

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **MONKSTON COMBINED SCHOOL**

Monkston, Milton Keynes

LEA area: Milton Keynes

Unique reference number: 133259

Headteacher: Mr T Winter

Reporting inspector: Mr D Shepherd  
2905

Dates of inspection: 20 - 23 January 2003

Inspection number: 249023

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First and middle
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Wadhurst Lane Monkston Milton Keynes
Postcode:	MK10 9LA
Telephone number:	01908 671034
Fax number:	01908 679582
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P Laws
Date of previous inspection:	Not applicable

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2905	David Shepherd	Registered inspector	Foundation stage	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
16472	Catherine Stormonth	Lay inspector	Educational inclusion	How high are standards? b) 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?
32375	April Bosworth	Team inspector	Geography History Religious education	
32227	Sally Howard	Team inspector	English as an additional language Special educational needs English Music	How well is the school led and managed?
18199	David Lindsley	Team inspector	Art and design Mathematics Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
18116	Christopher Taylor	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology Science	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

At the time of the inspection, Monkston is a large combined school that has been open four terms. At present, there are 375 pupils on roll aged four to eleven. This is due to rise to 480 by 2004 when the age-range will be four to twelve years. Most pupils are white British with a small number coming from minority ethnic communities. These are from an Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, African, Caribbean, Chinese and black British background. Twenty-two pupils are from other minority ethnic groups. Thirty-five pupils speak English as an additional language [EAL] of whom eighteen are at an early stage of learning English. This is higher than in most schools. Forty-two pupils are on the school's register for special educational needs [SEN] and three of these have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. This is lower than in most schools. The main needs of these pupils are speech and communication, language, moderate learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties. About 14 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is broadly average. Attainment on entry at age four is well below average, partly because a significant minority of children have had no pre-school education. There are more boys at the school than girls, especially in the Reception classes and in Years 4 and 5. Most pupils come from the immediate locality of the school. The initial intake of 240 pupils in September 2001 came from twenty-three different schools. Forty-three per cent of the pupils on roll in September 2002 had changed schools in the previous four terms to joining the school. Seven full-time teachers were appointed to the school in September 2002 in response to the rapid growth in pupil numbers at that time.

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

Monkston is a very effective school with a number of outstanding features. The majority of pupils are making good progress and achieving well at the school. Pupils' attitudes to and enthusiasm for school are very good. The quality of teaching is good in all classes. The leadership and management provided by the headteacher and governors are excellent. The school provides good value for money.

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

- Ensures all pupils make good progress and achieve well throughout the school.
- Ensures pupils have very positive attitudes to school and that they behave very well.
- Secures good teaching in all classes.
- Provides very good opportunities for pupils' personal development.
- Provides excellent care for its pupils.
- Secures positive views about the school and good support from parents.
- Provides very good leadership and management by the headteacher and governors.

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

- There are no major areas of weakness in the school. A number of minor issues are mentioned in the main sections of the report. These include improving the standards of high-attaining pupils in mathematics, science, history and religious education [RE]; enabling all subject co-ordinators to monitor and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects; and improving the accommodation for Reception children.

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED**

This is the school's first inspection. The dedication and commitment of staff and the excellent leadership of the headteacher and governors give it the capacity to improve further.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				<b>Key</b>
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
Reading	N/a	N/a	C	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Writing	N/a	N/a	C	D	
Mathematics	N/a	N/a	D	E	

In a combined school, the table included here would normally be that of the results at the end of Year 6. However, the school has pupils in Year 6 for the first time this year and these pupils will take their first National Curriculum tests this summer. The results included here are the only ones available and were taken by pupils who had only been in school for two terms. The interpretation of these results should be treated with caution because of the short time these pupils had been in school at the time of taking the tests.

These results indicate that pupils at the end of Year 2 attained standards that were average in reading and writing and below average in mathematics in comparison with all schools. In comparison with schools in a similar context, these standards were average in reading, below average in writing and well below average in mathematics. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels was average in reading, writing and mathematics when compared with all schools. In the Teacher Assessments in science, pupils achieved above average standards in science in comparison with all and similar schools. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher level in science was below average. The boys achieved higher levels than the girls in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2.

The school met the targets it set for itself for pupils attaining the nationally expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. It exceeded its targets at the higher levels. Pupils enter the Reception classes with standards that are well below average overall in early reading, writing and mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development. By the time they leave these classes, most children have made good progress, but nevertheless their standards in literacy, numeracy and personal development are still below average. Inspection evidence suggests that standards at the end of Year 2 are average in all subjects except in physical education [PE] and music, where they are above average. Standards in Year 6 are above average in English, mathematics, information and communication technology [ICT], art, music, religious education [RE] and PE. Standards in all other subjects are average. There is no noticeable difference in the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils with SEN and those with EAL make good progress in most subjects. High-attaining pupils could achieve higher standards in some subjects.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are keen to learn and have very positive attitudes to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are helpful, thoughtful and very well behaved in classrooms and around school.



Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils show considerable maturity and take on responsibilities eagerly. Relationships are very good.
Attendance	Well above average. Most pupils arrive at school punctually.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching and learning	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, the teaching and learning throughout the school are good and this enables pupils to make good progress. They are often very good and excellent in a number of classes in Years 3 to 6. Strengths in the teaching include very good planning and preparation of materials and equipment for lessons, very good relationships between adults and pupils and well-organised lessons. Teachers select interesting content for their lessons and use a variety of different approaches, such as drama, discussions and computers, in their teaching. They assess pupils' work very well in lessons and, in the best examples, adapt their teaching to extend the thinking of higher-attaining pupils. Most teachers have expectations of pupils' achievement in lessons and in their personal development that are very high. Pupils rise to the challenges set and make good progress in all aspects of their development. A number of teachers have high levels of expertise, particularly in literacy, numeracy, music, design and technology [D&T], ICT and in the Reception classes. The teaching of literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics are good. Overall, the school meets the needs of lower attaining pupils, including those with SEN, well. The needs of pupils with EAL are also met well. The needs of higher attaining pupils are not met well in some subjects.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. All subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are taught well. The school's provision for personal, social and health education and extra-curricular activities is excellent. The school also provides a suitable programme for sex education. Provision for drugs education is not established in all classes.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Individual Education Plans include targets for improvement. Pupils with SEN are helped appropriately in lessons by associate staff.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils with EAL are assessed appropriately and specialist provision from the local education authority is used for those at the earliest stages of learning English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school is underpinned by strong moral values. Provision for social development is excellent – there are many opportunities for pupils to develop a wide range of social skills. Provision for spiritual development is very good. Provision for cultural development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Excellent. The school provides a very safe and secure environment. The school has developed excellent systems for assessing and monitoring

	pupils' progress.
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The school works in partnership with parents very well. Parents make a good contribution to pupils' learning.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher and key staff provide a very clear direction for the work of the school. They show high levels of commitment and enthusiasm in promoting high standards throughout the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Excellent. Governors have a very good understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The headteacher and staff have established very good systems for monitoring, evaluating and developing the work of the school.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The budget is spent wisely to help raise standards. Specific grants and budget allocations are targeted very well towards identified priorities. The principles of best value are applied very well.

The school is well staffed to teach the National Curriculum. New staff receive good training to help them settle into school quickly. The school is continually adding to its resources and there are enough resources to teach the curriculum. With the exception of the Reception classes, the accommodation is good. It is well maintained by the site supervisor and cleaning staff. The internal accommodation for the Reception classes is too small and the outside accommodation for these classes is unsatisfactory.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• Their children are making good progress.</li> <li>• Behaviour is good.</li> <li>• They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems.</li> <li>• The school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• The school is helping their children to become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Levels of homework to be clarified.</li> <li>• More information about how their children are getting on.</li> <li>• A closer working relationship between home and school.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views about the school. However, they disagree with the criticisms a minority of parents make about the school. The school works closely with parents and many are actively involved in school life. The information provided for parents is good overall, but some school reports are difficult to understand because they include educational jargon. Evidence from homework diaries and from discussions with pupils indicates that pupils receive a reasonable amount of homework throughout the school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Having only been open four terms, the school has National Curriculum results from Year 2 pupils in 2002. At that time, the school had only been open for two terms. Because of this, these results do not reflect on the teaching and standards in the school throughout Years 1 and 2. At best, they provide a benchmark from which the school can move forward. There were no Year 6 pupils in school last year, hence no results to report.
2. Inspection evidence indicates that standards on entry to the Reception classes are well below average overall. The assessments carried out by the school on these children using the procedures recommended by the local education authority support these findings. A factor contributing to these low standards is that many of these children have not attended any form of pre-school provision before entry to school. For example, of the initial intake of 60 pupils in 2001, twenty-eight per cent had not attended a playgroup or nursery before joining the Reception classes. As a result, many of these children have not developed some of the early skills of language, number or working together with other children in groups. This means that, in spite of the good teaching they receive in the Reception classes, standards in these aspects of their development are still below average when they enter Year 1.
3. Standards achieved by pupils who have joined the school in other year groups vary considerably – some are above but many are below average. Taken as a whole, standards in most subjects of pupils joining the school at unusual times are below average. A factor contributing to this is that many of these pupils have changed schools a number of times. For example, twenty-five per cent of the initial and forty-three per cent of the 2002 intake had already changed schools in the previous four terms prior to joining Monkston. Each school has a different style of teaching and pupils have to adapt accordingly. In the process of this, their rate of learning slows down and they do not make the progress of which they are capable. The standards achieved by many of the pupils joining the school are lower than they should be because of the changes of school that have been a feature of their lives.
4. In the initial intake, the school admitted pupils from twenty-three different schools. Houses in the Monkston and Middleton grid squares are being occupied rapidly and the school is also increasing in size rapidly. Pupils new to the school need to settle into the school's routines and these may be different from those to which they have been accustomed. They need to do this before they will make the progress of which they are capable. This slows down the rate at which standards at the school are improving.
5. However, standards at the school are improving at a significant pace. There are three main reasons for this: the first is the learning environment that has been created in the school, the second is the structured curriculum that has been worked out by the staff and the third is the good teaching.
6. The governors and headteacher have established a clear vision and aims for the work of the school. The headteacher and staff have created the conditions for the vision and aims to be implemented. The school now has an "established feel" to it in spite of being open for a short time. The school has managed to create consistency in the approaches to learning and this provides a good framework for pupils' learning, which contributes well to the good progress that they achieve.
7. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in Year 2 are average in reading, writing, speaking, listening, mathematics, science and other subjects with the exceptions of music and PE, where they were above average. This shows that these pupils as a whole have made good progress since joining the school and raised their achievement to average from below average. In music

and PE, the progress they have made is better than this as they are now reaching above average standards in these subjects. The teaching in Years 1 and 2 is good and the teachers have good expertise in a number of subjects, most notably in English, mathematics, music and PE. These factors help pupils achieve higher standards and reach their potential. The findings from the inspection are broadly similar to the results of the National Curriculum tests that the pupils in Year 2 took last year. In these tests, standards were average in reading and writing, but below average in mathematics.

