

INSPECTION REPORT

MONKSMEAD SCHOOL

Borehamwood

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117219

Headteacher: Lorraine Fairbank

Reporting inspector: Cheryl Thompson
22822

Dates of inspection: 25th – 27th November 2002

Inspection number: 252408

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Hillside Avenue
Borehamwood

Postcode: WD6 1HL

Telephone number: 0208 953 3328

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Kevin Moore

Date of previous inspection: 15th June 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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22822	C Thompson	Registered inspector	English Music Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Information about the school The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well the school is led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
13828	R Ibbitson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20950	R W Burgess	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
32367	J J Pike	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology Art and design	
28686	E Walker	Team inspector	Geography History Religious education Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage Educational inclusion	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Monksmead is a popular and oversubscribed school of average size. It serves an area of Borehamwood which is neither advantaged nor disadvantaged. Currently there are 216 girls and boys aged three to 11 on roll including 26 attending part time in the nursery. Nearly all pupils are white with their origins in the United Kingdom; there is a small number of pupils from diverse ethnic backgrounds but all speak English as their first language. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs is around average with most of these identified as having moderate learning difficulties. Attainment on entry to the nursery is below the local authority average but by the time children start full time in the reception class, attainment is generally above the local authority average for this age group. In September 2000, the school changed from a 'first school' where pupils left at the end of Year 4, to a primary where pupils leave at the end of Year 6. The new headteacher has been in post since September, 2002.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Monksmead is a very good school which serves its pupils, their parents and community very well. The school provides good value for money. It sustains high standards for Year 2 pupils and in its first year of having Year 6 pupils, standards were also high. Pupils are valued as individuals and very good teaching ensures all achieve their best. Leadership and management are very good.

What the school does well

- Year 2 and Year 6 pupils attain high standards in national tests.
- The headteacher, senior staff and governors provide a very clear sense of purpose for the school.
- Nursery and reception classes give children a high quality start to school.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- The school helps pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes and behave very well in class and at play; older pupils are confident and responsible young people.
- Parents hold the school in very high regard.

What could be improved

- Although standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are average, standards should be higher. The school makes insufficient use of its computers. **
- Make learning even more interesting by developing reading and writing skills through such subjects as history, geography and science. **
- The school is not doing enough to help pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of other cultures and how different faiths influence the way people choose to lead their lives.
- Improve teachers' assessment of pupils' scientific knowledge. **
- Make better use of the school's good procedures for tracking pupils' progress. **

** Already identified by the school.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in June, 1998 when it was found to be 'a good school'. Since then high standards have been sustained for Year 2 pupils. The previous headteacher managed the change from a first school to a primary very successfully; high standards were evident in the first year of national tests for Year 6. Key Issues raised by the last inspection

have been addressed well, although there is still room for improvement in the attainment of more able pupils in science. The capacity for further improvement is very good.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
English	No Year 6 pupils in these years. Until September 2000 the school was a first school and pupils left at the end of Year 4			A*	A*
mathematics				A	B
science				A	C

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

In the school's first year of national testing for Year 6, standards were well above the national average. Compared with similar¹ schools, standards were above average in mathematics and average in science. Standards in English were similar to those attained in the top five per cent of all schools in the country. The school sets realistic targets for attainment in national tests. Over time, standards attained by Year 2 are high. In 2002 they were well above the national average for reading, writing and mathematics and above the average for similar schools. Science is the weakest area; although standards are average, not enough pupils are attaining the higher Level 3 for their age. In response to high quality teaching in nursery and reception, standards are above average. It is likely that all the September intake of children will attain the expected standards by the time they start Year 1.

Inspection evidence shows all pupils achieve well as they move through the school. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress because they have very suitable targets for learning and proficient support. In Year 2 and Year 6, inspection evidence shows that standards are not as high as in the previous year. Through its good procedures, the school is well aware of this and is making sure all achieve their best but it is unlikely that there will be so many of the higher levels gained. Across the school, standards in geography and physical education are above average. In design and technology, standards in Years 3 to 6 are above those expected. Standards in ICT are not as good as they should be given the high standards attained in English, mathematics and science. The main reasons for this are teachers' lack of expertise and confidence in using the school's software and hardware and not making enough use of the computers. Standards of handwriting and presentation are satisfactory, but inconsistent across the school.

¹ Similar schools are those with a similar proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils enjoy coming to school and have very good attitudes to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Standards of behaviour throughout the school are very good.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils have very good relationships with their teachers, with support staff and with each other. They show initiative and undertake responsible tasks with enthusiasm. They show respect for each other.
Attendance	The attendance rate is very good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Overall, teaching is very good with over a third of teaching observed either very good or excellent. In the nursery, high quality teaching combined with carefully planned, imaginative activities give children exciting opportunities to develop very positive attitudes to learning, concentration and curiosity. In reception, these very good foundations are extended with basic literacy and numeracy skills taught exceptionally well. Learning is fun and meaningful and as a result, children make rapid progress. Good learning continues through the school. Lessons are very well prepared and pupils left in no doubt about what they are expected to be learning. The best lessons have a very brisk pace which keeps pupils on their toes and interest and concentration levels high. English and mathematics are taught well, although few opportunities are taken to teach literacy skills through or in other subjects such as history, geography and science. In the main, the school is successful in meeting the needs of all its pupils. Pupils with special educational needs have their specific needs carefully assessed and very good individual education plans to help them improve. Higher attaining pupils are provided with suitable tasks although in science, teachers are not totally secure in their understanding of how to extend more able pupils. Recent ICT training did not match the teachers' requirements, therefore their knowledge and understanding of the soft and hardware available in the school is not good. As a result, teaching though satisfactory, is not bringing standards up to the high levels attained in English and mathematics. Homework is used very well to reinforce and extend pupils' learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good and excellent in the nursery and reception classes. There is a good range of activities outside lessons.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The knowledgeable special educational needs co-ordinator guides her colleagues well; individual education plans are very good. All pupils are fully included in lessons with work and support closely matched to their needs. Very good relationships ensure good self-esteem.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall, with very good provision for pupils' social development. More needs to be done to increase pupils' knowledge of other cultures and traditions.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school's provision for the care and welfare of its pupils is good. Child protection procedures are excellent.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Parents have very good views of the school. The very good partnership with parents makes a major contribution to children's learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. On appointment, the headteacher took over a good school and talented staff. Together with the deputy and senior staff, she has developed a very good understanding of what needs to be done to improve further. There is a clear determination shared by all to sustain high standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. Governors have a very good understanding of what goes on in the school and also share the commitment to provide a high quality education for all its pupils. The school applies the principles of best value well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school makes very thorough analyses of all test results. The headteacher has checked on all the teaching across the school. The results of these evaluations have already identified areas for improvement but, as yet, the headteacher has not had time to put appropriate strategies in place.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory, overall. The school has a very good idea of what needs to be done to improve further, therefore all monies allocated to the school are used to best advantage. There is an satisfactory number of suitably qualified teaching staff to teach the National Curriculum and a good number of support staff to assist them who are deployed effectively. Accommodation is very good with a strength in the outdoor provision for the younger children. Resources for learning are good. Nursery and reception resources are of a high quality due mainly to generous donations from parents. Currently, computers are not used to the full and this is a great waste of valuable resources.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children enjoy coming to school and make good progress.• Teaching is good.• Behaviour is good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some parents felt they would like to know more about how their child was getting on.• Some parents would liked to see more activities outside lessons.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive comments. Some parents feel they are not well informed about their children's progress. Inspectors found that parents are well informed about their children's progress but that the complaints made by parents of the annual pupil reports were justified. Although the reports meet statutory requirements, inspectors consider that improvements are needed to show greater individuality between reports. Some parents consider there is an insufficient range of activities outside of lessons. The findings of the inspection were that the range of activities provided is good but could be improved further by the addition of a computer club.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. This is the first year the school has had Year 6 pupils taking national tests. Prior to September 2000, the school was a designated First school where pupils left at the end of Year 4. Since 2000, pupils have remained at the school until the end of Year 6.

Results show:

- High standards for Year 6 in 2002;
- high standards are sustained for Year 2;
- the school does very well compared with similar schools;
- initial testing in the nursery class shows children attain below the local average;
- initial testing in reception shows children attain above the local average.

Inspection evidence shows:

- Children in the nursery and reception classes achieve very well;
- overall, all pupils achieve well in relation to their starting point;
- pupils with special educational needs have very good support and make particularly good progress;
- standards in ICT, though sound, are not good enough;
- not enough pupils are gaining the higher levels in science.

2. National Curriculum test results for Year 6 in 2002 show standards overall are well above the national and similar school averages. In English, standards are similar to those attained in the top five per cent of all schools in the country. In mathematics, standards are well above the national average and above those in similar schools. In science, standards are well above the national average but in line with the average for similar schools. The main reason for this is that there was not a high proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5; teachers' assessment is not yet finely tuned at this level. The school has identified assessment in science as an area to improve.

3. Both boys and girls attained very well in English, they were ahead of their age group by about a year and a term, giving them a very good start to their secondary education. In this particular year group, in mathematics and science girls did better than boys.

4. Inspection evidence shows standards in Year 6 to be above rather than well above average in English, mathematics and science. Each year group is different and this year, although all pupils are achieving well, fewer are likely to attain the higher than expected levels. Standards in ICT, art and design, history and religious education are in line with those expected. In design and technology physical education and geography, standards are above.

5. Test results for Year 2 show high standards are sustained over time and in 2002 were well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics and above the average for similar schools. Both boys and girls do equally well and are generally two terms ahead for their age. Science is the weakest area. Although standards are average, not enough pupils are attaining the higher Level 3. Teachers are not secure on what is needed for pupils to attain Level 3. Therefore, learning opportunities are not always provided for pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding at this level. The school has identified the need to improve assessment procedures.

6. Inspection evidence shows standards attained by Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics to be above average and average in science. In this year group, there is a significant number of pupils with special needs who are making very good progress in relation to their special learning targets. However, the proportion of the class who will attain the higher Level 3 is likely to be lower than in 2002. Standards in ICT, religious education, design and technology, history and art and design are in line with those expected and in geography and physical education they are above.

7. When children start in the nursery class, their attainment in most areas of learning is generally below the levels expected for their age. The high quality provision and teaching in the nursery and reception classes helps children achieve very well. They are enthusiastic and very keen to learn. By the time they leave the reception class, standards are likely to be above average, with many making a good start on the National Curriculum in Year 1.

