate.
39. The school is very successful at promoting moral development and provides a clear code as a basis for behaviour. Pupils are made aware of what is expected of them and the difference between right and wrong. Staff provide very good models, promoting fairness and, respect for others, no matter their background. Personal and social education and other subjects give pupils the chance to explore a wide range of moral issues, such as justice and injustice, rights and responsibilities and equal opportunities. The very strong support of a wide range of charities provides very good examples of moral virtues and clearly shows the importance the school gives to caring in the wider community.
40. The school provides very well for pupils' social development. The school successfully fosters a very strong sense of community where everyone is made to feel important. Church services, assemblies, Retreat Days and trips provide important social opportunities. The annual residential visit, team sports, extra-curricular activities and a variety of drama productions give pupils very suitable opportunities to learn about co-operation, fair play and competition. The school helps pupils of all ages take responsibility by giving them a range of duties in class and around the school.
41. There are very good arrangements for promoting pupils' cultural development. Pupils are helped to appreciate a variety of cultural traditions in and beyond the school. Positive contributions come from most subjects but particularly English, science, information and communication technology, art and design, history, music and physical education. The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to experience local and national cultural traditions such as harvest festival, sporting and creative activities.

With over a third of pupils having different backgrounds, staff make very good use of this in the life of the school to celebrate cultural diversity.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

Overall, the school takes very good care of pupils and checks their progress well.

42. The school is a very friendly, caring community doing all it reasonably can to keep pupils safe. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. Staff know pupils very well and are aware of their various needs and respond in a positive and supportive way. This means that pupils feel secure and have confidence in staff for advice and support. The school takes particularly good care of pupils with special educational needs and those who use English as an additional language, and works closely with parents. The newly-appointed headteacher responds very quickly to any concerns raised. The school works hard at and has been successful at raising attendance levels, and regularly checks registers.
43. The school is very good at making sure pupils behave well and they know what is expected of them. There is a climate of good behaviour in this well ordered community, where teachers and other staff have high expectations of good behaviour. The school does not tolerate bullying or racist behaviour. Staff always respond quickly and firmly to any unacceptable incidents.
44. The way pupils' personal development is checked and supported is thorough and works very well. Nearly all classes have personal and social education lessons and provision for personal development is woven into all aspects of school life. The school is very keen to make all pupils feel appreciated. Their efforts, attitudes and behaviour are celebrated regularly in class and in assemblies.
45. Thorough and regular checks are carried out in English and mathematics and to a slightly lesser degree in science. The school makes very good use of this information. The progress of individuals and groups, including those from non-British backgrounds and the few Travellers, is tracked and pupils identified for booster classes and additional support. The procedures provide accurate information for discussions between the co-ordinator and class teacher in order to highlight the learning needs of individuals, particularly those who are under-achieving.
46. The school has devised new 'Class Sheets' which will help teachers to track pupils' progress more easily and set individual targets for improvement in English, mathematics and science. Checking of pupils' progress in other subjects is variable, but generally good. Teachers regularly review information about shortcomings in pupils' learning in team meetings and adapt their lesson plans accordingly.
47. Checking the progress of pupils with special educational needs is good. The co-ordinator works well with staff and outside agencies to make sure that records are thorough, detailed and helpful. Individual education plans are used well by staff in their planning and teaching and, as a result, pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

Parents are supportive and appreciative of the school, kept well informed and involved in their children's education.

48. Nearly all parents find it easy to approach the school and feel encouraged to be involved in their learning. A very small number of parents felt the behaviour of a few pupils is at times unacceptable. Inspection findings confirm this but found any incidents are dealt with quickly and firmly. However, the inspection found that other concerns could not be supported: the amount of homework is suitable and the range of activities outside of lessons is good. Parents felt that it was not appropriate to separate girls and boys for aspects of sex and relationship education in Year 5. The school is currently looking at changing these arrangements.
49. The schools' links with home are good as shown by the high degree of satisfaction expressed in the parents' questionnaires and meeting and during the inspection. The quality of information provided by the school is good. The annual overview and half-termly newsletters keep parents informed of matters of interest. The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are informative but have some minor omissions, which are being dealt with.
50. The school has an open door policy and parents appreciate that they can readily talk to teachers about any concerns. In addition, parents have two formal opportunities a year to discuss their child's progress and an open evening when they can look round the school and view pupils' work. Parents are well informed about their child's progress in the annual written report. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are closely involved with reviews of their individual education plans. Parents from different backgrounds, including Travellers and those who use English as an additional language, are encouraged to be involved in the life of the school. Good use is made of parents to translate for others, where appropriate.
51. Parents make a good contribution to their children's learning at home and in school. Parents from other backgrounds have a positive effect on the multi-cultural development of pupils. Parents often help in classrooms, on school trips and with extra-curricular activities. Their help with pupils' learning is greatly valued by the school. Parents support their children's learning at home through shared reading and other homework. There is a very active parent staff association that regularly raises funds to support pupils' learning, such as the recently equipped computer suite.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

The school is a very well led and managed by the newly-appointed headteacher. Subject co-ordinators do a good job and are looking at ways to improve how they develop teaching and learning. Governors carry out their roles well and spend wisely. However, there are no measures to check if planned actions are worthwhile.