8. Inspection evidence suggests that standards in Year 6 are above average in English, mathematics, art and design, music, PE and RE. Standards in ICT are particularly good. This is because a number of teachers have significant expertise with computers and the school regards this subject as a priority. Standards in mathematics and all other subjects are average. The teaching in Years 3 to 6 is consistently good, and, on many occasions, it is very good and sometimes outstanding. A number of teachers are particularly enthusiastic and express their desire to achieve their best for the pupils. A number of the teachers have high levels of subject expertise in a number of subjects, including English, mathematics, ICT, music and PE. Each of these factors helps to inspire pupils to make progress and raise their standards. The school is on course to reach the challenging targets it set for itself in English and mathematics for 2003.
9. Pupils with EAL make good progress. The contributions made by the specialist staff from the local education authority are a factor in raising standards of pupils with EAL. A specialist teacher has helped the school to identify the stages of learning English these pupils are at and advised in setting targets for improvement for them.
10. Pupils with SEN, including those who have Statements of SEN, make good progress, especially in English and mathematics. This is because teachers have a good understanding of their pupils' individual needs and these pupils are helped effectively with their work by associate staff as well as teachers. In literacy and mathematics lessons, work for pupils with SEN is clearly matched to their abilities. Teachers and associate staff plan the work for these pupils together and associate staff evaluate pupils' learning during activities.

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

11. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and are a significant factor in the good progress that pupils make. The quality of school life is also improved because of pupils' positive attitudes to school and their good behaviour. This is an inclusive, vibrant and supportive community where the ethos is very positive and relationships are very good. Pupils obviously enjoy school and parents are pleased that their children are happy at school.
12. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning, especially when the teaching inspires very good work and teachers' expectations are high. Pupils settle to work quickly and are keen to learn, have good concentration levels and answer questions eagerly. They behave well even when they spend long sessions on the carpet. They follow instructions well, work hard and respond positively to praise and encouragement. Pupils relish challenge and this was seen in an excellent Year 3 dance lesson when the teacher's enthusiasm captivated pupils and encouraged them to stretch themselves to the full to develop new skills. Pupils were proud of their efforts and enjoyed themselves.
13. Behaviour in the classroom and around the school is very good. Pupils are calm and orderly. Lunchtimes are pleasant sociable times. Behaviour in the playground is good and pupils amuse themselves well. Some older boys were occasionally boisterous but it was good-natured and pupils had fun during playtimes. Pupils show reverence during assemblies, especially during reflection and prayer, and sing joyfully. There is no evidence of any sort of vandalism. Pupils confirmed strongly that bullying and racist incidents seldom occur and when reported they are dealt with very effectively and are simply not tolerated. There have been no exclusions since the school opened.

14. Relationships throughout the school are very good and are based on mutual respect for all in a caring school community. Teachers speak positively to pupils and all talents are valued. This builds confidence and self-esteem and helps pupils tackle new learning and do their best. Boys and girls and pupils from minority ethnic groups mix freely and happily. Pupils have a very good understanding of the impact of their actions on others and have the utmost respect for each other's feelings and values. Pupils are supportive of each other, especially when they discuss issues as a class during circle time. On these occasions, pupils openly share what is troubling them and they receive some mature advice and help from classmates about friendships and work habits.
15. The personal development of pupils is good. Pupils are thoughtful, well mannered, helpful, and welcoming to visitors by opening doors and greeting them in a friendly manner. Pupils reflect deeply and write imaginatively when given the opportunity to do so. For example, when they considered the conditions during The Great Fire of London they considered very carefully what life was like at that time. Moral themes in assemblies and during circle times make pupils aware of the benefits of goodness and kindness. In an outstanding Year 6 personal, social and health education lesson on prejudice, pupils began to stereotype people and quickly recognised the need to change their thinking to avoid stereotyping. Pupils take their School Council responsibilities seriously and feel pleased that they have a "voice" in the school. They really enjoy and appreciate the huge range of extra-curricular activities and the school trips provided by the school. The residential trip to Shortenalls gave pupils a range of new and exciting opportunities for learning about the environment and living together away from school and home. As behaviour improves and pupils show good levels of self-discipline, some teachers are increasingly able to give pupils more independence in their learning and more freedom to choose resources, carry out research and apply learning to new situations. This is not a strong feature of the school, however. Some lessons were very much led by the teacher and too few opportunities to develop independence in pupils were created.
16. Attendance is very good and well above the national average. Authorised absence is attributable to genuine illness and taking holidays. Unauthorised absence levels are at the national average. Punctuality on arrival at school is very good and there is a prompt and punctual start to each school day.

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

17. Teaching and learning are strengths of the school. During the inspection, in approximately three quarters of lessons, teaching and learning were judged to be at least good. In two out of ten lessons, they were very good and occasionally outstanding. Only one lesson was judged to be unsatisfactory. Good teaching and learning are evident in all classes and in all subjects. This is a remarkable achievement for a school that has only been open for four terms.
18. The impact of this good teaching is seen in the achievement of the pupils. Pupils are making good progress in all subjects, particularly in literacy and numeracy. The school has quite rightly placed significant emphasis on training teachers to teach literacy and numeracy well. The school has been successful in this and, as a result, through consistently good teaching nearly half of the pupils who joined the school when it first opened have made better than average progress in literacy and numeracy.
19. There are a number of strengths in the teaching and learning. Teachers plan their lessons well in year groups. The school's programmes of work for all subjects follow closely national and local guidance. For example, the National Literacy Strategy and National Numeracy Strategy are taught systematically. This provides a good structure for learning that helps pupils make progress in a logical and structured way. Materials and equipment for lessons are prepared very well. Resources are of good quality and to hand when needed during lessons. This contributes to the teaching being organised very well. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. This promotes pupils' positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour. These underpin the

teaching and allow lessons to be taught without interruptions to correct inappropriate behaviour. As a consequence, pupils make good progress. Many teachers adopt different teaching styles. This variety helps to motivate pupils and maintain their interest in lessons. For example, in an assembly for Years 3 to 6, the teacher enlisted the help of a few pupils to act out a simulated television game show to win a trip around the world as a way of introducing the assembly theme about journeys. This captivated the pupils and the teacher was able to introduce the theme of journeys very effectively. In a lesson in the Reception class, the teacher asked a group of children to throw a bean bag on to a number as a way of helping them recognise numbers to twelve.

20. Teachers monitor the progress pupils make during lessons and assess their work well. In the best examples teachers use this information to help them plan future lessons. A number of teachers have significant expertise in a number of subjects. This is evident in literacy, numeracy, ICT, music, dance, games and D&T. High levels of subject expertise enable teachers to ask questions and respond to pupils' questions in depth, thus enabling pupils to learn effectively.
21. In spite of these strengths, three aspects of the teaching were noted as relative weaknesses. Some teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to contribute and use their initiative during lessons. For example, during a very good dance lesson in Year 3, the teacher gave pupils the ideas they should try, rather than ask them for their ideas. Some of the work set for higher-attaining pupils, including the gifted and talented, is too easy for them. For example, in a Year 1 numeracy lesson, higher-attaining pupils were not set hard enough work and did not make the progress of which they were capable. Occasionally, lower-attaining pupils, including those with SEN, find the work set for them too hard. Sometimes, teachers spend too much time on introducing lessons and this reduces the time available for pupils to carry out tasks that clarify their understanding.
22. The content of lessons is of equal interest to boys and girls, and this helps both groups to make good progress. Both male and female staff act as good role models to inspire both boys and girls.
23. Overall, the quality of teaching for pupils with SEN is good. Their needs are identified carefully by teachers and Individual Education Plans are prepared for them. These include clear targets for improvement and ways of reaching them. They are shared appropriately with the parents and pupils concerned. The provision of activities pitched at their levels, especially in English and mathematics, is good. Associate staff provide good help for these pupils during lessons. Most achieve their learning targets by the time they are reviewed.
24. The teaching and learning of pupils with EAL are good. Teachers effectively use associate staff especially in English and mathematics, to help these pupils in their work. However, less help is available in other subjects and these pupils do not make the same progress in these lessons. Visual methods of teaching are often used to help pupils' understanding of what is being taught. For example, interactive white-boards are used to project pictures and diagrams. This helps pupils with EAL to follow the lesson. Subject vocabulary and lesson objectives are clearly explained in most lessons. Careful grouping of pupils enables pupils with EAL to work alongside fluent English speakers. In the best lessons, resources have been adapted to draw on pupils' own knowledge and understanding of their cultural identity, such as the book of traditional Caribbean tales used alongside European examples in Reception classes. This has had the effect of boosting these pupils' confidence and interest in learning English.
25. The school receives valuable support from a specialist teacher from the local education authority, who works in the school each week. This teacher works alongside pupils at the early stages of EAL during lessons and then discussing lesson planning with the teacher. Additional resources such as dual language books are also loaned to the school. This aspect of teaching is the focus of staff training in the near future.