8. The school is aware that standards are not as good as they should be in ICT and recognises that staff need more appropriate and helpful training. Currently, the use of computers across the school is patchy and generally unsatisfactory. Pupils are learning specific skills but have insufficient opportunities to apply and develop them within other subjects such as mathematics and science. A notable exception is the use of word processing; in Year 6, pupils' skills in this area are above expectations.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

Strengths are:

- Pupils' very positive attitudes to learning;
- very good behaviour;
- respect for others.

There are no significant areas for improvement.

9. The attitudes of pupils to learning, the values shown by pupils and their personal development are very good and these high standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils like coming to school and are smartly dressed in their school uniforms. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting said their children were glad to come back to school after a long holiday to see their friends and teachers and return to school life.

10. The school has very high expectations of pupils and does not tolerate inappropriate behaviour. In the last year there were no exclusions for poor behaviour or for any other reason. Behaviour is very good in lessons. Pupils enjoy lessons and show an eagerness to do their best and settle quickly to independent work. In an art and design lesson, Year 1 children were totally absorbed in their efforts to make clay sculptures in the style of Henry Moore and Elisabeth Frink. They sustained concentration throughout the lesson as they tried hard to capture the details of the sculptures. Enthusiastic responses to their teacher's questioning in a Year 5 science lesson revealed pupils' interest and understanding of evaporation and condensation.

11. Behaviour of pupils is very good out of lessons. In a whole school assembly pupils listened attentively to the reasons for having candles at Christmas, joined in a song with enthusiasm and were respectfully quiet for a short prayer. Lunch and break times are seen by children as pleasant social occasions where they can chat with friends. In the playground there is much energetic running around by some pupils while others play games or talk to friends. There is no evidence of aggression or racism. Pupils are polite to visitors and are keen to hold conversations with them. They speak with confidence of their life in school and how they feel about their work.

12. Pupils' personal development is very good. In their personal, social and health lessons they gain an understanding of moral and social perspectives. In discussions with some School Council members for example, pupils showed a clear understanding of right from wrong and agreed that the school's discipline system is fair. Through religious education lessons and assemblies they are aware of different religious beliefs and are learning to respect views different from their own. Nominations and elections for the School Council give children a sense of democracy and the importance of rational debate; council members take their responsibilities very seriously. Pupils are proud of their school and during the inspection there were no signs of litter, graffiti or vandalism. They wear their uniform with pride. Pupils in all classes cheerfully carry out tasks allotted to them which encourages their personal development. For example from Year 1 taking registers back to the office, to Year 6, doing many monitoring tasks around the school; all pupils take their turn at helping the school to run smoothly.

13. Pupils form very good relationships with their teachers and support staff and with each other. Year 6 boys and girls were sad when one of their classmates was leaving to live elsewhere. Pupils give seeing their friends as one of the reasons they like coming to school. Teachers often ask pupils to work in pairs which helps them develop consideration and toleration. All pupils spoken to say they feel safe in school and can readily talk to their teachers or other adults when they have any personal problems. All pupils are fully included in lessons and the life of the school.

14. The attendance rate is very good and within the range of the top 10 per cent of schools across the country. Most pupils arrive in good time for school, registrations are carried out efficiently and lessons start promptly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

Strengths:

- Relationships are very good and expectations are nearly always high;
- high quality teaching in nursery and reception classes;
- English and mathematics are taught well;
- in the best lessons, the pace is brisk.

Areas for improvement:

- Increase teachers' knowledge, understanding and confidence in using the school's hardware and software and make much better use of ICT in lessons and, therefore, raise standards;
- increase teachers' knowledge of assessment against National Curriculum criteria, particularly in science;
- make learning more relevant and interesting by exploiting meaningful links between subjects;
- consistency in expectations for presentation.

15. Overall, teaching is very good. This judgement is similar to the findings of the last inspection although there have been improvements. The proportion of very good and excellent lessons has more than doubled since the last inspection and planning, identified then as sound, is now good.

16. During inspection, 50 lessons were observed. Over four-fifths of lessons were good or better and two-fifths were very good or excellent. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. In the main, all pupils learn well as they progress through the school, not only in acquiring knowledge and skills, but in their personal development. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress against the targets set for them in their individual education

plans because teaching and support are very effective. In science, higher attaining pupils do not make the progress they should because teachers are insecure in their assessment and as a consequence do not always set work to extend pupils' learning.

17. There are many strengths in the teaching at Monksmead but the main ones are teachers' very good relationships with their pupils, high expectations and very good subject knowledge, except in ICT. In the very best examples, lessons are taught at a really brisk pace with infectious enthusiasm so that pupils are very keen to join in, answering questions and giving suggestions confidently. In these lessons, pupils work at a good rate and learn a great deal. Teachers' subject knowledge in ICT is sound. Teachers have had the opportunity for specific training (New Opportunities Funding), but this was not as useful as had been hoped, consequently many staff still lack experience and confidence in using the school's hard and software. As a result, computers are not used effectively and standards, though satisfactory, do not match the high standards attained in other main subjects such as English and mathematics.

18. Planning is mostly very effective with good improvement in identifying what classroom assistants will do in lessons. Teachers state what it is they expect pupils to learn in the lesson and share this with them; however, opportunities are frequently missed for pupils to check up on their own learning as teachers rarely encourage pupils to consider what they have learned by the end of the lesson. Examination of a wide range of pupils' work indicates there is an inconsistency in teachers' expectations for presentation. Marking is good overall. In the very best examples, pupils are told how they have got on, what they need to do next and personal targets for improvement receive comment. Where marking is satisfactory but less helpful, targets are not referred to and comments are not made as to how to improve. Homework, too, is always marked. It is used very well in a variety of subjects and extends pupils' knowledge or provides opportunities to practise reading. Very good habits are firmly established in the nursery when children take a library book home to share with their family. These habits are continued through the school, with many older pupils reading a great deal by themselves.

19. Literacy and numeracy are taught well with some very good and excellent teaching observed. Excellent teaching of basic skills in the nursery and reception classes sets solid foundations for future learning. In the nursery, children develop a love of stories and learn that letters have sounds as well as names. They learn the names of basic shapes and begin to count in meaningful situations such as candles on pretend birthday cakes. In reception, skills are developed further so that children apply their knowledge of letter sounds to help them spell the words they want to write. In an excellent lesson, children gasped as the various masks and 'faces' were taken one by one out of a bag. They thought hard about the adjectives to describe them and set about their writing full of excitement. The school follows the national frameworks for literacy and numeracy and lessons follow a set format. An area for improvement, rather than a weakness, is that teachers are tending to follow the National Literacy Framework too slavishly. They need to consider if they could be more flexible and whether they could cover some teaching objectives in and through subjects such as history, geography and science.

20. Classroom assistants are a valued and valuable part of the teaching team. In most cases, teachers' planning identifies how they are to be deployed and pupils' learning is enhanced as a result. In the nursery and reception classes particularly skilled assistants make a significant contribution to the rapid progress made. The support given to pupils with behavioural difficulties is also very good and ensures the individual pupil can learn effectively and that they do not impede the learning of others.

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

Strengths:

- Excellent provision for nursery and reception children;
- very good provision for pupils with special educational needs;
- very good equality of access and opportunity;
- very good provision for pupils' social development.

Areas for improvement:

- Links between subjects for the development of skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT;
- opportunities to develop an appreciation and understanding of the diverse cultures within modern society;
- making better use of the school's hard and software.

21. The school provides a good curriculum that is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. This finding is similar to that of the previous inspection. All subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are taught. The allocation of time to each subject is in accordance with national guidelines.

22. Inspection evidence indicates standards of provision are at least satisfactory and often good in all subjects. The curriculum for children in the nursery and reception classes is excellent. There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs.

23. Opportunities for developing literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in the different subjects of the curriculum are not identified. As a result, opportunities pupils have for developing these skills are limited. Cross-curricular links between subjects has been identified as an area for development by the recently appointed headteacher. The use of ICT has also rightly been identified as a focus for development.

24. Long and medium term planning is good, following national frameworks for literacy and numeracy and nationally recommended schemes of work in other subjects. The curriculum for children in the nursery and reception classes is planned exceptionally well to meet the expected standards for children at this stage of education.

25. There is excellent provision for children in the nursery and reception classes. The very wide range of first hand experiences for these children ensures very good opportunities are provided in all areas of learning. Very effective use is made of the outside play areas. The teachers and nursery nurses work very closely to plan and develop stimulating activities for the children. The curriculum provided in reception makes a smooth transition into the National Curriculum Programmes of Study in Year 1.

26. In Years 1 to 6, effective learning opportunities are provided for all pupils in the different subjects of the National Curriculum and in religious education. There is appropriate provision for sex education and drugs' misuse awareness through the curriculum and the very good personal and social education programme. There are suitable policies and schemes of work in place for all subjects. These take into account equality of opportunity for all pupils, including those who have special educational needs. The governing body has a clear policy for sex education. The school has adopted the national strategies for literacy and numeracy effectively. Teachers follow the guidelines very well. In most cases, they structure their lessons to ensure that the balance of direct teaching and pupils' activities maintain high levels of application and motivation. However, there are lessons in literacy when the content is technically correct but appears to lack any relevance to pupils' interests. It is here that better links need to be made between subjects to give more 'life' and relevance to lessons. In

both literacy and numeracy, teachers normally plan activities that are appropriate to pupils' differing prior attainment.

27. The school improvement plan provides for review for each subject, providing opportunities to reappraise the school's approach and improve on good practice.

28. Central to the school's ethos is the very good provision of equal opportunities for all pupils to learn and make progress. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum and pupils with special educational needs receive very good support to aid their learning.

29. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is very good. In their personal development, pupils throughout the school willingly take on responsibility for tasks and show initiative. The school places great emphasis on its personal care of pupils. Health education takes place as part of the science curriculum, for example, when pupils learn about the value of healthy food and exercise. Health education is an important component of science teaching and learning. Good displays around the school indicate pupils' interest in healthy living and pupils have fruit as a playtime snack. Through the physical education, games and swimming activities as well as the residential trip, the school contributes to the development of pupils' physical fitness.

30. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good; they are well integrated into the school's caring environment. Individual education plans are prepared and used most effectively to help pupils make maximum progress. Pupils are supported through the provision of work matched to their abilities and support from proficient learning support assistants.