52. The school is very well led and managed by the newly-appointed headteacher who has made a very smooth transfer from being deputy to her new post. She has been very well supported by staff and governors. Together, they have been successful in raising standards to above average in reading in Year 6 and maintaining above average standards in speaking and listening, art, dance and singing across the school. They have also made sure the school is at the heart of the Catholic community in Stevenage and that all pupils, regardless of their backgrounds, play and work happily together.

53. In the short time since her appointment in January 2003, the headteacher has successfully built on the good work of her predecessor in continuing to identify and tackle shortcomings. Indeed, inspection findings agree with the school's own look at itself. Already, there has been some improvement in the teaching and learning of mathematics and science in the juniors, where standards, after a dip in 2002, have now risen to around the national average. However, there has not been sufficient time for all actions to be successful; junior pupils' skills in scientific investigation, independent research and musical composition are not as well-developed, as they should be. Teachers frequently take part in professional activities to improve what they do, try out new ideas and learn from each other. There is a strong commitment and will to move the school forward.
54. The headteacher and acting-deputy work very well together, meeting once a week to look at what needs doing and keep in frequent daily contact. The senior management team oversees developments and co-ordinates events and activities affecting the school and key stages². Its role will be reviewed following the appointment of a permanent deputy later this term. Key stage co-ordinators meet weekly with teachers from the nursery and reception, Years 1 and 2 and Years 3 to 6. These teams work very well together making sure problems are identified early and dealt with quickly. Overall, this management structure meets the needs of a larger than average sized primary school and staff report the system runs smoothly.
55. Subjects are well led by co-ordinators who have a clear idea of their roles and what they need to do to improve teaching and learning. Co-ordinators have been particularly successful in raising achievement in English, mathematics, science and art and design. While all co-ordinators have observed teachers and pupils in lessons, they recognise the need to look more closely at learning in order to identify what could be improved. This is an area planned for professional development in the near future.
56. The acting deputy head is also the co-ordinator for special educational needs. She has managed the recent changes to the classification and recording of pupils' needs well, making sure that staff and parents are kept informed. She also liaises closely with outside specialist agencies and this has helped provide a good level of service, particularly for pupils who use English as an additional language and the few Travellers. As a result, these pupils are given very appropriate support and make good progress.
57. The governing body is well organised but only one of the present governors held office during the previous inspection. While they attend training, it was decided that because of their relative inexperience, much of their work is conducted through the full governing body. They work well as a team and are carrying out their responsibilities well with no outstanding tasks.
58. The chair and vice chair keep in frequent touch with each other and the headteacher. Governors are regular visitors to the school and most have very good contacts with parents. A governor attends the termly review meeting with the local education authority adviser and others have observed lessons. In addition, the governing body is given termly detailed reports from the headteacher, senior staff and co-ordinators. In this way, governors are kept well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
59. The headteacher and senior managers systematically check teaching and learning through classroom observation as part of well-established performance management

² Foundation Stage (Nursery and reception), Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2), Key Stage 2 (Years 3 to 6)

procedures. This process is seen as very important to the development of the school and teachers.

60. The current development plan is rather unwieldy as it covers both new and maintenance activities and does not show specifically what improvements in standards are being sought. This makes it difficult for managers and governors to tell if planned actions are being successful and whether the time, effort and resources are being well used. However, the areas identified by the school for development are appropriate as they are based on a comprehensive and thorough examination of the results of pupils' tests, observations of teaching and learning and reviews by subject managers. Governors, staff and parents' views are also sought and taken into account before plans are finalised. The school also wishes to involve pupils more and is in the process of setting up a school council.
61. Financial planning is clearly centred on raising standards and the desire to maintain a stable staff. The governing body spends very carefully and has such good control of finances that the school has been able to operate with a very small reserve, making sure all funds are spent on current pupils. With two staff not having class responsibility, unplanned teacher absences can be covered without cost and other emergencies can be funded by borrowing from the Catholic diocese. Specific funds are used well, such as in support of pupils with special educational needs and to support staff training.
62. When new staff or temporary teachers are appointed, they are given good support from the headteacher, senior managers and class teachers. Similar arrangements are used for student visitors. Recruitment of qualified teachers has been difficult so governors successfully overcame this problem by supporting the training of unqualified staff to take on class responsibilities. The inspection found these teachers coping well with their new roles and being well supported by more experienced staff in parallel classes. As a result, the school has received a 'partnership promotion' award for their very good training programme and further national recognition from acquiring the 'Investors in people' standard.
63. New technologies are increasingly being used by staff as they become more confident and skilled. This has helped in lesson preparation, tracking pupils' progress, writing reports and school administration. While equipment and resources for new technologies in classrooms are satisfactory, pupils do not always make sufficient use of these facilities to support their learning.
64. The school is very well looked after by the site manager, who keeps the buildings and ground in good order. The well-stocked library is also an additional teaching area and is not extensively used by pupils, particularly for independent study. The recently built computer room has sufficient equipment and space for a class and lessons are regularly held throughout the week. There are further rooms used for special educational needs and practical activities. There is a large and spacious hall in each of the two main school buildings; both are very well used throughout the day for a range of purposes.
65. There are two large playgrounds and an extensive grassed playing field, with a wild area. The school makes good use of these facilities and the nearby outdoors sports centre. There is a good supply of books, apparatus, equipment and materials of good quality in all subjects.
66. The headteacher and governors apply the principles of best value especially in funding the training of unqualified teachers and supporting the professional development of

other staff. They carefully consider all options and consult widely before taking decisions.