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

26. The school teaches all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education as required by statute. In addition, a suitable programme of personal, social and health education is taught. Sex education is taught appropriately and drugs education is taught in three year groups. The curriculum reflects the aims of the school in that it provides equality of access and opportunity for all pupils. The National Literacy Strategy and National Numeracy Strategy are taught. The school wisely uses national guidance in teaching other subjects of the National Curriculum and for pupils in the Reception classes. Local guidance is followed for teaching RE. The school modifies national and local guidance to provide suitable programmes of work for each year group. These programmes of work provide a good guide for teachers and help pupils to make logical progress in their work.
27. Teachers plan their teaching in year groups. This works very well and ensures that there is consistency in what is taught to pupils in classes in the same year group. The school's checking of planning (and this is confirmed by inspectors) ensures that pupils receive the same curriculum within year groups and that they make logical progress between years groups. Teachers' termly and weekly plans are written using the same format and stored on teachers' laptop computers. This is a very efficient way of storing teachers' plans and is an outstanding strength of the school. Plans are clear and informative; they provide a good indication of teachers' intentions for pupils' learning.
28. Great care is taken to ensure that individual pupils' needs are met, and appropriate consideration is given to the needs of all groups, irrespective of ability or background. The early identification of individual educational needs helps to ensure that appropriate support – including the well-targeted help given by associate staff – is provided for pupils for whom English is an additional language and for those with SEN. This is a major factor in the good progress that all pupils make. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language and those from ethnic minorities are included in all activities. They make progress as a result of teachers' good understanding of their needs. There are effective systems of monitoring the progress of pupils with EAL and specialist teachers are used well to provide additional guidance for staff. One member of the assistant teaching staff has recently undertaken an Indian dance course so that she can provide an additional after school club to help raise the self-esteem of these pupils. There is special individual attention given to pupils who are vulnerable, physically disabled or new to the school and no pupil is excluded from any school activity on financial grounds. The needs of higher-attaining pupils, including the gifted and talented, are met through teachers' input and questioning during lessons. This is effective in literacy and a number of other subjects. However, the needs of higher attaining pupils, especially the gifted and talented, are not met in a minority of lessons in mathematics and science.
29. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. There is a good programme of work that includes coping with feelings, bullying, healthy diet and lifestyle, personal hygiene habits, harmful substances, road safety and safe behaviour. Many of these issues are discussed by the whole class as pupils are sitting in a circle. This teaching method, called circle time, is used very effectively. This aspect of the curriculum focuses on personal awareness, making choices and how our actions can affect others. A School Council with two pupils representing each class in Years 3 to 6 has been established. The work of this group of pupils is impressive. Their views and decisions are valued and acted upon. The School Council has already looked at playground games, furniture and equipment. Action has been taken to comply with a number of their decisions.
30. Extra-curricular activities are a strength of the school. The school provides a comprehensive range of activities. Out of school clubs make a positive contribution to pupils' development. Staff provide opportunities for pupils to develop their interest in a range of games and sporting activities, expressive arts and modern technology. Most clubs change each term to provide fresh opportunities for pupils to try out new interests. During the inspection, 60 per cent of pupils from all age groups took part in at least one of these clubs.
31. Links with the community are developing. Visitors to the school help to broaden the curriculum. For example, the artist in residence encouraged the pupils to produce the eye catching wall mural in the hall. Pupils have good opportunities to visit places of interest that extend their class

learning. There have been residential visits for Years 4 and 5, and day visits to Bletchley Park Museum, Hazard Alley, Milton Keynes Village and Olney. The school has taken part in fund raising for the NSPCC, held a Blue Peter bring and buy stall and organised a Pound for a Baby Appeal. Considering that the school has only been open for four terms, the range of additional activities provided is impressive.

32. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. This provides an exciting and varied background for learning and successfully promotes pupils' personal development.
33. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. Assemblies are of high quality and comply fully with the requirements for collective worship. A strong moral message is usually central to assemblies and this is presented in a range of different ways to interest and involve pupils. The theme during the inspection was about "journeys" and several journeys were featured and linked very effectively to the spiritual journey through life. The promotion of pupils' spiritual development in the curriculum is good, especially when pupils are encouraged to reflect on beliefs and values, and understand feelings and emotions. Pupils are given many good opportunities to express these elements in RE, dance, music and personal, social and health education lessons. Year 6 pupils wrote thoughtfully about "Why every child deserves to achieve happiness". Year 2 pupils imagined the terror of escaping from the Great Fire of London to dramatic music in a very good dance lesson.
34. The promotion of pupils' moral development is very good. Pupils' efforts and achievements are valued. Through the very fine examples set by the headteacher and other adults in the school, pupils learn the principles of right and wrong and high expectations for behaviour and care for others. Staff constantly remind pupils about this in lessons. Personal, social and health education lessons also promote pupils' moral development well. For example, pupils talk about moral issues and reflect on topics such as "How can I make myself a better person?" Discussions about resolving problems encourage pupils to think in a fair and reasonable way as pupils are encouraged to see both sides of an argument.
35. The provision for pupils' social development is outstanding. The personal, social and health education programme teaches pupils some important life skills, such as adopting a healthy lifestyle, personal safety and some early good citizenship skills. Contributions to solving issues in school during circle times enable pupils to help each other effectively. The School Council helps pupils to raise issues in a responsible way. Raising funds for charity extends pupils' social awareness and helps pupils appreciate and value others. Pupils carry out jobs around school and pupils in Years 1 and 5 share times for reading. Some pupils lead and take part in assemblies, school productions and sporting events and the wide range of clubs also provides further very good opportunities to promote pupils' social development.
36. Cultural development is good and the school tries to encourage greater knowledge and understanding of living locally and in a multi cultural society. Pupils are taught to know about Milton Keynes and the history and geography of the locality. In RE and in some assemblies, pupils have focused on many aspects of Hinduism, Islam and Judaism as well as Christianity. There is adequate use of classic literature and stories, and a range of music and artwork is used to promote pupils' cultural development. When Year 4 pupils were given some Aboriginal art and poetry themes, it inspired work of a particularly high quality and was a fine example of promoting cultural development. An artist in residence helped to produce an impressive tapestry called "Indian Chaos" for Year 4 pupils and an author led the story telling in the book carnival. Opportunities are taken to enliven learning when staff tell tales from the Caribbean and lead Indian dancing reward time sessions described by one pupil as "fabulous".

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



37. The school takes great care of pupils and this helps to improve the effectiveness of the teaching and learning. Staff know their pupils well and pupils are very confident in their approaches to their teachers and other adults in school; this helps pupils to feel happy, safe and secure.
38. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are excellent. Registers are consistently maintained and absences are rigorously followed up to encourage very good attendance and reduce unauthorised absence. Taking holidays in term-time is actively discouraged and the consequent disruption caused to pupils' education minimised. Procedures for monitoring and promoting behaviour are outstanding. They are consistently applied and there is an effective positive approach to promoting good behaviour, which is constantly reinforced throughout the school day. Pupils are familiar with the school's rules for behaviour and most usually behave very well. Rewards and sanctions are used very positively to encourage good behaviour and effort. The Friday afternoon "reward time" is highly prized and is an excellent deterrent against bad behaviour. The procedures for eliminating any oppressive behaviour are also excellent. Bullying is not tolerated and the small number of racist incidents are treated very seriously to promote racial equality in an inclusive school community.
39. The arrangements for child protection are excellent and fully meet all statutory requirements. The designated person for child protection receives regular training and updates the school on any changes in legislation and local child protection procedures. The school is vigilant and carefully monitors any suspicious behaviour. When pupils are sick or injured, they receive a very high level of care and attention and all pupils' medical conditions and disabilities are catered for very well. The school has some excellent systems for carrying out all the routine health and safety checks and risk assessments. Meticulous records of these are kept. School security, including Internet security, is very good.
40. Much checking of pupils' personal development is informal. Teachers show a high level of support and commitment for pupils and give them good advice for improving behaviour and social skills while encouraging a good work ethic. This has significant benefits for learning and for supporting and guiding pupils' personal development. Year 5 pupils have their own action books where they keep a check on their own progress when targets are regularly reviewed with their teachers. The induction arrangements for new pupils are very good and enable these pupils to settle and feel part of the school community quickly.
41. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are very good and these have been developed significantly since the school opened. The school has exceptional procedures for monitoring pupils' progress in English and mathematics. The school makes very good use of ICT to record assessments. This makes them available to all teachers. To assess pupils' attainment on entry, the school used a Global Online Assessment of Learning (GOAL) test from Year 2 onwards. By comparing these results with results from the same tests a year later, the school has a good indication of the progress pupils have made at the school. The results of these tests provide individual National Curriculum levels for all pupils. To add to these results, the school gave pupils in Years 3 to 5 the national non-statutory tests in English and mathematics at the end of the school year.
42. The school acknowledges that systems and procedures for assessment in all subjects are not available for all subjects but this is understandable given that the school is only four terms old. There are good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment in science and ICT. Assessments in other subjects are completed each half term at present, highlighting pupils who are attaining below or above average for their year group. This is a good start.

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

43. The school has a strong partnership with parents. As the school expands and grows in confidence, Monkston's popularity is increasing and it has become a school at the heart of its burgeoning community. Parents' views are very positive and they are highly satisfied with the education provided by the school.

44. Parents had some minor misgivings about the quality of information provided by the school, particularly about the progress of their children. Some parents felt that the school is not working closely enough with parents and homework arrangements are not satisfactory. The inspection team investigated these and found no cause for concern. The school tries hard to work closely with parents. The quality of information is good overall. Homework arrangements are good and form an active part of pupils' learning, especially in English and mathematics.
45. The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is good. The family induction arrangements are very good and children are able to settle quickly when they start school. Parents are given very good information explaining what to expect at school. The home-school books are used very well to record reading and homework and for two-way dialogue with parents. This values the contribution that parents can make to children's learning at home.
46. The quality of information provided for parents is good overall. The regular friendly school newsletters keep parents fully in touch with news about the school. Year group letters are excellent and let parents know what their children will be learning and details about any special activities taking place. They also help parents to know how to support learning at home. The meetings held for parents on literacy, numeracy and the National Curriculum tests are very useful and well attended. The quality of information parents receive about their children's progress is good. The termly formal consultation evenings are very well attended. Informal opportunities at the end of each day for parents to discuss more immediate issues about their children are used well. The full and interim school reports are good. Parents are provided with good information about their children's performance over the year, especially in English, mathematics and science. The weakness is when some teachers use educational jargon in these reports that is difficult for parents to understand. The governors' annual report to parents and school prospectus are full and well-written documents that meet all statutory requirements.
47. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is good. Some parents are governors and actively help to move school developments forward. Governors are easy for parents to access to raise issues and make suggestions. Many parents regularly volunteer to help in the classroom. Parents also help with swimming lessons and whenever other needs arise. The Friends of Monkston is an active, fast growing and enthusiastic parents' group raising funds and providing parents with many social activities. The sums raised have funded a school banner, outdoor playground furniture and a quiet playground area with a shaded pergola, which is planned shortly. Parents come to school whenever they are invited, especially when they are supporting their children in class assemblies, school productions, sports day and various meetings. In this way, parents make a very good contribution to children's learning at school and help improve the quality of school life.

