

INSPECTION REPORT

Roebuck Primary School and Nursery

Stevenage, Hertfordshire

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 133263

Headteacher: Mrs J Phelps

Reporting inspector: Alan Andrews
6436

Dates of inspection: 24th-26th February 2003

Inspection number: 249025

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

© Crown copyright 2003

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior with nursery

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: St. Margarets
Stevenage
Hertfordshire

Postcode: SG2 8RG

Telephone number: 01438 352924

Fax number: 01438 740807

Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr K Follett

Date of previous inspection: None. Newly amalgamated school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
6436	Alan Andrews	Registered inspector	English Religious education Special educational needs	What sort of school is it? How high are the standards? How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
13481	Doug Binfield	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
32162	Adrienne Beavis	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Art and design Design and technology	
10090	Kath Beck	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to the pupils?

2700	Peter Sudworth	Team Inspector	Science Information and communication technology Music Physical education Educational inclusion English as an additional language	
------	----------------	----------------	--	--

The inspection contractor was:

Quinset

Draycott
Chappel Road
Great Tey
Colchester
Essex CO6 1JP

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

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

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	14
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	15
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	17
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	18
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	19
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	22
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	23
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	28

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Roebuck Primary School was formed in April 2001 following the amalgamation of an infant and junior school. It occupies a building that was previously shared by the two schools. Currently, it is larger than most other primary schools, but is moving from two to one form entry as part of the local authority's strategy to address the issue of falling rolls in the area. The class groupings within the school reflect the uneven intake numbers before reduction to one form entry. At the present time, there are 29 boys and girls on roll aged from three to eleven. This includes 23 children who comprise the nursery and attend mornings only. The Foundation Stage consists of a nursery and a reception class. There are two admission dates to the nursery each academic year. Children whose fourth birthday is before the end of February are admitted at the beginning of the autumn term. Those who are four after February are admitted at the beginning of January. Children at the infant and junior stages are divided into a total of nine classes. Years 4 and 5 children are deployed into three mixed age group classes, but Years 1, 2, 3 and 6 are in discrete year group classes. Because of higher numbers there are two such discrete year group classes in each of Years 2 and 6. Overall, the school has approximately the same number of boys and girls, but year groups vary and in Year 4 there are more than twice as many boys as there are girls.

The headteacher was appointed to take up post at the time of the amalgamation. The school serves a mixed social area and attainment on entry is generally below that expected nationally. The percentage of children known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. However, 37% of the children have been identified as having special educational needs and this is more than in most schools. It includes two children with statements of special educational need. There are few children from ethnic minorities and no children at an early stage of learning English.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school has established itself quickly and effectively following amalgamation. It is tackling its many challenges with optimism and energy. The headteacher and chair of governors are clear about the direction in which the school needs to go. Data is analysed carefully to identify strengths and areas for development. Children are cared for really well. Standards are below national expectations in English and mathematics, but this reflects the school's higher than average percentage of children with special educational needs. A positive environment for learning has been created and everyone is working hard, with some success, to raise standards. Provision in the nursery is good and gives children a positive start to life at school. Overall, teaching is satisfactory, but there is some better teaching in the nursery and in Years 2, 4, 5 and 6. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher and chair of governors provide good leadership and management.
- The nursery gives children a good start to school life.
- Provision for information and communication technology is good.
- There is good provision for children's spiritual, moral and social development.
- The care and personal development of the children is very good.
- Partnership with parents is good.
- Accommodation is very good and used effectively.

What could be improved

- Standards of attainment at the end of the Foundation Stage.
- Standards of attainment in English, mathematics and information and communication technology.
- The roles of the coordinators so as to help raise standards more effectively.
- The use of record keeping and assessment procedures to facilitate the setting of short-term targets for children's future learning.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

This is a newly amalgamated school and there has been no previous inspection upon which to base improvements.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

The table shows that the school's 2002 results in national tests for children aged eleven in English and mathematics were in line with the national average. In science they were below the national average. The results were the same when compared to similar schools and represent an improvement on 2001 when the school had just been formed. In all three subjects the percentage of children reaching only lower levels in the 2002 tests was above the national average. This reflects the school's higher than average percentage of children with special educational needs. However, the percentage reaching the higher levels in the English and mathematics tests was above that of most schools. This shows that the school's small, but significant, number of brighter children were being challenged and extended in these subjects.

In 2002, the school's national test results in reading, writing and mathematics for children aged seven, were all well below the national average. When compared to similar schools they were also well below average. This again reflects the school's higher than average percentage of children with special educational needs as well as the difference between year groups.

Lesson observations and scrutiny of work from children currently in Years 2 and 6 show standards in English and mathematics are below average. Standards in science are generally in line with the national average and this represents a considerable achievement. Brighter children continue to be challenged well. The school sets realistic targets for improvement and is working hard, with some success, to raise its overall standards.

At age seven and eleven, standards in art and design, design and technology, geography, history and physical education are similar to those expected nationally. Standards in information and communication technology are lower and children have considerable ground to make up. Improvements in resources means that this is beginning to happen. It was not possible to make judgements about music at age seven, but at age eleven standards are in line with those of most schools. Standards in religious education at age seven and eleven are in line with that expected in the local syllabus.

Most children begin school with attainment that is generally below that expected nationally for their age. They make a good start in the nursery, but, with the exception of personal, social and emotional development, few children will reach the early learning goals by the end of the Foundation Stage.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Children enjoy school and respond positively to its caring ethos.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good, although some children find it difficult to concentrate for long.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is good. Children undertake responsibility well. Relationships are very good and help create a positive learning environment.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Unauthorised absence has been reduced significantly.

Children arrive punctually for school. Good organisation ensures that lessons and other activities start and finish on time throughout each day. Children behave well in lessons, assemblies and on the playground. Any incidents of misbehaviour are dealt with quickly and fairly. A school council has recently been established and will enable children to have a voice in the school's affairs.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Overall, teaching is satisfactory. It is good and sometimes very good in the nursery. There is also a significant amount of good teaching in Years 2, 4, 5 and 6. The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is satisfactory. Literacy and numeracy skills are sometimes taught well. In science lessons, children often make good progress in their learning. Strengths in teaching stem from tasks that challenge children to work hard and to do their best. Children are managed effectively so that behaviour is usually good and there is a calm learning environment. The teaching of children with special educational needs is satisfactory and is often carried out by teaching assistants under the direction of class teachers. Brighter children perform well because activities extend and challenge them appropriately. Some unsatisfactory teaching was seen with reception children due mainly to low expectations of what they can achieve.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall, but good in the nursery and at the junior stage. It is enriched by a good programme of extra curricular activities and visits to places of interest.
Provision for pupils with	Satisfactory. Individual education plans set out clear targets for

special educational needs	development. Programmes of work are devised by class teachers, but often delivered by teaching assistants.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Children from ethnic minority groups play a full part in all learning activities. The school has no children at an early stage of English language acquisition.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall, provision for children's personal development is very good. Spiritual, moral and social development is promoted effectively in lessons, assemblies and at other times. Cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school is highly attentive to children's needs. Their general welfare is catered for well.

The school has established a good partnership with parents. Its caring and supportive environment helps children to feel secure and happy in their work. The curriculum rightly gives priority to literacy and numeracy. There are good links with the community. Children's personal well-being receives considerable attention and they are given appropriate opportunities to undertake responsibility. Children's academic progress is tracked well, but not enough use is made of records and assessment procedures to facilitate the setting of short-term targets for children's learning. Children with special educational needs are enabled to experience success and to play a full part in the life of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides good leadership. The senior management team is relatively new, but is having a positive impact on helping to raise standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities and monitor the performance of the school satisfactorily.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Data is analysed carefully to judge the school's effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Money is directed appropriately to the school's priorities for raising standards.

Following amalgamation, the newly formed school has been established quickly and effectively. There are significant strengths in the leadership provided by the headteacher and chair of governors. These stem from a positive approach to team building and an emphasis on raising standards. Overall, staffing and resources are satisfactory, although provision in the reception class is not as good as in the nursery. The recently installed computer suite is very good and is helping to improve standards in information and communication technology from a low base. The school's accommodation is spacious and used effectively. The principles of best value are promoted well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school is well led and managed. Children work hard and do their best. Behaviour is good. Parents are well informed about how their child is getting on. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homework arrangements.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school works closely with parents.• Teaching is good.• Children make good progress. | |
|---|--|

Inspectors fully agree with the first five positive views expressed by parents. Whilst examples of good teaching were observed in most classes, inspectors judge that overall teaching is satisfactory. Children's progress across the school is also satisfactory although the most able children do well. Homework is making a helpful contribution to learning, although there are some inconsistencies in the amount set and in the level of support provided by some parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The school is coping well with a larger than average number of children with special educational needs and a high turnover of staff since amalgamation in 2001. Steady progress is being made and standards are rising, albeit slowly.

2. On entry to the nursery, most children have attainment below that typical for their age, especially in speaking and listening skills. Overall, their progress is satisfactory at the Foundation Stage. Many make good progress in the nursery because activities are matched to their needs and teaching is consistently good. However, their progress slows in the reception class so that, with the exception of social, personal and emotional development, most are not on target to meet the early learning goals by the time they are five. Some have significant special educational needs that hinder their learning. These children and their particular needs are identified early and they receive levels of support that enables them to make satisfactory progress.

3. In 2002, the school's national test results in reading, writing and mathematics for children aged seven were all well below the national average. When compared to similar schools they were also well below average. The results reflect the school's higher than average percentage of children with special educational needs.