31. The good provision of extra-curricular activities strongly enhances the curriculum. At present, activities include choir, drama, netball, gardening, pottery club and brass band. Links with the community also make a good contribution to pupils' education. There are good links with other local schools.

32. Overall the school makes good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils develop self-esteem, a sense of belonging to a caring community and an understanding of what it means to be a responsible member of society. These aims, together with the variety of cultural experiences open to pupils, are central to the school's ethos. The quality of this provision results in the very good mutual relationships between everyone associated with the school and especially between pupils and staff.

33. The clear ethos of the school is visible in the concern of teachers and governors for the rounded development of the pupils as confident young people. A very important feature of the provision for pupils' personal development is the School Council for which pupils volunteer to be elected. The pupils themselves manage this, they are trained to help their fellow pupils and encouraged to bring concerns to appropriate members of staff. This body has not only been very effective in its primary purpose, but as pupils became more self-confident it has become a means by which they can affect the life of the school positively. Not only the members of School Council but other pupils also feel, as a result of its efforts, that their opinions matter and that the school really cares about them.

34. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. As well as feeling comfortable with themselves, pupils are provided with the means of expressing their deepest feelings through prayer and reflection in the acts of collective worship. The wide range of interesting pictures displayed in the classrooms and corridors promotes pupils' appreciation of the impressive skills of famous artists. Teachers stimulate pupils' imagination and get them to think beyond themselves, for example, when they write imaginative stories and

poems. In assemblies, pupils listen to well-chosen pieces of music which help to create a spiritual atmosphere.

35. Provision for pupils' moral development is good. The behaviour policy is implemented in positive ways so that pupils are encouraged to behave very well, rather than discouraged from behaving badly. Very good relationships between staff and pupils create a climate in which pupils learn the difference between right and wrong and behave naturally in harmony with one another. The methods of encouraging positive relationships and hence very good behaviour, are practised by all the adults in the school. The school has a clear code of conduct which plays an appropriate part in enabling pupils to understand the difference between right and wrong. Each class has its own rules for behaviour in lessons. Very good teaching methods, which encourage co-operative working, also support the development of a well founded ethical community. Pupils behave very well because they have a clear understanding of what is expected.

36. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. Pupils have very good models of social behaviour in the work of volunteers and governors who give of their time and talents to support the school and create a welcoming community, supporting the very good work of the staff in this respect.

37. Pupils work and play together in an atmosphere of harmony. The school is preparing pupils for their adult roles very well. For example, members of the local fire service came to the school and worked with pupils. They helped pupils understand the rules which are necessary to avoid fires. Pupils gain a sense of independence when they take part in residential visits in Years 2, 4 and 6. Throughout the school, pupils have collected money and items for a variety of appeals, including a local hospice.

38. Visits pupils make within the local community help them to understand how society functions. In much the same way, discussions in subjects, such as English and geography about social and environmental matters, provide pupils with insights into wider issues such as pollution and land use and who takes responsibility for decisions.

39. The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' cultural development through the curriculum in subjects such as art and design, music, English, history, geography and physical education. Throughout, pupils are made aware of a range of music and learn about composers predominantly from Western European countries which is also introduced through dance and drama. Different ethnic heritages are not overtly celebrated as well as they should be. The school teaches about different religions and beliefs but is not giving sufficient attention to helping pupils understand how these influence the way people lead their lives.

40. The books selected for literacy and provided in the library or used as models for pupils' own writing are drawn from both British European culture and those from more distant lands. Pupils benefit from the wealth of cultural opportunities which are available including the British Museum, National Gallery and Royal Observatory.

41. In religious education, pupils learn to understand the Christian background and cultural heritage, for example, by a visit to St Albans Cathedral. They also study Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Sikhism at appropriate levels although this does not include sufficient attention to the cultural heritage of these traditions and how individuals' faith influences the way they choose to lead their lives.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

Strengths:

- Child protection procedures are excellent;
- analysis of national test results and action taken to improve.

Areas for improvement:

- Consistency of assessment procedures through the school;
- information to individual pupils to inform their learning.

42. The very good standard of pastoral care noted at the time of the previous inspection has been maintained.

43. Child protection procedures are excellent and the school discharges its responsibilities effectively and conscientiously. All staff have attended training in child protection and are alert to any signs of potential distress in children. The teacher responsible for co-ordinating special educational needs is also the named person for dealing with child protection matters. Where necessary, the school seeks the support of outside specialist agencies. Very good records are maintained and kept in secure conditions.

44. Health and safety matters are managed effectively and all statutory requirements are fulfilled.

45. There is a good policy for encouraging acceptable behaviour, detailing systems of rewards and sanctions that reinforce good behaviour and discourage poor behaviour. Caring teachers and support staff are excellent role models and play a vital part in the formation of pupils' attitudes and values. Class leaders are selected daily to do jobs in the class or around the school. Each class has a set of class rules, which pupils have agreed together with their class teacher. These are simple yet important guides for pupils, such as those in Year 4: 'Try to help those in need of assistance', 'Don't sit there and worry, ask for help if you need it' and 'Try to be more independent, think for yourself'.

46. Procedures for maintaining very good attendance are effective, with frequent promotions of attendance in letters to parents and in the school prospectus. In letters to those parents requesting permission to take their children on holiday in term time, the school emphasises the importance of regular attendance.

47. The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to develop personal and social skills. The School Council offers pupils the chance to take responsibility and ownership for decisions regarding the school. Pupils experience the democratic process through nominations, canvassing and electing their classmates to the council. Through its personal, social and health education programme pupils are exposed to a wide range of knowledge and skills necessary for young people growing up in today's world, such as sex education and knowledge about drugs. In circle times when pupils sit quietly together, they are encouraged to consider a variety of social issues and to speak with frankness about them in the safe environment of their classroom.

48. The school has made good progress in improving its procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. Baseline assessments in the nursery and reception classes are now a strength of the school. Procedures for assessment of pupils' progress and learning are satisfactory overall. The school has developed good testing and record keeping procedures in English and mathematics, which it plans to extend and develop in other subjects. Assessment information is kept for the other subjects of the curriculum but in less detail.

49. The school makes good use of detailed comparative data from the local authority to extensively monitor and analyse the data from testing. With this information it identifies trends and variances in achievement. The recently appointed headteacher has used this information to track the progress of pupils of all abilities to ensure that they are progressing fast enough against predicated levels of attainment. Answers in national tests are closely analysed so that staff can pinpoint exactly where pupils have gaps in their understanding, for example, the use of data handling and problem solving in mathematics.

50. Teachers' knowledge of their pupils is good but this is not always reflected in written records. Through their assessments in lessons and monitoring of pupils' work, teachers are setting good, and increasingly precise, targets for pupils to work on. The assessment co-ordinator has identified the need to identify best practice within the school to unify systems and assessment procedures. As yet there are no whole school portfolios of pupils' work, so that teachers can assess work more precisely against specific National Curriculum level criteria.

51. Information gained from test results is used to track the progress of each individual as they move through the school and also to identify areas of success or difficulty. Assessment information is used well to inform the planning of the curriculum but is not used to best effect to provide pupils with individual targets for improvement. The marking of pupils' work does not always provide them with useful encouragement or guidance and is inconsistent through the school.

52. The achievement of pupils who have special educational needs is monitored regularly and individual education plans are reviewed and adapted. These plans give clear guidance about what pupils need to learn and practise. Individual teachers ensure pupils are supported with as much adult help as possible to promote good self-esteem and help them succeed in lessons.

53. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are good although there are no formal methods of doing this. However, the school is a close community, teachers and class assistants know their pupils very well and are sensitive to their needs and accomplishments. Pupils' personal development regarding self-awareness and self-discipline are promoted well and is reflected in pupils' behaviour both in and out of lessons.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

Strengths:

- Parents hold the school in high regard;
- parents' help at home makes a significant contribution to their children's good progress;
- the school has good ways of finding out parents' views.

Areas for improvement:

- Parents do not like the annual reports; they tend to lack individuality.

54. The school has continued the very good partnership with parents noted at the last inspection and this is a major contribution to pupils' learning. Parents have very good views of the school and consider it a happy and inclusive environment in which children can learn and develop. Through parent and pupil surveys, the school is aware of the views of parents and tries to ensure that any concerns parents may have receive attention. It also ensures that it maintains an 'open door' policy for parents so that matters of concern can be discussed.

55. The overall quality of the school's communications to parents is good. On most days teachers are available to talk to parents about their children's progress. Parents are invited to a consultation early in the spring term and they receive a report on their children's progress at the end of the summer term. Weekly newsletters enable parents to keep up with all aspects of school life. Parents receive an annual report on their children's progress. The latest reports were compiled on computers and although meeting statutory requirements and informative, comments made about pupils of the same year tended to be similar. Parents spoken to during the inspection expressed dissatisfaction with the format of the reports. The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are well presented and informative.

56. There is an active 'Friends' association that organises several events over the school year to raise money for the school. All events are well attended by parents and friends but two events in particular, the Christmas Fayre and the Summer Fayre, are very well supported. Although primarily fund raising events, they also serve a useful social function in bringing staff, parents, pupils and the local community together. The association raises a substantial amount of money, which has benefited the school in many ways and contributes to pupils' learning and development. For example, the money has allowed purchases of a new pottery kiln, a play area for the youngest children, chairs for the computer suite and a fridge-freezer. In addition to the association, there is a parents' forum, which meets each term to discuss a wide range of matters affecting school life. Each pupil age group is represented and in recent times the forum has been influential in several areas, such as the new safer traffic arrangements.

57. Parents' contribution to their children's learning at school and at home is very good. Parents help the school to run effectively by ensuring their children are smartly dressed in their school uniforms and attend school regularly and punctually. They encourage children to do their homework and take an interest in their work. Reading diaries are used as a means of communicating with the class teacher. In the home/school agreement parents have indicated their acceptance of the responsibilities shown.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

58. Leadership and management are very good.

Strengths:

- Very clear vision and sense of purpose for the school;
- governors fulfil their role very well;
- a shared, strong commitment to further improvement.

Areas for improvement:

- Following up on areas very recently noted for improvement, for example, assessment, target setting, training for ICT, meaningful links between subjects;
- making sure that all computers and software are used to full advantage in order to raise standards in ICT.

59. The headteacher was appointed in September, 2002 and took over a well established, thriving school with a talented staff. Until his retirement, the previous headteacher had been in post for 20 years. He created a popular school which attains high standards and is highly respected in the community. He led the school very successfully through the change from a first to a primary school in 2000.

