

# INSPECTION REPORT

## LEEDON LOWER SCHOOL

Leighton Buzzard

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109509

Headteacher: Mrs S Banks

Reporting inspector: Mr J Sorsby

14042

Dates of inspection: 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> September 2002

Inspection number: 250719

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Highfield Road Leighton Buzzard Bedfordshire
Postcode:	LU7 3LZ
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr David Simons
Date of previous inspection:	15 <sup>th</sup> June 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
14042	J. Sorsby	Registered inspector		<p>Information about the school</p> <p>The school's results and pupils' achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils taught</p> <p>How well the school is led and managed</p> <p>What the school should do to improve further</p>
8937	H. Allen	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils</p> <p>Educational inclusion</p>
25778	A. Hicks	Team inspector	<p>Mathematics</p> <p>Design and technology</p> <p>Information and communication technology</p> <p>Music</p>	<p>How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils</p>
22178	K. Robertson	Team inspector	<p>Science</p> <p>Art and design</p> <p>History</p> <p>Religious education</p> <p>Provision for pupils with special educational needs</p>	
15590	S. Slocombe	Team inspector	<p>Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage</p> <p>English</p> <p>Geography</p> <p>Physical education</p>	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Leedon Lower School is located in and serves Leighton Buzzard. It is a slightly larger than average size school with 277 pupils on roll, aged four to nine. There are ten classes covering reception to Year 4, and no nursery. Only fourteen pupils are not of United Kingdom heritage, the largest group being from Europe. Four pupils speak English as an additional language, all fluently. The native languages of these pupils are Italian, German, Chinese and Gujarati. Fourteen per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is average. Seventeen per cent of pupils have special educational needs, which is about average, while 2.8 per cent have statements of special educational needs, which is above average. The majority of pupils with special educational needs have either moderate learning difficulties or autism. Almost seventeen per cent of all pupils joined or left the school during the past year at a time other than the normal joining or leaving time, which is high when compared with most schools. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below that typical for their age.

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

Following a period of difficulty, this has quickly become a good school that is continuing to improve. It is a caring school where pupils and staff work harmoniously together. Parents are happy with the school, in almost all its aspects. Standards in previous years have been disappointing, but they are once again rising and are in line with expectations because of better teaching and learning and leadership and management. Pupils now make good progress in lessons, although their achievement over time has only been satisfactory. Although the school receives above average income for each pupil, it is providing good value for money because pupils are now making good progress in lessons and standards are rising, the quality of teaching and leadership and management have improved and the school is successful in enriching pupils' lives.

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

- The quality of teaching is good.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour, personal development and the relationships between them and with adults are very good.
- The leadership and management is good and is particularly effective in identifying issues and taking appropriate action.
- The school successfully encourages parental involvement in their children's learning.
- The curriculum is well planned. It includes good provision for pupils' personal development and an interesting range of activities outside lessons.
- All staff successfully promote the care and well being of pupils.

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

- Standards in English, mathematics and science have improved significantly in the past year, but could be higher, especially for lower ability pupils and those with special educational needs.
- The use of information and communications technology (ICT) to enhance teaching and learning across all subjects.

*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 good school, which following a period of difficulty, is improving rapidly. Since the last inspection, the school has undergone a change of leadership. There are strong indications that following the last inspection, during a period of high staff turnover, the school's focus on raising standards was lost. Whilst standards are now generally as they were at the time of the last inspection, this is primarily as a result of the new headteacher's leadership during the



past year. In this time there has been significant improvement. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development have improved, supported by improved planning and provision for their personal, and particularly their moral and social development and improved behaviour management. The curriculum and planning in all subjects has been revised and improved and several minor resource deficiencies have been overcome. Importantly, the effectiveness of the schools links with parents has improved, as have parents' views of the school. Most significantly, there has been major improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, which has enabled standards to be maintained despite pupils' attainment on joining the school being lower, more pupils joining and leaving at times other than normal and there being more pupils with a variety of learning difficulties. Overall, there has been good improvement since the last inspection.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
reading	C	C	E	E
writing	B	C	D	D
mathematics	A	C	D	D

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

As can be seen from the above table, there has been a steady decline in standards over several years since the last inspection, with a particularly sharp fall in 2001, the most recent year for which national and similar school comparisons are available. This was due to weaknesses in leadership and management and rapid staff turnover, both of which resulted in the school losing its previous sharp focus on raising standards. Early indications of test results, and work seen during the inspection show that standards are improving and are once again similar to those expected nationally. In all subjects except music and art, they are now in line with national expectations at the end of Years 2 and 4. In music and art they are above expectations in both year groups. This very significant improvement has been achieved despite the groups of pupils tested including an average proportion of pupils with special needs and a particularly high proportion of lower attaining pupils. However, the teaching of these pupils has not been as good as the teaching of average and higher attaining pupils in the past and consequently, neither has been their rate of progress. This was an equal opportunities issue that the school has now addressed through better assessment of needs and planning to meet those needs. Improvements have also been achieved despite the large number of pupils who join or leave the school at times other than normal.

Rising standards overall can be attributed to improvements in leadership and management by the headteacher and subject co-ordinators. Weaknesses have been identified efficiently, and sensible remedial actions designed and implemented. Numerous important links have been established, such as research links with universities, and these have further enhanced the school's range of actions to successfully raise standards, and are now addressing the issue of the rate of progress by lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. Despite the improvements in 2002, inspectors agree with the school that further improvement is possible and desirable. Overall, pupils with special educational needs are

progressing as well as all other pupils. Pupils for whom English is an additional language do not require or receive special support, as the few present in the school all speak English fluently and also progress as well as all other pupils. Overall, children join reception with standards below those expected for their age and achieve well, reaching standards in line with expectations by the time they enter Year 1. In Years 1 to 4, pupils achieve satisfactorily in all subjects except music and art, in which they achieve well.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to school and to learning are very good. They are eager to succeed and participate enthusiastically in all that the school offers.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong and their behaviour is good in lessons and very good around the school. There have been no exclusions.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between pupils and with adults are very good. Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.
Attendance	Good.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 4
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

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

In reception, teachers have a particularly good understanding of how young children learn, and plan and organise their lessons very well. Consequently, children learn and achieve well. In Years 1 to 4, the majority of pupils learn well. However, a significant minority have not, until recent changes in assessment and planning, learned as well as the majority. Consequently achievement overall in Years 1 to 4 has only been satisfactory and standards achieved are also satisfactory. This is because there is a high proportion of pupils who are of lower than average ability, and teachers' planning had not consistently taken appropriate account of their needs in the past. This issue has been addressed and in the majority of lessons seen, the teaching of all pupils was good. However, the benefit of this good teaching has had insufficient time to raise the standard of lower ability pupils.

The teaching of English and mathematics is good overall throughout the school. Literacy and numeracy skills are also well taught, with good opportunities being taken to enhance them through the teaching of other subjects. This is, however, not entirely consistent, the notable exceptions being history and geography, where too little opportunity is provided for pupils to practice writing long accounts of the topics they study. Information and communications technology (ICT) is not being used effectively to support teaching or learning in other subjects.

Almost all aspects of teaching are now strong, for example, teachers' planning, their subject knowledge and the way in which they manage their classes. Good pupil management results

in pupils concentrating well and working hard, contributing well to rising standards. A new scheme of assessment has recently been introduced to deal with the needs of lower ability pupils, and early indications are that it is much improved. Consequently it can be said that good teaching and learning have resulted in rising standards and the school is now successfully meeting the needs of all its pupils, including those with special educational needs, lower ability pupils, higher attaining pupils and those for whom English is an additional language. This is a further example of the improved leadership and management of the school.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Extra-curricular activities and the community make a significant contribution to the richness of the curriculum, which provides appropriately for the teaching of all subjects. Provision for children in reception is good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school provides satisfactorily for pupils with special educational needs, through the adaptation of work and the support pupils receive.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Pupils for whom English is an additional language do not require or receive special support, as the few present in the school all speak English fluently and progress as well as all other pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The school provides very well for pupils' moral and social development and satisfactorily for their spiritual, and cultural development. Preparation of pupils for life in our multicultural society is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a caring school that provides well for pupils' safety and well-being. While it varies from subject to subject, overall, the monitoring of what pupils know understand and can do, and the use of this information, is satisfactory.
How well does the school work in partnership with parents	The school is very highly valued by parents who play a major role in its life and in their children's learning. Parents are encouraged well to support their children's learning at home and at school.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The headteacher, senior management team and subject managers provide strong and effective leadership and management, constantly striving to support individual pupils and promote their academic success. However, the needs of lower attaining pupils have not been fully met.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are well informed about the school and play a very effective role in supporting it and contributing to setting its overall direction.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school uses all available data very well to set its priorities and plan its course towards their achievement. Particularly effective is the work done to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. All available resources are used effectively to support learning and rising standards. The school pays good attention and is successful in achieving best value in all its work.
The adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources	The school has sufficient qualified and experienced staff, satisfactory learning resources and sufficient internal and external accommodation, to teach the curriculum effectively.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like coming to school.</li> <li>• Behaviour is good.</li> <li>• Teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school has high expectations of pupils.</li> <li>• Pupils are helped to become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of homework set.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views. The use of homework to reinforce what is learned in school is satisfactory.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. As explained earlier, standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science are now in line with national averages at the end of Year 2 as are standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 4. This is a significant improvement since 2001, and is the consequence of good teaching and much improved leadership and management of the subjects and the school. Much closer attention has been paid to accurate assessment of the needs of individual pupils and provision to meet those needs. This is a good example of the school striving to make equal provision for all pupils in all its work.