4. A better picture emerged in the 2002 test results for children aged eleven. In English and mathematics they were in line with the national average whilst in science they were below the national average. The results were the same when compared to similar schools. However, in English and mathematics, the percentage of children reaching the higher levels in the tests was above average. They were below average in science. Overall, the results again reflect the school's higher than average percentage of children with special educational needs, but they also indicate that brighter children are being challenged and extended in English and mathematics.

5. The school sets itself challenging targets for test results and strives hard to achieve them. Its above average percentage of children with special educational needs includes a high proportion of those with emotional and behavioural difficulties. This means that year on year results are likely to vary. The school is aware of this, but is not complacent. It rightly puts considerable effort into analysing data so as to plan improvements. This is good practice because it enables resources to be directed effectively towards raising standards. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of work shows that, currently, in Years 2 and 6 children's attainment in English and mathematics is below that expected nationally for their age. In science it is generally in line with expectations. Overall, this represents satisfactory progress for the children concerned.

6. Children are usually pleased to talk to visitors about their work and interests. However, discussions with them show that, apart from a small but significant number of brighter children, their range of vocabulary is often limited. Speaking and listening skills are mostly below average at age seven and eleven and this hinders progress in all subjects. Many children find it hard to communicate more than simple meanings clearly and they are reluctant to offer views or express preferences. They begin oral sessions by listening attentively, but some find it difficult to concentrate for long.

7. In discussions with children it is clear that their reading at home is often irregular. Few parents contribute to the home/school reading record books. At age seven, children enjoy listening to stories, but their own reading is often halting and lacking in confidence. They are encouraged to use letter sounds when tackling unfamiliar words, but their reading is generally below average. By age eleven, children's reading skills have improved, although they are mostly below average for their age. Brighter children have read the work of a number of authors and can talk sensibly about these. Many children know about the use of an index and contents page, but their research skills are often limited.

8. The school has focused on improving skills in writing, with some success. However, many children have considerable difficulty with this area of their work. At age seven, standards are mostly below those of other children nationally. There is a growing understanding of how to sequence events in the right order, but children's knowledge of basic sentence structure, including the use of capitals and full stops, is developing only slowly. By age eleven, standards have improved, but remain below average. Children write for a range of purposes and think more carefully about the use of language and its meaning. They are beginning to plan what they want to write, but it often lacks imagination and they could accomplish more in the time available.

9. In mathematics, standards are below those found in all schools nationally at the end of the infant and junior stages. At age seven children have some understanding of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. They know about odd and even numbers to 20 and count forwards and backwards to 100 confidently. By age eleven, children are not as secure as they might be in their calculations of the four rules of number. They use their knowledge of doubling and halving number to help them calculate quickly. The school places more emphasis on children learning about numbers, shapes and measures than investigations that allow children to apply their skills to problem solving. The rate of children's progress is faster in some year groups than in others. This is due in part to the quality of teaching and the overuse of poor quality worksheets that do not help to take children's learning forward.

10. In science at age seven and eleven, standards are broadly in line with the national average, although children's factual knowledge is better than their skills in planning and carrying out investigations. They set out their work satisfactorily in most classes. Older children have a sound understanding of fair testing, although they seldom raise questions of their own to investigate.

11. The school has improved significantly its resources for information and communication technology. As a result, standards are rising, but are below that of most schools at age seven and eleven. Standards in art and design, design and technology, history, geography and physical education are broadly in line with national expectations for children aged seven and eleven. No music lessons were seen at the infant stage and it is not possible to make judgements about standards. However, by age eleven, they are in line with most other schools nationally. In religious education, standards at age seven and eleven are similar to those expected in the locally agreed syllabus.

12. The percentage of children identified as having special educational needs is higher than in most other schools. It includes two children with statements of special educational need. The system of support relies heavily on in-class work often delivered by teaching assistants. The achievement of children with special educational needs is satisfactory and the work of the teaching assistants is valuable in helping them to make progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. Children's attitudes to learning are mainly good. They enjoy school and are keen to participate fully in each day's activities. During lessons they mostly listen attentively to teachers and undertake written and practical tasks in a diligent and conscientious manner. However, the majority of children sometimes lack confidence when answering questions, explaining views and contributing to class discussions. Brighter children are more assured, show initiative and have a commendable independent approach to their work. All children cooperate well when working in pairs or small groups. At such times, the learning of many children is helped significantly because they benefit from individual advice and support from the teacher or teaching assistants. Throughout the school, children are trying hard to do their best and their cooperative approach is having a positive impact on standards of achievement.

14. Behaviour is good. In lessons children behave well and this enables work to proceed with hardly any interruptions. Lessons are controlled well by teachers and the teaching assistants provide invaluable support by dealing immediately with any children who become disaffected or inattentive, including those with emotional and behavioural difficulties. This approach helps to ensure that the progress of the rest of the class is not interrupted. Children are well mannered in the dining hall and behaviour is good in assemblies and in the playgrounds. A small number of incidents of bullying and serious misbehaviour do occur, mainly with boys in Years 4 to 6, but such matters are dealt with in a fair and expeditious manner. Despite the overall positive picture, four children, three boys and one girl, were excluded for fixed periods last year. There were no permanent exclusions. The school places strong emphasis on promoting racial harmony and children from minority ethnic backgrounds play a full part in the life and work of the school. Overall, the good standards of behaviour are making a significant contribution to the school's calm and purposeful atmosphere for learning. Parents are rightly pleased about this.

15. The provision for children's personal development is very good. Educational visits are made in the locality and further afield to museums, churches, farms, musical events and sporting activities. Year 6 children have a residential stay at an activity centre on the Isle of Wight. Visitors include representatives from a wide range of backgrounds, including local clergy. They talk to the children at assemblies and in lessons. The school also arranges for performances by theatre and other groups. The well attended lunchtime and after school clubs include choir, recorders, a range of sports and many other specialist activities. The overall provision made by the school enables children to develop particular interests, to undertake new experiences and to acquire self confidence.

16. Children are encouraged to take on responsibilities as they move up through the school, including monitoring tasks in the classrooms. Year 6 children support the younger children at playtimes and at lunchtimes. They also take part, on a rota basis, with office reception duties and in the dining area. A school council has recently been established and this will enable children to have a voice about the school's affairs. Children take part enthusiastically in activities to raise funds for charities. Relationships in the school are very good and this contributes significantly to the school's high expectations of behaviour. They help children to develop a strong sense of values and responsibility. An outstanding example is seen in the nursery where staff have established a special rapport that enables the children to make a happy start to the school.

17. Attendance is now satisfactory. In 2001/02, the school's first year, attendance levels were below the national average for primary schools. The reason for this was the unauthorised absence of 1.0% that was double the average level for other schools. In the

current year to date unauthorised absence has been reduced dramatically to 0.1%. Almost all children now have commendable attendance records, although a large number of children were absent for a few days last October as a result of an infectious illness that swept through the school. Children arrive punctually each morning. Good organisation ensures that lessons and other activities start and finish promptly during the school day.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

18. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. It is good and sometimes very good in the nursery. There is also a significant amount of good teaching in Years 2, 4, 5 and 6. Children are generally managed well and in most lessons there is a productive working atmosphere. This enables children to work hard and concentrate on their learning. The teaching assistants make a valuable contribution in helping them to do this.

19. Children in the nursery are enabled to settle into school routines quickly. Their learning environment is colourful and stimulating. The good and sometimes very good teaching stems from:

- a secure knowledge and understanding of how children of this age learn;
- a range of well planned and organised activities that have a clear purpose and build on what children already know;
- an imaginative approach to the presentation of activities, such as the making of porridge for the story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*;
- effective use of praise and encouragement so that children are motivated to work really hard;
- positive ongoing interactions with children that help them to know how well they have done and what they are going to learn next;
- very good relationships with the children so that there is fun and humour in learning.

20. Teaching in the reception class is less successful, but improving as the teacher gains a greater understanding of what children of this age can achieve. Some unsatisfactory lessons were observed when children were off task because activities were not sufficiently demanding. The work does not always build effectively on children's previous learning and, when this happens, their progress slows.

21. Many lessons at the infant and junior stages have a clear structure. Overall they are satisfactory. They are generally planned well and often begin with an explanation of what is to be learned and how this links with previous work. The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is satisfactory. Literacy and numeracy skills are sometimes taught well. Science lessons are often presented effectively and this helps children to make good progress. Teachers are beginning to make good use of the newly established computer suite. Children enjoy the lessons, but have considerable ground to make up in their knowledge, skills and understanding of information and communication technology.

22. All teachers at the infant and junior stages have an expectation that children will:

- work hard and do their best;
- behave well so that there is a positive working atmosphere;
- work together cooperatively.

23. Most children respond well to these demands and, although progress is sometimes slow, they take pride in their achievements. Features of the good teaching observed include:

- activities that encourage children to think hard;

- planning that ensures brighter children are given tasks to challenge and extend them;
- well organised group activities that enable children to work together and to learn from one another;
- good questioning that assesses children's progress and helps to deepen their knowledge and understanding;
- an emphasis on basic skills and ongoing feedback to children so that they know how to improve;
- good use of time with tasks often undertaken at a brisk pace.

24. The teaching of children with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Their support relies heavily on the programmes of work provided by class teachers, but often delivered by teaching assistants. Activities are chosen to reflect the needs of the children and to stimulate learning. Relationships are positive and children are usually keen to please and to do their best. Their self-esteem is maintained well and they take part fully in class activities.