67. Pupils start school at three-years-old with broadly average attainment and, by 11-years-old, most are confident and achieve well in speaking and listening, reading, art, dance and singing; pupils with special educational needs, those who use English as an additional language, talented pupils and the few Travellers make good progress. This is as a result of the generally good teaching they receive. The school provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The governors and head teacher should improve:

1. junior pupils' skills

- in scientific investigation by providing more opportunities for them to test their own ideas through practical experiments;

(Paragraphs: 11, 26, 30, 53, 90)

- in researching topics by encouraging them to follow their own lines of inquiry consulting a range of sources;

(Paragraphs: 4, 19, 26, 30, 53, 78, 83, 108)

- in musical composition by allowing them to make their own melodies, add appropriate accompaniment and perform with others using their voices or instruments.

(Paragraphs: 1, 27, 30, 53, 116, 121)

- ### 2. the use of new technologies to support learning in classrooms by planning more activities within subjects where pupils can apply skills learnt in information and communication technology lessons; and

(Paragraphs: 12, 25, 30, 53, 63, 78, 88, 90, 98, 103, 108, 115)

- ### 3. the way development plans are drawn up so as to show specifically what is intended and provide measures to check if actions to improve teaching and learning are working and are value for money.

(Paragraphs: 53, 55, 59, 60)

In addition, governors may wish to include the following minor shortcomings in their action plan:

- Junior pupils' writing for different audiences (*paragraphs: 9, 79*);
- Outdoors apparatus and equipment for the nursery and reception (*paragraphs: 31, 74*);
- Links with local industry and commerce (*paragraph: 35*);
- Omissions in the prospectus and governors' annual report (*paragraph: 49*);
- Reading comprehension in Year 2 (*paragraph: 78*); and
- Junior pupils' mental skills in mathematics (*paragraphs: 10, 83*).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	84
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	51

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	1	13	55	15	0	0	0
Percentage	1	15	66	18	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.

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)	22	397
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	23

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	1	56

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	33

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	1.9
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2002	28	21

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	26	24	27
	Girls	17	15	18
	Total	43	39	45
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	88 (88)	80 (86)	92 (86)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	25	27	26
	Girls	17	17	20
	Total	42	44	46
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	86 (86)	90 (84)	94 (86)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2002	37	27

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	31	25	33
	Girls	24	15	24
	Total	55	40	57
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	86 (85)	63 (78)	89 (98)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	34	33	37
	Girls	23	20	24
	Total	57	53	61
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	89 (93)	83 (89)	95 (95)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	245	0	0
White – Irish	8	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	9	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	11	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2	0	0
Black or Black British – African	9	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	17	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	4	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)	15.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23
Average class size	25

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	278.5

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26.6
Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	46.5

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	896,510
Total expenditure	894,290
Expenditure per pupil	1,996
Balance brought forward from previous year	42,983
Balance carried forward to next year	2,220

Number of pupils per FTE adult	9
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.4
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	419
Number of questionnaires returned	117

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64	29	6	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	61	34	3	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	42	44	8	2	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	40	18	2	2
The teaching is good.	62	31	3	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	49	6	0	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	31	4	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	33	3	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	47	40	9	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	46	38	2	0	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	36	4	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	39	16	1	15

Other issues raised by parents

Teaching of sex and relationship education to Year 5 boys.

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

Strengths

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children make a good start in the nursery and, overall, three-quarters are on course to reach or exceed the early learning goals¹ by the time they leave reception.• The teaching and learning are consistently good in the nursery and reception classes.• Children enjoy a rich and interesting programme of learning activities.• Staff know the children very well and keep a careful check on their progress.• The co-ordinator and staff work very well as a team to develop teaching and learning further. |
|--|

Areas for development

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children's independence during outdoor play.• The range and variety of outdoor equipment. |
|--|

69. Children enter the nursery part-time at three years of age in September and January with a wide range of attainment. At the time of the inspection, there were 40 children in the nursery and 57 in two reception classes. Teaching is consistently good and often very good as staff have very good relationships with their children and, through careful checks on their learning, know what needs to be done to help individuals make progress. They plan a varied and interesting programme based on themes that appeal to this age group where children have plenty of hands-on experience. Sessions are very well managed and very good use is made of the very appropriate range of learning resources. As a result, children achieve well, enjoy coming to school and work and play happily together. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.

Personal, social and emotional development

70. There are 17 three-year-olds in the nursery, who have only been in school since the beginning of term. Already, they have settled in well and are in advance of where they are expected to be for their age showing independence and confidence, such as when changing for physical or creative activities and going to the toilet without fuss. All nursery children work well together and are interested and excited by the activities set out for them and those they choose for themselves. In the reception classes, children co-operate well in small groups, moving around safely and orderly. Staff set very good examples for the children showing them how to develop respect for each other and the world around them. As a result, children from all backgrounds mix well together. Ninety per cent of the children are well on their way to exceed the early learning goals in personal, social and emotional development by the time they start Year 1.