60. Leadership is very good. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the future of the school which encapsulates sustaining high standards within a broad and relevant curriculum. She plans to build on the good work of the previous headteacher and increase the school's links with the community. She has managed the change of leadership style very sensitively but most effectively. Many staff commented that they feel '... lucky to have had a really good head and now we have another'. The strong team spirit continues, with staff keen to take on the greater opportunities presented to be more involved in planning future developments. The deputy headteacher works closely with the headteacher and has specific responsibilities, such as the school's accreditation for the Investors in People award. With the exception of leadership for ICT, established key stage leaders and subject co-ordinators in the main fulfil their roles very effectively. The nursery and reception leader is extremely effective; she leads an outstanding team who reflect on their work and are always looking to improve on the high quality education provided. Staff changes and maternity leave have meant that some subject co-ordinators are new to their subjects and, as such, their leadership, though reasonably effective, has yet to impact on standards.

61. The governing body are a knowledgeable and valued part of the leadership team. They use their personal expertise such as management or accounting to the benefit of the school. All roles and responsibilities are clearly defined with very good means of two-way communication with each other, the headteacher and parents. Many governors visit and help in the school on a very regular basis. They are very effective in carrying out their responsibilities because they have a clear understanding of what goes on in the school. They have a 'governors action plan' which highlights their need for a better understanding of how to analyse the data supplied about the school in order to have a greater and more informed input into planning and target setting. Even though the school attains high standards, there is no complacency; there is a strong commitment to further improvement.

62. Management is very good. On appointment, the headteacher conducted an 'audit' of strengths and weaknesses. All teachers, plus two trainee teachers, have been observed teaching. Data relating to National Curriculum tests and outcomes of other tests used in the school has been carefully analysed to see where improvements are needed. For example, it has been noted that though they make at least satisfactory progress, some higher attaining pupils could do better. It has also been noted from discussions with staff that more needs to be done in developing their knowledge and understanding in ICT. Procedures for performance management are well established but the headteacher has noted that not all targets for teachers are linked to the school improvement plan. Currently, there has not been time to implement all the planned improvements but these are very clearly outlined in the new school improvement plan which is very good. It is underpinned by the findings of the headteacher's 'audit', comprehensive and has a very clear focus on further improvement. Professional development courses for assessment and science have been booked for staff to attend in early 2003.

63. Financial management is good. The principles of best value are applied well. Governors keep a very 'critical eye' on all spending and ensure all monies are spent as they should be and in the best interest of pupils.

64. The management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Pupils' needs are quickly identified through a variety of procedures. Individual education plans are formulated with input from the special educational needs co-ordinator and class teacher. These are very good, workable and facilitate very good progress. Learning support assistants are deployed very effectively to support individuals or groups. Extensive records are kept, progress is reviewed regularly and action taken if plans are seen not to be effective or targets have been met. Parents are involved with their child's learning as much as possible.

65. The number of suitably qualified staff is satisfactory for teaching the National Curriculum. There is a good number of support staff. Resources for learning are good and excellent in the nursery where generous donations from parents go towards replacing or purchasing high quality equipment. The school's accommodation is very good and will soon benefit from the additional field area. The majority of classrooms are spacious and in the recently added classroom 'block', thoughtful attention has been paid to providing changing rooms for older pupils. The outside areas for the younger pupils are used extremely well and add a richness to their curriculum. Both libraries are adequate but would benefit from extra seating and a judicious 'pruning' and replacing of well worn, popular books.

66. The school is an active and entirely suitable provider of initial teacher training. Appropriate mentors are appointed to ensure trainees have all the required experiences for course work and that their progress is checked. Trainees benefit from the support of the whole school and have the privilege of working alongside some outstanding classroom practitioners.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

67. Monksmead school provides a very good quality education for its pupils. To make this very effective school even better, the school should:

- (1) Raise standards in ICT across the school by*:
 - Providing appropriate training for staff to increase their knowledge, understanding and confidence in the use of the school's hard and software;
 - making full use of all the computers in the school;
 - making good use of ICT in as many subjects as possible.(Paragraphs: 1, 8, 17, 58, 62, 91, 99, 105, 111, 122, 137, 141, 143, 144)
- (2) Develop literacy skills through and in other subjects*.
(Paragraphs: 19, 23, 26, 68)
- (3) Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of other cultures and especially how particular faiths influence how people choose to live their lives.
(Paragraphs: 39, 41, 158, 162)
- (4) Raise teachers' awareness of assessment particularly for the higher National Curriculum levels in science.
(Paragraphs: 2, 5, 16, 107, 110, 111)
- (5) Make full use of the school's good procedures for tracking pupils' progress*.
(Paragraphs: 48, 50, 51, 102)

* already identified by the school

Other issues which should be considered by the school:

- A handwriting scheme.
(Paragraphs: 90)
- Raise standards in presentation of pupils' work.
(Paragraphs: 90, 129, 161)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	50
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	10	10	23	7	0	0	0
Percentage	20	20	46	14	0	0	0

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

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	13	203
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	46

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.01

National comparative data	5.4
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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
	2002	13	17	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	13	12
	Girls	15	15	14
	Total	27	28	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (90)	93 (94)	87 (90)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	12	13
	Girls	15	14	14
	Total	27	26	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (94)	87 (90)	90 (97)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	18	12	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	14	17
	Girls	12	11	12
	Total	30	25	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	100 (N/A)	83 (N/A)	97 (N/A)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	16	17
	Girls	12	11	12
	Total	30	27	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	100 (N/A)	90 (N/A)	97 (N/A)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

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

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	187	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	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	1	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20
Average class size	29

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	211

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	*
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	*
Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	45
Number of pupils per FTE adult	7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

** There is no qualified teacher in the nursery*

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	535 166
Total expenditure	539 047
Expenditure per pupil	2 334
Balance brought forward from previous year	32 526
Balance carried forward to next year	28 645

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1.3

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	229
Number of questionnaires returned	87

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	70	24	3	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	59	41	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	61	38	1	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	40	51	6	0	3
The teaching is good.	67	33	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	34	22	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	32	5	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	72	28	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	48	40	9	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	60	31	0	0	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	61	33	3	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	45	17	0	5

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Strengths:

- planning, organisation and team work between the nursery and reception classes;
- high quality teaching;
- excellent use of resources to extend children's knowledge and understanding;
- the range and variety of activities;
- assessment and recognition of children's achievements so that a curriculum is planned to extend learning.

There are no significant areas for improvement.

68. Both the provision and teaching for this age group have improved considerably since the last inspection. The nursery and reception classes are a major strength of the school. There are two intakes per year, according to age, into the nursery and reception classes. During the inspection, only the September intake was in school; another 11 children will join them in January.

69. Fundamental to the high quality provision is both teachers' excellent understanding of young children's needs and how to plan explicitly to ensure optimum progress. Overall, teaching is very good in all areas of learning, with a high proportion of excellent teaching noted in both classes. Teaching of basic literacy and numeracy skills is excellent. Basic literacy and numeracy skills are nurtured extremely well in the nursery and built on further in the reception class. Teachers, nursery nurses and classroom assistants work extremely well as a team, conveying the same very high expectations. No opportunity is wasted to take a child's learning one step further, by asking just the right question or providing a pertinent resource.

70. Children, including those with special educational needs, receive a very good start to their education in the nursery because they make very good progress in their personal and social education. They acquire very positive attitudes towards learning in all areas of the curriculum. They enter the nursery with attainment below average levels for Hertfordshire. The clear focus which develops children's social skills through well established and consistent routines is extended from their time in pre-nursery. This ensures children are ready to explore all the areas of learning and make good progress through the 'stepping stones' towards achieving the nationally prescribed expected standards for this age group.

71. Children are confident and secure in school routines by the time they enter the reception class. They enter reception class having made above average progress. Very good progress continues because they are taught to organise themselves, listen carefully to adults and each other and have a very wide range of very well planned and relevant activities to support their learning. The very good use of the continuous assessments of children's progress contributes to the very detailed planning which incorporates learning objectives for both individuals and groups. Opportunities to extend children's understanding and experience are very good so that by the time they leave the reception class nearly all of September's intake are likely to have achieved the expected standards and be working well within the statutory National Curriculum.

72. Relationships between adults and children are very good; there is an atmosphere of respect and mutual trust in which children receive very good care. The work of teachers is very well supported by the contribution of classroom support staff. Their clearly defined role

and input of their specific strengths make a significant contribution to the children's progress. Links with parents are very good; they are made aware of the progress and needs of their children through discussion and frequent newsletters.

Personal, social and emotional development

73. Teachers place a strong emphasis on the personal, social and emotional development of children. Children arrive at school in the morning with an air of enthusiasm and confidence, quickly settling into the well prepared classrooms and routines of the day. They are very supportive of each other, ready to listen to the news and the activities for the session. Children in the nursery listen carefully as they are told about the activities, why they are important and what they can do. They are carefully directed if necessary and show maturity in their choice and their reason for playing with the corn flour paint or making a marble picture. The support assistants and teacher move from area to area guiding, talking and ensuring children develop vocabulary and further their understanding. Children use computer programs well; they sustain their concentration very well and are totally involved in the wide range of activities on offer. In reception, the regular use of 'Today we are learning about...' at the beginning of each lesson, listening times and the provision of interesting activities are important and valued. The very good interactions and extension which children experience through all areas of learning enables children of all capabilities to make very good progress. When they leave the reception class nearly all children will have easily achieved the expected standards. This represents very good progress.

74. All children can organise themselves to get changed with limited assistance for physical education sessions. When they are ready, they move responsibly into the hall where they work very well together, sharing and co-operating with each other.

Communication, language and literacy

75. Children are given very many opportunities to develop their skills in this area of learning. High quality planning and consideration of every child's progress ensures that all use the opportunities to enjoy language, books and discussions. By the end of reception, all children are likely to have met the expected standards in this area. In the nursery, well constructed role play and creative activities create situations and opportunities where children are constantly engaged in high quality discussions and talking about the experience. The good ratio of adult helpers and classroom support assistants are well briefed so they interact very well and extend children's ideas and vocabulary effectively. They focus well on the sound for the week and interject carefully as children offer their ideas about '.... objects which begin with...?'. Children listen carefully to a story and when in the book corner, choose a book with care because it is either familiar or the illustrations appeal to them. They use books appropriately and look after them well.