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

25. The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum. As a recently amalgamated school, it has worked very hard to review, establish and implement clear policies and programmes of work for all subjects, including religious education. In doing so, national guidance and the year on year development of children's knowledge, skills and understanding have been taken into account. The school has taken the decision to teach subjects, such as history, geography, design and technology and art and design for 'blocks' of time. This is working well as children have time to study them in depth, rather than for brief periods of time each week.

26. The aims of the school include helping the children to develop lively enquiring minds, giving them the ability to question, argue rationally, as well as apply themselves to work. These are applied more successfully in some year groups than others. In some classes the overuse of poor quality worksheets limits the children's ability to acquire such skills. The curriculum is richer for children in Years 3 to 6 as there are many visits out to places of interest and within the immediate locality. In addition, visitors are welcomed into the school.

27. There is a strong emphasis on the arts and the contribution of the community to children's learning. There are opportunities for children to learn to play the guitar, violin and recorder. They take part in local musical events and school concerts and this extends their musical skills. Visiting artists and visits to art galleries enrich this aspect of the curriculum. The full physical education curriculum, including swimming, is taught. The good provision for school clubs and activities outside lessons is aimed more at the children in Years 3 to 6. Activities, such as art, clay, athletics, choir, computer, dance, first aid, netball, recorders, tennis and environmental studies offer children additional opportunities to develop and extend their skills.

28. There are good policies for the promotion of children's personal, social and health education and citizenship. These include appropriate provision for sex education, the promotion of successful relationships, drugs education and dealing with loss and bereavement. These are taught through the curriculum, including science and assemblies, as well as discrete time for personal, social and health education, visitors to the school and

informal opportunities. The policies indicate the school's stance towards each issue and offer good, clear guidance to staff, stressing the importance of balance between confidentiality and children's safety. The provision for personal, social and health education forms a central part of the care the school offers its children and preparation for life, as they grow older.

29. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are in place and proving effective in raising standards. The school has also implemented other national initiatives to help particular groups of children reach the nationally expected Level 2 in Year 2 and Level 4 in Year 6. However, in mathematics, teachers in all year groups do not give enough attention to investigational activities where children can solve problems and find out more by applying their knowledge of shapes, measures and numbers.

30. The curriculum for the children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and is planned to cover all the areas of learning. It is more challenging for the children in the nursery than in the reception class. Children take part in activities in and outside the classroom, but often the outside activities are not linked closely enough to other areas of the curriculum. In the nursery, children have many opportunities to use their initiative, move between activities and spend time on artistic tasks so that they complete them to a good standard. Some children from the reception class are timetabled to spend time in the nursery. This makes it very hard to provide a cohesive and challenging curriculum for the reception children that builds on their prior attainment. Some activities, such as the completion of poor quality worksheets, do little to take children's learning forward at a faster rate to reach higher standards, especially in mathematical development.

31. Overall, the school makes satisfactory provision for children with special educational needs, including those with statements of need. There are two coordinators for this area of the school's work and they liaise closely. Children's individual education plans are up to date and written well. Targets for improvement are clear and realistic so that teachers know what learning difficulties need to be addressed. Programmes of work are produced by class teachers, but often delivered by teaching assistants. Their contribution to children's progress is significant. The school's procedures for identifying children with special needs are generally sound. However, it sometimes identifies children as having special educational needs because their attainment is below expected norms. The desire to support such children is understandable, but in a small number of instances they are already making satisfactory progress in lessons and do not need individual education plans.

32. The provision for the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. It is good for their spiritual development. School acts of worship are thoughtfully presented, have a sense of occasion, fulfil requirements and engage the children's interests. They relate well to children's own experiences. The children have opportunities to visit nearby woods when the bluebells are in flower and have planned their own *Jubilee Garden*. The wild life group is given opportunities to plant up new parts of the school's grounds and there are several garden areas that are already planted, including the nursery. Pupils have opportunities to study different world faiths in religious education, which enables them to think about different beliefs and life's meaning and purpose. The provision for art and design, particularly children's appreciation of a wide range of artists' work and styles, helps to deepen their spiritual awareness.

33. The school makes good provision for children's moral development. It is a key part of the school's mission statement. Good attention is given to moral development in personal, social and health education lessons and in themes in literacy lessons where, for example, children contemplate the case for and against fox hunting and the use of animals in circuses. In a mixed Year 4/5 class, specific statements written on cards are shown to the children,

such as *'If you want to change the world, start by changing your attitude'* and *'It is better to be beaten trying to win than to win by lying'*. In another mixed Year 4/5 lesson, children discuss their personal responses in religious education to specific hypothetical situations, such as to an elderly man begging on the street.

34. The school's provision for children's social development is good. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities that include sports, computers and wild-life studies. Children play matches against others schools. They raise money for charity. A school council has just been set up and older children care for younger children on a rota basis and undertake duties around the school. Older children also have the opportunity to go on a residential visit. There are opportunities for children to display their musical skills and develop confidence in public performance.

35. The school's provision for the children's cultural development is satisfactory. Visiting theatre groups, musicians and artists entertain them periodically. Children make occasional visits to galleries. They develop a sound appreciation of their own culture and gain some insight into life in another country through their link with a school in Zimbabwe. Children have a more limited understanding of Britain as a multi-cultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. Very good provision is made for children's guidance and welfare. This is reflected in the strong commitment shown by staff at all levels to provide a safe and happy learning environment. Parents are most appreciative of this aspect of the school.

37. Children benefit from a well-planned programme covering personal, social and health education issues. This includes whole class lessons and discussions, whilst other matters are dealt with during assemblies. The programme includes information on personal hygiene, healthy living and the importance of understanding the views and beliefs of others. For example, in a Year 4/5 lesson, children witnessed a practical test illustrating the nicotine and tar output from a lit cigarette. This illustrated that smoking could cause damage to the lungs. Older children receive more detailed advice on sex education and the dangers from the misuse of drugs. Ready support and advice from staff, together with the school's wide provision for personal development, contribute well to the strong level of pastoral support that is provided.

38. Effective arrangements are in place for dealing with accidents and illness, including first aid training for staff. When appropriate, the school contacts the parents concerned. Appropriate accident records are maintained. The school has a comprehensive health and safety policy and the premises committee of the governing body regularly considers any issues arising. Planned safety inspections of the buildings and equipment are carried out and a comprehensive condition survey was undertaken last year. The school has identified the need to provide a disabled toilet and improved facilities for persons with disabilities, in order to meet the recent legislative requirements. This involves providing alternatives so that the disabled can move around the school, avoiding the stairs in the two halls and the concrete steps leading to the Year 4/5 classrooms. There are appropriate arrangements in place for dealing with child protection issues, including a strong emphasis on staff awareness and training.

39. Very good procedures are in place for promoting high standards of behaviour. Strong emphasis is placed on rewarding children for behaving well and this is reflected in the optional activities available during the Friday afternoon 'Golden Time' sessions. Children understand and respect the behaviour rules. There are good policies on anti-bullying and on the promotion of racial harmony. Sanctions for dealing with serious misbehaviour are clearly

defined and administered in a fair and competent manner, where necessary in consultation with parents. The school is particularly successful in supporting children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Teachers and teaching assistants are quick to respond to any problems, thus minimising further difficulties and reinforcing the school's high expectations. Effective use is made of the expertise of a teacher trained in behaviour management and of the support services provided by the education authority.

40. There are very good systems for promoting regular attendance. The importance of this for children's learning is well explained to parents together with the arrangements for the notification of the reasons for absence. Registration work is undertaken efficiently and the school works closely with the education welfare officer on the very small number of concerns about attendance that arise. The introduction of arrangements whereby a teaching assistant contacts the home on the first day of any un-notified absence has been extremely successful. Parents are now much better at keeping the school informed about absence due to sickness. They also appreciate that they would be notified should an unaccompanied child fail to arrive at school.

41. Procedures for monitoring children's academic progress and personal development are satisfactory. Governors and senior management review achievements in national tests and set targets for improvement. The school has given priority to monitoring progress and setting targets for each child's performance in English and mathematics. This tracking system is relatively new and some of the evaluations about children's progress are inconsistent. The targets are reviewed twice yearly, but not enough is done to use record keeping and assessment procedures to facilitate the setting of short-term targets for children's learning. Class teachers know the individual children well and aspects relating to their personal development are logged on the record of achievement. This provides helpful information for consultation meetings with parents and for the annual written reports.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

42. Parents are very pleased with the school and have a high regard for the progress made since the amalgamation took place nearly two years ago. They feel that the school is well led and managed. Parents say that children behave well, are expected to work hard and to do their best. They indicate that the school works closely with parents and that they are well informed about their child's progress. Parents consider that the teaching is good and that the children make good progress. About a quarter of parents replying to the questionnaire would like to see improvements made to the homework arrangements.

43. Inspection evidence fully supports most of the positive views expressed by parents. However, inspectors judge that teaching is satisfactory overall, although examples of good teaching were seen in most classes. Children's progress across the school is satisfactory, but the most able children do well. Homework is making a helpful contribution to learning, although there are some inconsistencies in the amount set and in the level of support provided by some parents.

44. The quality of information given to parents is very good. As part of the school's friendly and welcoming approach, parents are encouraged to raise any concerns by informal discussions with the headteacher, class teacher or other staff. Helpful information about the school is included in the lively and interesting prospectus, the governors' annual report and in the weekly newsletters to parents about the school's activities. Special arrangements are in

place to ensure that parents are advised about induction into school, the main areas to be studied in the following term and about the transfer of Year 6 children to secondary schools. Good quality information about children's progress is given at the successful parent/teacher consultation meetings held in the autumn and spring terms and in the annual written reports issued each summer.