Communication, language and literacy

71. Speaking and listening are given great importance in the nursery and reception classes. From the beginning, three-year-olds are encouraged to express themselves orally and pay attention to what others are saying. This is done particularly well for children who are at an early stage of using English as an additional language. While most children in the nursery are achieving as expected for their age and maturity in this

¹ Early Learning Goals are the nationally accepted levels in six areas of learning that children should reach by the time they leave reception classes.

area, four with special educational needs are not so well advanced. These children are shown great sensitivity and understanding by staff. In the reception classes, children talk and listen sensibly to each other and to adults. They enjoy hearing and acting out stories and reciting familiar poems, such as 'Hey, diddle diddle' and around half can pick out rhyming words and link sounds to the first letter of familiar words. Ninety per cent know that print carries meaning and all can recognise their own written names. Children frequently look at books in school and at home and this proves very helpful in starting them reading. They enjoy writing for themselves through games and activities such as in the role-play area, now a garage. As a result, nearly all children make marks easily and will say what they have "written". More able children form most letters correctly and write simple sentences. The classrooms have plenty of attractive displays celebrating pupils' written work and many labels and posters emphasising the importance of the written word. Around three-quarters of children in reception are on track to reach or exceed the early learning goals in communication, language and literacy by the time they start Year 1.

Mathematical development

72. Nearly all children in the nursery are at a suitable stage of their mathematical development. They enjoy learning and thinking mathematically as they are given many opportunities to count, compare and match numbers to objects, as they did when making a display of 'Five Speckled Hens'. In the reception classes, there are regular sessions each week exploring number, pattern and shape, followed by interesting and appropriate practical activities. Three-quarters of the class were able to recognise and reproduce repeating patterns using coloured rods, pasta and printing blocks. They are beginning to use mathematical language correctly and can identify 'largest' and 'smallest' and have a good understanding of words that describe the position of things. They recognise different shapes and name circles, triangles and squares. Children in the nursery and reception enjoy singing counting songs and rhymes that staff use to round off different sessions in the day. Around three-quarters of children in the reception are on course to reach or exceed the early learning goals in mathematical development by the time they start Year 1.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

73. Topical themes linked to festivals, seasons and children's own experiences make sure that activities are interesting, wide ranging and very appropriate for their age and maturity. Displays and photographs show that children in the nursery and reception classes have a good understanding of their world, such as how to keep warm and dry, how to be more considerate in Lent and using their sense of hearing to identify different objects shaken in plastic tubs. They are all confident in using new technologies; a boy with special educational needs in the nursery competently controlled the mouse when using a computer program and a group of four reception children put on headphones and altered the volume on a listening centre sensibly. Three-quarters of children in the reception are well on their way to reaching or exceeding the early learning goals in knowledge and understanding of the world by the time they start Year 1.

Physical development

74. Generally, children's physical development is in advance of what is expected for their age in both the nursery and reception classes. Even the youngest children in the nursery move confidently and handle equipment with precise movements. All classes benefit from regular sessions in the large hall and make use of the good range of specialist climbing equipment. They are particularly good at responding to music and expressing themselves through dance, as did both nursery and reception children to

very appropriate piano playing by a visiting specialist. While there are appropriate opportunities for outdoor play for both year groups, staff are keen to acquire more large wheeled toys and climbing apparatus to allow children to develop their independence when playing outside. Around 90 per cent of reception children are on course to reach or exceed the early learning goals for physical development by the time they start Year 1.

Creative development

75. The nursery and reception classrooms are colourful and exciting places where children are encouraged to try out new ways of expressing themselves creatively. The youngest children use a wide range of materials, such as play dough, paint, chalk, crayons, card, paper, cloth often to record what they have been doing in topics, such as self-portraits using collage techniques and paint. In the reception classes, children benefit from staff with specialist knowledge and they are given very good guidance in developing techniques, as they did when making clay models based on paintings of animals completed earlier. Children in both year groups also enjoy many opportunities to role-play, sing together and play instruments. Around three-quarters of children in the reception are on track to reach or exceed the early learning goals in creative development by the time they start Year 1.

ENGLISH

Strengths

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards in speaking and listening are above average in Year 2 and Year 6 and above average in reading in Year 6. • Pupils with special educational needs and those who use English as an additional language make good progress. • Generally, pupils work very hard during their English lessons and respond very well to teachers' high expectations. • Pupils enjoy their English lessons very much and behave very well. • Teaching and learning are good overall. • Teachers manage pupils very well and are very good at checking pupils' progress and helping them improve their learning. • The subject is very well led and managed. |
|--|

Areas for development

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils' research and independent study skills. • Greater use of the school library and new technologies to support learning. |
|---|

76. Standards in speaking and listening are above average because pupils have plenty of opportunities to communicate with each other and adults within all subject lessons and throughout the school day. Teachers and assistants encourage them to listen carefully, express opinions and value the views of others. In Year 2, nearly all pupils are eager to communicate and respond enthusiastically to questions. By the time pupils are in Year 6, over three quarters have become responsive listeners and very confident speakers. During a discussion on using animals in experiments, many pupils showed an understanding of more formal language and a more able girl began her contribution by stating, *"I have two points to raise"* and then expressed a well-thought-out personal view.
77. Pupils with special educational needs and those who use English as an additional language are given plenty of individual support to help them overcome any difficulties. As a result, they make good progress in their language development. This is particularly

helpful to the recently arrived Filipino pupils, who have quickly picked up key words and phrases. Pupils from non-British backgrounds and the few Travellers achieve as well as others of similar capability.