76. In reception, children are enthusiastic and listen carefully to the teacher because they are intrigued by the different and intriguing beginnings to each lesson. They are very involved and interested in 'What we are going to learn today?'. The good use of ideas and thoughts turned into "Can you help me with ..." type questions ensure children listen and respond carefully. Questions are well directed and higher attaining children quickly recall, for example, the use of a question mark and distinguish an exclamation mark in the text. The variety of activities to follow up the teaching point is very clearly focused and supports the learning intention very well. Children work hard on their assigned activity and the very good use of classroom support ensures they are engaged in their work and make very good progress. Teaching of letter sounds and how to use these to spell is excellent. Very nearly all children are extremely confident about tackling unfamiliar words using sounds to help them; they make very good progress. They enjoy selecting books from the well stocked book corner,

reading and sharing their books willingly with an adult. Reading progress is carefully maintained and reading diaries reflect a good partnership with parents and children. Children are well supported in their writing tasks and share their ideas with each other.

Mathematical development

77. Children make good progress in this area because their mathematical development is thoughtfully planned and integrated into the range of activities which children encounter in the nursery. By the end of their time in reception, all children are likely to have attained the expected standards. They have regular opportunities in a variety of meaningful situations to practise their counting skills. They make patterns, play alongside each other in number games both indoors and outside. When exploring the texture of lentils, they estimate the number of spoonfuls to fill the containers and begin to develop their mathematical language describing the sizes and whether the container is bigger or smaller and whether there are more or less. They particularly enjoy singing various rhymes like 'Five currant buns' and 'Jumping beans' to recognise how many more or how many left. In reception, this area is planned as a regular activity and children enjoy and respond very well to counting in consecutive order. The good use of 'What if ... ?' and 'How many?' questions make children think hard. They are anxious to respond and use their number bananas to display their answers. They all achieve well through the use of gentle encouragement and the good support from classroom assistants. In the "What are we learning about today" children identify a square and a triangle regular shape which they fold in half and quickly recognise they have two shapes the same and add the word *symmetry* to their mathematical vocabulary. Children use their cutting skills to make symmetrical patterns. Displays in the classroom emphasise the importance numeracy plays in everyday life and are used well by the children to discuss different aspects of their learning in mathematics. The good use of resources, including ICT, enables children to extend their mathematical skills well and supports the children's progress to prepare them for their mathematics lessons when they enter Year 1.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

78. All children in the nursery and reception classes make very good progress in this area. By the end of their time in reception, all children are likely to have attained the expected standards in this area. They have a large number of very good opportunities provided for them to extend their understanding of the world. Many bring a good range of experience which teachers extend by the many, varied and interesting displays. For example, on the theme of light, children made a significant contribution to the displays. Through very effective teaching and thoughtful planning, the topic helped children learn about and share in the Divali celebration by making clay holders for the lights. Reception children visited the local church and made comparisons between old and new buildings on their walk. The visit to the church and learning about how people use the church, helped them to make their own worship corner in the classroom. They paid careful attention to detail, noticing the hymn books and the music on the organ in addition to making a cross using a hammer and nails to join wood together. The role play and subsequent discussion about their church has led to an understanding about celebrations and how different people celebrate in their lives.

79. The good use of a range of materials including simple maps and playground routes helps children recognise how to be safe as they use the large wheeled toys on the 'pretend' road in the playground. Opportunities are created so children can adapt and use a very wide range of materials to explore texture and make models to use in their play situations. They recognise that various models belong to certain situations. In discussing the building of the rail track, nursery children determine that lions and tigers will not live in their fields but belong to the jungle or in Africa. The attention to detail teachers and support assistants give, ensures

children extend their knowledge about the world they live in. In reception, children have a clear purpose about their learning and discuss their progress at the end of the session which helps teachers assess how well children have learnt and what they need to teach next.

Physical development

80. All children make good progress in this area of learning and will achieve the expected standards by the time they enter Year 1. Through a well planned and managed range of activities, children are taught how to use cutting tools safely and to good effect. Children are confident when using puzzles, recognising shapes, matching colours and identifying parts of the picture. They build tracks and make interesting structures using building bricks. They describe in detail the purpose of their structures. Teachers move between the activities asking questions, encouraging children to explore and extend their ideas. Children sustain their interest very well, sharing toys and working well together. When writing, they form letters carefully because the teacher has prepared the materials well and children are able to make a very good attempt at copying their names. They use a range of writing tools and are encouraged to hold their writing tools and place their paper appropriately so that letters are well-formed. There are good opportunities for children to use an interesting range of large and small equipment in their outdoor play. The playground assumes a range of different themes which are very well planned so that play and tasks are different and cater for a variety of interests. They are sensitive to each other's needs and use the equipment and space with care. Children are encouraged to use large spaces and explore the way they can use it in developing a range of movements. By the time children reach reception, they dress and undress themselves for physical education. The very good use of a taped programme about the toy maker encourages children to refine their listening skills.

Creative development

81. Excellent provision enables children to explore an extended range of creative experiences. All children, including those with special needs, will attain the expected standards in this area by the time they leave the reception class. Children in reception and nursery join together and sing a range of songs where they are accompanied on the piano. They sing well and in tune, recognising tunes to fit new words and rhythms which they enjoy and incorporate into their singing. They listen carefully for the introduction and join in at the correct point. There are other opportunities to use a range of instruments so that children can make their own music and perform in the activity sessions. Children are stimulated with a wide range of ideas; these include exploring different textures of paint, water play, model making, colour mixing, and tactile experiences where different consistencies of liquids run through their fingers and make patterns. In all activities children are encouraged to discuss their efforts and describe what it does by well focussed questions and supportive comment. Children gain increasing confidence and are ready to describe their favourite experience of the day and what they would like to achieve next time. In the reception class, children use the creative opportunities to support their mathematical and language development. The achievement of creating a symmetrical pattern and describing their work in mathematical terms is good. Children take time and care with their work and when it is finished they are very proud of it and eager to share it with others. These are well planned opportunities so that children make connections in their learning as well as developing a wide range of creative skills.

ENGLISH

Strengths:

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge;
- basic skills are taught very well;

- stimuli for writing are relevant and interesting;
- good teaching helps all pupils achieve well;
- pupils' very good attitudes towards their work.

Areas for improvement:

- Marking;
- handwriting and presentation;
- making meaningful links to develop literacy through and in other subjects;
- use of ICT especially in literacy sessions.

82. Standards are above average across the school and are similar to those noted at the last inspection.

83. In the school's first year of National Curriculum testing for Year 6, results were similar to those attained in the highest five per cent of all schools in the country. Inspection evidence indicates standards are above average and all pupils are achieving well; however, inspection evidence indicates there will not be so many pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in this year group.

84. Over time, Year 2 normally attain well above average standards in reading and writing which compare very favourably with similar schools. Attainment in writing is particularly good, especially for boys. Inspection evidence indicates that standards may not be as high in 2003 as there is a significant proportion of pupils with special educational needs.

85. Pupils have very good attitudes towards their work in English. Across the school, standards in speaking and listening are above those expected. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers and each other. They are very confident in giving their opinions as in an excellent Year 5 lesson where pupils evaluated a range of instructions for various products. Pupils in Year 2 gave their 'oy' rhymes, such as annoy, destroy, very confidently and, by listening very carefully, most could distinguish when a word did not rhyme.

86. Basic literacy skills are taught very well and exceptionally well in reception. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and very good understanding of efficient methods to teach basic letter sounds to help pupils spell independently. Basic punctuation is also taught thoroughly so that the foundations for success in writing are well established. Basic reading skills are, again, taught very well so that the love of stories young children develop in the nursery can be exploited when they learn to read for themselves, using letter sounds and context clues to help them.

87. Throughout, all pupils show great enthusiasm for reading. They enjoy being read to and reading for themselves. Pupils of all capabilities have just the right level of reading book to enable them to progress at a good rate. They make good use of letter sounds to help them work out unknown words. Better readers 'read between the lines' and discuss what might happen next or what they like or dislike about a character. Year 6 discuss their preferred authors and more able readers elaborate on similarities or differences between authors' styles. Book reviews in Years 5 and 6 demonstrate that pupils read widely and give their opinions on plot and characters in mature depth. Pupils read books that are matched to their reading abilities and interest and make good use of their skills to extract information from non-fiction texts.

88. A strength in the provision for good progress in writing is teachers' setting of exciting and imaginative tasks. Year 2 pupils make good use of punctuation in their 'Night Poems'. Their writing about 'Invisible Wishes' showed how their teacher had encouraged them to think beyond themselves when writing 'I wish my Daddy would come home early' or 'I wish we

could stop the fighting in the world'. Year 4 respond very well to the task of writing a setting of a play featuring an alien in the classroom and make good use of their knowledge of adverbs to make their play openings entice the audience.

89. Overall, teaching and learning are good and particularly good for pupils with special educational needs. These pupils have very good, clear and workable individual education plans and very good support from their teachers and/or learning support assistants. In the very good and excellent lessons observed, the pace was very brisk with a good balance between the teachers' explanations and the time pupils had to get on with their tasks. In other lessons, teachers tend to be driven by the Literacy Framework to pack too much into their lessons and as a consequence, the actual time available for pupils to work, consolidate ideas and practise skills is restricted. Opportunities are missed at the end of lessons to help pupils assess their own learning by making reference to the learning objective for the lesson. Currently, the school is not extending the teaching of literacy through and in other subjects. Opportunities to practise literacy skills in other subjects could make learning more interesting and relevant.

90. Pupils work is always marked but across the school there is an inconsistency in the way teachers refer to pupils' individual targets or make comments for future improvement. There is not an overall scheme for handwriting in the school therefore there are inconsistencies and, in some cases, the quality of presentation does not give an accurate reflection of pupils' abilities. Homework is used effectively to extend pupils' learning and give opportunities for further practice of a particular skill. The amount of reading parents help with is commendable and supports the good progress their children make.

91. During inspection, no use was made of the computer suite during literacy sessions, thus wasting a valuable resource. Currently, many teachers lack confidence in using the school's hard and software, although older pupils are proficient in word processing.

92. Subject management is good with a clear sense of direction for improvement. The co-ordinator analyses data provided about the school and test results and in this way has a good understanding of the standards attained in the school. Over the course of a year, she observes all teachers teach a lesson and this gives a good picture of strengths and areas for improvement and any needs for professional development. Resources for the subject are good and used effectively. The good use of classroom support in the younger age groups is an important factor in the good progress made, especially with writing.