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

48. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and key staff provide excellent leadership and direction for the school. There is an exceptional school ethos for success. This includes the involvement of the whole school community within its aims and objectives, curriculum and organisation. This is reflected in the excellent relationships in the school and the shared commitment of the whole community to succeed. Since opening in 2001 the school has made significant progress and has focused on raising standards for all groups of pupils. Priority is given to raising standards in English, mathematics and ICT. Being a new school, there has been an excellent emphasis on recruiting and developing a highly effective staff team and creating and promoting a positive climate for pupils' learning and achievement.
49. The school has an excellent governing body. Governors are very knowledgeable and together they are a confident and well-informed body, having benefited from extensive training and advice in the recent past. Governors are very well informed about the school's strengths and areas for further development. They have devised an effective committee structure. Individual governors take responsibility for aspects of the school's work, such as literacy, numeracy and SEN. A very

good pattern of meetings and contact with the school has been established. This has resulted in governors meeting regularly with staff. Governors monitor the work of the school on a regular basis. The Chair has regular meetings with the headteacher. This enables governors to establish very good relationships with the staff and maintain an excellent understanding of the work of the school and its future plans. Governors are well informed by the headteacher about ongoing developments and of progress in achieving the targets set in the school improvement plan through regular and informative reports.

50. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and has established an appropriate clear educational direction for the school. At regular meetings, the senior management team reviews the progress made towards achieving the school aims and targets. This has been achieved through very effective systems of monitoring teaching and learning, especially in English and mathematics. This has involved regular lesson observations by the senior management team, scrutiny of planning and pupils' work and discussions with pupils. As a result of providing governors with the outcomes of this monitoring, governors have been able to produce an audit of the school's strengths and areas for further development. However, all aspects of monitoring and evaluation have not yet occurred within a number of subjects. Teachers have delegated responsibilities for subjects but not all of them have not received training to carry out their monitoring and evaluation roles effectively. Subject co-ordinators have produced action plans, which identify areas for improvement. However, without a full grasp of how well all pupils learn in their subjects, some subject co-ordinators are limited in their capacity to advise and help

colleagues. All teachers are provided with lap top computers. These are used well to establish consistency within planning of teaching. This has included the use of interactive whiteboards, projection of video clips and for recording pupils' progress.

51. The SEN co-ordinator is fully up to date with knowledge of the new code of practice and has ensured staff and governors are fully informed of the recent changes in practice. All staff understand the procedures for identifying pupils with SEN. There are very effective systems to monitor the progress of these pupils. Teachers and associate staff are responsible for the daily needs of pupils with SEN and together they keep effective records of the progress of these pupils.
52. The co-ordinator for pupils with EAL has a good understanding of the needs of these pupils. There is a very good system for assessing these pupils' level of English language following the guidance from the local education authority. Of the 35 pupils identified as having EAL, eighteen are identified as being at an early stage. All pupils are being effectively catered for as a result of the support from the local education authority.
53. A recent government grant has provided the school with an additional half-day's support per week for raising the achievement of African Caribbean pupils. Although this provision began three weeks ago, the pupils involved are gaining in confidence and taking a more active role in lessons as a result.
54. The school has very good procedures for managing and controlling its finances. The initial budgets were set by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. This ensured purchasing of appropriate equipment prior to the school's opening. Governors are now becoming increasingly involved in the monitoring and management of these budgets. Because of the rapid rise in the school's role, they have to base budgets on predictions of numbers rather than actual numbers. This has caused some difficulties during the past four terms. To help them with this, the local education authority is providing the school with generous support in the short term. The school's internal procedures and systems for budgeting are very effective, and the finance administration assistant deals very well with orders and monitors expenditure, ensuring best value. As yet, the school has not had the opportunity to raise significant income from external sources. However, the Parents' Association has already raised significant amounts for playground equipment and some sponsorship has been obtained.

55. There are sufficient suitably qualified staff employed in the school and they are a strong and enthusiastic team. There is a good match of expertise in subjects. Arrangements for inducting staff new to the school are very good and new staff confirmed how well supported they felt as they settled into their jobs. Arrangements to assess and improve teachers' performance are also good. Staff are undertaking training aligned to their own and the school's development plan. The benefits of this training are evident in excellent behaviour management by all staff and expertise in subjects like ICT, where standards have risen as a direct result of training.
56. There are enough associate staff to help pupils with SEN, EAL and the Reception classes. Associate staff play an important role in teaching and learning, especially when they are well briefed. In some lessons, however, they spend long periods of time with little to do. This is a waste of their time. Day-to-day administration of the school is very good. This enables the headteacher to focus his attention on other more appropriate areas of management. The site supervisor and cleaning staff also make a very good contribution to the smooth running of the clean and well-maintained school.
57. The school accommodation is good overall. Most classrooms are bright and spacious and have access to specialist areas for art, music, science, ICT and food technology. Displays are a strong feature of the school. These give prominence to pupils' work and help to make the school an attractive learning environment for pupils. However, during the inspection, the furniture in the specialist areas caused some difficulty for younger pupils who could not touch the ground when seated on the stools, could not access the sinks to wash their hands without kneeling on stools and had difficulty accessing computers from the large chairs.

58. The Reception class accommodation is unsatisfactory. The designated activity areas are too small and cramped for the large number of children. Noise levels are high and the children in the curtained off area of learning are often distracted by noise from other pupils and find concentration difficult. The outdoor area is too small and does not provide sufficient learning opportunities for large toys and equipment. The structural post is a hazard and needs to be fenced off in some way. There is not enough large equipment to adequately cover the physical development curriculum for the Reception class pupils. There are not enough wheeled toys and climbing apparatus to develop the required physical skills of young children.
59. Resources are generally good in most subjects. Most are new, are of good quality and are used well. The school is building up resources when funds permit and is aware of some shortages in art, RE and D&T. More books for pupils with SEN are needed. There are also insufficient tuned percussion instruments and instruments from other cultures in the music room.

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

60. There are no key issues upon which the school should focus. However, the school may wish to include the following minor issues in its improvement plan:
- (1) Raise standards more consistently of high-attaining pupils in mathematics, science, history and RE.  
*[see paragraphs 92, 98, 121, 141]*
  - (2) Train all subject co-ordinators to enable them to carry out all aspects of their roles.  
*[see paragraph 50]*
  - (3) As funds allow, improve the accommodation in the Reception classes both internally and externally, and provide large play equipment outside.  
*[see paragraphs 58, 62]*

*The inspection team recognises that aspects of these minor issues feature in the current school improvement plan but recommends that they feature more prominently than is envisaged at present.*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	106
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	44

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	9	23	48	25	1	0	0
Percentage	8.5	21.6	45.3	23.5	1	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	375
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	54

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	42

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	35

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	200
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	14

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.7
National comparative data	4.3

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.3

*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	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2002	16	31	47

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	13	14
	Girls	27	27	28
	Total	40	40	42
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	85 (n/a)	85 (n/a)	89 (n/a)
	National	84 (82)	85 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	14	15
	Girls	28	27	31
	Total	41	41	46
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	87 (n/a)	87 (n/a)	98 (n/a)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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	287	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	19	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	17	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	10	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	5	0	0
Black or Black British – African	5	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	9	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0



No ethnic group recorded
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*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)	15.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.6
Average class size	28.8

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	352

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2001-02
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	£
Total income	394,618
Total expenditure	380,954
Expenditure per pupil	1,561
Balance brought forward from previous year	2,369
Balance carried forward to next year	16,033

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

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	371
Number of questionnaires returned	143

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	53	42	3	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	44	49	4	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	47	17	1	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	47	17	1	2
The teaching is good.	50	45	0	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	39	43	11	3	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	52	38	5	3	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	35	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	36	47	10	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	49	40	3	2	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	41	2	0	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	50	34	8	0	7

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE [RECEPTION CLASSES]**

61. The school has made good progress in establishing suitable provision for children in the Reception classes. National guidance for the teaching of young children is being followed very well. The teachers have considerable expertise in teaching young children and they are helped in this by three highly skilled associate staff. Volunteer parents also make a good contribution to the learning achieved by these children. The classrooms are resourced well and provide a very stimulating environment in which to learn.
62. However, in spite of the best efforts of the staff, provision in the Reception classes has significant shortcomings, due to the quality of the accommodation. Classrooms are too small to provide suitable spaces for teaching the Foundation Stage curriculum. The accommodation outside the classroom is poor. Children do not have enough opportunities to ride on tricycles, bicycles, scooters and the like or climb larger apparatus such as a climbing frame. Plans have been drawn up to increase the size of the hard area outside the classroom, but this needs to be sufficient in size to provide Reception children with enough opportunities to develop their physical skills as well as other aspects of their development.
63. There is a wide range of attainment on entry to the Reception classes. However, overall attainment in all areas of learning is well below average. The majority of children have not attended any pre-school provision before joining the school and have more ground to make up than those who have. The school assesses the children's attainment at the beginning of their Reception year in key language and number skills and in personal development. Teachers use this information to set targets that are generally appropriate, but occasionally they are not specific enough or easily measurable, for instance, a target for a child 'to represent some sounds in writing'.
64. The teaching of Reception children is good, overall. In spite of working in cramped conditions, most pupils make good progress and improve significantly in a number of areas by the time they enter Year 1. Pupils make most progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and in aspects of their physical development and they leave the Reception class having achieved the Early Learning Goals in these areas. In communication, language and literacy, mathematics and personal, social and emotional development, children have made good progress, but have not achieved the nationally expected standards for this age. Overall, children entering Year 1 have achieved well during Reception, but enter Year 1 with below average standards.
65. The leadership and management of provision and teaching in the Reception classes are good. Planning for the whole year is detailed. The attainment of children is well known to the staff and is used to allocate children to teaching groups. In this way, higher-attaining pupils as well as lower-attaining pupils, including those with SEN, are taught well at levels appropriate for their abilities. The progress of children with SEN is checked against the targets set for them in their Individual Education Plans and new targets are set. Pupils with EAL are assessed with the help of a specialist teacher from the local education authority and appropriate targets for learning English are set for them.