78. Just over three quarters of pupils in Year 2 read at the level expected for their age and a few read at a higher level; standards are around average. More able pupils can discuss their favourite authors and they sometimes use the local town library. Almost all pupils enjoy reading, they are learning letter sounds and recognise simple words. However, half the pupils do not always fully grasp the meaning of what they have read. The school is currently trying out appropriate ways of improving their understanding. Many read regularly at home with adults and this helps them make better progress. In Year 6, half of the pupils read well above the level expected for their age and standards are above average. These pupils have read a wide range of books, including classic fiction. Nearly all pupils in Year 6 have preferences for different kinds of fiction and favourite authors. While most pupils are able to find the information they need from non-fiction books or the Internet, they do not make much use of the well-organised library to support their learning in other subjects. Opportunities to use new technologies in the classroom are also limited in English. This means pupils are not confident in carrying out research and following up ideas on their own.
79. Overall, standards in writing are around the national average. In Year 2, just under two thirds of the pupils write at the level expected for their age. They are beginning to write simple sentences and put capital letters and full stops in the right place. They spell many simple words correctly, write with clear letter formation and with spaces between words. Just over two thirds of pupils in Year 6 write at the level expected for their age. Only a third of those who read well manage to write at a higher level. The school is looking at ways of challenging these pupils to write in a more varied and interesting manner for different audiences, particularly when writing in other subjects. Handwriting and presentation by older pupils are generally good.
80. Teaching and learning are good overall. In the 11 lessons seen, the teaching in three was very good, in three good and in the rest satisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers plan interesting activities, they have high expectations of what pupils can do and they make very good use of additional staff. Their management of lessons is also very good so pupils work very hard for most of the time, achieving well. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils were involved from the outset, making words orally from a selection of letters on the board before moving on to discuss a non-fiction text about a rainforest. They were challenged to explain words like 'canopy' and their attention was drawn to compound words such as 'sunlight'. Five pupils with special educational needs and two pupils who use English as an additional language were very well supported by an assistant and the special educational needs co-ordinator, enabling them to take part fully in the lesson. The range and variety of activities in English lessons make a very good contribution to pupils' personal development.
81. There has been steady improvement since the last inspection. Staff are more confident in teaching English as they have benefited from national training and guidance and there is now no unsatisfactory teaching. The subject is very well led by the co-ordinator, working with senior staff. Together with teachers, they carry out thorough checks on pupils' progress and have identified and begun to tackle shortcomings in their learning as well as develop teaching and the curriculum further.

MATHEMATICS

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Standards are improving in Year 6 from last year's dip to well below average.• Pupils enjoy mathematics very much and behave very well.• Pupils with special educational needs and those using English as an additional language make good progress.• Teaching and learning are good overall.• The subject is very well led and managed.

Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupils' mental skills.• The level of work for more able pupils.• Junior pupils' independent study skills.• Use of new technologies.

82. Standards in Year 2 are average. All pupils achieve well during their first two years in the infant school and they are beginning to develop the ability to explain their methods of working out problems, using appropriate mathematical vocabulary. They understand and use number facts up to 20 when adding and subtracting mentally. They use measure appropriately and have a sound knowledge and understanding of regular geometric shapes. They can collect data and produce and interpret simple graphs.
83. Standards in Year 6 are around average and have improved since last year when they were well below average. Pupils explain their mathematical thinking well and are good at suggesting different ways of solving problems. For instance in a lesson observed, they used their knowledge and understanding of angles to recognise the number of degrees in a triangle, in a straight line and around a point. Overall, their numeracy skills are satisfactory, although pupils are a little slow in carrying out mental calculations. They know the properties of two and three-dimensional shapes and can collect, present and interpret data in different ways. However, they do not confidently follow-up their own mathematical ideas and undertake investigations on their own.
84. Pupils with special educational needs and those who use English as an additional language make good progress in learning as work is well matched to their capabilities and they are well supported by teachers and assistants. Pupils from non-British backgrounds and the few Travellers achieve as well as others of the same capability.
85. Years 5 and 6 are organised into five classes based on prior attainment and Years 3 and 4 are divided into two ability groups. These arrangements have been successful in making sure that teaching and learning are matched more accurately to individual pupils' needs. However, sometimes, as for example in a Year 3 lesson on division, the planned extension tasks for some higher attaining pupils are too easy. The school is currently looking at ways of improving the level of difficulty for more able pupils by introducing more challenging investigation and problem-solving activities.
86. In the 11 mathematics lessons seen, the quality of teaching and learning was very good in three, good in six and satisfactory in two. The best teaching occurs when teachers have high expectations of pupils' performance and assistants and resources are very well used. In the lessons observed, very good organisation and management of pupils made sure that pupils were attentive and remained on task throughout the lesson. In a Year 5/6 lesson on using and developing an efficient method of addition and subtraction, pupils enthusiastically came up with different ideas and were keen to try them out and share their explanations.

87. The co-ordinator is very well qualified and experienced and has recently returned from a two-year secondment to the University of Hertfordshire. The co-ordinator and her assistant co-ordinator manage and lead the subject very well. Together, they have been successful in helping teachers identify and begin to tackle shortcomings in learning that resulted in well below average standards last year. All teachers and assistants have benefited from recent training, particularly in improving pupils' mental agility in solving problems. Pupils' progress is regularly and thoroughly checked and the information is used well to plan lessons and help pupils improve their learning.
88. Resources are good and are used well by all staff. Links between mathematics and other curriculum subjects are generally good. However, new technologies are not used sufficiently to support pupils' learning, particularly in data handling and shape and space.