45. The school has good links with parents and this has a positive impact on the work of the school. Several parents provide voluntary assistance in classes, for example by helping with reading, art and craft and cooking. Others assist in the school library, with gardening, educational visits and the school clubs. The majority of parents provide good support for the work that their child carries out at home. However, there are also instances where children do not receive sufficient encouragement with reading and other homework. Meetings for parents and events such as school concerts are well attended. Strong support is given to fund-raising events organised by the Roebuck School Association. Last year this enabled the Association to make a donation of £3,800 to help equip and furnish the new computer suite.

46. A commendable feature is the school's practice of consulting fully with parents. For example, there were detailed discussions with parents about changes to the school uniform. The school also accepted parental suggestions for the establishment of a lunch-time nursery club. Parents' views about the school are taken into account through informal discussions with staff and arising from the completion of an evaluation form. Planned meetings with parents take place to review progress for those children who have individual plans for behaviour improvement or statements of special educational needs.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

47. The headteacher was appointed at the time amalgamation. She was not part of the previous schools. The deputy headteacher was appointed a term later. Considerable effort has been put, successfully, into establishing the newly formed school. It is tackling its many challenges, including the move to one form entry, with optimism and energy.

48. The headteacher and chair of governors provide good leadership. Change has been managed with sensitivity and clarity of thought. They work together well and are clear about the direction in which the school needs to go. The senior management team is still relatively new, but is playing an important part in helping the school to move forward. Strengths in the leadership stem from a positive approach to team building, together with an emphasis on endeavouring to raise standards and quality in children's work. Parents are pleased with the school and the way it is being led. The interests of the children are always put first and the school has the capacity to improve further.

49. The governing body has appropriate committees that meet regularly. It is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and has recently completed a self-evaluation exercise. It fulfils its statutory responsibilities and monitors the performance of the school satisfactorily.

50. Governors are closely involved in the formulation of the school development plan that sets out realistic priorities for the current year. It also contains brief medium term plans until 2005. However, the school is rightly looking to the future and would benefit from more detail here. Progress on the agreed priorities set out in the school development plan are considered carefully at governors' meetings. The school analyses its performance in

national tests and governors reflect on why the results are the way they are and how the school can do better. Targets for improvement are set and everyone works hard to try and achieve them. There is a clear, shared educational direction for the school that encourages children to work hard and to do their best. That said, more could be done to use record keeping and assessment procedures to help set short term targets for children's learning.

51. Day to day management of the school is good and enables everyone to get on with their tasks without unnecessary hindrance. Visitors are made to feel welcome and are dealt with in a pleasant manner. Staff are proud of the atmosphere and environment in which children work. The school's general ethos of effort and caring for everyone is reflected successfully in its daily life and good relationships. This gives a sense of purpose and helps promote the raising of standards.

52. The headteacher rightly emphasises the importance of monitoring, evaluating and developing further the quality of teaching. She has undertaken a programme of observation of lessons and given both verbal and written feedback to the teachers concerned. This is part of the school's effort to raise standards and quality of education. It is paying dividends, but the headteacher recognises that there is still work to do, building on the teachers' determination to improve further and increasing their skills so that all teaching is at least good.

53. Coordinators are enthusiastic and keen to help raise standards in their areas of the curriculum. Those responsible for literacy and numeracy have observed colleagues teaching and have given feedback to them. However, some coordinators have not been in post long and, as yet, are inexperienced in monitoring and evaluating standards in their subjects. They have made a good start in evaluating resources and provision, but need to build on this to enhance their skills in subject leadership. This is particularly important in terms of monitoring procedures aimed at raising standards.

54. The school has an appropriate complement of teachers. There is sufficient expertise jointly to deliver the curriculum. Teachers are supported well by teaching assistants who make a valuable contribution to the school and have a developing role. High priority is given to training that is linked to needs identified in performance management.

55. There are clear job descriptions. A system of performance management has been successfully introduced for teachers. There are plans to extend the programme to include all non-teaching staff in the future. Individual targets are linked with whole school targets and this is having a positive impact on teaching and learning.

56. A good school handbook supports new staff effectively. A mentor is assigned to each new member of staff to help them become familiar with organisation and procedures and to settle into the school quickly.

57. Accommodation is spacious. It is well maintained and used effectively. Some classroom heaters are rather noisy and this sometimes distracts the children in class lessons. The computer suite, library and food technology rooms have been established recently and make good use of accommodation. The school has made considerable efforts to develop the site and make the grounds more attractive. The Foundation Stage play area is a good resource for learning. The *Jubilee Garden* is an exciting project that has involved the children, staff, parents' association and the local community in its development.

58. Resources are satisfactory overall. However, provision for science, music and information and communication technology is good. The programmes of work for these areas are enriched because of this. Provision for the Foundation Stage is good overall. Resources are better in the nursery than in the reception class and this has an effect on standards in teaching and learning.

59. The school buys in and makes good use of professional expertise to monitor and manage its budget and there is efficient day-to-day management of finance. All grants are spent according to their specified purpose. The headteacher and governors monitor spending at regular intervals and the governing body has recently acquired good professional financial expertise. The school does not, however, sufficiently assign finance to developments in the school improvement plan, particularly for premises costs and projects in the long-term. The high carry forward figure of twelve months ago was largely a result of amalgamation arrangements and has now been reduced to approximately four per cent. Given the uncertainty of pupil numbers, this is a useful precaution. The school has not had a recent local authority audit report. The school pays due regard to obtaining value for money and undertook detailed best value research for its recent information and communication technology suite.

60. Taking into account the standards achieved by the children, the quality of education provided and the school's costs, it gives satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

61. The governors, headteacher and staff should build on the strengths of the school to:

- (1) improve standards of attainment at the end of the Foundation Stage;
Paragraphs: 2, 20, 62 – 80;
- (2) raise standards of attainment in English, mathematics and information and communication technology;
Paragraphs: 3 – 9, 11, 21, 81 – 88, 89 – 98, 129 – 133;
- (3) strengthen the role of the coordinators to help raise standards more effectively;
Paragraphs: 53, 88, 98, 104, 111, 119, 128, 137, 142, 146.
- (4) strengthen record keeping and assessment procedures to facilitate the setting of short term targets for children’s future learning.
Paragraphs: 41.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	56
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	22

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	3	21	29	2	0	0
Percentage	0%	5%	38%	53%	4%	0%	0%

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	11	268
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	38

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	4	103

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	29
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	27

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.4
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	12	16	28

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	7	7	11
	Girls	13	13	12
	Total	[]20	20	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	71 (N/A)	71 (N/A)	86 (N/A)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	11	12
	Girls	12	13	15
	Total	21	24	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	75 (N/A)	86 (N/A)	96 (N/A)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	29	27	56

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	21	22	25
	Girls	21	18	23
	Total	42	40	48
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	75 (52)	71 (66)	86 (80)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	20	19	21
	Girls	21	14	21
	Total	41	33	42
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	73 (64)	59 (72)	75 (76)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	211	12	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	7	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	31	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.1
Average class size	26.8

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	280

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22:1
Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	25
Number of pupils per FTE adult	11:1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	6

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	826,322
Total expenditure	814,180
Expenditure per pupil	2,452
Balance brought forward from previous year	87,857
Balance carried forward to next year	99,999

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	293
Number of questionnaires returned	59

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	51	33	14	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	41	54	5	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	38	57	5	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	50	23	2	0
The teaching is good.	41	57	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41	48	11	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	37	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	34	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	39	52	9	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	59	39	2	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	50	0	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	48	9	0	5

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

62. The Foundation Stage consists of a nursery and reception class. The nursery has 23 children attending for mornings only. Children start in the nursery in the September or January in the year of their fourth birthday. There are 30 children in the reception class.

63. National guidelines for the Foundation Stage have been implemented satisfactorily. The school uses the Early Learning Goals and the relevant parts of the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies. On entry to the nursery, most children have attainment below that typical for their age. Many have weak literacy skills, particularly in speaking and listening. Children's personal and social skills are developed well and by the time they transfer to the reception class most are confident members of the school community.

64. The Foundation Stage coordinator provides good leadership. There are plans to raise standards in teaching as well as the level of resources, particularly in the reception class. The nursery provision allows children to start school in a positive manner. Teaching is good and sometimes very good. Learning activities are planned effectively to meet the needs of the children. Each task has a clear purpose and outcome. This allows all the adults to challenge and support the children well.

65. Accommodation in the nursery is spacious, bright and colourful. The room is organised well with areas set out for each part of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Good resources support children's learning. There is easy access to the outside play space. This has recently been developed to provide good learning opportunities. By the time the children leave the nursery they have made good progress, although standards in attainment remain below average.

66. The children in the reception class enjoy coming to school. They have good relationships with the adults. Behaviour is mostly good and the children are becoming independent. However, teaching in the reception class is not always satisfactory. The reception teacher does not yet have a clear understanding of the needs of very young children, although she is working hard, with some success, to acquire this skill. Expectations of what the children can do are often too low. The purpose of each activity and the intended outcomes are not sufficiently clear. Tasks do not always build on previous learning. Consequently, children are sometimes off task and time is not used as productively as it should be. These factors hinder children's progress. Except in personal, social and emotional development, children are not on course to meet the early learning goals by the end of the reception year.

Personal social and emotional development

67. The children start school with satisfactory personal and social skills. These are developed further in both the nursery and reception class. This means that by the end of the Foundation Stage most children are on course to meet the Early Learning Goals in this area of their work.