2. In practice, in English, mathematics and science, the meeting of pupils' individual needs now includes all pupils. However, because the planning to meet the needs of lower attaining pupils has only recently been introduced, their progress over time has been less good than that of average and higher attaining pupils. When considering pupils in each year group overall, including those who have special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, they make satisfactory progress. Pupils for whom English is an additional language present no particular needs and have required no special action, as those in the school all speak English fluently. They achieve standards similar to those of other pupils of their ability and age.

3. The development of the process of identifying pupils' needs and addressing them through teachers' planning is continuing. The school is aware that some pupils with special educational needs and those who are of lower ability can achieve more, and appropriate planning is in place to encourage and enable them to do so. However, this important area of the school's work, which is entirely in keeping with the school's aim to enable each pupil to develop to his or her full potential, has only been developing for the past six months and has not had sufficient time to have an effect on the standards of lower ability pupils. These pupils are now being provided for and achieving satisfactorily, in deed, almost all pupils in the school make at least the expected amount of progress as they move through the year groups. However, the school has recognised that because of these pupils relatively low starting standards, they need to achieve more in order to boost their standards and coincidentally raise the overall standards achieved by the school.

4. In all other subjects but two, pupils are achieving well in reception and satisfactorily in Years 1 to 4. The standards they reach by the end of Years 2 and 4 are in line with national expectations. Achievement in Years 1 to 4 is less good than in reception because of the problems previously faced by lower ability pupils, but, as stated, plans are in place to better support these pupils. The two exceptions are music and art, in which pupils achieve well throughout the school, resulting in above average standards.

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

5. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good. This represents good improvement since the last inspection. The good levels of attendance reported at the last inspection have been maintained.

6. Parents report their children enjoy coming to school. This is evident in the children's smiling faces as they come to school, meet fellow pupils and are then greeted by staff each morning. Pupils respond well to the enthusiastic teachers and support staff and are eager to do well in lessons. They sustain concentration very well even in the few when lessons that

are less interesting than others. Pupils also show consideration for each other by helping one another when working in groups and by moving quietly around the school, for example when going to the hall for physical education or the computer suite for ICT.

7. Parents are very pleased with behaviour at the school and consider the school helps their children become mature and responsible. In discussions with pupils it is clear they have a good understanding of right from wrong and consider it important to take account of the feelings of others. This is reflected in the very good behaviour at break and lunchtimes when pupils play very well together and ensure everyone is included. They understand the need to take turns, for example when throwing the ball through the ring in basketball or playing noughts and crosses.

8. Pupils of all ages are encouraged to be responsible for getting out their work at the start of lessons and putting it away at the end. When appropriate pupils eagerly take on monitor duties such as taking dinner registers to the office and handing out and collecting items such as paper, books and glue sticks. Pupils of all ages are proud to represent their class on the School Council and take their duties very seriously. Older pupils enjoy the responsibility of looking after younger ones when carrying out their duties as activity play leaders and dining hall helpers. They wear their 'T' shirts with pride and carry out their tasks with maturity. Pupils' social skills are well developed with pupils not only displaying great courtesy to each other and staff but also to visitors to the school. Pupils are encouraged to consider the wider community and those less fortunate than themselves. In the past year they raised over £2000 for different charities including a children's hospice, the Multiple Sclerosis Society and the British Heart Foundation.

9. Pupil's enthusiasm for school is reflected in the level of attendance. However, family holidays in term time are the cause of much of the absence that does occur. Lessons start promptly throughout the day.

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

10. The quality of teaching is good overall, and there has been significant improvement since the last inspection. Twenty-eight per cent of teaching was very good or excellent. In Years 3 and 4, one in every three lessons observed was very good or better, and 59 per cent of lessons observed were at least good. One excellent lesson and one unsatisfactory lesson was observed. In Years 1 and 2, sixty-five per cent of lessons were good or better, and 17 per cent were very good or better. One excellent was observed. Teaching in reception was particularly good, with all lessons being good or better. The quality of teaching overall is a strength of the school.

11. In reception, all aspects of teaching are good or better. In Years 1 to 4, particular strengths are teachers' knowledge and understanding of subjects and topics, their teaching of literacy and numeracy skills, the effectiveness of their planning and their effective management of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are satisfactorily supported by teachers and support staff. Teachers manage pupils well, developing a calm and productive atmosphere in classrooms. One less strong feature, although remaining satisfactory, is teachers' expectations of lower attaining pupils. This is a consequence of the weaknesses in identifying these pupils' needs, which is described in the section of this report dealing with standards and pupils' achievements.

12. In reception, staff have a very good understanding of how young children learn, and the importance of play and first hand experiences. This has a positive effect in supporting children's progress and provides a firm foundation for learning in Year 1 and beyond.

13. The teaching of English and literacy was good overall. Particular strengths were teachers' knowledge and understanding of the National Literacy Strategy, and the imaginative lessons they prepared for pupils. The teaching of mathematics and numeracy is also good. Lessons are well structured and usually proceed at a brisk pace. Very good relationships in lessons lead to a good working atmosphere being developed and pupils eagerly making progress. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and impart it well. The teaching of both subjects is enhanced by teachers good use of questioning and resultant lively discussions. However, not all tasks meet the needs of less able pupils.

14. The teaching of science throughout the school is satisfactory. Teachers manage their pupils well, and lessons are calm and productive. Lesson plans are generally good and good use is made of available resources. However, on some occasions, there is insufficient attention paid to the needs of less able pupils.

15. In art and design the quality of teaching across the school is good. Teaching is greatly enhanced by the involvement of visitors, such as visiting artists, who have worked with pupils raising their interest in the subject, the effort they make and their standards. Greater emphasis is now being placed on enabling pupils to produce three-dimensional work, an improvement since the last inspection.

16. Too little evidence is available to judge the teaching of design and technology.

17. In geography and history, teaching is satisfactory overall. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good and pupils behave well and concentrate on their work, enabling them to learn. Good use is made of resources and of visits to sites of interest and visitors to the school to talk about their areas of expertise. These aspects of teaching motivate pupils well, and contribute to the standards they achieve. However, in both subjects, insufficient attention to the needs of lower attaining pupils sometimes results in work being too hard for them and in their losing concentration.

18. Teaching and learning in information and communication technology is satisfactory. This is developing well following teachers having received recent training. Teachers are growing in confidence and subject expertise. They use learning resources well to explain and demonstrate new techniques, enabling pupils to learn quickly and effectively. Lessons are a satisfactory mix of whole class teaching and practical pupil work. Insufficient emphasis is being placed on using computers as a teaching and learning aid in other subjects.

19. Music plays a significant role in the life of the school, well supported by good teaching. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and are competent when, for example, using and explaining technical terms. They instil a love of music in children at a very young age, and this is maintained throughout the school. The range of available recorded music is insufficient for teachers to place appropriate emphasis on pupils hearing, understanding and appreciating music from a wide range of cultures.

20. The quality of teaching of physical education is satisfactory. Teachers plan their lessons well, and competently adapt their plans if circumstances in a particular lesson warrant this. Pupils are managed well and little time is wasted. Pupils participate enthusiastically.

21. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs, and their learning, is satisfactory throughout the school. Pupils make satisfactory progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. These targets, however, are not always sufficiently specific, and their effect on learning is not therefore always as effective as it could be. Teachers do not always ensure that learning resources and activities support learning sufficiently, for

example, the lack of sufficient specific resources in ICT, but where possible, the additional support of a learning assistant is used appropriately and compensates well. Pupils with statements of special educational need receive good support from classroom assistants and the special needs teaching assistant. The few pupils for whom English is an additional language receive satisfactory support from teachers.

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

22. The school provides a wide range of good learning opportunities for all pupils. Learning is well enhanced by additional activities such as team games and sports clubs, musical productions and educational visits that take place during the normal school day and after school.

23. The school has adapted well to new requirements introduced in the year 2000. A satisfactory balance of time between all subjects in the National Curriculum and religious education has been established, and statutory requirements are met. At the last inspection there were concerns over the quality of teachers' planning, which did not ensure that pupils systematically gained new knowledge and understanding as they progressed through the school. The successful introduction of the national strategies for teaching Literacy and Numeracy, and adoption of planning guidance from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and other bodies has rectified this weakness very well. This aspect of planning is now good.

24. The curriculum for children in reception is well planned and meets the needs of all. It provides well for all aspects of children's early learning, and particularly well for their creative development. The curriculum very effectively prepares children for their studies in Year 1.

25. In Years 1 to 4 teachers prepare good, clear plans for English and mathematics. Weekly planning sheets show well what pupils are to learn and how this is to be taught in each lesson. Planning in other subjects, where teachers rely on half-termly plans, usually drawn directly from the scheme of work for the subject, is satisfactory.

26. The National Literacy Strategy and National Numeracy Strategy have both been successfully introduced since the last inspection, and are contributing well to recent rising standards in English and mathematics. Pupils use some of their literacy and numeracy skills well in other subjects, for example joining in discussions and explaining their thinking, using specialist vocabulary in science, music and other lessons, and using measuring skills in lessons such as design and technology. However, teachers do not always exploit links between subjects effectively, especially to develop the quality and range of pupils' writing.

27. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum and extra-curricular activities and are provided for satisfactorily. Their individual education plans are drawn up by the class teacher in consultation with the co-ordinator for special educational needs and external agencies, where appropriate. Teachers' planning takes appropriate account of pupils with statements of special educational need. Pupils for whom English is an additional language also participate fully in all aspects of the curriculum. Having now addressed the needs of lower ability pupils, the school successfully promotes equality of opportunity. It ensures that all pupils are valued and fully involved in all activities.