93. There are two libraries, one for the younger pupils and one for Years 3 to 6. Both have an adequate stock of books which reflect pupils' interests and are relatively up-to-date and both have books which are popular and well-worn and could do with replacement. In both libraries, space is at a premium but additional seating and tables would give more opportunities for pupils to browse through books and work in the library.

MATHEMATICS

Strengths:

- Standards are good for the majority of pupils;
- teaching is good in Years 1 and 2 and very good in Years 3 to 6;
- pupils' attitudes are very good;
- subject leadership is good.

Area for improvement:

- Make full use of ICT.

94. Standards are above average across the school.

95. In the 2002 tests for pupils at the end of Year 2, results were well above expectations when compared with the national average and above the average of schools with similar intakes. Current standards for most Year 2 pupils are above those expected nationally. In the 2002 tests for pupils at the end of Year 6 the school's results were well above the national average and above the average of schools with similar intakes. The evidence gained from the current inspection concurs with these standards. The trend of improvement is above the national average. No significant difference was noted between the attainment of girls and boys. Standards are broadly similar to those in place at the time of the last inspection in 1997. Each area identified for improvement at the last inspection has been addressed successfully.

96. Higher attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Pupils in Year 2 achieve well, attaining standards that are above average. Pupils also achieve well in Year 6. Achievement is greatest in Years 5 and 6 because of the good and usually very good quality of teaching, particularly the very effective classroom management, lessons that proceed at a very good pace and the very good pupil attitudes and behaviour. Achievement is good overall because of the organisation of groups of pupils within the classroom, based on their prior attainment and current needs and the very good attitudes towards mathematics displayed by most pupils.

97. By the end of Year 2, many are able to add together mentally three numbers, which have been set out in a horizontal line. Other pupils, including higher attaining pupils, can write numbers up to 100 in figures and in words. They can read and write times of the day with confidence. Higher attaining pupils use terms such as quarter to and quarter past with consistent accuracy. Pupils can interpret data and draw conclusions from the results. Pupils can explain the characteristics of even numbers and multiples of five. Higher attaining pupils are confident in application of their knowledge and understanding of mathematics to solve everyday problems. For example, they can calculate mentally the total cost of three items that each cost 30p and know that they would receive 10p change from £1.

98. By the end of Year 6, pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are developed effectively. Most pupils are confident with using number. They calculate accurately using large numbers, have a very good sense of place value and recognise equivalent fractions and percentages. Pupils have a clear understanding of different mathematical shapes and can explain confidently the properties of various regular and irregular shapes at a sophisticated level. For example, higher attaining pupils recognise that a parallelogram has two pairs of parallel sides and two pairs of opposite angles that are equal. Pupils use previous knowledge well and confidently apply this to areas of work which are new, through mathematical investigation. Pupils work well together to look for and try out new ideas.

99. Pupils develop speaking and listening skills effectively in mathematics. There is appropriate emphasis on the development of specific subject vocabulary and there are good opportunities for pupils to learn through investigations in mathematics lessons. This provides the opportunity for pupils to tease out their thoughts and develop their mathematical ideas. Whilst pupils are familiar with and confident in the use of ICT, there are currently few opportunities to develop their skills in this area in mathematics. The school is aware of this and the purchase and implementation of appropriate software is a priority for improvement.

100. Pupil attitudes towards mathematics are very good. Most pupils work at a good pace and most are attentive and well behaved. They work effectively both individually and in small groups. Pupils' relationships with teachers and with each other are very good.

101. The quality of teaching is very good overall. It is good or very good in Years 1 and 2. In Years 3 to 6 it is very good and sometimes excellent. Where the teaching is very good or better, lessons are very well planned and structured. In these lessons pupils are set clear objectives, which they understand, there are very clear expectations for behaviour which are shared with pupils and lessons take place at a very good pace starting with brisk sessions of mental arithmetic, which encourage and motivate pupils. At the end of these lessons teachers' provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on what they have learned. Teachers group pupils effectively and grade work to provide appropriate individual challenge.

102. Pupils' written work is often well presented and most is marked and sometimes supported by positive remarks. For older pupils there are constructive comments to indicate to pupils what they need to do to improve. Teachers assess and record pupil progress each half term. This information is used to set targets for improvement. It is not, as yet, used consistently through the school to set individual targets to challenge pupils.

103. Support staff play a significant role in helping pupils to focus closely on their work and sort out their mathematical ideas. The school wisely makes the greatest use of support staff with the younger pupils. This is particularly beneficial for pupils who have special educational needs. This approach makes a significant contribution to the good progress made by pupils in Years 1 and 2. Teachers ensure that the staff who support pupils are clear about what is to be learned.

104. The co-ordinator provides good leadership of the subject. She has ensured that all the issues identified at the time of the last inspection have been addressed. The co-ordinator regularly monitors teachers' planning and reviews pupils' work, providing feedback and agreeing targets for improvement with staff. Observation of teaching has taken place and has been used to identify areas for development. The school encourages the involvement of parents through the provision of appropriate homework although it is not used consistently through the school to consolidate and reinforce what is learned at school. Parents provide good support for pupils with their learning at home.

105. There is a good level of resources for mathematics, including helpful materials for pupils. Resources are accessible to both staff and pupils. The resource priority is to provide a good range of software to support the teaching and learning of mathematics through ICT.

SCIENCE

Strengths:

- Good teaching and learning;
- pupils' very good behaviour and attitudes;
- good leadership and management is having a positive impact on standards;

Areas for improvement:

- Improve pupils' skills in scientific enquiry;
- raise the standards attained by higher attaining pupils;
- develop teachers' skills in assessing science.

106. Standards for Year 2 pupils are in line with those expected. In Year 6, standards are above.

107. Inspection evidence shows that Year 2 pupils attain standards which are in line with those expected. At the last inspection standards were judged to be above expectations. Analysis of teacher assessments over the last four years shows a slow decline in the number of pupils achieving the higher than expected Level 3 in science. Factors contributing to this decline are: teachers' subject knowledge of scientific enquiry; teachers' assessment of pupils' knowledge and understanding; and higher attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 over the last four years, show little difference between the attainment of girls and boys. This is the first year that the school has had national test results for pupils in Year 6, and these were well above those found nationally. Inspection evidence shows standards are above those found nationally. National test results for Year 6 pupils, show girls performed better than boys. Standards noted during the inspection did not show a difference between the attainment of girls and boys.

108. Pupils in Year 1 and 2 make good progress. Examination of pupils' work shows that they undertake a good range of experiments for different aspects of their work. For instance, they have investigated teeth and eating, the properties of materials, light, electricity, movement and friction. No lessons were observed in Year 1 or 2 during the inspection, but in discussions Year 2 pupils were keen to talk about their work in science and demonstrated good subject knowledge for their age. They had enjoyed finding out about friction by moving a car over different surface and explained that the car moved best on the smooth surface. Although they do not record how to carry out a fair test, they can explain at least one way to do this. They describe how to make a simple circuit and show accurate drawings of their circuits. They know some of the dangers of electricity. However, higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged, mainly because of the frequent use of easy worksheets, even for recording experiments.

109. Between Years 3 and 6 pupils make good progress. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when progress was noted as satisfactory. Lower attaining pupils make good progress in science. However, the progress of higher attaining pupils is satisfactory only, because the work they are given does not extend their knowledge and understanding. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 carry out a suitable variety of experiments. They use appropriate equipment, make observations and measurements and record their findings. For example, pupils in Year 6 learnt about the upthrust force of water on submerged objects. They made a number of predictions, based on their own ideas, about what would happen to an object's weight when it was submerged in water. During the investigation, they took careful measurements with a forcemeter and recorded these. Although no mention was made about carrying out a fair test, all pupils were able to explain how they were doing this. Examination of pupils' work shows higher attaining pupils are not consistently relating their predications, or interpretations of their results, to scientific ideas. They do not always check to see if their method was reliable. Pupils demonstrate good use of scientific terms.

110. Teaching is good throughout the school. In Years 3 to 6, half of all lessons seen were very good, which is an improvement since the last inspection, when teaching was judged satisfactory. Teachers' subject knowledge is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2, and good in Years 3 to 6. They make consistent use of practical activities to help pupils develop their knowledge and understanding. Teachers provide clear instructions and tell their pupils what they will be

learning. They convey high expectations through skilful questioning. Teachers' planning is good, but does not always include how higher attaining pupils will be extended. Where teaching is very good, subject knowledge is secure, expectations are high and teachers use well paced questions to allow pupils to extend their understanding and, as a result, pupils make very good progress. Teachers convey enthusiasm for science, and are quick to praise pupils. Pupils' behaviour is very good. They show interest in science activities. They work well together in groups, sharing tasks and taking turns. Their finished work is not always neatly presented. When teaching is satisfactory, teachers do not provide enough challenge for higher attaining pupils and use too many worksheets. They do not encourage pupils to identify more than one or two ways of making a test fair, nor to relate their predications and interpretations. Pupils' work is marked regularly, but there is inconsistency in the amount of comment made to help pupils know what they have to do to improve. Occasionally marking is not scientifically accurate, particularly in Years 1 and 2. In Years 3 to 6 pupils complete revision sheets for homework, but they are not given the opportunity for independent study.

111. The co-ordinator provides good leadership and management in science. She has introduced an appropriate scheme of work, based on government guidelines. This has helped improve the amount of practical work undertaken by pupils. She has studied samples of pupils' work and observed pupils in lessons, and from this has identified areas that need improvement. Teacher assessment in science is satisfactory overall, although teachers are not as accurate in their assessments of pupils' knowledge and understanding, as they should be, especially for high attaining pupils likely to attain the higher Level 3 or 5. Resources for the subject are good and in the main, used well; however, little use is made of ICT to enhance pupils' learning in science. For instance, the school has sensing equipment, which is infrequently used.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Strengths:

- Good standards in Year 6;
- planning including cross curricular links is good;
- subject leadership is very good.

Areas for improvement:

- Make full use of ICT.

112. Standards are in line with those expected for Year 2 pupils and above those expected for Year 6.

113. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Improvements have been achieved through a curriculum with greater breadth, improved resources and teachers who are more knowledgeable and confident. Virtually all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. The school provides a range of activities and experiences for pupils to acquire appropriate skills in choosing and using a variety of tools and materials. Good links are made with other subjects, for example, science when making hot air balloons, so that new learning in one subject reinforces learning in another.