68. In the nursery, some children need reassurance when they arrive at the start of the day. In such cases parents stay for a few minutes to help them settle. However, most children are confident and enter the room independently to choose their first activity. They are pleased to see their teacher and be in school. Relationships are good. Staff have high expectations in terms of behaviour. Children help with clearing up after activities, for example, sweeping up the sand. They help the adults prepare for 'snack time' and serve each other.

69. In the reception class children arrive with their parents. They are confident and happy to be at school. Children choose their first activity and this is recorded by parents. However, care needs to be taken to ensure that records are checked so children do not choose the same activity on successive days. Behaviour is mostly good, although there are times when children are slow to respond. Concentration is poor when tasks are undemanding.

70. Children in both the nursery and reception class are learning to be independent. There are opportunities for personal development in daily routines, for example, children self register, finding their own name cards and placing them in the appropriate container for their mid-day meal. They choose activities and materials they wish to use, for example when making models or playing with construction toys.

Communications, language and literacy

71. Children start school with skills below that expected for children of similar age. The nursery provides a wide range of activities for language and literacy. Resources and support staff are used well so that children make good progress. Children enjoy stories and rhymes in group activities and in the attractive book area. Some can retell a story and identify characters in, for example, traditional tales, such as *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. They are engrossed when the teacher uses small soft toys with a felt board as aids to tell the story. Some children can write their names and are beginning to use what they know about letter sounds to write simple words. Others need help with writing and copy over words written for them. They are learning about letter shapes and can fit letters into foam cut-outs. Speaking and listening skills are mostly below average, although brighter children are confident in their use of language. However, many children are diffident speakers who need help from adults to talk about what they are doing. The nursery staff give the children good support and encourage them to talk and extend their vocabulary.

72. In the reception class, children enjoy stories and can identify characters and recall events. They know and enjoy singing rhymes, such as *Incy Wincy Spider*. In small group time children are mostly well supported in the development of literacy skills. Questions are used effectively to help children talk about stories and events. Children are beginning to use the correct terms when talking about books, such as *cover*, *title*, and *author*. Some children are starting to read and write. They are beginning to learn keywords, recognise some sounds and use the pictures to help them read unknown words. Some can write simple words without help. Overall, however, attainment in language and literacy skills in the reception class is below that expected for children of a similar age and progress is slow. Teacher expectations are too low, for example, when asked to make a story map about the *Three Bears*, children do not draw carefully enough or try to keep inside the lines of a drawing when colouring their illustrations. There is an over dependence on work sheets for writing and spelling. These are insufficiently challenging and do not take the children's learning forward enough.

Mathematical Development

73. Progress in the nursery is satisfactory in mathematical development. Children are beginning to recognise some numbers and count to more than ten. Social occasions, such as *snack time*, are used well to develop their learning. Children are asked to match the number of milk cartons with children in the group, to count the straws and find the numbers on a number line. In one group a particularly able child identified that there are 'two jumps between 10 and 12.' Children can match objects and put them in order of size, for example finding the right beds, bowls and chairs for the three bears. They enjoy filling different sized containers with water and sand and completing number puzzles. They are beginning to recognise simple shapes in daily life, for example talking about the shape of the paper used for painting.

74. Standards in the reception class are below that expected from children of this age. Some tasks are not completed if a child is absent. The range of activities lacks imagination. Tasks are not varied enough to challenge the middle and higher ability groups. Teacher expectations in standards of presentation are too low. Most children are working on counting and recognising numbers to ten. They are learning about measurement, longer, *shorter, bigger, and smaller*. In one activity observed, the children made jam sandwiches. They recognised that the bigger plate holds more and said that eleven was a bigger number than nine. The children enjoy taking part in number rhymes.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

75. Children in the nursery are given good opportunities to explore their world. Adults are used effectively to help children in practical activities, such as making cakes. Children explore their world using sand and water, play-dough, modelling and construction toys. In one activity they rolled and shaped play-dough to make a bowl for one of the three bears. Breakfast is prepared using authentic looking props for ham, bread, crockery and cutlery. The children enjoy using a computer to chart the weather on a map, using the correct symbols. They know what the symbols mean and can talk about the weather forecast. In play outside they enjoy digging in really deep sand. They also enjoy finding out about bubbles and how they are formed.

76. In the reception class, children investigate their world through play and other activities. Their knowledge and understanding of the world is developing, albeit slowly. They remember what they have learnt in the previous half term about weather. They use the role-play weather station to make a weather chart and can say what the symbols mean. In their workbooks children have made a shopping list and are beginning to look at which foods are healthy. The outside play area provides more opportunities for children to explore their world. One group used large construction toys to build a spaceship. Another group blew bubbles using different shaped wands. However, the adults do not take the opportunity to build on children's learning through talk and questions because their role is mostly supervisory. There are too few links between the indoor and outdoor curriculum.

Physical development

77. The nursery has a good range of resources for physical development and they are used well. Children use tools, paintbrushes, crayons, felt pens and pencils with growing confidence, although hand control is varied. Some children can draw detailed pictures while others find it hard to manipulate pencils and crayons. The nursery has a good resource to help children practise doing up buttons, toggles, buckles and tying laces. They are also

enabled to develop independent skills for dressing. The garden provides children with opportunities to develop their skills satisfactorily through creative outdoor activities.

78. Children in the reception class share resources with the nursery. They develop their skills satisfactorily, riding wheeled toys, working together to build with large construction toys. However, some need more direction in their play, to practise specific skills. In their work children are continuing to develop hand eye coordination and manipulative skills. Sometimes the choice of resources for a task is not appropriate and makes it too difficult, for example drawing a figure on fabric to cut out to make a puppet. This frustrates the children as they cannot complete the task.

Creative development

79. Adults in the nursery use exciting props, for example puppets and soft toys, and provide good examples in storytelling to stimulate children's imagination and creative development. Children explore colour and shape in painting and drawing and making models. They use their imagination and play together in role-play in the weather station relating what they are doing to their experience. They join in with singing simple songs and rhymes and use the resources in the music area to have a go themselves. Adults work well with the children promoting imaginative play. Children use paint to express their thoughts and feelings. The adults provide careful advice and support, for example when children are painting a dog and a teddy from models, so that children succeed in their task.

80. In the reception class, children continue to develop confidence as they try out new ideas, exploring colour, texture, shape, and sound. They use different materials and tools, for example cutting a spiral to make dragons for the Chinese New Year. Construction toys and playing together in the role-play area contribute to the activities that enable the children to use their imagination. Children enjoy taking part in musical activities. They sing simple songs and rhymes joining in with the actions and can tap and clap a pattern in time. When the children are playing outside, adults are insufficiently interactive and some opportunities are lost to stimulate children's use of imagination.

ENGLISH

81. Since amalgamation in 2001, the school has worked hard, with some success, to raise standards in English. However, its 2002 results in national tests produced a mixed picture. In reading and writing for children aged seven they were well below average when compared to both the national scene and schools in a similar context. The school's English results for children aged eleven were better. They were in line with both the national average and the average for similar schools. In addition, the percentage of children reaching the higher levels in the tests was above that of most other schools. Lesson observations show that, currently, children's attainment at age seven and eleven is below average, although brighter children are challenged and extended effectively. The school monitors the progress of children carefully and is aware that there will be variations in its overall performance because of differences in cohorts and a higher than average number of children with special educational needs.

82. Scrutiny of work shows that most children, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress over time. The national initiative on literacy is used satisfactorily by teachers and is helping to raise standards. Texts are chosen well and generally appeal to children's interests. Appropriate efforts are made to use homework to extend children's learning, although not all of them respond positively to this.

83. Children are usually pleased to talk to visitors about their work and interests. They are polite and respectful. However, at the end of both the infant and junior stages, most children use only a limited range of vocabulary and their speaking and listening skills are not as well developed as in most other schools. They listen carefully at first during oral sessions and try to respond well to prompts and encouragement, but some find it hard to concentrate for long. Many are reluctant to offer opinions or to express preferences. They sometimes find it difficult to communicate more than simple meanings clearly. However, brighter children at both stages often use a wide range of vocabulary and draw effectively upon their own experiences to develop what they have to say. They answer questions sensibly and their contributions to class discussions are sometimes good. An example of this was seen in a Year 6 lesson about discussion texts. The children identified the arguments for and against smoking and showed a growing understanding of how to put forward their views.

84. Children enjoy handling books and listening to class texts. Most take reading books home regularly and reading record books are used to show the progress they make. This is a useful link between parents, children and teachers, but the response from parents is sometimes disappointing. Children's reading skills are generally below that of most schools at the end of both the infant and junior stages, although brighter children often read well. Infant children are encouraged to use letter sounds and the context of the story to work out new words, but many find this hard and have difficulty with irregular words. By Year 2 they have gained in confidence, but few read fluently. Both infant and junior children show satisfactory understanding of main characters and story lines. They are able to predict story outcomes and some brighter children put forward reasonable alternatives. Year 6 children read with increased fluency, although often with little expression. Brighter children in the year group can identify a range of well-known authors and stories they have written, but others find this difficult. Most children know about the use of an index and contents page, but their research skills are limited.

85. Raising standards in writing is a school focus. The children are benefiting from this, although many still find it difficult. There are examples of imaginative and well planned writing, but children's skills in this area of their work at the end of both the infant and junior stages are generally below that expected nationally. Year 2 children show a growing understanding of how to sequence events in the right order. However, they often write little given the time available and their knowledge of basic sentence structure, including the use of capital letters and full stops, is developing only slowly. Although children try hard with spelling, simple words are often spelt incorrectly. Children practise handwriting, but many struggle to transfer their skills successfully to other written work.