28. The school uses the local community well to support its work. Visits from local Police, the Bishop of Bedford, road safety groups, poets, theatre groups, musicians and others all enrich lessons and add substantially to what the school provides. Local businesses have donated funds to help equip facilities for pupils with special educational needs.



29. The school has very good links with the onsite playgroup, other schools in the area, and especially with the Middle School to which most pupils transfer. The school shares its accommodation with the playgroup, which helps familiarise the children with the school environment. Groups of local headteachers meet regularly to share information and to develop joint projects, such as improving pupils' writing in Years 3 to 6. There are very good arrangements to help pupils transfer to Middle School, including a programme of visits by teachers and pupils. At the time of the inspection plans were well advanced for the Year 4 science lessons to take place in the Middle School's new science laboratory.

30. The school provides well for pupils' personal development, which lies at the heart of the school's aims. Great importance is attached to pupils' moral and social development. High quality relationships between all members of the school community, clear and fair systems for managing behaviour, and excellent adult role models all set the tone for teaching what is right and just. As a result, pupils learn by example what is socially acceptable and morally right or wrong. A new programme of personal, social and health education is being developed. This will help formalise the already satisfactory arrangements that the school has for sex education and drug awareness.

31. Pupils are encouraged to accept responsibility, for example through representing their class on the School Council, taking on classroom monitorial duties or acting as lunchtime activity leaders. Pupils take such responsibilities very seriously, and contribute well to the day-to-day running of the school. The school provides a very good range of well-supported additional activities such as sports and team games, opportunities to learn to play musical instruments and to take part in school concerts, and drama and chess clubs. Pupils' willing acceptance of responsibility and involvement in the wide range of extra activities available to them all make a valuable contribution to their personal and social development by building self-confidence and developing pupils' ability to work cooperatively with others.

32. Provision for developing pupils' spiritual awareness is satisfactory. School assemblies are good. A well-developed programme of assembly themes systematically explores a wide range of religious beliefs and moral and social issues. A very good assembly on the first anniversary of "September Eleven" explored pupils' feelings and emotions. The teacher discussed the subject very sensitively in ways that pupils could understand, linking it very well to family life and religious beliefs. Religious education and art and design further develop pupils' spiritual values, but opportunities to do so in other subjects are not used.

33. The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' cultural development and preparation for living in a multi-cultural society. These are addressed in many subjects such as music, art and design, history and geography. Pupils learn satisfactorily about life in other places around the World, for example comparing life in Leighton Buzzard with that on a Scottish Island. They play musical instruments and sing songs from around the world, and in history they study what life used to be like, for example during the Second World War. A new policy for Multi-Cultural Education and the school's recent application to take part in the "Global Citizenship" project demonstrate the school's positive commitment to this area of learning. Pupils benefit from visits, for example by parents and foreign students who talk about their religious beliefs and festivals such as Diwali.

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

34. The school has maintained its good practice since the previous inspection and remains effective in providing for pupils' welfare, health and safety. The school now has very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour.

35. This is a very caring school where high priority is given to the physical and emotional well being of pupils. Pupils feel valued and understand they can talk to their teacher, classroom support assistant, midday supervisors or headteacher if they have a problem or are upset for any reason. All teachers know their pupils very well and the strong caring and supportive school ethos is supported by teachers monitoring pupils' personal development effectively.

36. There is a common approach across the school from all staff, including non-teaching staff, to creating an atmosphere of warmth, security and well being where pupils feel safe. Child protection procedures are secure but training has not been updated for some time. However all adults in school have a clear understanding of the need to report any concerns about pupils' welfare to the responsible member of staff. There is very good provision of first aid within the school and any incidents, including minor ones, are fully recorded and parents notified when appropriate. There are two first aid stations and the members of staff responsible for the administration of medicines and first line contact in the case of accidents are well known to and respected by staff and pupils. At lunch times during the inspection many pupils new to the school were seen queuing for attention. Despite suffering no real injury they all received the serious and full attention of the first aider on duty who after administering only a few kind words ensured they went on their way only when they were happy to do so. Formal risk assessments and safety audits have been carried out and urgent matters have been attended to appropriately. The very competent site manager works hard to ensure the buildings and grounds are well maintained.

37. All staff work hard to ensure there is good behaviour and to promote positive attitudes to learning. In addition to simple school rules that are well understood by pupils, classes have their own rules which are discussed and developed with pupils. Teachers are consistent in their behaviour management with positive reinforcement used as the preferred means of improving behaviour. There are very good procedures in place to manage any incidents of inappropriate behaviour including incidents of bullying and racial harassment, which, although very rare, are taken very seriously by the school. The school's effectiveness in promoting and encouraging positive behaviour helps produce a happy and orderly community and contributes very significantly to pupils' progress. The school is currently reviewing its behaviour policy as a result of suggestions from the school council.

38. This is a school where the welfare and academic performance of every child or group of children is considered. An example is the action the school took after identifying that boys were significantly under performing compared to girls in literacy. Having identified the problem, the school put in place initiatives directly aimed at improving the performance of boys. These included revising reading schemes and resources to reflect boys' interests, employing male members of staff and looking at seating arrangements in class. Latest results indicate the school has been successful in addressing the under performance as boys' performance compared to that of girls now reflects national trends.

39. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory. The school follows up unexplained absences and the Educational Welfare Officer attends the school on a regular basis and is advised of any concerns teachers may have with regard to pupils' attendance.

40. Pupils with special educational needs generally receive satisfactory support from teachers and classroom assistants. Pastoral care for pupils with statements of special educational need is good and they are well-supported by external agencies, where appropriate. The school has recently updated its procedures and follows the recommendations in the revised Code of Practice. Close liaison between the school and outside agencies is maintained and the educational psychologist, language therapist and educational welfare officer all provide support to pupils. Satisfactory records are maintained. The special needs assistant monitors pupils with statements regularly during class lessons. The feedback from these observations influences teachers future planning and in this way, makes a significant impact on the progress made by pupils. The use made of individual education plans for those pupils with special educational needs who do not have statements, is satisfactory, but targets are not usually sufficiently specific and measurable and therefore have a limited impact on pupils' progress. These targets are, however, appropriately shared with parents. Current statements within the school provide additional staffing in the form of teaching and learning support staff. All staff know their pupils well and are always encouraging and supportive.

41. The school's procedures for the monitoring and assessment of pupils' academic development are good in English, mathematics, and the reception class and satisfactory overall. They are unsatisfactory in history and geography. Pupils are set personal targets that are reviewed and revised regularly. Parents are kept fully informed of their child's progress during termly meetings with the teachers.

42. Children are assessed on entry to the reception class and before they move into Year 1. This provides helpful information to guide teachers' planning and enables the school to measure the progress children have made. Throughout their time in the reception class the children's achievements are monitored and well documented.

43. There are effective procedures for assessing, testing, and tracking attainment in English and mathematics thereby facilitating the setting of specific targets in both subjects for each pupil. All pupils are entered for the statutory national standard assessment tests at the end of Year 2. Additionally, national standard assessment tests are completed in Years 3 and 4 and this data is analysed well to identify pupils who are underachieving or who may require additional help. Teachers' planning sheets record information on pupils who have not met the learning intentions or expected outcomes in lessons. Each pupil's progress in reading is documented in their individual reading record books. Information obtained through assessment procedures is used well in teachers' planning in English, mathematics, music, and religious education and in the reception class. It is satisfactorily used in all other subjects except for history and geography where its use is unsatisfactory. Targets on individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are monitored and reviewed regularly in order to measure pupil's progress.

44. The quality of the marking of pupils' work is inconsistent across the school. In some instances there are helpful comments with information on areas of possible improvement, in others work is marked with a single word or tick.

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

45. The effectiveness of the schools links with parents has shown considerable improvement since the last inspection. Parents speak very highly of the school and consider they have a very good working partnership. The close and effective partnership between parents and the school has a positive effect on pupils' learning and the standards they achieve.

46. The school appreciates the contribution parents make to their children's learning both in school and at home and works very hard to encourage this. Parents appreciate the "open door policy" and make good use of opportunities to speak informally to the headteacher and class teachers, particularly at the end of the school day. The school takes account of the needs of the whole family of any pupils in their care. There is very good provision for family support, before, during and after school. This includes clubs, holiday clubs and the support given to families of pupils with special educational needs through coffee afternoons where problems can be shared. The school demonstrates its awareness of social and family issues in fully supporting a local project that works with families who may be experiencing temporary difficulties.

47. Parents receive satisfactory information about school news and events, and about their children's progress. They are made aware of day-to-day events affecting their children by way of regular class newsletters. As a result of a parent consultation exercise the school ensures newsletters are now also displayed on classroom windows. A very informative whole school newsletter is produced each term. The governors' annual report to parents and the prospectus are of an exceptionally high standard and provide much invaluable information for parents concerning the running of the school. There is also a prospectus designed specifically for parents of reception year children that is of equally good quality. Pupils' annual reports are satisfactory but do not always include sufficient detail regarding pupils' progress.

48. The school strives hard to ensure parents are able to work with them in partnership in supporting their children's learning. Parents of children new to the school are able to attend an induction meeting and receive an information pack including a booklet on shared reading. At the suggestion of parents the school now sends out curriculum information at the start of each term that gives them detailed information of curriculum topics that their children will be covering. This is another example of the school consulting parents and implementing good ideas. The school also runs several information evenings on subjects such as early years reading, literacy, numeracy and National Curriculum tests. In addition, parents also have the opportunity to attend courses such as computing for beginners. Parents and their children are involved in target setting at the reviews held in the Autumn and Spring terms.