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

66. Overall, pupils enter the Reception classes with standards well below average in their personal, social and emotional development. Through good teaching, they make good progress in this area and achieve well. Some reach average standards in this area, and a few exceed them. However, overall, standards in personal development are below average. Many enter Year 1 with standards that are below average in their personal development. The staff emphasise the routines of the

classroom and how to behave in such a confined space. They talk to children individually and in small groups as they focus on appropriate behaviour when listening to a story

or playing in the water tray. The children respond to this teaching very well and most behave well during class lessons and activities. The individual attention children receive promotes good relationships between staff and children and between the children themselves.

67. However, a small group of children are immature for their age and seek attention by interrupting the teaching. In addition, many children are too noisy during group activities. They raise their voices when talking to others in their group. The staff do not correct the children enough when this happens, and, as a consequence, noise levels become too high. This prevents children from making as much progress as they could because they spend too much time and energy seeking to be heard. Groups of pupils work very close to each because of the cramped conditions within the classroom. For example, a noisier activity, such as using Lego for construction, takes place next to a quiet activity, such as learning letter sounds. The close proximity of these groups makes it difficult for the quieter group to get on with their work without noise distractions. This is unsatisfactory.

### **Communication, language and literacy**

68. Overall, children's language skills are very low on entry to the Reception classes. From this low starting point, children make good progress because the teaching is good. However, by the end of Reception, many children are still below the nationally expected levels, especially in reading and writing.
69. Children enjoy listening to stories and the teachers use their skills well to encourage children to listen and follow a story. For example, teachers use large picture and hand puppets to engage children's interest in the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. One teacher told a part of the story and asked the children to say what happened next. The children enjoyed playing their part in telling the story in this way. Overall, children's skills in listening are better than those in speaking. This is because children have more opportunities to sit and listen than they have to speak at length. Teachers teach the sounds letters make very well and this helps children to read simple words. For example, lower-attaining pupils were learning some words beginning with the letter "t" by learning the sound made by this letter. Staff made good use of objects, such as a model of a tree and the table, to interest children in this exercise. Higher attaining pupils were learning the sounds made by other letters as they built up their skills in reading simple three letter words such as "top". Most children are beginning to form letters correctly. Teachers and associate staff teach children to hold their pencils correctly and to start forming letters in the correct way. Higher-attaining pupils read simple sentences they have written. However, some of the writing of lower-attaining pupils is difficult to read because their letters are not formed well enough.

### **Mathematical development**

70. At the start of Reception, most children have little awareness of number and their knowledge of mathematical language is well below average. Staff teach mathematics very well in specific lessons each day and they take other opportunities to teach about numbers and the capacity of measuring containers at other times of the day. Using objects, such as a number of teddy bears, they teach the children to place them in order of size using words such as "bigger", "smaller", "heavier" and "lighter". Weighing balances are used to show children which teddy bears are heavier or lighter. Children enjoy being taught using objects and mathematics apparatus such as balances and water. Practical approaches such as these help them to make good progress in their mathematical development. In spite of the progress, they make during Reception, children's attainment in mathematics overall is still below average when they enter Year 1. For example, a significant proportion of Reception children cannot recognise numbers such as the number 2.

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

71. Teachers plan a wide range of activities to broaden children's knowledge of the world around them. Most children use computers well and many can follow a simple program, such as 'My World', unaided. Many are developing good skills with the mouse and use it skilfully. Their attainment in this aspect is above average. During one lesson, children learned some of the techniques of cooking. They helped their teacher to make different flavours of porridge. They washed their hands, helped prepare the necessary ingredients, stirred the mixture and watched their teacher cook it on the cooker. They expressed their likes and dislikes of the different flavours of porridge by colouring in a chart. Most children made good progress and achieved average standards in this lesson because it was well prepared by the staff and all children were able to take part in the preparation and tasting. However, it took too long to wash children's hands at the beginning and end of this lesson because the sinks in the food technology room are too high for young children. Children needed to be supervised as they stood on a stool to wash their hands. Most children join large Lego and other structural apparatus together skilfully to form moveable toys. Higher-attaining children add extra features to their models so that they can play with them in interesting ways. Overall, from a low starting point at the beginning of Reception, most children reach average standards in the elements of this area of their learning. It was not possible to judge any aspects of their understanding of the past or features of the world around them during the inspection.

### **Physical development**

72. Children are taught systematically to cut with scissors, colour, stick materials together, cut out shapes using playdough and hold their pencils properly. They fill containers with water and make shapes in sand using different shapes. Such a variety of interesting activities helps pupils to make good progress in this aspect of their development. A further factor in helping children make good progress in their physical development is the way in which staff help children improve. They discuss with children what they are doing and show them how to carry out their tasks better. Children like to be shown what to do in this way and respond positively to this teaching. As a result, from a low starting point on entry to school, children reach average standards in this area by the time they enter Year 1.
73. Other aspects of their physical development are not catered for well enough. On the positive side, children are taught to move carefully in PE lessons. For example, they were taught to walk along a skipping rope placed on the floor during one lesson. The teacher added additional challenges in this lesson and this increased the progress made by some pupils. For example, higher-attaining pupils walked along a rope that included curves, while lower-attaining pupils walked on one that was straight. Many children achieve average standards in lessons such as the one observed, and a few reach above average standards. On the negative side, provision for outdoor activities is poor. The school does not have any structural apparatus outside and the provision of larger toys for outdoor play is inadequate. This holds back the progress children make in their physical development.

### **Creative development**

74. Provision for children's creative development is good and most children make good progress in this area and achieve average standards. This aspect of their programme of work is very well resourced. Children enjoy playing with puppets and retelling the story of Goldilocks. They enjoy taking part in the role-play of the 'Teddy Bears' Picnic'. They learn how to carry out these activities well because their teacher takes part in them as well and gives them ideas about how they can act out their parts. Staff also take part in the role play in the 'Palace'. This area has been thoughtfully created by the staff and is popular with the children as they dress up and act out roles as princes and princesses. Children are beginning to sing songs in tune and play percussion instruments. During a music lesson, children sang the song "When Goldilocks went to the house of the bears" and all played an instrument at the same time. Children paint patterns and create faces by sticking materials together quite well.

## ENGLISH

75. Since the school opened in September 2001, standards in English have improved significantly. Overall, they are judged to be average in Year 2 and above average in Year 6. The majority of pupils have made good progress and achieved well in English since joining the school. Most pupils enter Year 1 with standards that are below average. This is particularly the case with higher-attaining pupils, including the gifted and talented.
76. There are no results in the national tests in English for Year 6 pupils in 2002 as there was no Year 6 class. The results for Year 2 showed that they were broadly in line with national averages in reading and writing. There were half as many boys taking the tests in 2002 in Year 2 as girls. Their attainment in reading and writing was above the national average for boys and was higher than that of the girls in the school. This does not reflect the national picture of boys' attainment where boys do not attain as well as girls. Because the school is new there is insufficient information to make a judgement about progress in National Curriculum tests over a period of time.
77. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 2 and in Year 6 is above nationally expected standards in speaking and listening. In reading and writing, standards are average in Year 2 and above average in Year 6. However, pupils' handwriting is untidy, especially at the top end of the school. Pupils with SEN make good progress with regard to their specific needs. Pupils with EAL make good progress in learning English.
78. Pupils in Year 2 in 2002 met the targets that were set for them in reading, writing and mathematics. They exceeded the targets set for the higher levels of attainment in reading and mathematics, but did not meet them in writing. The targets set by the school for 2003 are suitably challenging, especially for high-attaining pupils in Years 2 and 6. This reflects the school's drive to raise standards of attainment in English.
79. Pupils in all classes speak confidently and contribute enthusiastically to discussions. For example, in a Year 6 lesson discussing 'prejudice', many pupils spoke and listened to each other with great maturity. During this discussion, they showed a good awareness of stereotyping in books. They were then able to perform a short play to illustrate their point. They use Standard English well when talking in formal situations, such as in class discussions, circle time or in work in pairs. Their range of vocabulary is appropriate for their age, overall. For example, in a Year 3 lesson, the teacher used a hand puppet of a witch to help the children think of descriptive words and phrases. This teaching technique captivated the pupils and they responded using imaginative phrases such as '*mysterious pointed shoes*' and '*green beady eyes*'. Pupils' listening skills are well above average. They listen to each other and to their teachers carefully, enabling them to join in with discussions well. When answering questions, their responses are focused and precise and relate appropriately to the question asked. Staff encourage those pupils learning English as an additional language to speak out in class. They are well supported in teaching techniques for pupils with EAL by the specialist teacher from the local education authority.
80. By the end of Year 2, many pupils read aloud with a good level of accuracy, paying attention to punctuation. They read fluently, often with expression, and understand what they read. They read regularly, both at home and at school. Many know how to use dictionaries. In Year 6, many pupils have satisfactory skills in using reference books, dictionaries and thesauruses. They understand the purpose of the index and glossary in a book and can find information by scanning the text. When reading aloud, most read fluently and with expression. They talk about authors and characters in a story and discuss some of their favourite books. All pupils are enthusiastic about books. They enjoy using the new school library with all its new books.
81. Pupils throughout the school engage in a range of writing styles and they write for different purposes. They use appropriate techniques and vocabulary, for example when writing an argument, instructions or stories. Pupils' work in all year groups is often well structured. Pupils' handwriting is variable in quality. At best, it is neatly formed and legible. However, too often letters are inconsistent in size and are not joined together. The school is aware of this and has established regular lessons to improve pupils' handwriting. Some good writing was observed in

lessons other than English. For example, pupils have opportunities to word process text during ICT lessons. They label diagrams in D&T and science lessons and write about events in history. In spite of good examples of writing being noted during the inspection, the school does not provide pupils with enough opportunities to write at length, especially in subjects other than English.

82. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Strengths in teaching include very good planning, good use of ICT to help teach lessons and the use of subject specific language, such as *suffixes*, *connectives* and *adjectives*, which most pupils remember and use in discussions. Particular attention is often given to those learning English as an additional language to ensure they understand the meaning of subject vocabulary and this helps these pupils to learn effectively. The specialist teacher for EAL from the local education authority gives very good support on a weekly basis to help teachers with this. Lower-attaining pupils, including those with SEN, are helped in class by being set activities that are pitched at their ability levels and they receive good additional support from associate staff. At times, associate staff also provide useful additional support to higher-attaining pupils, including the gifted and talented. Teachers help pupils to organise their work logically through the use of 'mind maps'. These help pupils to see the connections between some of their ideas as they link them together by using arrows before continuing with their work. Teachers ask probing questions of pupils that help to deepen their understanding of what is being taught. These help to maintain pupils' interest and concentration. Pupils in all year groups are encouraged to use their individual white-boards to try out ideas before writing them down on paper. This helps pupils to recognise good ideas then focus on correct spelling and neat presentation. Marking of pupils' work is done regularly and provides positive comments and feedback for pupils. This helps pupils to improve their work for the next time. Not all teachers identify future learning points for pupils from their work. The setting of homework in English follows the school's policy and includes daily reading practice. Regular practice in reading at home helps many children to consolidate their reading skills and to develop an enjoyment of books.
83. Lessons begin promptly and pupils are very well managed. This helps pupils to behave very well as they co-operate very effectively with their teachers and each other. Most pupils enjoy English lessons. They are attentive and work well. This is because they find their work interesting. For example, in two Year 4 lessons, the teacher provided the stimulus for the lesson by dressing up in costume and role-played a character. This generated great enthusiasm in the class. All lessons are well structured, extremely well prepared and have suitable resources, often developed by the teachers. The National Literacy Strategy is taught well, along with other national initiatives such as the Early Literacy Strategy, the Additional Literacy Strategy and the Further Literacy Strategy. These are having a positive effect on standards and helping pupils of all abilities, especially those with SEN, to make good progress. Literacy skills are consolidated well in other subjects; for example, pupils read well in subjects such as history and geography and they have some good opportunities to practise their writing skills in these subjects.
84. The school has a satisfactory range of fiction and non-fiction books and the new library is well organised and provides a very pleasing environment for reading and developing library skills. Children are taught effectively how to use the electronic booking system and this encourages their skills of independence in the library. The subject leader is very aware that this will need to be corrected as the school continues to grow. The annual book carnival, where all work in school is focused around a particular book, provides pupils with a good opportunity to enjoy different aspects of a book. The school is using computers well to help pupils with their reading and writing.
85. English has been a priority subject since the school opened. As a result, the school has detailed information about pupils' attainment on entry to the school. Comparing that information with current standards shows that most pupils are making good progress in English since joining the school. This includes high-attaining pupils, low-attaining pupils, including those with SEN, pupils with EAL and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. An experienced and knowledgeable teacher leads and manages the subject well. This co-ordinator has a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses within the subject. This has been acquired following detailed monitoring and evaluation of lessons and the scrutiny of pupils' work. This has helped the subject

co-ordinator to identify priorities and include them in the school improvement plan. The work of the subject co-ordinator has had a significant impact on rising standards in English.

## **MATHEMATICS**

86. At the start of Year 1, pupils' skills in mathematics overall are below average. By the end of Year 2, standards are average and in Year 6 they are above average. Most pupils make good progress in mathematics and their rate of achievement is good. As they pass through the school, they rapidly improve their knowledge and understanding of mathematics, making significant gains in their levels of achievement.
87. Results in the 2001 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, the first since the school opened, indicate that attainment is below average. The school has identified numeracy as a priority subject for improvement. Pupils' performance is assessed and monitored on an individual basis. Ambitious individual targets for improvement have been set. Inspection evidence, which includes analysis of attainment on entry to school, observations of teaching, talking with pupils and looking at their work, confirms the school's assertion that pupils are making good progress in the subject. Significant gains in knowledge and understanding of mathematics, above those expected nationally, have been achieved by nearly half of the pupils.
88. Most Year 2 pupils understand terms such as 'difference' and 'sum of', they add two-digit numbers together, identify coins and give the correct change from amounts up to £1. They discuss their work and show confidence in mental calculations. They understand some of the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes. They know about reflective symmetry, and higher-attaining pupils understand the principles of rotational symmetry. By Year 6, the majority of pupils have a good understanding of number and calculate using addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. They use the four rules of number effectively, work with negative and positive numbers and work comfortably with decimals. They use calculators confidently to check their work. They work confidently with 12-hour and 24-hour analogue and digital clocks. They solve mathematical problems well.
89. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. A strength of the learning is the way in which teachers help pupils in their work. Relationships are very good and this encourages pupils to seek help and learn when they are stuck. Teachers have very good subject knowledge of mathematics, which enables them to answer pupils' queries confidently, and this helps pupils learn. Pupils follow lessons attentively, responding enthusiastically when challenged to "have a go". They make good use of time and resources and are clear about tasks and methods to use in their work. White-boards are provided for pupils to record and show their answers quickly during introductions to lessons. This ensures that all pupils are involved in the lesson and gives the teacher the opportunity to check their understanding. Teachers make good use of the knowledge pupils learn in mathematics when teaching other subjects. For example, pupils consolidate their learning of repeating patterns in art and they measure appropriate lengths when cutting materials in D&T.
90. Associate staff are very effective in supporting pupils with SEN. Teachers work as a team, both in year groups and across the school. They make effective use of computers to record their planning to ensure there is consistency and progression in their lessons. The programme of work for mathematics is logical and future learning builds upon that that has preceded it. Teachers plan well, both as year groups and for their own classes. Each lesson has a clear objective that is shared with the pupils at the beginning and returned to at the end of lessons to check the progress made and pupils' understanding.
91. Most teachers make sure their explanations are clear. They break learning down into small manageable steps and use a good variety of ways to show how problems can be tackled. Lessons usually have a brisk pace that challenges and motivates pupils. In an excellent lesson, pupils were learning to add together two and three-digit numbers. The teacher made good use of the interactive white-board to look at mistakes being made and encouraged pupils to share their



methods of working with their classmates. The discussion that followed was of high quality, with pupils constantly being challenged to explain their answers. The worksheets used had been carefully prepared to meet the needs of pupils of different ability, including those of high-attaining pupils. Computers are used very effectively to consolidate and extend pupils' understanding in mathematics. For example, in a Year 4 class pupils were observed confidently using the interactive white-board to work out problems using a 100 square.

92. Overall, teachers' expectations of pupils' achievements are high. Teachers use information from assessments of pupils' work to organise teaching groups in their classes. This ensures that work is set that is matched to pupils' abilities and that they make good progress. Teachers know their pupils well and this results in focused teaching based upon pupils' prior learning.

However, this is not always the case. In some classes the work set is not as challenging as it should be, especially for higher-attaining pupils, including the gifted and talented. On these occasions, these pupils do not always make the progress they should.

93. There are good resources for the teaching of mathematics. The subject is managed very well. The co-ordinator has observed teaching and learning across the school and this has resulted in a consistency of approach in teaching the subject by all teachers. The co-ordinator knows the strengths and weaknesses in the subject. The inspection team judged that there were no significant weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics. The meeting held with parents to explain the school's work on mental and written calculations has helped parents to understand the school's approach to numeracy.
94. Since opening, the school has given close attention to pupils' achievements since joining the school and compared these to national standards. About half the pupils have made better than average progress since they joined the school in 2001. This represents a considerable achievement for the school.
95. The school has successfully adopted the National Numeracy Strategy. This has led to a good programme of work being taught in all classes. The school also teaches Springboard, a national initiative to help raise standards of pupils who are performing below the nationally expected level. These initiatives are helping the school to raise standards in mathematics.

## **SCIENCE**

96. Inspection evidence indicates that standards by the end of Year 2 and in Year 6 are average. Overall, they make good progress and achieve well, though those who have joined the school more recently are not achieving as well as those who have been there from the start. The school has made good progress in developing science since it opened.
97. Lesson observations and analysis of work indicate that pupils in Year 1 know the functions of the main parts of the body. They investigate the properties of different materials. In Year 2, pupils know about healthy eating and the effects of exercise on their bodies. They investigate electricity and how a torch works. Pupils in Year 3 know about the properties of magnets. They know how to take care of their teeth and what sorts of foods to eat to keep them healthy. Pupils in Year 4 know the different parts of a flower and their functions. By Year 5, they investigate the germination of seeds and how seeds are dispersed. They understand how to make a test fair and carry out an experiment with some success. By Year 6, they know about the effect of electrical resistance on the brightness of bulbs and how to purify water. Progress is good year on year and pupils achieve well. Pupils with SEN make good progress throughout the school and are well supported in their work by the associate staff. Pupils with EAL also make good progress in science across the school.
98. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Some lessons were judged to be very good during the inspection. As a result of this, most pupils are learning well and making good progress in science. In the best lessons, teachers share their enthusiasm for the subject with the pupils

and make learning fun. Planning is good, with scientific investigations taking a high priority. Teachers form good relationships with their pupils and pupils, in their turn, are well behaved and receptive to what their teachers are teaching. Pupils use their knowledge well. For example, they use appropriate scientific vocabulary, such as 'insulate', 'control', 'variable', 'fair test', when talking about what they are doing. In Year 2, pupils talk about the differences between living and non-living things and sort out a range of materials into groups. However, in a few classes, teachers miss opportunities to pitch tasks at the appropriate levels of pupils' abilities. On these occasions, high-attaining pupils, including the gifted and talented, and pupils with SEN do not make the progress of which they are capable. Teachers share their high expectations of behaviour. Because of this, pupils enjoy science and produce work of good quality. In the majority of lessons, teachers link science appropriately to other subjects, such as English and mathematics. The brisk pace of most lessons maintains pupils' interest and increases their work rate. Behaviour throughout most lessons is good and in some is very good. Most pupils are motivated and remain focused on the activities for considerable lengths

of time. However, in the one lesson judged to be unsatisfactory, the pace in the lesson was too slow and pupils lost their concentration and became restless. Teachers use ICT to a limited extent in science.