SCIENCE

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils have good scientific knowledge and understanding. • Pupils show high levels of interest and enjoy practical work, behaving very well. • Pupils with special educational needs and those who use English as an additional language make good progress. • In most lessons, teaching and learning are good. • Leadership and management are very good.

Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Junior pupils' skills in scientific investigations and independent study. • Use of new technologies to support learning in classrooms. • Checking pupils' progress towards their targets in science.

89. Standards in Year 2 are average. Pupils show good knowledge and understanding in science. Year 2 pupils know how magnets work and understand and use appropriate scientific vocabulary, such as 'attraction'. They can predict the outcome of a simple experiment and compare the actual result with their prediction. They know the properties of common materials, such as fabric, plastic, wood, metal and paper and understand the meaning of 'waterproof', 'mouldable' and 'shiny'. They apply their knowledge by considering which materials would or would not be a good choice to make a hat and justify their decisions by reference to different materials. More able pupils know how to speculate about possibilities and have good control of the language necessary to express their ideas.
90. Standards in Year 6 are also average. Pupils generally have good scientific knowledge and understanding and bring these to bear on new learning. For example, when Year 6 pupils were studying healthy eating habits and a balanced diet, they readily related the new topic to their existing knowledge and came up with appropriate suggestions. They know which materials conduct electricity and which do not, about the differences between solids, liquids and gases and about the different types of joints in the bones of the human body. However, they do not confidently put forward ideas and carry out their own scientific investigations. Also, pupils do not make enough use of the skills learnt in information and communication technology lessons in support of their science work in classrooms. Generally, pupils achieve well, enjoy practical work and are eager to respond to scientific challenges. Their behaviour is very good.

91. Pupils with special educational needs and those who use English as an additional language are making good progress as they are given appropriate support and individual attention. In a Year 2 lesson on magnetism, for instance, pupils with special educational needs responded well to questions, which invited them to predict and explain. Pupils from non-British backgrounds and the few Travellers achieve as well as others with similar capabilities.
92. Of the eight lessons observed, the quality of learning and teaching was good in six and satisfactory in the other two. In good lessons, teachers express themselves clearly and have very good relationships with pupils, asking appropriately challenging questions. This results in thoughtful answers from pupils and an eagerness to respond. In a Year 1 lesson on magnetism, the teacher's well thought-out questions enabled pupils to practise their use of 'attract' and 'attraction' when describing their observations. Teacher plan well and lessons are very well managed with very good use being made of assistants and resources. When Year 5 pupils were investigating electrical circuits, the materials chosen and the additional help from the assistant made sure pupils were able to have meaningful discussion about the effects of insulation on the conduction of an electrical current. Pupils show very high levels of interest in science lessons, focus well on their work and respond very willingly to advice. These experiences make a very good contribution to their personal development.
93. The co-ordinator leads the subject very well, knowing what needs to be done to bring about further improvements as she has carried out checks on teaching and learning. She has successfully helped raise standards in Years 6, which fell to below average last year, through staff training and useful advice. There are now more opportunities for pupils to undertake scientific investigations and the intention is to increase the use of new technologies to support learning. Improvement targets are being set for individual pupils but the school is not yet following through to see whether these are being achieved. Since the last inspection, the school has made good improvement in science, apart from the dip in 2002.

ART AND DESIGN

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are above average. • Pupils paint and draw very well. • Pupils enjoy art and design very much and are particularly appreciative of visiting artists. • Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan interesting and creative lessons. • Teachers have high expectations about what pupils can achieve. • Leadership and management are very good.

Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of new technologies to support learning.

94. Although only four lessons were observed during the inspection, there was sufficient pupils' work available to make secure judgements about standards, but not the overall quality of teaching and learning. Standards in art are above average in Year 2 and Year 6. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when standards were average in the infants and above in the juniors.
95. Throughout the school, there are examples of high quality painting, pencil drawings and three-dimensional sculptures, including work produced in the style of a variety of artists. Year 2 and Year 6 pupils describe their experiences confidently and knowledgeably. Year 6 pupils particularly enthuse about artists they study and offer opinions about the

different styles. For example, they described the Sunflowers of Van Gogh, the pencil drawings of Chris Van Allsburg and the matchstick men of Lowry. In a Year 6 lesson, their study and opinions of Lowry were intense. They had researched his background on the Internet and in class learned about his role as a World War II artist. Not one pupil was disinterested or failed to offer an opinion, which prompted cross-curricular issues, such as the strength of a church archway, which remained standing after a bombing.

96. Pupils are given regular and various opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in art and design as they progress through the school. Pupils in Year 2, under direction and guidance of a visiting artist, imaginatively and successfully explored the use of natural materials, such as small branches and twig and bound them together with papier-mâché, producing a variety of very attractive displays.
97. Art and design lessons are very popular and make a very good contribution to pupils' personal development. In all lessons, pupils worked quietly and at a brisk pace with interest and enthusiasm. Pupils were engrossed, irrespective of the media they were working with, and the end of lessons always reflected 'a wanting to go on' feeling.
98. The co-ordinator is particularly successful in helping teachers develop their skills and shows, by their own teaching, the high quality of work pupils are capable of producing. Resources are good and art and design is linked well to other subjects, such as history, science and information and communication technology. However, pupils do not have many opportunities to follow-up their own ideas using new technologies in the classroom.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils' planning and reviewing skills. • Pupils' enjoyment and enthusiasm. • The interesting and varied design and make activities. • The range and quality of tools and materials.

Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of new technologies to continue to support learning.

99. Only one lesson was seen but because of the ample evidence available and discussions with co-ordinators and pupils, it is possible to make a judgement on standards but not on the overall quality of teaching and learning. Standards in Years 2 and 6 are average. This is the same as at the previous inspection.
100. Teachers plan interesting and varied activities, introducing new skills that build well on previous lessons. This is particularly helpful in developing pupils' planning and reviewing skills, areas often overlooked in primary schools. For instance in Year 3, pupils spent a considerable time discussing and altering their plans before making and decorating musical instruments; they also considered how they might improve these products having made them.
101. In Years 1 and 2, pupils use a variety of materials competently, cut and assemble them skilfully, such as when making a daffodil and pincushion for 'Mother's Day'. They show an understanding of components, mechanisms and control in their models. In Year 5, pupils talk enthusiastically about their design and making activities and show a suitable

awareness of health and safety issues involved with working with tools and handling food, as they did when making sandwiches.

102. Pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 clearly enjoy working with their hands and take pride from showing and talking about the products they make. They have a good knowledge and understanding of how to go about making things and their craft skills are satisfactory.
103. The co-ordinator has recently taken on this job, is committed and eager to raise standards. She has made a good start in displaying work from each class to help teachers and pupils see what can be achieved. Resources and tools are good and readily available from a central storage point. Little use is made of new technologies to develop pupils' learning in design and technology.

GEOGRAPHY and HISTORY

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupils are very interested in the topics and enjoy learning.• Good use is made of visits and fieldwork to support pupils' learning.• The leadership and management are good.

Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Junior pupils' independent study skills.• Opportunities for map work.• The use of new technologies in classrooms.

104. Two lessons of geography and four of history were observed in the inspection, not enough to make secure judgements about the overall quality of teaching and learning. However, from looking at pupils' work and displays and talking to teachers and pupils, standards in geography and history are average. This is the same as the last inspection.
105. In history, Year 2 pupils have a good range of knowledge about aspects of the Victorian era and are producing thoughtful work, for instance about Dr Livingstone, Florence Nightingale and the Rainhill Trials. They are aware of their own history and important events in the past. In geography, Year 2 pupils know about issues of litter and re-cycling and are aware of their town and surrounding area but are not very confident using maps. They are beginning to understand some of the differences between places, such as town and country, coasts and hills.
106. In their study of Britain in the 1940's, Year 6 pupils are aware of the changes that have taken place and about people's feelings. In the lesson observed, they were able to make reasonable suggestions about what families and children experienced when they were evacuated from the major cities and when Coventry Cathedral was bombed. More able pupils spoke with good understanding of wartime Britain.
107. In geography, Year 6 pupils are able to make appropriate comparisons between two different locations, giving well thought-out reasons. This understanding has been helped by fieldwork undertaken in Norfolk. While they have a satisfactory knowledge about maps, they do not confidently use them.
108. Teachers are confident in history and geography and plan interesting lessons. A Year 2 teacher used her knowledge about Dr Livingstone well in choosing very appropriate resources to tell his story clearly to pupils and to emphasise the main points. A Year 4 lesson on Greece was well planned with a range of learning activities, including a video

to show pupils what the Greek landscape and agriculture are really like. However, teachers are not providing sufficient opportunities for pupils to use their skill in information and communication technology to support their learning in geography and history or to work more independently.

109. Leadership and management of geography and history are good. Co-ordinators have checked teaching and learning by looking at samples of pupils' written work and observing lessons. As a result, there are plans to make more use of new technologies in the teaching of both subjects. The school makes good use of a wide range of very appropriate resources, including visits to local sites of historical interest and for geography fieldwork.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils are very positive about using new technologies. • Teachers are becoming more confident through training. • The new computer suite and resources. • The temporary leadership and management.

Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of new technologies in the classroom. • Junior pupils' independent study skills.

110. As only six lessons could be seen during the inspection, there is insufficient evidence to make secure judgements about the overall quality of teaching and learning. However from these observations, talking to pupils and looking at their work, standards in information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 2 and 6 are average.

111. Year 2 pupils competently control the 'mouse' and use the keyboard. In their geography work on different types of houses, they are learning to represent and store their work on a computer after the initial data collection. They have also produced a class folder, 'The Lord is my Shepherd' containing their own psalms using simple word processing. They are aware of the everyday uses for new technologies in the home and at school.

112. Generally, Year 6 pupils are confident in using new technologies and understand how this helps them carry out certain tasks more quickly. They were able to bring together text, tables and images in a multimedia presentation. Pupils know how to use the Internet safely to find out information across a range of subjects but do not always get the opportunity in the classroom to participate in independent research. Pupils with special educational needs and those who use English as an additional language benefit from using ICT, as activities can be tailored more accurately to their requirements.

113. Teachers are becoming more confident as a result of training and plan interesting lessons to help pupils build on their developing skills. In a Year 1 lesson, the teacher asked challenging questions to check pupils' previous knowledge and understanding of the use of a paint program. As a result, they were able to 'paint' their own impression of Monet's pictures. Pupils listen very well to instructions, work hard and handle equipment with care. In a Year 3 lesson on the features to look for before buying a magazine, pupils knew exactly what to do because of the teacher's clear explanation. They settled quickly to the task and concentrated throughout the session.