49. Parental involvement in school is well developed. There are a number of parents who regularly help in lessons and school clubs. The school benefits greatly from the activities of the very active parent teacher association that has raised considerable funds to purchase extra resources for the school including a new stage, lunchtime play equipment, portable CD players for classrooms and new physical education equipment.

50. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are encouraged to be involved in every stage of their child's school life. They are well informed about their progress. They are invited to reviews of individual education plans and are consulted on the setting of future targets. Records of contacts with parents are well maintained. Communications with the parents of pupils for whom English is an additional language are as effective as that with all other parents.

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

51. As mentioned earlier in the report, the school went through a period of instability following the last inspection. Morale was low, many teachers left and standards fell. In January 2002 the then deputy headteacher was appointed to the headship, and a successful process of renewal began. The work is by no means complete, but it is particularly encouraging that standards have once again risen, and that the headteacher and her senior management team have a clear understanding of how to raise standards further. The plans already implemented, and current plans, place a much firmer emphasis on identifying

individual pupils difficulties and doing all that is necessary to overcome them. Senior managers and subject co-ordinators are now much better trained and equipped to play a significant role in this process, and to address whole school issues such as further improving the already good quality of teaching. Improved monitoring of teachers planning and sampling of pupils work by subject co-ordinators, and the headteacher's monitoring of the quality of teaching of literacy and numeracy have resulted in improvement in the quality of teaching and learning and in standards. Very effective induction of new staff and very good use of performance management and associated staff development opportunities are further improving the effectiveness of teachers. The school has developed a range of very strong partnerships with other institutions such as universities, which are managed by senior staff and are further improving standards. Overall, the very effective headteacher is well supported by strong senior managers and subject coordinators. Professional leadership and management are now good.

52. The governing body plays a significant role in the school. Their good knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, coupled with their enthusiasm and hard work are ensuring that they play a meaningful role in shaping the direction of the school.

53. Leadership and management are now characterised by a wide range of strengths and few weaknesses. Of particular merit is the detailed analysis the school constantly undertakes to measure its own effectiveness. This in turn leads to prompt and effective action in areas requiring attention and careful use of financial resources to meet priorities. This is very commendable, and has been largely responsible for the rapid improvement in standards that has been achieved. The one area of weakness is in the monitoring of teaching and learning in geography and history. The detailed attention to analysis and planning, and the significant results already achieved, lead to the judgement that the school's capacity to succeed is very good.

54. The management of special educational needs is satisfactory. The co-ordinator for special needs has a satisfactory knowledge of her role. The policy has been recently updated and the co-ordinator has received appropriate training. However the school has a significant number of pupils who have special educational needs and the examples of activities that are very well matched to their needs is limited. Resources are generally satisfactory although no use was seen being made of specific ICT software for pupils with special educational needs.

55. Following a period of rapid staff turnover, the school now has an appropriate number of teachers and teaching assistants to teach the curriculum. Staff have an appropriate mix of qualifications and experience.

56. The school site and buildings are attractive, welcoming and maintained to a very high standard by the school site manager and his staff. Through maintaining a warm and inviting environment, they contribute well to the positive learning ethos throughout the school. The accommodation supports teaching and learning satisfactorily overall, and there are some significant strengths in provision. It supports learning by children in Reception classes well, for example in the provision of a secure outdoor play area. It is also good for physical education, where facilities such as a swimming pool, and access to extensive playing fields enable the school to provide a wide range of physical activities. A well-equipped computer suite is large enough for whole classes to use and supports learning in ICT well. The large hall is suitable for physical activities such as dance and gymnastics, and also for school musical and dramatic productions. The school is aware that the playground surface is in urgent need of renewal before it becomes a potential safety hazard. Overall, the accommodation is good.

57. The quality and range of learning resources are satisfactory overall. Deficiencies in geography and design and technology reported in the last inspection have been satisfactorily remedied. There are sufficient learning resources for all subjects, and they are good in art and design, physical education, and to support learning by children in Reception. Although also good in English, more books are needed in the library to enable pupils to borrow books more often. ICT resources are very good overall, although the range of software to support geography is inadequate and that for special educational needs only recently received and not yet in use. Overall, teachers make insufficient use of classroom computers. Learning resources are well organised and easily accessible in classrooms around the school.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

58. To continue to build on the good quality of education provided by the school, the headteacher, senior management and governing body should:

- (1) Further improve standards in English, mathematics and science, especially for lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, by continuing the program of improving the more accurate assessment of their needs and providing to meet them. (See paragraphs 11,13,17,54,83,86,87,99,113,117 and 122)
- (2) Improve the use of ICT in the teaching and learning of all subjects and for pupils with special educational needs. (See paragraphs 18,54,80,93,100,113 and 118)

The following minor issues should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- Assessment procedures, use of assessment data and monitoring in history and geography are unsatisfactory. There are too few opportunities in these subjects and religious education for pupils to write long pieces about the topics they study. (See paragraphs 26,81,113,117 and 118)
- The presentation of pupils' work is inconsistent in different subjects. (See paragraphs 82,99 and 117)
- Teachers' marking does not usually give pupils guidance as to how to improve their work. (See paragraphs 44,83,92,99 and 117)
- Annual pupil reports require more detailed information on pupils' progress. (See paragraph 47)
- There are insufficient software resources in geography and an insufficient range of available recorded music from other countries and cultures. (See paragraphs 57 and 129)
- The surface of the playground is in a poor state of repair. (See paragraph 56)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	54
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	42

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	13	20	18	1	0	0
Percentage	4	24	37	33	2	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	277
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	39

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	8
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	46

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	30
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	15

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.2

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2



National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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*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
	2001	44	24	68

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	30	36	39
	Girls	21	23	23
	Total	51	59	62
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	75 (82)	87 (84)	91 (92)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	34	38	37
	Girls	21	22	23
	Total	55	60	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	81 (84)	88 (84)	88 (98)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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	204	0	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	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 – Y4**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Average class size	27.7

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y4**

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	219

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001/2002
	£
Total income	621 290
Total expenditure	592 617
Expenditure per pupil	2 187
Balance brought forward from previous year	38 636
Balance carried forward to next year	67 309

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	277
Number of questionnaires returned	67

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64	35	0	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	71	28	0	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	58	41	1	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	46	39	13	1	1
The teaching is good.	71	28	1	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	54	39	6	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	72	24	3	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	24	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	52	40	6	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	63	34	3	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	32	1	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	65	29	1	4	1

## **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**

59. The provision for children in the reception class is a strength of the school. The quality of teaching is good overall, and is particularly effective in encouraging children's creative development. This is because teachers and assistants have a good understanding of the learning needs of young children and have high expectations of their achievement and behaviour. The reception class is well organised and managed, providing the space and resources for all children to gain experience of class, group and individual work during the school day. The curriculum is well planned with a good range of stimulating and interesting experiences well matched to the children's needs and abilities, preparing them well for when they enter Year 1. The co-ordinator provides very effective leadership and management of the early year's department. Children's standards when they join the reception class are lower than at the time of the last inspection, but higher when they complete the year. This is very good improvement and is a consequence of good teaching and planning.

60. When children start in the reception class they have below average levels of attainment for their age. During their time in the reception class progress for all children including those with special educational needs and higher attaining children is good. By the time they move into Year 1, children have achieved well and reach average standards in all areas of learning with some reaching above average standards. Assessment procedures are good with children's progress checked regularly through observation. Testing takes place when children enter the reception class and when they move into Year 1, giving teachers a clear indication of how well the children have achieved, and providing valuable information to Year 1 teachers to help them plan to continue to meet children's individual needs.

61. Children under statutory school age who attend the school part-time were not observed during the inspection, as it was too early in the term for arrangements to be completed for their admission. However, the arrangements made for them to start were examined and these are good. Teachers and assistants spend time liaising closely with parents and preparing children to adapt to their new environment and new routines. For example, a very well attended 'drop-in' day is organised, when parents and children visit the school and spend time in the classroom and outdoor play area. Liaison between home and school is good. Parents are welcomed into school to help the children settle each day.

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

62. Children's personal, social, and emotional development underpins all aspects of school life. Teachers and assistants have very good relationships with the children. This helps to develop their self-confidence and engenders a willingness to undertake new tasks and activities. The teachers are very well organised and use time effectively, creating a learning atmosphere that promotes good behaviour, independence, and a positive attitude to learning. The children are enthusiastic, enjoy learning, and concentrate well. They learn to share, take turns, and respect the opinions of adults and each other. The quality of teaching for children's personal, social and emotional development is good.

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

63. In language and literacy children speak clearly and confidently. They listen attentively and respond well to instructions and directions. They describe their activities well and are eager to talk and share their ideas with the teacher and each other. For example, after

listening to the teacher read the story 'Wishy Washy Day' the children retold part of the story successfully, using a range of expressive language. By the time they complete their time in reception, most children have well developed early reading skills. They know most letter names and sounds and they read independently many of the 100 most used words. Children enjoy books, know that print conveys meaning, and understand and discuss stories read to them. They understand simple spelling patterns and some grammatical conventions. Examples of their writing show that they are beginning to form letters correctly, write their names, and copy simple sentences. Labels, text, and questions displayed around the classroom, together with a variety of books and equipment for the children to explore and handle, provide a stimulating environment in which they learn well. They are proud of their work and are eager to try new ideas and skills. The children make good, and often very good, progress in developing language and literacy skills because of good teaching and the successful involvement of the school in a university led Early Reading Research Project that aims to improve the reading and spelling of young children.