86. By Year 6, there is an improvement in writing, although standards remain below average. Children write for a range of purposes, such as stories, playlets and reports. They are beginning to think more carefully about the use of language and its meaning. However, their writing often lacks the skill of developing ideas in an interesting way. Teachers give appropriate attention to spelling and grammatical structure, but children often make simple errors.

87. The overall quality of teaching in the lessons observed was satisfactory, although there was a significant amount of good teaching in Years 2 and 6. The structure of the literacy hour has given teachers clear guidelines about the organisation of lessons and they use this effectively. Resources are prepared carefully and lesson plans are usually clear about what children are to learn and how. This is often explained to them at the start of the lesson so that they know what they are going to do and how it builds on their previous learning. Most children have good attitudes towards the subject and behave well, although a small number are difficult to manage and to keep on task. The good teaching stems from:

- good relationships and an expectation that all children will work hard and do their best;
- secure subject knowledge that is used effectively to clarify teaching points;
- well chosen texts and activities that hold children's interest and are matched to their needs;
- good use of opportunities to reinforce basic skills, such as the use of letter sounds to read new words;
- skilful use of questions to assess children's understanding and progress;
- a sense of purpose and pace that helps children develop their skills effectively.

88. The coordinator is knowledgeable, enthusiastic and aware of what needs to be done to raise standards. He wrote the school's policy statement in consultation with colleagues. He sees teachers' planning and has observed some literacy lessons as part of the school's system of performance management. Resources are satisfactory and maintained well. Children's literacy experiences are broadened successfully through the use of annual productions and Book Fayres as well as visiting authors, poets and theatre groups. These all help to enliven children's interest in the subject.

MATHEMATICS

89. Children's attainments at age seven and eleven are below those found in most schools nationally.

90. Results of national tests for children aged eleven in 2002, were similar to those found in all schools nationally and in schools with children from similar backgrounds. This is an improvement in results from the previous year, when they were well below average. A good percentage of children reached the higher level of attainment, Level 5, reflecting a high level of challenge for the brighter children. Boys do much better than the girls in the tests, but in the scrutiny of work, the girls were doing better than the boys. The school's targets for the number of children to reach the expected Level 4 in national tests in 2003 predict lower levels of attainment as the year group has a high number of children with special educational needs. In addition, there is a significant number of children who have joined the school recently.

91. In Year 6, the brighter children are competent in their calculation of the four rules of number. They know how to use spreadsheets to calculate the costs of a school trip. They draw different kinds of graphs, such as line, pie and block, to illustrate the different methods of transport children use to get to school. They use a variety of methods, such as long multiplication and division to calculate accurately numbers involving money and decimals. Children, who find mathematics difficult, use addition, subtraction, multiplication and division to calculate simpler sums. They use strategies, such as doubling and halving to help them. They know about right angles and the names of different triangles. While all children are challenged to reach the expected level of attainment, the amount of work covered in some lessons is not enough to enhance their rate of progress.

92. In 2002, the results of national tests for children aged seven were well below average in comparison to all and similar schools. Few children reached the higher Level 3. Lesson observations indicate that standards are rising. As in the juniors, boys do better than the girls. One of the reasons for the lower attainment is the extensive use of poor quality worksheets in some infant classes. These do little to take children's learning forward or help them to think through problems or record their ideas. In both the infant and junior stages, teachers do not give children enough opportunities to investigate problems and solve them using their knowledge of shapes, measures and numbers.

93. In Year 2, children's attainments differ between the two classes. In one, the children cover far more work and have greater knowledge across the curriculum. A very able child is challenged particularly well and is working at a much higher level than other children in the year group. Children know about odd and even numbers to 20, count forwards and backwards to 100, recognise common two-dimensional shapes and carry out simple addition and subtraction sums.

94. Scrutiny of work and lesson observations indicates gaps in children's knowledge in Years 3 to 5. This makes it hard for them to make a faster rate of progress, as additional information has to be given to help children catch up. In some lessons, the work is less challenging, as teachers' expectations of what the children know and can do are not high enough.

95. Many children show good attitudes to mathematics. Work in their books is set out well and tidily so that they can calculate accurately. In lessons, children usually behave well and concentrate. They become restless when the length and pace of some parts of the lessons are extended and slow. Brighter children say they understand why they need to be patient while the teacher explains strategies and answers to others who learn more slowly, but they are eager to get on with their work.

96. Of the eight lessons observed during the inspection, three were good and the rest satisfactory. In the good lessons, teachers give good attention to a rapid-fire mental arithmetic session that challenges children to think of their answers quickly. These sessions are followed by opportunities for children to share the different ways in which they reached their answers. Teaching assistants are deployed well to help children of different abilities to carry out tasks successfully and ensure those who find it hard to behave well do not disrupt the learning of others. In satisfactory lessons, teachers offer clear explanations and set appropriate tasks. However, the children are not as involved in sharing their ideas and time is not used as well as it should be.

97. In Year 6, work is clearly set according to children's needs. There is inconsistency in the teaching between classes in similar year groups. Teachers' planning also shows a lack of consistency in the approach to teaching mathematics. Some teachers follow a published scheme closely and others use plans linked to this scheme, drawn from the Internet. This means that some teachers are not placing as much emphasis on the National Numeracy Strategy as they should, or the children's particular abilities to ensure continuity in children's learning.

98. The leadership of mathematics is satisfactory. Teachers' lesson plans are checked for coverage of the curriculum, but the implementation of these plans is not checked closely enough. Some lessons have been observed and strengths and areas for development identified. Strengths include teachers' questioning and an emphasis on teaching appropriate vocabulary. Areas for development were linked to the timings of the three part lessons and the amount of work covered in the time. These were still in evidence in some lessons during the inspection. Children's work books have also been checked and this has enabled the school to identify the lack of emphasis on investigational work.

SCIENCE

99. Children's attainment at age seven and eleven is broadly in line with national expectations in terms of their scientific factual knowledge. This is better than their skills in planning investigations, because they do not yet reason their predictions and conclusions sufficiently well. Children set out their work satisfactorily in most classes and communicate their results with varying skill. Most children label their diagrams effectively and these support their written explanations about what they have done. There is little overall difference in the attainments of boys and girls.

100. By age seven, children know some of the dangers of electricity, such as handling electrical appliances with wet hands and they can name and categorise several electric appliances by their main function. They have a basic understanding of forces such as pull and push. They study reversible and irreversible changes and change of state after food is heated. They have a good appreciation of materials and can categorise them as man-made or natural and discuss their qualities, such as hardness and softness and whether they can be squashed or bent. They follow up investigations with interest to find out whether the shape of the bubble blower makes any difference to the shape of a bubble and which boat of several in the water tray is easier to blow and why.

101. By age 11, children understand the conditions for growth of plants. They know that there are different animals and plants and that they have preferred habitats. They have a good appreciation of solubility and can categorise soluble and insoluble solids as they predict the outcomes of immersing iron filings and salt in water. They know some ways of separating solids and liquids. Occasionally they make good use of numeracy to record their results in graphs, for example to demonstrate how long it takes for different solids to dissolve. They consider reversible and irreversible changes to a greater depth. Children tabulate their results well and record their findings accurately about magnetic and non-magnetic objects. Children measure accurately in Newtons in their work on forces. They have a satisfactory understanding of fair testing but do not yet sufficiently raise their own questions to investigate.

102. The quality of teaching in science is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and good overall in Years 3 to 6 with a range from good to satisfactory. Overall, it is good and children make good progress from a below average attainment on entry. Teachers share the lesson objectives with children effectively so the children know what the lesson is going to be about and revise well on previous learning. They prepare resources thoroughly so the lessons run smoothly. Teachers monitor the practical activities effectively and help children with their thinking. Some teachers make effective use of time reminders so they complete their work on time. Teachers manage children's behaviour well and deploy teaching assistants effectively to ensure that children with the potential to disrupt lessons usually remain calm. They create a good learning atmosphere so that children want to learn. The well prepared lessons ensure that children are usually kept interested, although a few children find it difficult to concentrate during the discussions and through explanations. Several have poor listening skills and also find it difficult to express their thoughts. Nevertheless, they cooperate well during practical activities and share the resources fairly. Most try hard and want to do their best.

103. The quality of teachers' questioning is usually good, but they do not always ask questions of children who are more reluctant to answer. As a result, discussion is sometimes too focused on one part of the class. A minority of teachers have a tendency to tell children too much rather than drawing information out of them. Occasionally, they presume understanding that the children do not have. More opportunities could be taken to discuss the process of fair testing and in providing opportunities for children to devise their own investigations. Whilst some good use of information and communication technology was seen, teachers do not use it enough in science lessons as a means of recording their work. Sometimes, children with special educational needs miss important parts of lessons to undertake extra English work.

104. The coordinator has not had responsibility for the subject for very long. She has attended in-service training and is keen to develop the subject further. She has a good understanding of the developments that need to be made. She has improved the range and quality of science resources and these are now good and include an electronic microscope that can be attached to the computer. Resources are arranged well and labelled and easy to access. The work in science is supported further through the wild life club that plants the grounds and takes an interest in environmental issues. Currently there is no portfolio of work that would help to raise teachers' awareness of standards nor a record of children's developing science skills.

ART AND DESIGN AND DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

105. Five lessons were seen during the period of the inspection, four at the junior stage and one in the infants. Judgements were informed by an examination of teachers' planning as well as scrutiny of children's work and displays around the school. Sufficient time is given to these areas of the curriculum. Teachers' planning shows a programme of interesting and lively activities. Overall, the children are achieving as well as most other children nationally at ages seven and eleven.