114. Pupils are very enthusiastic and enjoy using new technologies, particularly when working collaboratively in pairs on computers. Year 6 pupils spoke enthusiastically

about their experiences producing their own web sites during a residential trip. The subject makes a valuable contribution to their personal development.

115. The co-ordinator is at present on maternity leave but the subject has been well managed by a temporary co-ordinator during her absence. Ways of checking and recording pupils' progress have been introduced and are proving helpful in identifying and tackling shortcomings in learning. Accommodation is good, with a recently built computer suite where all classes have a weekly lesson. However, computers in classrooms and the library are not often used by pupils to follow-up work started in the computer suite or for independent study. There has been a significant improvement in information and communication technology since the previous inspection.

MUSIC

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupils really enjoy singing and taking part in musical performances.• Subject guidance and the co-ordinator's support are helpful to non-specialist teachers.• The quality and range of musical instruments are good.• Good use is made of talented pupils.

Areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Junior pupils' composition skills.

116. With only four lessons being observed during the inspection, there was insufficient evidence available to make secure judgements about standards in all aspects of music or about the overall quality of teaching and learning. However, standards in singing in Years 2 and 6 are above average but junior pupils are not confident in musical composition. This is similar to the previous inspection.

117. Year 2 pupils perform traditional songs from memory and follow tunes easily. They sing clearly and expressively in large and small groups. They quickly learn new songs and are able to sing well in rounds. Year 6 pupils display good quality in their singing and pronounce their words clearly and distinctly. They sing in two parts, keeping in tune, while listening to others. They perform a wide repertoire in different styles from around the world. Pupils from non-British backgrounds make a valuable contribution to lessons, introducing other pupils to a range of traditional and folk songs. Overall, music helps a great deal with their personal development.

118. In a Year 2 lesson recording a rhythm using non-standard notation, pupils enthusiastically wrote down and performed repeating phrases, using symbols they made up themselves. They had been well prepared in a previous lesson by the teacher and all pupils, including those with special educational needs, were able to complete the task.

119. An important feature in Year 6 is the appraisal of music. In the lesson observed, pupils were able to discuss Bizet's Carmen, identifying different elements, such as timbre, melody, dynamics and texture. They followed and repeated the rhythm and showed an understanding of musical expressions, such as 'allegro', 'forte' and 'crescendo'.

120. Pupils are enthusiastic about music and particularly enjoy taking part in a number of musical performances throughout the year. These events are well supported by parents and families. Talented pupils benefit from instrumental tuition in brass and strings. Good use is made of their skills to complement musical performances and show other pupils the high quality work that is possible with effort and commitment.

121. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Teaching and learning have been checked through classroom observation, which identified the lack of confidence shown by junior pupils in musical composition. This is now a development area. The co-ordinator supports colleagues well and the scheme of work provides helpful guidance for non-specialist teachers. The range and quality of musical instruments and other resources are good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Strengths

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards in dance are above average in Years 2 and 6. • The enthusiasm and enjoyment of pupils taking part in physical activities. • The many opportunities for pupils to improve their physical skills in and beyond the school day. • The very useful contribution the subject makes to pupils' personal development. • Leadership and management in the subject. • Two halls, the outdoor hard play areas and the school fields. |
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Areas for development

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More opportunities for specialist coaching. • Support for talented pupils. |
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122. There is not enough evidence to make a secure judgement on the overall quality of teaching and learning or standards in each aspect of the subject, apart from in dance, where standards are above average in Years 2 and 6. All pupils in the school can swim 25 metres by the end of Year 6 and are aware of the principles of water safety. This is similar to findings at the previous inspection.
123. Standards in dance are above average because staff are confident, activities are well planned to build on pupils' developing skills and creative movement is given a high profile right from the nursery. Dance is used to help pupils come to terms with emotional and personal issues and to understand important spiritual and religious issues such as the birth, life and death of Jesus. Teachers link dance to other subjects, including stories, poetry and music. The school also takes part in events such as maypole dancing, Tudor dances and the county dance festival.
124. In an excellent lesson for Year 5 pupils, the expertise of the teacher helped them make rapid progress in perfecting their timing of sequences in an innovative dance piece being rehearsed for Easter. In a games lesson for pupils in Year 2, most were able to improve their skills in passing a ball to their partners and showed a good awareness of space in the hall because of very clear and helpful coaching.
125. There are many very good opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in physical education in lessons and out of school. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 have orienteering sessions linked to geography, Year 5 have sailing lessons and Year 6 have the chance to stay at a residential centre and improve their outdoor and adventurous skills. Pupils from non-British backgrounds, those with special educational needs and the few Travellers fully participate in physical activity and are well supported by teachers and assistants where necessary. Pupils also benefit from a very good range of extra-curricular activities, including football, cricket and netball as well as inter-school competitions. Pupils gain much in their personal development from taking part in physical education activities.

126. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic co-ordinator, well supported by the acting deputy head. They have identified the need to provide more specialist coaching and advanced skills training for the considerable number of talented pupils. They have put in place regular checks on pupils' progress and use the information to advise teachers and improve teaching and learning. Physical education is well provided for as the school has two large halls, hard play areas and extensive playing fields that are used well. The school also makes good use of a nearby public swimming pool and outdoor sports park.