114. By the end of Year 2, skills and techniques are developing well. Pupils measure and cut accurately and assemble and join materials, incorporating a moving part. All pupils show very sensible attitudes to their work and support assistants are very well employed in helping the slower workers. Pupils in Year 1, studying household equipment from the past in history made irons, practising the basic skills of scoring, cutting and joining materials together. Pupils in Year 2 follow carefully the step by step stages involved in making a wheeled vehicle, using dowel for axles to enable their vehicles to move. They can describe how they designed,

evaluated and modified their models. By the end of Year 2, pupils have satisfactorily covered all aspects of the designing and making criteria.

115. By the end of Year 6, pupils have learnt well and are able to work with much more independence. Pupils are planning well, applying their good knowledge and understanding, and working confidently and safely with tools and materials. In their planning they identify suitable materials and research, through disassembling, the process of making gloves. They are interested and industrious and their ability to assemble materials is much improved. Pupils in Year 5 use their science knowledge in designing and making hot air balloons and in making musical instruments draw on knowledge gained in science and music. Pupils in Year 6 use the correct technical terms in their planning and discussion. For example, pupils in Year 6 are confident in their use of specific vocabulary such as “pulley, cog and axle” when planning three fairground rides with a focus on appearance, rotation and electrical circuits. Their accuracy in measuring is enhanced by the work undertaken in numeracy.

116. From examples of work, displays and discussions with teachers and pupils, the quality of teaching is judged to be good. The activities selected are well chosen to develop skills, as well as to achieve effective models. The design activities challenge pupils to think creatively as well as practically. The provision of tasks that require co-operation enables pupils to discover together and learn from one another. Teachers use their improved knowledge to teach and develop skills and usually provide interesting and challenging activities. The teachers’ own increased confidence leads to higher expectations of what their pupils will achieve. All these factors have made significant contribution to the improved standards being achieved. They use the school’s resources well, prepare materials and demonstrate techniques that promote pupils’ learning and progress. Planning mainly follows nationally agreed guidelines. Teachers use their own informal assessments to build on what pupils already know.

117. The subject is very well managed. The co-ordinator has very good subject knowledge and supports her colleagues very well. She monitors teachers’ planning in the subject in order to ensure progression and coverage throughout the school. A national scheme tailored to meet the needs of the school, with a progressive development of pupils’ skills and capabilities has been introduced. Appropriate tools and resources have been purchased and staff expertise has been developed well.

ART AND DESIGN

Strengths:

- Pupils experience a wide range of activities using a variety of starting points and materials;
- pupils’ behaviour and attitudes;
- the positive impact of the co-ordinator.

Areas for improvement:

- Monitor pupils’ progress throughout the school;
- raise standards by making better use of sketchbooks to record observations accurately and develop ideas;
- develop the use of computers as a tool to develop ideas and designs
- identify more linkages with other subjects, including using art from other ethnic cultures.

118. Across the school, standards are in line with those expected as was noted at the time of the last inspection.

119. It is clear from the attractive displays of art and design around the school that pupils experience a good range of activities, often linked to other subjects such as history. However, no use is made of art and design from other ethnic cultures.

120. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2. They are introduced to different media and techniques. For example in a Year 1 lesson, pupils were shown some pictures of sculpture by Elizabeth Frink and Henry Moore. They discussed what they liked, and gave reasons why. They produced some good models, to match their favourite sculptures, demonstrating good observational skills and familiarity with handling clay effectively. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils designed a storyboard about a cat, linked to their work in literacy. Some pupils explored using press prints as a technique, while others used cartoon style illustrations. Pupils explained how they were using different line thickness to create specific effects, such as thick lines to make figures stand out. They were aware of how to use perspective, by varying the size, and where they placed objects and figures. They worked hard, and even when things were not going well with printing, they persevered.

121. Pupils in Years 3 and 6 continue to make good progress. They build on the knowledge and skills they developed in Years 1 and 2 about particular artists and styles. For example, in a Year 3 lesson, pupils explained that Mondrian's work used lines and primary colours to create abstract images, whereas Van Gogh painted real things and people. Pupils made attractive designs in the style of Mondrian, using a paint program on the computer. Year 5 pupils demonstrate good colour mixing and painting techniques to create different moods. For instance, after a visit to Walton-on-the-Naze, Year 5 pupils captured their observations of the seascape using a variety of approaches. The recent introduction of sketchbooks in Years 3 to 6 has not had a positive impact on pupils' learning. Pupils' work is of poor quality, mostly lacking accurate observation and little variation in use of line and tone. There is no evidence of pupils developing their own ideas. Pupils say that they rarely use their sketchbooks.

122. Teaching is good overall. Judgements about teaching also take into account examination of pupils' work, the school's art and design portfolio and the numerous displays around the school. Teachers' subject knowledge and planning are satisfactory. Planning does not always distinguish between activities and learning outcomes. What characterises good teaching is planning which identifies learning objectives and takes account pupils' different abilities, clear demonstrations of techniques, pupils being made aware of what they will learn and time to reflect on this at the end of the lesson. Additionally, the care with which teachers display work, shows pupils their work is valued. Good use is made of a variety of stimulating starting points, often arising from pupils' work in other subjects. As yet this is not formally planned, but occurs in a rather haphazard way. Little use is made of ICT and only some use of textiles and 3D.

123. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable, and has had a positive impact on teaching and learning in art and design. She has recently introduced a scheme of work based on Government guidelines. Teachers who are non specialists have been provided with new guidance materials. The co-ordinator has already identified her own professional development needs and priorities for the subject. This will include developing teachers' subject knowledge, particularly the use of sketchbooks. The co-ordinator has set up a school portfolio and class portfolios, to provide a means of monitoring standards across the school. Additionally, teachers have just started to record pupils' progress at the end of each unit. There are sufficient resources for art and design in the school, including the recent addition of a kiln, provided by the Parents Association. The introduction of a Pottery Club, in Year 1, organised by voluntary helpers, is much enjoyed and appreciated by pupils. Pupils are developing good skills in working with clay.

GEOGRAPHY

Strengths:

- Pupils' knowledge of maps and how to use them;
- the range of materials and resources which are used effectively to pursue lines of enquiry about geographical features.

Areas for improvement:

- Extend the use of local environmental opportunities;
- use a variety of methods to record pupils knowledge and understanding;
- improve the presentation of pupils' work;
- extend assessment opportunities to measure pupils' achievements.

124. Standards are above average for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils.

125. Standards at the previous inspection in Year 4 were good and these standards have been sustained and extended to pupils now in Year 6.

126. By the end of Year 2, pupils have studied the human and physical features of their locality. Barnaby Bear has begun his travels to other countries with pupils and staff. His visits are linked to a world map and postcards from children are used to describe the places he has visited. It was not possible during inspection to observe any lesson in Years 1 and 2. However, displays and discussions with pupils indicate they are aware of their local area and display an understanding about how to make a plan and recognise key areas in the local area and locate them on a large map. The good use of photographs and familiar areas increase pupils' understanding about the purpose of maps and how to plan a simple route.

127. The quality of teaching is good overall, lessons are well planned and teachers use a good range of strategies to encourage pupils' learning including the very good support which is offered to pupils with special educational needs. These pupils make very good progress.

128. Pupils are very confident by the time they are in Year 5 and have a good knowledge where they can locate mountain ranges, countries, continents and oceans throughout the world. In a study about mountain climates, the teacher uses a range of questions to assess their knowledge and understanding before moving into more detail about how to research further geographical features. Pupils are very clear about what they are expected to achieve. They begin to pose and phrase their own geographical questions about mountain climates, for example "Do you think we could make moisturise a bit clearer?" or "What sort of weather conditions prevail?". They discuss in pairs, and work in groups to make a presentation to the class. They use note taking skills to good effect. The good use of a variety of tasks ensures pupils work hard and concentrate well. The high expectations of the teacher about the quality of pupils' responses using the appropriate geographical terms is very good. The lesson moves at a good pace and retains the interest and enthusiasm of all pupils, including those with special educational needs who are well supported so that they make a significant contribution to the lesson. Year 6 are confident about using a range of maps to identify local water resources and locate specific local features. They recognise, through the teacher using a good range of questions, the significance of scale and which map is appropriate for their purpose.

129. There are clear aims and objectives which include comparisons with local and other areas. A recent project about Walton-on-the-Naze indicates that in addition to developing pupils' geographical skills, links are made with other areas of the curriculum. Pupils collect the information on worksheets and use photographic evidence to make comparisons. In a series of brochures, pupils present a series of ideas about the two localities. They use the

data well and present interesting notes on the merits of both Borehamwood and Walton-on-the-Naze. The quality of presentation and spelling does not reflect the quality of research and effort pupils make to present the information and data collected within their geography topic. The co-ordinator has been in post four weeks and, as such, has not had time to make an impact. Resources for the subject are satisfactory. The use of resources local to the school is not yet used to full advantage to help pupils observe local economic and human geographical features.

HISTORY

Strengths:

- Pupils' understanding about the differences between past and present;
- teachers use good, challenging questions to promote discussion to help pupils extend their knowledge and understanding.

Areas for improvement:

- Use and develop further links with other areas of the curriculum;
- increase writing opportunities so that pupils record their own thoughts and ideas instead of relying on worksheets;
- more rigorous and helpful marking so that pupils know how to improve the quality of their work;
- use the good practice seen during inspection to extend and consolidate pupils' learning through role play and discussions.

130. Standards are around those expected for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are attaining standards that are above those at the time of the last inspection.

131. By Year 2, pupils have an appropriate knowledge and understanding of life in the past. They know that anything that happened yesterday is history. They recognise major events and principal characters within a period of time. Pupils in Year 2 are confident about who is important in their lives and recognise the significance of Jubilee year and how life has changed in the recent past. They are very much aware of, and show considerable understanding about the Great Fire of London and people who were important in that era. The teacher used a wide range of strategies and linked to other areas of the curriculum to promote and extend their knowledge about famous people. The use of challenging questions enabled pupils to write interesting eye witness accounts about the Fire. Pupils use the time line well and refer to the classroom resources to describe how the Fire began and how they would have felt if they had been Samuel Pepys. The quality of their presentation styles and handwriting marred the quality of the information and pupils' enthusiasm in writing the account. In discussion they describe the events clearly and with feeling about how it would have been at that time.