106. Children's learning over time, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory at both the infant and junior stages. In Year 1 children have used a variety of fabrics, ribbons and other materials to work together on woven samples. Large pieces of fabric have been woven into the stair rails leading to the hall as children practise their technique. In Year 2, children make good observations about the work of other artists. They use appropriate vocabulary, such as shade and blend, to describe the use of colour and tone. However, their ability to talk about what they see is often hindered by their lack of speaking and listening skills. In their observational drawings some children do not pay close enough attention to detail and their efforts are limited by a lack of skill in using a variety of pencil techniques to portray different shades and textures.

107. Sketch books are used in both the infant and junior stages. Children have a broad range of experience using different techniques and materials in colour mixing, printing and in observational drawing using pencil, pastel and charcoal. Examples were seen of quilling, pattern making and drawings to portray movement. In Year 3, children have made some effective patterns using a variety of techniques in printing and paper cutting. Their portrait gallery shows effective use of pencil techniques and colour.

108. In Years 4 and 5, children have made group collages using textiles and sewn work to portray stories of Noah's Ark and the Greek myths. This work shows effective use of colour and texture and stitches chosen from a range of materials. In Year 6, children have made some effective pencil drawings trying to capture movement in human form. They have taken care in their work and show developing confidence and skill. Appropriate attention is given to the work of well-known artists, such as Mondrian, Picasso and Van Gough. These studies help children to be more aware of the ways in which different artists represent what they see and feel.

109. Resources for art are satisfactory. The coordinator has identified areas for development and plans to increase the number of artefacts available to support multi-cultural development as well as the range of resources for three dimensional work. A good start has been made on a portfolio of samples and photographs of children's work. There have been few opportunities to monitor teaching and learning and this limits the coordinator's ability to affect standards in the subject.

110. Children's work in both the infant and junior stages shows increasing confidence in handling equipment and trying out different materials and media. For example, in Year 2 children have designed and made winding mechanisms. In Years 4 and 5, children have selected appropriate materials to make simple musical instruments. They used cardboard tubes and lolly sticks with various dried foods, rice, pearl barley, dried peas and split peas for fillings. They suggested alternative methods of construction, modified their plans and evaluated the results by considering what went well and what did not. In Year 6, children have designed and made slippers with pleasing results. This work shows that children research, design, modify, make and evaluate their ideas, working carefully from the drawing stage to the finished product. However, some junior children have difficulty in carrying out tasks according to instructions. Their efforts to record the way they have designed and made products and their evaluations, are hindered because of their lack of writing skills.

111. The subject coordinator is enthusiastic and has made good progress in organising resources. The food technology room is well thought out. Priorities for development have been identified and include a portfolio of work and record for assessment, as well as more construction toys for the infant classes. The role of the coordinator, however, is insufficiently developed as there are too few opportunities for monitoring teaching and learning in the subject.

112. The teaching observed was satisfactory or good. Where teaching is good, tasks are planned to link with previous experiences. Teachers' knowledge and understanding supports the children's learning well. There are good explanations of what is to be done and resources are organised effectively. Adults give children good support. Questions are used well so that children are helped to make appropriate choices about which materials to use and how to improve what they are doing. Children work with sustained concentration and enthusiasm. Displays around the school are of a good standard. They help build the children's visual awareness and encourage their creative development. The children enjoy work in these subjects and extend their learning through clubs at lunchtime and after school. The school has worked hard for its 'Artsmark' application and is awaiting the result.

GEOGRAPHY

113. No lessons in geography were observed during the inspection. Judgements are based on discussions with children, scrutiny of previous work and teachers' planning. Children's attainments are similar to those found in all schools nationally at age seven and eleven. Since its amalgamation, the school has implemented a policy and programme of work that promotes children's knowledge, skills and understanding successfully. Resources have been organised so that they are easy to access and improved to ensure they support the programme of work effectively.

114. Geography work in Year 1 is linked to other subjects, such as literacy. Children know how to draw simple maps and learned this skill by drawing a map of *The Gingerbread Man's Journey*. This led on to children thinking and finding out about different kinds houses and their home addresses. Postcards from different locations helped them to know about other countries around the world.

115. Year 2 children have composed and sent e-mails to their friends about their holidays. They have discovered the similarities and differences of living in Dublin or Stevenage. They also worked out the route and transport for a journey to France. They know about the euro currency and flags of different countries, such as France and England. The children have visited the area around the school and can draw a map of their route from home to school. They can draw maps that include a wood, river, flats, bridges and trees. Brighter children also draw the key to their map successfully.

116. In Year 3, children have learned about the locality close to the school. They know about the houses, facilities and services, such as the doctors' and vet's surgeries, shops, church and public houses that make up the community. The children know about environmental issues and how they could change the area in which they live by avoiding dropping litter and recycling items that are no longer needed. In Years 4 and 5, children have been finding out about life in Zimbabwe by writing to a school there, exchanging information, news and photographs. Acting as travel agents, the children also found out about exciting holiday destinations and how these differ from England in climate and lifestyle. Children have drawn graphs of their favourite holiday destinations and this helped them to see how mathematics is useful in other subjects.

117. In Year 6, the children know about the features of coastlines and talk confidently about coastal erosion. In discussions, many used the correct vocabulary and offered explanations about the lives of people who live on the coast. Much of the geography work in this year group is linked to a residential visit to the Isle of Wight, where children learn about features of another area of Britain from first hand experiences.

118. It was not possible to make a judgement on teaching. However, from the scrutiny of work, children have opportunities to use their initiative, find out information for themselves from books and discuss their findings. The children remember a lot of things from visits, talks and information presented by teachers. This good work is not always built on effectively when children receive poor quality worksheets to colour in or fill in the missing words to record factual details.

119. The coordinator for geography is very new to the post and has yet to influence standards and teaching. Resources have been audited and new ones ordered to give older children more opportunities to learn to read maps.

HISTORY

120. Children's attainments are similar to those found in most schools nationally at age seven and eleven. Since its amalgamation, the school has implemented a policy and programme of work that promotes children's knowledge, skills and understanding successfully. History is taught, alternating with geography, over the year. Teachers' planning and scrutiny of the work shows that some of the curriculum had been covered recently and the rest is due to be covered before the end of the summer term. Children make good progress in comparison to their prior attainment, including those with special educational needs.

121. In Year 1, children identify the characteristics of old and new toys correctly. They asked their parents and also their grandparents, about the toys they played with when they were young. The children recorded their findings in their own way, some through drawings and others by writing down information. They know about old household items, such as a lamp, washing tub, washing dolly and coffee grinder. They explain what their modern day equivalents look like confidently.

122. In Year 2, children know about the Great Fire of London. They found out about it by looking at pictures and asking questions, finding information from books as well as from their teacher. Children had to find the answers to questions such as, *Who was Samuel Pepys? What is the Monument?* The children reflected well on what it must have been like to live through the Great Fire, writing 'eye witness' accounts and this gave them a deeper understanding of it. For example, one child wrote, *I saw the fire. I was very shocked so I dug a hole and put all my special things in it so they wouldn't get burned. The fire took five days. Also I felt very worried.* Another wrote, *When everyone escaped, the houses burnt down quicker, roaring as they did.* In addition, children have written interesting 'eye witness' accounts of *The Gunpowder Plot* that illustrate their knowledge of this event.

123. Year 3 children know about events in Roman Times and the uniform of a Roman soldier. They are aware of the lifestyle of the Romans and how they adapted to living in Britain. Children in Years 4 and 5 know about famous people, such as Dr. Barnardo and Lord Shaftesbury. Their writing about life as a *trapper* in a coal mine, reflects clear understanding of what it was like to be a poor child in Victorian times.

124. In Year 6, children know about life in Tudor times. They have used the Internet to find pictures of some of Henry VIII's wives. They used these to identify differences in clothing between rich and poor people. Further research helped the children to know about the homes and lifestyle of the rich and poor in this period of history. Information and communication technology is utilised to raise standards and record some data.

125. At both the infant and junior stages, the development of children's historical enquiry skills is a strong feature, but often, after carrying out research activities, children complete worksheets where they fill in the missing words. This limits opportunities for them to apply their literacy skills and to use their initiative. In discussion with the children they know more than is represented in their written work. Timelines assist children in developing their knowledge of the chronology of past events.

126. Scrutiny of children's work indicates variation in the quality of what is produced across the junior classes. In some classes, children copy directly from books whilst in others they do their best to record their ideas. Sometimes work is left unfinished and unmarked. There is substantial use of poor quality worksheets that do not help the children to learn more.

127. Teaching was observed in three lessons during the inspection. Two were good and the other satisfactory. Lessons are planned effectively. Resources are also chosen well to develop skills of historical enquiry together with children's knowledge. Tasks, such as finding information from pictures, books and displays, promote children's speaking and listening and social skills effectively. For example, in one lesson, children worked together in small groups, with one child taking responsibility for writing down the information they wanted to record. Teachers are determined to make learning interesting by using artefacts to help children understand changes. The children were fascinated by an old fashioned *washtub* and *washing dolly*. This captured the children's interest so that they were motivated to learn. However, the length of time set aside for the subject was too long and interest waned. In the lessons observed, attitudes were very good in the good lessons and satisfactory in the other. All lessons were successful in challenging the children intellectually.