### **Mathematical development**

64. Opportunities for children to develop mathematical skills and awareness are well planned. Children identify numbers to ten and above and can count to twenty with a little help. In number games they add on and demonstrate counting forwards and backwards. One higher attaining child knows that one more than 39 is 40. Action rhymes and songs are used to reinforce counting skills. Children make simple estimations by guessing the number of toy animals in a group and then checking their results by counting carefully. They understand that however objects are arranged, whether in a pile, a straight line, or any other pattern, it does not alter the number of objects. They are familiar with simple mathematical terms such as more, less, smaller, greater, full, half-full, add and take away. The use of ICT is well planned and utilises a variety of simple number games to support children's mathematical development. The quality of teaching of mathematics is good.

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

65. Children gain good knowledge and understanding of the world from the topics and activities they learn about in school. Aided by good teaching, an interesting range of resources in the classroom, and with a teddy bear as a focus, they are developing an awareness of places, including where they live and where they go to school, and they have some knowledge of the surrounding area. They learn about materials through playing with sand and water and by using a variety of construction toys. The children take part in simple experiments. For example, when learning about the senses, they track sounds whilst wearing a blindfold and from a tape recording of different noises they identify what had made each sound. Children are developing good skills in using the computer. They confidently use a variety of programmes to support different areas of their learning.

### **Physical development**

66. As a consequence of good teaching, the development of children's physical skills is good. They change their clothes quickly for a physical education lesson needing little help in doing so. Very clear instructions from the teacher, and a good range of activities, enable the children to achieve well. They move confidently and are encouraged to think about the parts of the body involved in their movements. They curl up, stretch, and twist different parts of their body. They move sensibly around the hall showing an awareness of space. Good skills are evident in the children's use of scissors, pencils, and paintbrushes. There are good examples displayed in the classroom of pictures painted by the children in the style of various artists. The outdoor play area is adequately resourced and is used well to support physical and creative activities.

## **Creative development**

67. The creative development of reception children is promoted very well through art and design, music, and poetry. They join in enthusiastically with songs and rhymes, and beat time with a range of percussion instruments that they have made themselves. Children take part in school productions, acting, singing, and dancing to a high standard. They learn to draw, paint and make models and experiment in using different techniques and media such as pastel and paint. Their work is of a good standard and is well displayed in the classroom, adding to their confidence and enjoyment of school. Teaching to promote children's creative development is very good.

## **ENGLISH**

68. In the 2001 national tests, pupils' standards in writing were below the national average and below the average for similar schools and in reading they were well below both averages. The proportion of pupils reaching standards in reading and writing above those expected for pupils aged seven were also below the national average. For the four years prior to 2001 the results had been average. The reasons for the decline in standards in 2001 are documented elsewhere in this report. Inspection evidence and the results of the 2002 tests indicate that standards in reading and writing have improved and are now average. In particular, the number of pupils achieving above the national average has improved significantly. This improvement is due to the comprehensive measures implemented in the school to support and extend reading and writing skills, and to the additional help given to pupils following the detailed scrutiny and analysis of their progress and achievements. The school now has a range of strategies that are proving successful in raising standards in English. At the end of the last school year, pupils in Year 4, prior to moving to the next school, showed a good improvement in reading and spelling, and satisfactory improvement in writing. The work available for scrutiny for the current Year 4 pupils, and the lessons observed, indicate that the standards pupils achieve are average for their age, and given their current rate of progress they are likely to be average at the end of the school year when they transfer to their next school. Improvement in English since the last inspection is satisfactory.

69. Overall, pupils achieve satisfactorily and work seen during the inspection confirms this. As explained elsewhere in this report, until the recent introduction of improved provision for lower attaining pupils and some pupils with special educational needs, their achievement was not as good as it is now. All pupils now achieve equally well, including lower attaining pupils, those with special educational needs, higher attaining pupils and those for whom English is an additional language.

70. Standards in speaking and listening are good. Most pupils are articulate and have a vocabulary at least at the level expected for their age. Pupils listen attentively in a variety of situations, for example, in assembly, in lessons, and when being spoken to individually. They listen to the views of others and confidently ask questions to clarify instructions, to receive help, or to extend their thinking. Teachers provide all pupils with planned opportunities to speak in lessons. Year 1 pupils, for example, were asked to retell what had occurred so far in a story they were reading together. This resulted in an animated discussion with most pupils eager to participate. By Year 2, pupils are confident in responding to questions, and even when unsure, they are willing to attempt an answer. Time is allocated at the end of each lesson for pupils to discuss and evaluate work and achievements; this is very good use of the last few minutes of the lessons and contributes significantly to pupils understanding of their own achievements and to their learning. Whilst the majority speak clearly and confidently, there are a few pupils who require constant prompts from the teacher in order to describe aspects of their work. In Year 4, pupils select and use appropriate vocabulary for informal and



formal situations and use a range of descriptive language imaginatively, as for instance, when they were identifying and describing the main characters in a story. Pupils express their opinions clearly and enjoy talking to different audiences.

80. Standards in reading are satisfactory and pupils make good progress during their time in the school because of increased opportunities for developing reading skills. A number of new initiatives have been introduced following the dip in standards in 2001, and these have been successful in improving pupils' skills. For example, the Early Reading Research Project is making a significant improvement to the skills of both the pupils in Year 1 and the children in the reception class. The development of reading has a high priority in the school. Pupils are tested regularly and the data used identifies weak readers and those not making the expected progress. The provision of additional support, and careful monitoring, contributes effectively to the improvement of these pupils' reading skills. Most pupils enjoy looking at books and listening to stories and they are becoming confident readers. By Year 2, they are aware of the differences between fiction and non-fiction texts. They point out the name of the author, illustrator and publisher on the cover of the book they are reading, and describe the function of each of them. Pupils in Year 2 greatly enjoyed the story entitled 'Kangaroos'. They read aloud with good expression and identified in the text some of the punctuation that helped them to do this. By Year 4, the majority of pupils are fluent, confident readers. They read a variety of texts with interest and enthusiasm and demonstrate a good level of comprehension. Pupils are competent in using dictionaries and reference books to locate and retrieve information, but ICT is insufficiently used for this purpose. They understand how to locate particular types of books in the school library, and as each book is colour coded to signify its reading level, they are able to select books that match their reading ability. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in developing their reading skills and they make good progress. Parents are kept informed of developments in reading in the school and many are involved in the home to school reading scheme.

81. Teachers are well trained and confident in the teaching of literacy. Literary skills are developed and consolidated in other subjects such as mathematics, design and technology and art and design, but are not promoted consistently in all subjects. There are some missed opportunities for the development of a range of literacy skills, for example, the development of extended writing in history and geography.

82. Following the analysis of pupils' attainment and progress, the school has identified the further improvement of writing skills as an area for development and this has raised the standards of pupils' written work. Standards in writing are satisfactory. Throughout the school pupils learn to write for a range of purposes and readers. Examples of work completed by Year 2 pupils show that they have a clear understanding of how to write an informal letter. The completed letters were well presented, correctly written and their content appropriate. By Year 4, pupils have an awareness of the different types of letter writing and produce good examples of both formal and informal letters. In the majority of lessons pupils are set a written task to match their ability. Although these are appropriate for the majority of pupils and are completed well, for lower attaining pupils and for those with special educational needs the tasks are still sometimes too difficult and do not always support the on-going development of their writing skills. By the end of Year 2 pupils are beginning to develop their knowledge of grammar and punctuation and higher attaining pupils write with fluency and confidence. Pupils in Year 4 write extended pieces of work that are well planned and organised. They re-draft their text to produce a good piece of writing. Examples of extended writing on display in the library are imaginative, neatly written, and well presented. Pupils' handwriting develops satisfactorily during their time at school. Younger pupils regularly practise forming letters correctly using a joined script. By Year 4, pupils write neatly and generally maintain satisfactory standards of handwriting. ICT is not used consistently in assisting pupils in the presentation of their work although there are some examples on display in the school that

have been produced on a computer. Spelling is taught systematically throughout all year groups. Standards are satisfactory with pupils using dictionaries to help with difficult or unfamiliar words.

83. Teaching and learning are good overall. In half the lessons seen, teaching was very good; it was satisfactory in the remainder with the exception of one unsatisfactory lesson. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of how to teach English and the high level of support and training they have received has further enhanced this. In most lessons teachers use questions effectively to check what pupils have learned, and to challenge their thinking and help them develop their ideas. A good example of this was in a Year 3 lesson where pupils were reading part of a story. Following skilled questioning and guidance from the teacher they were able to recount the main points of the story and to explain why an introduction to the extract was needed. Occasionally tasks and activities still do not accurately match the abilities of the lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, resulting in little independent learning. Although all work is marked there is usually little guidance as to how pupils can develop and improve their work. Teachers praise pupils for good work and effort, helping to keep them motivated and confident in what they are doing. Interaction and relationships with pupils are very good. Teachers generally have high expectations of pupils and most understand what is expected of them. They settle to work quickly; concentrate on the task in hand, and as a result there is little inappropriate behaviour. Teaching assistants provide effective support for individuals and groups of pupils, encouraging them to take a full part in activities and helping them to build their confidence. All pupils have individual targets that provide a focus for their learning. In the one unsatisfactory lesson observed, there was insufficient challenge for pupils, resulting in them becoming bored and losing their concentration.

84. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The subject is very well led by a co-ordinator who has a high level of understanding and enthusiasm. A detailed action plan focuses on raising standards, and is based on a clear understanding of the areas where improvement is needed. The co-ordinator does not monitor teaching systematically, but this is undertaken by the headteacher. The co-ordinator does monitor teachers' planning and samples pupils' work. Assessment procedures are clear and comprehensive, and give details on pupils' attainment and progress. Analysis of this information ensures that additional help and support is provided for pupils or groups of pupils who are underachieving, and identifies areas of the English curriculum that may need further development. The resources for the subject are good and are well managed and accessible.