99. The quality of the leadership and management of science is good. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and works hard to help colleagues. The programme of work follows national guidance and is backed up with a good range of activities and resources. This enables pupils to learn the subject in a logical way. The school has provided him with sufficient time to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in classes and this contributes effectively to improving standards and provision in the subject. The specialist room makes a good contribution to the teaching of science.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

100. Only three art and design lessons were observed during the inspection. Judgements about standards and progress are also made from the displays of pupils' work, discussion with pupils and completed work seen. Overall, pupils make good progress in art and design and achieve well. Standards attained by the end of Year 2 are average and in Year 6 above average. The school has made good progress in developing the subject since it opened.
101. Throughout the school, pupils are learning some of the skills and techniques of art and design very well. They work with an increasing range of materials and learn how to select the appropriate tools and techniques for the tasks in hand. They examine the work of other artists to see what techniques they have used. For example, Year 6 pupils had produced portraits using computers with distorted features in the style of Picasso. Similarly, Year 4 pupils had studied portraits from other artists before producing good quality self-portraits of their own, using crayon and pastels.
102. Pupils made good progress in the lessons observed. They are highly motivated, work well together and carry out their tasks with enthusiasm. In discussion, pupils talked about their work and described the techniques they were using. For example, Year 3 pupils compared the different effects created by using a sponge from that of a stiff paint brush. They recognise the different effects each has on their piece of work. By Year 6, most pupils create repeating patterns. Higher-attaining pupils are able to design and cut out stencils. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils worked on designs using pastels through observing patterns. This work was linked well to a Jewish prayer shawl introduced to the pupils in an RE lesson earlier in the week.
103. The teaching of art and design is good. Associate staff and teachers work together to provide good advice and guidance to pupils that result in pupils making good progress. Teachers teach at a brisk pace and show pupils how to use tools and materials appropriately. Their kind, but firm, manner throughout lessons provides a very good environment that enables pupils to concentrate and produce good quality work. Clear explanations help pupils to carry out their work effectively.

Staff praise pupils' efforts and encourage them to experiment. This gives pupils confidence in their work. Computers are being used appropriately in art and design.

104. A teacher new to the school is taking over responsibility for leading and managing the subject from the deputy headteacher. Plans are in hand to carry out a full audit of art and design. There is a good range of materials and equipment for art and design. A specialist suite of rooms provides plenty of space for teaching. A recent artist-in-residence at the school helped pupils significantly to develop their skills and techniques in art and design.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY [D&T]**

105. Pupils make good progress in D&T and attain average standards by the end of Year 2 and in Year 6. Since it opened, the school has made good progress in developing the subject.
106. The analysis of work shows that the majority of pupils have satisfactory knowledge, understanding and skills in D&T. Most pupils make good progress. This includes those pupils who have SEN. Pupils with EAL also make good progress in the subject. By the end of Year 2, pupils have appropriate levels of practical skills when using scissors, glue and materials. They design and make puppets. They make models in other subjects, including Tudor houses to go with a topic on the Great Fire of London. In Year 1, they make models of opening doors on houses.
107. In Year 3, they design, make and evaluate photo-frames. In Year 4, they learn how to make a range of card mechanisms to fit into pop-up books. Pupils in Year 5 make a range of models with mechanisms including cams. In Year 6, pupils took apart some commercially made slippers before designing and making their own. Pupils in the lessons observed enjoyed D&T. They concentrate well, work hard and listen carefully to their teachers.
108. The quality of teaching and learning in the subject is good. However, no teaching was seen with pupils up to Year 2, and only two lessons with pupils up to Year 6. These were taught well. This helps them to plan well and teach skills and techniques in a challenging way with methods that make learning fun. Work on display, in photographs and in books indicates that all aspects of D&T are taught well. This effective teaching leads to pupils learning well across the school. D&T also helps pupils consolidate their numeracy skills as they cut materials to size and work out the proportions of their models. Computers are being used well in some classes to create designs.
109. The quality of the leadership and management of the subject is good. The co-ordinator is keen and enthusiastic and has worked successfully to raise standards. Planning is clear and helps teachers concentrate on the aspects they are teaching. This helps to raise attainment. Good guidance is given to teachers to help them with their teaching. The school has a specialist teaching room and a good range of resources, which are well organised and readily available during lessons.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

110. The school has made good progress in developing provision in geography since opening. During the inspection it was not possible to observe lessons in geography in Years 1 and 2. However, the analysis of pupils' work, discussions with pupils and examination of teachers' planning documents indicate that standards are average by the end of Year 2. Standards achieved in Year 6 are average. Pupils with SEN in Years 3 to 6 are supported well by teachers and associate staff and they make good progress. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 learning English as an additional language make good progress. They receive appropriate help in learning English from teachers and associate staff.
111. Pupils in Year 2 study the local area and are able to describe some of its features, such as types of building. They recall information about a contrasting locality based on first-hand experience of a holiday. Lower-attaining pupils record their work using pictures and higher-attaining pupils

record theirs using pictures and writing. Average and above average attaining pupils describe how the area could be maintained. Pupils produce simple plans of the local area and begin to identify where places are. They talk about where they live and how this is different from where they lived before. Some pupils can talk about the map of Great Britain and the countries that make up the United Kingdom. Pupils respond positively to the subject and enjoy their learning. Pupils in Year 6 look at the effect of water on the landscape. They are introduced to the terms *erode*, *deposit*, *transportation*, when looking at aerial photographs of landscapes showing the course of rivers. They discuss and identify how the movement of water can affect the landscape. They describe the effects of increased flow of water using a model cross section of a 'river' in a bottle.

112. From the evidence of pupils' work and teachers' plans, the quality of teaching and learning in geography by the end of Year 2 is satisfactory. Year 2 pupils talked confidently about their work from the last term and remembered much work from the lessons.
113. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 is good, overall. Particular strengths in teaching arise from teachers' secure subject knowledge, detailed planning using practical and visually stimulating resources clearly focused on the learning outcome, skilful questioning and good pace in teaching. For example, an excellent lesson observed in Year 4 included particular strengths in planning. A highly motivating and practical task was planned that was suitable for all pupils. It extended their understanding of settlements and included good links with the pupils' learning in history about the lifestyles of the Romans and Celts. During this lesson, pupils arranged themselves in different areas of the playground and discussed advantages and disadvantages of building a settlement there. They recorded their decision on a plan of the landscape. Most pupils respond positively to the good teaching of geography and show very good attitudes to the subject. They clearly enjoy their learning. Relationships and behaviour are very good and pupils are managed well. Teachers set high expectations for both work and behaviour and pupils are keen to achieve these.
114. The skills in literacy are well developed in geography. In Year 5, pupils read articles from newspapers and sort them into local, national and international news. They used evidence from the text to justify their decision. Places referred to in the text are then located on appropriate maps. Pupils use the contents and index pages in the atlas to help locate places around the world. Teachers are developing the use of ICT appropriately in the teaching of geography, although little use was seen in the lessons observed.
115. The subject co-ordinator is relatively new to the school and is enthusiastic about the subject. Some monitoring of resources for geography has been carried out and some work from pupils has been analysed. A sound plan for improvements in the subject has been drawn up by the co-ordinator.

## **HISTORY**

116. The school has made good progress in its provision for history since opening. Standards are average overall at the end of Year 2 and in Year 6. Pupils approach the subject with interest and enthusiasm. Those with SEN make good progress in history and are helped effectively in their work by their teachers and associate staff. Pupils learning English as an additional language are helped appropriately by teachers and associate staff.
117. By the end of Year 2, most pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the past. They learn about historical events. For example, they learn about the Great Fire of London through studying the diaries of Samuel Pepys. Pupils are beginning to understand why people acted as they did in the past. They understand that historical events are understood by studying the contents of diaries, as with Samuel Pepys or through the artists' impressions of events. Pupils in Year 1 begin to learn about some of the differences between the past and present through their observations and discussions of a good range of old and new toys. Higher-attaining pupils write labels for the toys and lower-attaining pupils place appropriate labels on a selection of toys.

118. Pupils in Year 6 select and combine information from a variety of sources, such as books, artists' impressions, artefacts, posters and the Internet, in their study of life in Ancient Egypt. They understand that our knowledge of the past is dependent on sources of evidence such as these. They use the available evidence to extend their knowledge of the past.
119. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is good overall. Occasionally, it is very good. Good teaching is characterised by detailed planning and preparation of resources, attention to range of highly motivational activities to capture pupils' interest and very good classroom management. In addition, there is a good balance between direct teaching of historical skills and opportunities to carry out historical research using sources of evidence. Teachers have a sound knowledge of their pupils' learning in history. Pupils' learning is good because interesting and stimulating activities are planned for them. For example, in Year 4, as part of a unit on lifestyles of Roman and Celts, pupils were asked to show that they understood about housing through a role-play activity, imagining they were estate agents selling houses of the different periods. In Year 5, cards are used as an effective way for pupils to learn the names and the order of the Tudor Monarchs. Time-lines are used effectively as a visual prompt and to help pupils in developing their understanding of chronology. Pupils with SEN learn best when teachers carefully plan activities matched to ability levels. However, this was not the case in all lessons observed. Pupils' positive attitudes to their work and the very good relationships in classes enable pupils to make good gains in their learning.
120. Literacy skills, such as reading for information and recognising and using different writing styles, along with opportunities for speaking and listening, are promoted effectively through the subject. Displays around the school indicate that a good range of stimuli, artefacts, day and residential visits and books are used to help pupils in their work.
121. However, the teaching is not always as good as this. Teaching is less successful in a few lessons where pupils are asked to carry out one activity for too long. As a result, many pupils, especially higher-attaining pupils, become restless because they find their work too easy.
122. Appropriate use is made of ICT in history. For example, in Year 6, the interactive whiteboard is used to record pupils' knowledge from their responses to questions. This shows them how to record information gathered about different aspects of history. A group of higher-attaining pupils carry out individual research using
123. The co-ordinator for history is very enthusiastic and has a good understanding of what is needed to develop the subject further. History is co-ordinated well.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY [ICT]**

124. Standards in ICT are average by the end of Year 2 and above average in Year 6. Pupils, including higher-attaining pupils and those with SEN, make good progress in lessons and achieve well. Pupils with EAL make good progress in ICT. The school has made good progress in developing the subject since it opened.
125. By the end of Year 2, pupils can write and correct short passages using a word processor and use a computer to create pictures. They save and print their own work. By Year 3, they input data into a database and search for specific questions. Pupils in Year 6 have learned successfully to program a set of traffic lights. They word process effectively, choosing the style of their text by selecting fonts, alignment and other features. They can create presentations, including text and pictures. During the inspection, teachers used laptop computers in classrooms very well, both to demonstrate their teaching and for children to show their ways of learning.
126. The teaching and learning of ICT are very good overall. Occasionally, they are excellent. Teachers know their pupils well and have good relationships with them. This promotes very good attitudes in pupils to ICT. Behaviour is good and often very good in most lessons; pupils are interested in learning about computers, concentrate well, listen to their teachers and get on with

their work. They obviously enjoy opportunities to use computers and feel they get great benefit from them.