128. Leadership is satisfactory. The priority has been to organise and improve the resources from following amalgamation so that they could support the programme of work. The coordinator has checked teachers' plans to ensure that the curriculum is covered appropriately. However, the role is not developed well enough to influence standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

129. The provision of a very good computer suite is beginning to have a good affect on the children's knowledge and understanding of the subject. Children's attainment at age seven and eleven remains below that of most schools, but there are signs of improvement. Much of the credit for the heightened importance of information and communication technology in the school is due to the enthusiastic and well-informed coordinator who leads very well. She has a clear vision for the future direction of the subject, including the training of teaching assistants. The newly set up computer suite is very well planned. It is laid out with a very good built-in facility for the teacher to monitor what each child is doing from any chosen screen. This helps check the progress the children are making in lessons and enables teachers to assist them more effectively with their work.

130. By the age of seven, children operate a tape recorder and record conversations. They log on and off on computers and select whether to print off their work in colour or

monochrome. They use a program to select words from a given word bank to make sentences. They are able to program a moving toy to travel particular distances in different directions. They follow the teachers' instructions to find a specific program and then access it. They use the properties of art programs, select specific program tools and make fine or wider marks accordingly as they draw pictures on the screen and then select colours to fill in their work. Their keyboard skills are not yet well developed and they are slow when they insert text. They are making satisfactory progress from a below average level on entry to Year 1.

131. By age eleven, children access the Internet to research their studies, as when finding out about Tudor clothes and costumes and the rich and poor in Tudor times. They put together a word document and merge text and graphics. Children have a good knowledge of the menu icons on the tool bar and highlight, copy and paste. They can create text boxes and link them with arrows to show the consequences of a series of actions. In addition, they are beginning to use a program to make individual presentations and gaining confidence in this. They are improving their knowledge of techniques and becoming better able to select particular software for a given task. With help they create formulae to make spreadsheets. They have developed good skills in combining text and graphics. As in Years 1 and 2, the keyboard skills of many are still quite laboured. They have had some experience of controlling the movements of plastic models through inputting control commands and there are plans to improve their skills in this activity.

132. Not enough lessons could be observed during the inspection to judge the quality of teaching overall. Of the three lessons observed, one was satisfactory and one good. Not enough time could be spent in the other to make a reliable judgement. The teachers make good use of the facilities, show good subject knowledge and use the built in facility to monitor children's work well. The lesson content is appropriate, planned well and sequenced. Children work with interest and with good levels of co-operation. Despite their overall below average attainment, children made good progress in one lesson and satisfactory progress in the other.

133. The resource provision is good. Some, but not enough, use is made of classroom computers to further children's skills. There is a good scheme of work in place that is guiding the work the children are now doing. However, there is not yet a portfolio of work to show the standards of work children might achieve for different ages nor is there a record of children's acquired skills to help plan the next steps in learning.

MUSIC

134. No lesson observations of music were possible at the infant stage. The observations of music activities at the junior stage show that children's attainment is in line with most schools by the time they are eleven. They make satisfactory progress over time, including those with special educational needs. Children listen attentively to music when they enter the hall for assemblies. The range of music they hear is wide and includes both classical and more popular music. In a mixed Year 4/5 lesson, the children listened calmly to the morning suite from *Peer Gynt* and suggested 'sunrise', 'summer's day', 'swaying flowers' and 'morning' itself as possible themes. They make up their own compositions to contrast the busy sounds of the day compared to the quietness of night. They select appropriate percussion instruments, such as drums and tambours, for the bustling traffic of the day and create drum rolls of increasing and then diminishing sound as the traffic goes off into the distance. In contrast, the maracas were chosen well to demonstrate the rustle of leaves blown in the breeze in the stillness of night. The children's singing is generally tuneful, but they lack confidence and do not sing with much enthusiasm. Teachers have to remind them to sing up. The children's knowledge of music theory is limited and few know the technical vocabulary, for example for *stave*. However, they are familiar with the term *ostinato* and can explain its significance. They do not find it easy to retain a second part when singing in two parts in class music lessons. They can usually clap the pulse of a tune and retain a steady beat as they do so.

135. Children show a good level of interest in practical music, as when working on compositions. Most children behave well in lessons and show suitable levels of co-operation when working in groups. They select instruments sensibly for compositional work and show respect for the equipment.

136. The overall quality of teaching at the junior stage is satisfactory. It is not possible to make comment about teaching in the infants. Teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge overall and some technical competence. Teachers can advise children how to breathe correctly for singing and discuss the importance of taking deep breaths. They use technical terms correctly, although sometimes the children get confused about these because of over complex discussion about terminology. Teachers make good use of praise and this encourages the children's efforts, but they do not encourage the quality of singing enough. Usually the explanation of the activities is clear.

137. The coordinator has good musical skills and is competent on piano, recorder and guitar. She has bought in a new published scheme and this is helping to give the staff greater confidence in undertaking their own music lessons. The planned curriculum meets requirements, though some children were observed to miss the whole of their music lesson to undertake extra work in spelling. The resources are good quality and there is a good range that promotes compositional work. The school has a small recorder group and a choir and these further the musical interest of the children who wish to take part. Some children further their musical knowledge and interest by having specialist lessons in violin and guitar. The school occasionally makes good use of visiting music groups to perform for the children and this enhances their general level of interest.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

138. The children's attainment in the physical education activities observed is in line with most school at age seven and eleven. Only three lessons were seen during the inspection period and it is not possible to judge the overall quality of teaching as a result. Attainment in the lessons observed was at the expected level for the children's ages and the teaching was mainly satisfactory. Children are making satisfactory progress over time, including those with special educational needs.

139. At age seven, children use the hall space well. They run and stop on command, change direction, create interesting body shapes at different heights and some incorporate balances. Many run and jump with turns and demonstrate different ways to roll on the floor. They create their own sequence of movements and include turns, spins and rolls with some success. They can move the apparatus and set it out safely. When on the apparatus, they turn and move on different body parts with suitable skill.

140. By age eleven, children create different movements when they warm up, stretch their arms and legs and create their own shapes. They listen attentively to dance music as they reflect on the different moods of the music and attempt their own dance routines in pairs and small groups. Children's quality of movement in interpreting the dance music ranges widely, but is satisfactory overall. In games lessons, they create their own rules for a game with the equipment provided and generally organise themselves satisfactorily. Most retain good levels of interest. They show some success in evaluating the game and how they might improve its organisation.

141. In the three lessons observed, the quality of teaching ranged from good to satisfactory. In the good dance lesson observed, the teacher's keen approach and high expectations enabled the children to make good progress. She gave strong emphasis to the importance of timing in the children's dance routines and emphasised to the children the importance of reflecting the moods of the music. This good knowledge and enthusiasm reflected itself in the children's own enthusiasm and in their keenness to do well. In the other lessons, the teachers managed the warm-up session effectively, had clear expectations about the lesson format, but the children did not always sustain total interest. In one of the lessons, too little attention was given to the quality of the finishing movement and to techniques in jumping and rolling. There was insufficient use of demonstration to improve technique, although class control was good and the resources and equipment were set out well in the hall.

142. The coordinator has not had responsibility for very long, but has good skills in the subject. The curriculum is planned well and includes suitable opportunities for swimming and most children can swim 25 metres by age eleven. However, the coordinator has not yet observed lessons to improve the quality of teaching in the subject. There is a good range of extra-curricular provision. Accommodation for the subject is good. There are two halls and suitable external provision. Resources for the subject are satisfactory.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

143. Three lessons were observed during the period of the inspection, one each in Years 2, 3 and 6. Judgements were also informed by scrutiny of previous work, interviews with children and with the coordinator for the subject. Children's achievements are similar to those generally found at age seven and eleven and are in line with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The programmes of work help children to begin to understand that religious faith is a common feature of communities and that people who share a faith express it in their values, behaviour, attitudes and religious observance. Children's learning is satisfactory over time, including those with special educational needs. However, a lack of speaking and listening skills sometimes hinders their ability to express views and to communicate what they know to others.

144. Children consider relationships and the community. They know that people's lives are brightened by special events such as birthdays and weddings. Most of what they learn is based upon the Christian faith, although they also learn about a variety of other religions, such as Judaism and Buddhism. Year 6 children, for example, are currently learning about significant experiences in the life of Buddha. Most are building up a satisfactory understanding of these and how they might relate to their own experiences and knowledge. Year 2 children have considered what it means to be a Christian and, in this regard, have visited a local church. They have thought about the purpose of a church and what happens in it. They know that this includes praying, singing and lighting candles. One child referred to the taking of bread and wine and the teacher explained the reason for this. Children also study the main festivals of the Christian calendar, such as Christmas and Easter, and most can relate the events of these in some detail. They can recall the main points of stories from the Old Testament, such as David and Goliath, and children from Years 4 and 5 have made good quality textiles to illustrate what they know.

145. Overall, teachers' knowledge and competence in teaching the subject is secure and this means children develop new knowledge at a steady pace. Teachers' planning is clear with appropriate learning objectives to help children to widen their understanding about new and sometimes difficult concepts. Children behave well in lessons and their attitudes towards the subject are generally good, although some older children say they do not like having to learn so many different names. Of the lessons seen, two were good and one was very good. In the good teaching, children are motivated effectively and challenged to think hard. Questions are used skilfully to assess progress. Activities are varied and children's skills, knowledge and understanding are built up systematically. In the very good lesson, the teacher had invited a lay preacher from a local church to help explain Jesus' temptations in the wilderness. The children were really gripped by the presentation and many of them responded enthusiastically to the teacher's invitation to describe the temptations in their own words. The lesson was a positive experience and the children applauded spontaneously at the end.

146. The coordinator is enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the subject. She sees teachers' planning and gives general support to colleagues when asked. She helps identify priorities for development, but her monitoring role does not include observation of lessons. Resources are satisfactory and stored well and are easily available for teachers to use.