85. The school recognises that the library would benefit from additional books so that pupils may borrow them more frequently. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development, for example, by their reading about the lives of children of other cultures and in visits from theatre, poetry and music groups.

## **MATHEMATICS**

86. Pupils' standards in numeracy and all areas of mathematics are in line with national averages at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. There are no marked differences in the performance of boys and girls. Results in the national tests for seven-year-olds improved well from the low point in 2001 to reach average levels in 2002. One third of pupils reached above average standards, and these pupils achieved well. In the Year 4 tests, most pupils reached expected levels of attainment, and a large minority attained higher levels. These pupils also achieved well. However, in both Year 2 and Year 4 some lower attaining pupils could do better. At present they do not reach the level expected for pupils aged 7 or 9. This is because teachers do not always match work and their teaching methods well enough to meet their

learning needs. Overall, the quality of teaching and the amount of progress made by pupils has improved satisfactorily since the last inspection and they achieve satisfactorily.

87. By the age of seven, pupils have a sound understanding of number and place value. Most pupils add and subtract numbers to 100, although lower attaining pupils make many errors when calculating with numbers of all sizes. Higher attaining pupils have a good knowledge of multiplication tables. Pupils measure and weigh familiar objects around them, and they know the names of common two and three-dimensional shapes. With the school year barely started, many current Year 2 pupils already explain well how to separate numbers into tens and units. Some know that the tens digit (or the hundreds digit) can be used to work out which is the larger of two numbers. By the age of nine, many pupils have sound mental and written calculating skills. They use decimals confidently in money and measuring activities and solve problems expressed in words well. However, the skills of lower attaining pupils are generally much less secure. Inspection of Year 3 and Year 4 work from the previous school year shows that demands on these pupils are not always high enough in number work, shape and measuring. For instance, there is too much repetition of work with small numbers, and pupils did little practical measuring work, which is a significant factor in their under-achievement.

88. The quality of teaching and learning seen during the inspection was good overall, and ranged from excellent to satisfactory. Whole class teaching is good. Teachers engage pupils well in lively discussions and mental mathematics at the start of most lessons. A good example was seen where pupils were challenged to make the number 67 in lots of different ways. "Why?" and "how?" questions made pupils think, and the discussion gave them good opportunities to use their speaking and listening skills in their explanations, as well as to demonstrate their mathematical understanding.

89. Relationships between teachers, classroom assistants and pupils are very good, with the result that nearly all pupils behave well. However, in a small number of lessons behaviour and attitudes are less good because some pupils are unable to maintain concentration without direct supervision. Classroom assistants support pupils with special educational needs effectively, particularly when engaged in small group work. As a result, pupils with special educational needs learn well although most need considerable help in order to complete work successfully.

90. Pupils' good attitudes and behaviour allow teachers to focus on teaching without undue distractions, and most lessons proceed briskly. Lessons are a satisfactory mix of whole class teaching and group or individual work. However, work sometimes lacks variety and does not sufficiently inspire and challenge pupils, especially those working at the lower levels of attainment. Teaching that is satisfactory rather than good is due mainly to this factor, although in one lesson slow teaching and pupil working pace also led to loss of interest and some time wasting.

91. The National Numeracy Strategy is firmly established and teachers plan well from it. Teachers set out clearly what pupils are to learn in each lesson, and usually share this with the class at the start. However, they do not always return to this at the end of the lesson to assess how well pupils have understood the work they have done, relying instead on collecting work in for later marking.

92. There are good systems to assess pupils' standards and progress in mathematics over the long term. Test results are rigorously analysed to identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses, and to set individual targets for improvement. However, the quality of day-to-day marking is satisfactory at best and is inconsistent across the school. Marking often consists

of little more than a tick with an effort-related comment. There are few constructive comments to show pupils how to improve their work.

93. The coordinator leads development in the subject very well. Teachers evaluate their lessons and provide him with good written feedback. When combined with other information such as test data analysis, he is then able to identify areas for improvement, which are included in the mathematics action plan. Because monitoring in this way is effective, the action plan is focused well on improving standards and the quality of teaching and learning. The school has sufficient learning resources for mathematics, but although some links exist with ICT, this is rightly included in the action plan as an area for development.

94. The school has taken effective action to halt the recent slide in standards. They are now rising and have already reached previous levels. Teachers' familiarity with the National Numeracy Strategy continues to improve, and the mathematics action plan is good. The school is well placed to continue development in the subject.

## **SCIENCE**

95. Teacher assessments show that standards by the age of seven were below the national average last year, and close to the national average for similar schools. In comparison with previous years this represents a drop in standards as explained earlier in the report. Teacher assessments for the current year indicate that by the ages of both seven and nine pupils attain standards that are in line with national expectations and are now similar to those found during the previous inspection. Teacher assessment at the end of Year 2 for 2002 showed an improvement in the number of pupils reaching standards above those expected for their age. However, there are a significant number of pupils whose attainment remains below the national average. Inspection evidence demonstrates that attainment at the end of Year 2 is in line with expectations and that pupils throughout the school achieve satisfactorily.

96. Pupils undertake a satisfactory programme of learning, covering all the expected areas, and generally develop a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the subject. Those in Year 1, have a satisfactory understanding of the human body and name the different parts. Pupils know that humans have five senses and where the sense organs are located. They know that different materials have different properties and test them to establish which are waterproof when making teddy a raincoat. Through activities, such as categorizing different types of movement, for example 'rolling a ball' and 'kicking a ball', pupils have gained satisfactory understanding of forces. In Year 1, pupils make a sound start in learning about plants and animals in the environment by investigating plant growth, and identifying animals and their young. They have gained a basic understanding of classification through simple 'sorting' activities using minibeasts such as snails and spiders.

97. In Year 2, pupils know various ways in which to ensure a healthy lifestyle, for example by eating a balanced diet and by undertaking regular exercise. They appropriately extend their ideas about plants and animals, learning that different types of plants and animals are found in different habitats. They keep a diary whilst observing the development of a caterpillar into a butterfly. Whilst working with bulbs, batteries, wires and connectors they have understood that an electric circuit must be complete in order to light up a bulb. They use the correct terminology to describe parts of a circuit and are know about the dangers associated with electricity.

98. Pupils are currently achieving standards in line with those expected for their ages in Years 3 and 4. Opportunities to ask questions, make predictions or plan their investigations have developed well since the previous inspection. Pupils' attainment in science investigation

is now satisfactory. For example, pupils in Year 4 have a good understanding of fair testing and a how changing a factor, for example when growing broad beans from seed, can change the outcome. They measure height, capacity and weight using appropriate units of measurement, and explain what they did articulately, using appropriate scientific language. Pupils in Year 3 have investigated whether different types of soil contain the same amounts of water, their observations of plant growth are more detailed and they are beginning to design their own experiments. They have built on their knowledge of materials by considering the differences between natural and man-made materials and have examined forces such as magnetism. Whilst studying the 'Earth, moon and beyond', they extended their knowledge of light using words such as 'opaque' and 'transparent'. In Year 4 pupils have a more detailed knowledge of the human body and recognise that animals have skeletons and that muscles are used for movement. Higher attaining pupils have produced good written accounts about heart rate. They know that some solids behave like liquids and investigate how to separate solids from liquids.

99. The teaching of science is satisfactory overall. Lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to good. All lessons were characterised by clear learning objectives so that pupils were aware of what they had to achieve. Teachers manage lessons well to promote a calm and purposeful learning environment where pupils work hard and concentrate well. For example, good management of behaviour and good relationships in a Year 4 lesson on materials resulted in all children listening carefully and being keen and confident enough to answer questions. Teachers make good use of whole class sessions to teach concepts. For example, in a Year 1 lesson on the senses, a good summary at the end of the lesson was used to reinforce what had been learnt during the lesson. However, as in English and mathematics, not all tasks accurately meet the requirements of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, and they do not achieve as well as other pupils. Recent changes described elsewhere in this report are solving this problem. Although pupils' work is regularly marked it is not always helpful in enabling pupils to know how to improve their work. Pupils' presentation of their work is sometimes haphazard and careless. Assessment procedures have recently been revised and are now satisfactory. As a result, assessment information is beginning to be used effectively to guide planning or to set targets for improvement. Analysis of the assessments carried out by teachers when pupils are age seven and nine are also being used more rigorously to identify specific strengths and weaknesses. In all lessons, good relationships, good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning are key factors in promoting the sound and sometimes, good learning that takes place.

100. The leadership and management of science are good. The overall planning for science has been improved since the previous inspection and now shows how pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are to be developed year by year. Planning and pupils' work is monitored and some observations of teaching in Year 4 have been conducted. This is beginning to have an effect on the quality of teaching and learning. Resources have been reorganised well to support teaching and learning. Some use is made of ICT although this area is underdeveloped.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

101. Pupils achieve well in art and design, and the standards they reach are above those expected for their age. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Throughout the school all pupils including those who have special educational needs make good progress. They develop their creativity and imagination and participate in a range of practical experiences. As they move through the school, they build successfully upon the good experiences they have had in reception and acquire good skills in managing a wide range of media including clay, paints, pastels, crayons and a good variety of collage materials of

contrasting textures. They use simple print-making techniques to make printed patterns. There are good examples of pupils in Year 1 making careful drawings from their observations of a friend. In Year 2 they explore ideas about themselves in self-portraits and use a computer program effectively to experiment with line and colour.