127. Teachers plan their work well, including that for higher and lower-attaining pupils. They are confident in using a range of computer programs. When pupils are working on computers, they are checked and helped very well by teachers and associate staff. Because of the high quality teaching, learning across the school is very good. Pupils have good opportunities to practise their computer skills across a range of programs. This is because the school is very well resourced with computers and computer programs. Pupils have no anxieties about using computers. They log on and retrieve work done previously. They talk confidently about what they have learned previously. All pupils are effectively included in lessons. At the time of the inspection, ICT was not being used specifically to help pupils with SEN but there are plans to develop this in the future.
128. Teachers use the technology well in a range of other subjects to help with their teaching. The interactive whiteboards are used effectively in English, mathematics, RE, music, history and geography. In some cases, they are used by the teachers to demonstrate aspects of their teaching, in others, children also use them to explain their ways of solving problems. Digital cameras are used to record completed work in some subjects, such as D&T. In music, tape recorders were by used by pupils to record and evaluate compositions.

129. The subject is very well co-ordinated. The co-ordinator has good subject knowledge, is enthusiastic and has a clear vision for the subject. Computers in the computer suite are used effectively to teach skills, often within the context of other subjects. Classroom computers are used to provide further opportunities to use ICT in other subjects, including literacy and numeracy lessons. ICT is very well resourced. However, the seats and worktops in the computer room are too high for the younger children in the school.

## **MUSIC**

130. Attainment at the end of Year 2 and in Year 6 is above average. Most pupils make good progress and achieve well in the subject. This includes higher-attaining pupils, including those who are gifted and talented, and lower-attaining pupils, including those with SEN. Pupils with EAL also achieve well in music. This is as a result of teachers' good understanding of the subject and their high expectations for their pupils. A good number of lessons were observed during the inspection and it is evident that pupils and teachers enjoy music. There is plenty of opportunity for all pupils to play instruments, particularly percussion instruments, and improvise in response to interesting stimuli. The school has made a good start in its provision of music.
131. Singing in assembly is good. Most pupils sing with clear voices and good timing. There are opportunities for pupils across the school to develop their understanding of famous composers, both within music lessons and at other times. In assembly time, a range of music from other cultures and from the past is played as they enter. In class, pupils hear a range of music. For example, classical music by composers such as Mozart is frequently played to promote a calm working environment. The school has started to develop pupils' performance skills through concerts, such as those held at Christmas. Other opportunities for pupils in Years 3 to 6 to develop their instrumental skills come from specialist tuition in brass, woodwind and string instruments.
132. Overall, teaching and learning throughout the school are good. The subject is suitably planned in order to develop the pupils' knowledge and skills, particularly in developing a specific musical vocabulary in Years 1 and 2. In a Year 3 lesson, pupils recorded the sounds they had made and listened to them to try and improve on their work. This was very successful and pupils' work improved as a result. However, this element of evaluating and refining performances is not consistently used in all classes. In a Year 2 class, the opportunity to explore dynamics by practising a sound poem was good because it built on previous lessons and used special musical terms like *tempo*, *dynamics* and *timbre* to describe the elements of the sounds made. Pupils' good behaviour and attitudes to the subject in all lessons observed help pupils to make good progress. There are suitable links made with other subjects, such as a Year 5 lesson that focused on Tudor music. In the best lessons, teachers adapt their way of speaking to include all pupils. This was evident in a Year 3 lesson where the teacher asked a pupil with very limited English which sound she liked best. Through a series of simple questions by the teacher, the pupil was able to explain her choice. The teacher and pupils in the class did this with great sensitivity and as a result the pupil was fully included in the lesson.
133. The subject is well managed by a music specialist who has only been in post since September 2002. For this reason and because the school has only been open for four terms, there has been little opportunity to lead the subject as yet. Understandably, music has not yet become a school priority for development. In spite of these constraints, the co-ordinator has a clear view of the areas for development within the subject. Overall, a number of teachers have good expertise in music, including with the clarinet, piano and singing. Overall, computers are not used enough in music.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION [PE]**

134. Standards in PE are above average. Throughout the school pupils achieve high standards for their age. Most pupils are on target to achieve the nationally recommended standard in swimming.

Pupils are taught all aspects of PE, including outdoor and adventurous activities. They have opportunities to attend a range of extra-curricular clubs and activities in PE. These

include cross-country, netball, football, athletics and basketball. A local firm has sponsored the purchase of football and athletics kits. No lessons in gymnastics were observed during the inspection.

135. By the end of Year 2, most pupils understand the need to warm up before they take exercise and they do this sensibly. They have built up their understanding of movement and body control, which they combine to make dance sequences. They link movements together and share ideas with each other before carrying out their movements. In a Year 2 class, pupils were observed using music to link their work in history to a dance sequence based around the Fire of London. They listened carefully to their teacher's clear expectations and explanations, which set the scene well. This enabled them to produce greater accuracy in their movements because they now paid greater attention to detail. As a result, they confidently produced appropriate dance routines of good quality.
136. In Year 6, pupils control their actions well. They respond well to their teachers' expectations of them. They discuss how and why they should warm up before exercise and how to build up an exercise and understand about safety aspects in PE lessons. In a games lesson, Year 6 pupils showed they had developed skills of stopping and passing a ball using a hockey stick. They used space well to improve their chances of passing or receiving a ball successfully. They understood the benefits of working as a team and were conscious of the need to play safely.
137. Effective teaching enables pupils to develop good skills. All lessons observed during the inspection started appropriately with a warm-up. Teachers often showed pupils what they meant by demonstrating the movements themselves. Teachers give pupils time to practise and concentrate on developing their skills. They know their pupils well and show good judgement about when to bring an activity to a close and teach the next stage of the lesson. A key factor in the teaching and learning is the very positive relationships that exist between teachers and pupils. In all lessons, teachers managed learning and behaviour effectively. Most pupils take their work seriously and are eager to do well. They enjoy the activities and through encouragement gain confidence to attempt different and more complex movements. In a Year 3 dance lesson, pupils were moving to the sound of a train, using music from a previous music lesson. With their teacher's guidance, pupils identified the rhythm and beat of the music. This helped them link the music of the train to their movements. Because of this, pupils performed very well and had confidence to try out more complex dance routines.
138. PE is co-ordinated very well. Good links with other subjects, such as music and history, are made in PE lessons. Resources and the accommodation for PE are good.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION [RE]**

139. Standards in RE are average at the end of Year 2 and above average in Year 6 in relation to standards expected by the Milton Keynes Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. Most pupils make good progress in lessons and they show interest and enthusiasm for the subject. This includes high-attaining pupils and those with SEN. Pupils with EAL also make good progress in RE.
140. Pupils in Year 1 recognise features of religious life and practices of Judaism. They talk confidently about artefacts used in Judaism such as the Torah, Mezuzah and Hanukah. In Year 2, pupils retell religious stories and identify some religious beliefs and teachings. In a Year 2 lesson about the parable of the prodigal son, pupils make good connections between the story and their own attitudes to life. They have a very strong moral awareness and a good understanding of forgiveness, tolerance and care for others. By the end of Year 2, most pupils have appropriate knowledge of Judaism and Christianity. In Year 5, pupils develop an understanding of the links between symbols and the ideas underlying them through the study of



the five pillars of Islam. This topic helps pupils to reflect on the beliefs of another world religion and to learn about a different way of life from the one they know. In Year 6, pupils show a good understanding of the word 'sacred' and how people express this idea in a variety of ways.

141. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. On occasions, it is very good. The strengths in teaching are in the teachers' subject knowledge, detailed and imaginative planning, good range and quality of resources, lesson preparation and the very good management of pupils. Teachers assess what pupils know and understand and use this information to plan future lessons. These strengths in teaching help pupils learn effectively. Pupils' interests are captivated by the broad range of activities provided. For example, in Year 1, teachers acted out the role of a rabbi as they introduced some of the artefacts used in Judaism. Extensive opportunities for pupils to speak and listen also help maintain pupils' interest in RE. Pupils are developing confidence to express personal opinions based on evidence they are learning in lessons or by their own experiences. Relationships are very good throughout the school and the pupils respond very well to the consistently high expectations set for both learning and behaviour. Pupils work well co-operatively in pairs or larger groups. In a minority of lessons, learning was not as fast as it should be because the pace of teaching was too slow and tasks lacked enough challenge for the higher-attaining pupils.
142. Good use is being made of computers in RE lessons. For example, in Year 4 the teacher used the Internet to provide visual stimulus to illustrate the lesson on worship in Hinduism. In other lessons the interactive whiteboard is used well to record pupils' ideas.
143. Pupils with SEN are well taught through the variety of teaching approaches used. They are also helped in their work by teachers, who plan work appropriate to their abilities. Associate staff also help these pupils with their work. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language are fully included with support from teachers and associate staff and make good progress.
144. A new co-ordinator for RE has been appointed and will need time to become fully effective. The subject development plan identifies appropriate key areas for action in the future. These include more resources and staff training in some aspects.