102. By Year 4, pupils' observation and recording skills develop well. For example, pupils in Year 3 make clear observational drawings of flowers applying colour and learn the importance of line, and tone. They study the work of famous artists and produce drawings in the styles such as that of Andy Warhol. Pupils in Year 4 demonstrate improved control of materials and techniques, for example, when drawing detailed portraits. They look at and comment on the work of established artists, such as Hockney and Picasso. This aspect of the curriculum has improved since the previous inspection. There are limited opportunities for pupils to evaluate their work and comment on what is done well and where improvements could be made.

103. Discussions with the subject manager, evidence from teachers' planning, displays, portfolios, photographs and sketchbooks indicate that there is there is a sound curriculum in place and it has some good features. For example, since the last inspection, there is greater evidence of pupils attaining well in three-dimensional work and there are many attractive displays of their work on display around the school.

104. The quality of teaching and learning in art and design is good overall. In one lesson on observational drawing, the teacher's excellent subject knowledge, enthusiasm and management of pupils ensured that they were highly motivated and made excellent progress. Good links are established with other subjects and art and design is used effectively to enhance other areas of learning. For example, in Year 4 the music of Debussy and Grieg was observed being used as a stimulus for pupils to produce imaginative pictures. Art is making a good contribution to the development of pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

105. The subject coordinator offers very good guidance to staff and uses her expertise well to improve their subject knowledge. Through the monitoring of pupils' sketch books and displays of pupils' work, she has identified areas for improvement such as observational drawing. The scheme of work for art and design is very detailed and provides well for the development of pupils' skills. Resources are good and appropriately support teaching and learning.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

106. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school and reach average standards in design and technology at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. Standards are similar to those reported at the time of the last inspection.

107. By the end of Year 2, pupils design and make products such as puppets, straw models of playground equipment, moving vehicles and Joseph's multi-coloured coat. They draw pictures to show what they intend to make, and experiment with ways to join materials and how to make structures rigid. Completed products are satisfactorily finished and decorated, and pupils make simple evaluations of their work, for instance saying what they like about it, and how they could improve it.

108. By the end of Year 4, pupils develop satisfactory design skills. A group of pupils explained that the design process is more than just drawing pictures, and includes notes to show, for example, how they intend to join and assemble different parts of their product. They know that evaluation of their work is important. Written comments such as "the ham was horrible because I didn't like the mustard" are typical evaluations of sandwich making. A good

example of quilting was on display in the school hall. This was finished to a high standard, and showed that pupils had taken great care in its production. In the library, "The Time Machine Adventure" book was on display. Produced as a collective effort by a Year 4 class, this is a well-made book, where pupils had worked in small groups to prepare "moving pages", scenes with moving parts controlled by sliders, levers and pivots. Although the range of artefacts available for inspection was limited, satisfactory assessment records show that pupils achieve expected standards in all aspects of the subject.

109. Insufficient evidence was available for a judgement to be made on the quality of teaching and learning in design and technology. In the single lesson seen, teaching and learning were satisfactory. Pupils began to develop their ideas for "Joseph's coat" by investigating repeating patterns, first on paper in the classroom, and then on computers. Pupils were interested in the work and behaved well. The lesson was well planned and prepared. However, too much was attempted for the time available, and because pupils had limited computer skills they were unable to complete both parts of the task within the time.

110. The curriculum for design and technology follows national guidelines, and planning is satisfactory. The coordinator monitors planning and occasionally observes lessons. These activities help identify areas for development in the subject, for example teachers' understanding of simple pneumatics and how to teach it effectively. The school has sufficient equipment for design and technology teaching. Deficiencies reported in the last inspection have been satisfactorily remedied.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

111. As at the time of the last inspection, pupils' progress and standards are satisfactory throughout the school. There have been some improvements in provision for the subject. A policy and a new scheme of work that meet the requirements of the National Curriculum are now in place. However, the development of other aspects of the subject has been slow as the school's priority has been the improvement of literacy and numeracy. Pupils achieve satisfactorily and attainment is at the expected level for their age and is in line with national expectations.

112. Pupils in Year 1 learn about different areas of this country and other parts of the world by following the imaginary travels of a toy bear. They study pictures and maps, observing the different landscapes and cultures of the places the bear has visited. They understand that in other countries the climate may be different and they know that on a Greek island, where the bear went for the holidays, it is very hot in summer during the day. Pupils discuss ways in which the bear might travel to the island. They learn that an island is surrounded by water, and that it is not possible to drive there. Building on what they have learned previously pupils in Year 2 further develop their skills and knowledge. They use geographical vocabulary appropriately in comparing the physical features of different terrains and they can identify the specific factors that effect life on a small island. For example, they investigate and compare methods of transport in their local area to that on the island. In all years, pupils develop their knowledge and skills by using atlases, maps and reference materials. In Year 4 they become increasingly proficient at gathering information, analysing data, and reaching and recording their conclusions. In a lesson on pollution, pupils were observed identifying areas around the school where there was excess litter, noise, and unpleasant smells, and charting the results. They discussed the issues well and suggested several ways by which the problems might be solved. Scrutiny of pupils' completed work shows that they gain a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the different conditions and cultures in a number of countries throughout the world.

113. Based on the evidence of past work and lessons observed, teaching and learning are judged to be satisfactory overall. Teachers plan appropriately and lesson intentions are clearly stated and shared with pupils. Although specialist vocabulary is taught and used in lessons there are insufficient occasions when literacy and numeracy skills are reinforced. There are missed opportunities for pupils to practise their individual writing skills by writing long pieces on the topics they are learning. Skilful use of questioning by teachers encourages pupils to think carefully and expand their own ideas. Suitable pace and a variety of tasks and activities help to maintain pupils' interest and motivation. Pupils listen carefully to instructions, work well together, and use resources correctly. Teachers adapt tasks for the ability range in the class so that pupils can work independently. However work for lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs is sometimes too difficult, is not always appropriate, and often results in a loss of concentration. Provision is made in teachers' planning for the use of the school grounds for local study and for developing fieldwork skills. Assessment and recording of pupils' progress is unsatisfactory as it is insufficiently detailed and does not provide clear information of what pupils understand, know, and achieve. The use of ICT is underused in developing the pupils' research skills and extending their knowledge.

114. Management of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has identified some areas for improvement but these have yet to be effectively dealt with. Resources are satisfactory with sufficient good quality books and materials to support teaching. At present the co-ordinator monitors planning and samples pupils' work but does not have the opportunity to monitor teaching, and is therefore unable to identify and spread good practice and verify standards.

## **HISTORY**

115. In Year 2 and 4, pupils' standards are in line with national expectations. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils achieve satisfactorily throughout the school.

116. In their first two years, pupils make satisfactory progress in developing a basic sense of chronology and of how life was different in former times. In Year 1, they are developing an understanding of then and now by learning about familiar things such as old and new toys and houses. Work in Year 2 further extends pupils' sense of chronology through studying the lives of famous people such as Florence Nightingale. They also develop an understanding of the historical significance of Remembrance Sunday and begin to appreciate how different life was in their work on the Great Fire of London. Good links to literacy are made when pupils create a diary following the example of Samuel Pepys. Pupils enjoy learning about different people and events, and have a sound recall of key facts.

117. By the age of nine pupils knowledge of historical figures and events is extended when they study Henry VIII and the Tudors. However, recording is largely limited to pupils copying a series of facts about Henry's wives and a comparison of the rich and poor during Tudor times. Pupils build on their knowledge of invaders during their studies of the Roman invasion of Britain and the widespread settlement in various parts of Britain. This area of study is supported by visits to places such as St Albans. The pupils in the Year 4 class clearly enjoy listening to stories about people and events from former times. In a very good lesson the teacher generated an infectious enthusiasm when recounting incidents from the Second World War. Pupils are equally enthusiastic when sharing the research they have done at home. As a consequence of this very good teaching they rapidly pick up and retain key points from the stories and research, which they can retell with accuracy. Teaching is less effective when the pace is slow and activities do not fully meet the needs of the less able. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Many areas of historical study are supported by 'focus days' provided by 'Past Alive' who demonstrate artefacts and clothing from Roman and Tudor



times. Marking and presentation are inconsistent and there is little evidence of higher ability pupils being given the challenge of writing long pieces about topics they are studying.

118. Resources for teaching are adequate and are sometimes used to good effect to stimulate pupils' learning. Although some monitoring of standards has been undertaken by the co-ordinator, this is not sufficient to have a significant impact on learning. Assessment is unsatisfactory. Class teachers keep records but not enough detailed information is held to enable teachers to identify pupils' strengths and areas for development. As a result, assessment information cannot be used effectively to guide planning or to set targets for improvement. Procedures for assessment have recently been put in place but these are too recent to have had a significant impact on pupils' acquisition of historical skills and knowledge. Some use is made of ICT although this area is underdeveloped.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

119. There have been many changes in the provision for ICT since the last inspection. The school has largely replaced its older equipment with a well-equipped computer suite, supplemented by additional computer systems in each classroom. New planning has been introduced in response to changes in curriculum requirements, and there have been significant staff changes over the past two years. The changes have placed great demands on teachers and pupils, all of whom have had to learn new skills. They have generally been successful, but there is still some way to go.

120. Pupils' standards in ICT are, as at the time of the last inspection, in line with those expected for their age in all year groups. They make satisfactory progress and all pupils achieve satisfactorily in relation to their earlier attainment. For example, Year 1 pupils already use the keyboard confidently to type and correct short phrases. By the end of Year 2, pupils have learned how to add captions and short descriptions to pictures they load from disc, to "paint" pictures on the computer screen and to make an onscreen "turtle" move around according to the instructions they give it. Year 4 pupils use computers effectively for word processing. A good display of Year 4 descriptive writing was on display in the entrance hall. Work was up to the standard expected. It had clearly been edited carefully to remove spelling errors and to ensure that it was neatly set out. Pupils use computers to draw graphs, for instance to show the different amounts of materials in a rubbish bin, that could be recycled. They use the Internet to search for information on the Tudors and Romans. During the inspection pupils were just beginning a unit of work to explore how newspapers and magazines use a variety of presentation techniques to communicate their messages.

121. All classes have a weekly ICT lesson, usually taken in the computer suite. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. One lesson was very good. This was due mainly to very clear step-by-step instructions, use of vocabulary to reinforce learning, good class management and brisk lesson pace. As a result of these factors, pupils were highly motivated and made good progress, despite this being only their second experience of working in the computer suite. Teachers have satisfactory practical expertise, and confidence is growing as a result of training. They teach practical skills well in lessons in the computer suite. Lessons are well organized and classes are well managed. Pupils behave well as a result. Pupils with special educational needs receive appropriate support, either from classroom assistants, or from fellow pupils when they work in mixed-ability groups, and consequently make satisfactory progress. Although all lessons included good elements, some were judged satisfactory overall largely as a result of slow teaching pace, which prevented pupils from completing or developing their work.

122. The scheme of work followed in ICT lessons provides for pupils to practice their skills while learning other subjects. In addition to their designated ICT lesson, each week pupils

have a second lesson in which they use their ICT skills in other subjects. However, the way this is organized does not allow them to do this to best advantage. There is often little connection between this lesson and their designated ICT lesson. For example, in a Year 3 ICT lesson at the time of the inspection, pupils were working on "Greetings Cards" as a vehicle for exploring how to combine text and graphics effectively. In their other lesson, they used the computers to type out answers to geography questions about the development of settlements.

123. The coordinator leads development in the subject well. He trains colleagues and assists with planning, and modifies the scheme of work in the light of feedback from teachers. The school has good resources, including additional equipment such as digital cameras and scanners, and software to support most subjects. However, much of this is under-used at present. The school takes good measures to prevent pupils accessing unsuitable materials from the Internet.

124. Given the rapid developments in computer provision, the curriculum and staff changes, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, and the school is in a position to move forward to its next stage of development.

## **MUSIC**

125. Pupils achieve well and reach above average standards in music by the end of Year 2 and Year 4. The school has maintained the good standards reported at the time of the last inspection.

126. Pupils make good progress in singing and attain standards above those expected for their age. School assemblies are used well to rehearse and sing hymns and songs. Pupils sing expressively and accurately in unison. They have a good sense of rhythm. Older pupils sing descants to hymns well while the rest of the school sings the melody. When directed, pupils vary dynamics sensitively to match the mood of the words. Each year group, including reception children, presents its own musical Christmas play. Video recordings show that these performances are well rehearsed and polished. Pupils clearly enjoy taking part.

127. Pupils of all ages compose music and perform it to their class. By the end of Year 2 pupils have learned how to write simple pictorial representations of their work, to show, for instance, when the music is loud and soft, and to indicate which instruments are to be used. Tape recordings of their performances show that pupils work hard to practise and develop their work, and the standard of performance is well up to that expected. Recordings of Year 3 pupils' work also include good evaluations of each other's efforts. They listen carefully, describe what they like and make constructive suggestions for improvement. Many Year 3 and Year 4 pupils sing in the choir and learn to play a range of instruments such as the violin, cello, trombone and recorder. The "Year 4 Leavers' Concert" video was very good. Pupils make good progress in learning to play, and perform confidently in front of a packed hall. They play with good technique, and standards of performance are above those expected for their age.

128. Two lessons were seen during the inspection. Whilst the quality of teaching and learning in these lessons were satisfactory, the good progress and high standards of performance that pupils reach indicate that teaching overall is good. Lessons seen were well prepared. Both contributed well to pupils' cultural development because instruments such as kalimbas ("thumb pianos") and recordings of a steel band were used effectively, in one lesson to develop pupils' understanding of pitch, and in the other to explore how music can convey different moods and emotions. Although some teaching elements were good in both lessons, both were judged satisfactory overall because the introductory discussion sessions

were too long. As a result, pupils were given insufficient time to develop their own compositions.

129. The opportunities to take part in school productions and concerts contribute well to pupils' personal development, and provide a good extension to class music lessons. Curriculum development is proceeding well, under the skilled leadership of the coordinator, who regularly consults colleagues and monitors teaching plans. The hall and additional music room are good facilities for music-making. The school has a good range of musical instruments, including electronic keyboards and instruments from around the World, but the range of recorded music is too narrow to support pupils' multi-cultural education.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

130. Pupils' attainments at the end of both Year 2 and Year 4 are at the expected levels for their ages and are in line with national expectations. As at the time of the last inspection, standards are satisfactory. Learning opportunities are good and all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are fully involved in lessons and achieve satisfactorily.

131. In Year 1, the majority of pupils move with confidence and use space well. They move around the hall taking their weight on different parts of their body and repeat the exercise weaving around cones placed on the floor. They enjoy the session, although a few pupils find the task difficult. Pupils show some imaginative ideas although the overall quality of their movements is limited. At the start and end of lessons pupils discuss with the teacher the changes that take place in their bodies during exercise. They understand why they need to warm up at the beginning of a lesson and cool down at the end. In Year 2, pupils develop greater control of their movements; they throw and catch well, demonstrating their ability by throwing balls through basketball hoops. They recognise and describe the changes to their bodies following their involvement in a number of different activities.

132. In Year 3 pupils show good levels of co-ordination. When running at speed and frequently changing directions, they move with dexterity and control. Pupils have a growing understanding of the function of the muscles and the role of the heart and lungs. Year 4 pupils develop balancing techniques that they practise and refine, thus improving their performance. They collaborate well and show good body control in producing sequences of exercises that include balance and rotational movements. The majority of pupils are competent swimmers by the time they reach the end of Year 4. Pupils benefit from the extra-curricular activities the school offers with twelve different clubs available to them at different times during the year. These include cricket, netball, football, rounders and general fitness training. The school participates in a variety of sports and games with other local schools. These activities make a positive contribution to the pupils' moral and social development as they observe the rules of fair play, support one another and interact with others.

133. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are well organised and generally provide pupils with appropriate challenges so that they maintain their interest and concentration. They work well together and commit themselves to activities energetically. Teachers provide clear explanations of the learning intentions in each lesson so that pupils know what is expected of them but opportunities are missed to evaluate and improve their performance. Inter-personal relationships are very good giving pupils the confidence to ask relevant questions and to try out new activities. Teachers pay due attention to safety and encourage pupils to think about health related fitness. The school has been granted 'Healthy School' status for physical activity. Behaviour is generally good and managed well.

134. The co-ordinator approaches the subject with energy, enthusiasm, and confidence and is committed to raising standards. He gives good support to the staff by sharing his

expertise and offering them sound advice and guidance. Lesson planning is monitored and all lessons are evaluated. Accommodation is good and used effectively in providing space for a variety of activities. The quality and quantity of equipment is good and is easily accessible to staff and pupils.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

135. Pupils achieve well in religious education and in Years 2 and 4, attainment is in line with that expected by the locally agreed syllabus. They have a sound factual knowledge of Christianity. They demonstrate an understanding that Jesus has special significance through his teachings, especially the parables, and provides a model for relationships and behaviour. Pupils have a breadth of knowledge about religions in general. They know about worship, sacred texts, holy places, festivals and the significance of religious symbols in faith and worship. They display good knowledge about Judaism and Islam.

136. By the end of Year 2, pupils learn that some books are special to certain groups of people. For instance, they recognise the importance of the Bible to Christianity, the Qu'ran to Islam and the Torah to Judaism. In Year 1 they recognise that they are special individuals and are learning to respect each other's similarities and differences. By Year 4, pupils have a good knowledge of the Bible and know many stories both from the Old and New Testament. For instance, pupils in Year 3 know that Jesus had twelve disciples, and accurately recall the story of the feeding of the five thousand. They build on their knowledge of Christianity by recalling events in the life of Jesus and, through discussion, begin to understand that visual representations are based on historical knowledge of the period. All pupils recognise that Jesus was 'a good man'. In a Year 4 unit on 'Food and Fasting', pupils identify the relationships between faith, festival and food and build on this knowledge using books for simple research.

137. The teaching of religious education is good overall. Work is carefully planned using the comprehensive scheme of work. Learning objectives are clear and shared with the class. Where the teaching is effective teachers have high expectations for pupils to record, recall and discuss information for example, important symbols in Judaism and for pupils to use new and unfamiliar language. In the best lessons, teachers are enthusiastic and create interest in the topic to be covered. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well but work is not always appropriate for their needs. There are few opportunities for extended writing for more able pupils. Very good teaching was exemplified by varied, well-chosen activities and by questioning skills of a high level. All teachers display at least secure subject knowledge; they know pupils well and demonstrate sensitivity and concern for them, and the school's aims are an important part of their teaching.

138. Religious education makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For instance, pupils are encouraged to be tolerant of others and respect their differences in all lessons. Behaviour and attitudes are good in lessons because teachers often link religious education with events within pupils' own experience, and appropriate emphasis is placed on the moral teachings contained within Bible stories. For instance, pupils in Year 1 are asked to consider their similarities and differences and begin to understand that they are all special. Pupils concentrate well, and frequent opportunities to ask and answer questions are well taken when pupils demonstrate respect for others' beliefs and feelings.

139. Religious education is carefully managed by the co-ordinator who provides clear guidelines for staff to follow through the recently updated policy. The scheme of work and long term planning demonstrate a comprehensive coverage of the subject. Visits from individuals such as the Bishop of Bedford enhance the curriculum, but the location of the

school presents some difficulties when attempting to organise visits to temples or mosques. Resources are good and appropriately support teaching and learning.