132. The clear information, the good use and variety of experiences which the teachers plan within their lessons enables pupils to discuss and work with each other to extend their understanding about life in various periods of time. Year 3 pupils use drama and role play to consolidate their knowledge and understanding about how we learn from the past. Their role play promoted by very good teaching and encouragement confirmed pupils' understanding about the importance of archaeology and how they can use the information which they have discovered from a variety of sources. Pupils pose interesting comments and portray carefully the burial at Sutton Hoo and how people in Anglo Saxon time lived their lives

133. Teaching in history is sound. There is good coverage of the guidelines for the subject in each year group. Teachers have good subject knowledge but the emphasis on using worksheets in some year groups does not enable higher attaining pupils to extend their personal writing. The expectations about what the pupils can achieve are sometimes too low. There are missed opportunities especially in Years 3 to 6 for pupils to communicate their ideas and findings through a range of purposeful writing.

134. Pupils enjoy their history lessons and those with special educational needs contribute well to the discussions; the tasks they are given ensure they achieve success and develop their understanding of the subject. Behaviour is good because the lessons are varied, well paced and hold the pupils' interest.

135. The co-ordinator provides sound leadership and is continuing to develop the subject. She has recently begun to address the issues around assessing pupils' knowledge and understanding. The subject is a priority in the school development plan and the curriculum content is under review. The initiative to model high quality displays and encourage pupils to look carefully to find information is good. Pupils enjoy observing and relate to knowledge they have learnt earlier. Resources are satisfactory. The school makes good use of visits and visitors to provide additional support and harness pupils' enthusiasm. There are no formal procedures to assess pupils' work and, at present, no opportunity to monitor teaching and learning in the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Strengths:

- Pupils' good behaviour and attitudes;
- word processing skills are above expectations in Year 6.

Areas for improvement:

- Raise standards further;
- increase the use of ICT hard and software, and make full use of the computer suite;
- improve leadership and management;
- develop the use of databases, spreadsheets and the Internet;
- develop assessment of pupils' work.

136. Standards are around those expected for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils.

137. Given the standards attained in English, maths and science, it is clear that standards are not as good as they should be. The main reasons for this are:

- Staff lack confidence and expertise in using the school's hard and software;
- pupils do not have enough opportunities to use computers;
- there is not a consistent approach to developing ICT through other subjects;
- lack of strong leadership.

138. The school has had a computer suite for the last two years, and each class has two lessons per week.

139. Pupils in Year 1 and 2 make satisfactory progress. They gain confidence in using the computer for a variety of purposes and present information in different ways. Year 2 use different fonts, and underline text; they use full stops and capital letters and have explored different font colours. In science they recorded, and saved work on foods in a table, and then represented this as a simple bar chart. In Year 2, pupils have used computers to link to work in other subjects, such as: history; science; art and design and English. For example, when they studied the Fire of London, pupils used a draw program to create speech bubbles, to

which they added text. They are proud of their work, and the class book of poems. Year 1 pupils' mouse and keyboard skills are below the standards expected, especially lower attaining pupils. With help they save their work, and know that the computer can store information as pictures, text and sound. Pupils are attentive and well behaved. They treat the computer suite with care.

140. Between Years 3 and 6 pupils continue to make satisfactory progress. They make limited use of computers in their work in other subjects. However computers are not used much at all for literacy and numeracy. In Year 6, pupils have good word processing skills. They use the mouse and keyboard effectively. In their project about rivers, Year 6 pupils are preparing a multimedia presentation using PowerPoint. They make good use of many features of the program to enhance their presentation. For example, they vary the effects they want to achieve, incorporating pictures, text and sound, and trying to suit this to their audience. They search for information about a topic on the Internet. However, many pupils' skills are limited. For example, they do not know the number of responses their search has found, nor are they adept at narrowing their search.

141. Across the school, pupils' learning is constrained by the limited use of computers. They do not regularly use databases, modelling programs or spreadsheets. Pupils show interest in their computer work, they are attentive and use computers carefully. On occasions, higher attaining pupils are not making as much progress as they should, because the tasks provided do not extend their learning.

142. During the inspection, all teaching was satisfactory or better; this is an improvement since the last inspection. Two-thirds of lessons were good or better. The reason why the good teaching observed is not resulting in higher standards is because pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise, refine, and consolidate their skills. Where teaching is good, teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan lessons so that learning is broken into small steps. They give clear instructions and demonstrations, but also give pupils time to try out their ideas. They show enthusiasm for the activities, and maintain a brisk pace. They utilise pupils who already have good knowledge and extend this further. They have high expectations of what pupils can do, and use skilful questioning to draw out pupils' knowledge. Where teaching is satisfactory, teachers' subject knowledge and confidence is not always secure. Planning is not effective in clearly identifying what pupils will learn, and no extension activities are identified to challenge higher attaining pupils. Teachers do not give pupils time to explain their learning or try out new ideas. Sometimes activities do not match the time available.

143. The computer suite is well resourced with sixteen computers, four printers and a scanner. There is an adequate range of software, except for maths, and for pupils with special education needs. Each classroom has a computer, though these do not always have the same software as those in the suite. There is no monitoring of the use of the suite and it is under-used. It is not used during literacy or numeracy sessions which take up most mornings. It is not used during lunchtimes or after school. Computers in classrooms are not always used to advantage.

144. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The co-ordinator has not had specific time or training for the role. ICT is not identified as a high priority on the school's development plan, therefore there is no non-contact time for the co-ordinator to check up on what goes on in the school. Assessment is unsatisfactory, and, at present there is no clear picture of standards in the school. The co-ordinator has introduced a class ICT portfolio for samples of pupils' work to be stored, but at present the work is not matched to national curriculum levels, and therefore of limited use. She has also put in place a scheme of work based on government guidelines, which is helping to improve the range of activities provided.

Assessment procedures have recently been implemented, but as yet this is not fully developed. The school has no security policy for ICT, but uses a filtered Internet service, to ensure pupils' protection. The sending and receiving of email is undeveloped for reasons of security, and at present Year 6 pupils can only send and receive email with staff at the school. Teaching staff have received training through the Government scheme. Unfortunately this was not related to the teachers' needs and therefore not helpful in extending teachers' expertise. The new headteacher has identified that teachers need more training, and is currently organising for this to happen.

MUSIC

145. Due to timetabling, only one lesson was observed during the inspection. This lesson provides insufficient evidence on which to form a fair and accurate judgement about standards, the quality of teaching and learning and improvement since the last inspection. No work was available to show pupils have listened to and appraised music, although pupils listen attentively to music by famous composers as they enter and leave assemblies. Opportunities are missed, however, as the name of the piece of music and composer is not shared with pupils or exhibited for them to read for themselves. The headteacher has identified the need to provide more opportunities for pupils to experience music from other cultures.

146. In assemblies, pupils sing well. The school is very fortunate to have highly accomplished musicians to give their time voluntarily to run the school choir. A short observation of the choir practising at dinnertime showed standards here were high. Learning was great fun. Older pupils sang with enthusiasm, could sing in harmony and switched easily from one tempo to another. They supported the younger members very thoughtfully. It was clear that both boys and girls of all ages are very keen to be part of this highly professional group.

147. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable but has only recently taken over the leadership and as such has not had time to evaluate standards and provision for the subject across the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Strengths:

- Teaching is good or better and often excellent;
- pupils' attitudes are very good;
- subject leadership is very good.

Areas for improvement:

- Use of the grounds for athletics following completion of building work;
- procedures for assessment.

148. Standards are above those expected for Year 2 and Year 6.

149. Good standards in physical education throughout the school have been maintained since the last inspection. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. All the sections of physical education identified in the national curriculum are provided for. Swimming is undertaken regularly from Year 2 onwards and standards achieved by the time the pupils leave the school are good. Almost all the pupils, with very few exceptions, achieve the minimum requirements, with a significant proportion attaining standards higher than expected, often engaging in swimming as a voluntary sporting activity.

150. Nearly all pupils in Years 1 and 2 develop an appropriate response to instructions, changing and stopping on command. They develop understanding of the importance of warming up at the beginning of lessons and develop ways of moving in different directions at varying speeds. Pupils explore and repeat simple ball skills to show basic control and co-ordination. When practising basic techniques, they look to improve their performance. They develop confidence in performing in front of the whole class.

151. By the time they leave the school they have a good knowledge and understanding of fitness and healthy living. In Year 5 and 6 pupils were completely engrossed and concentrated well. By the end of the lessons all pupils had improved their throwing, catching and positional skills. They run and jump with energy and skill, they throw and catch well, They showed awareness of safety and followed instructions immediately. Pupils of all ages understand the need for warming up before, and gentle cooling down after, exercise. The pupils in Year 5 take it in turns to lead the class, in a very mature way, in their warm up exercises and clearly understand what they are doing and why.

152. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and make good progress in physical development. The school is thoroughly inclusive in its approach to physical education. All activities are open to all pupils irrespective of gender or background.

153. Pupils have very good attitudes towards physical education. They enjoy the active and sometimes competitive nature of the subject and respond well to the tasks set, playing co-operatively together. Pupils benefit from a broad range of activities. Pupils enjoy opportunities for physical activity and express themselves confidently. The pupils in their relationships with one another follow the very good relationships between the teachers and pupils. They are generous in their applause for success and helpful and courteous when they make observations about each other's performance, encouraging each other to do better, such as when a groups of Year 5 pupils were developing their throwing and catching skills.

154. All the teaching of physical education is good or better. Teachers have a very good understanding of the subject and their teaching of basic skills is good. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own performance, to become self-critical in attempting to improve the standards of their skills. This they do in an increasingly mature way. The enthusiasm of the teachers for the subject is conveyed to the pupils and maintains their motivation for the subject. Procedures for assessment are informal and inconsistent between classes.

155. The subject co-ordinator is enthusiastic and has sensible plans for the development of the subject and to extend the experience of pupils outside school. She monitors teachers' planning and provides feedback and advice. The nationally recognised scheme of work is being used, with suitable adaptations to make it relevant to the school. The quality of learning resources is good and used well. Extra-curricular activities are offered, including netball and football taken by parents on a Saturday. The curriculum is further extended by activities with other schools such as taking part in football matches. The local rugby union football club has provided coaching and the pupils benefit considerably from that input. Physical education plays its part in the provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, by enabling the pupils to express themselves, handle challenging situations, learn to play by the rules and to work and play together.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Strengths:

- The clear understanding and knowledge of the subject pupils bring to the discussions.

Areas for improvement:

- Extend the variety of opportunities so that pupils visit other places of worship as well as local churches;
- create further opportunities so that pupils can learn from other traditions and beliefs;
- extend writing opportunities to record pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject.

156. Standards are in line with those expected for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils. These standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

157. Examination of pupils' work, displays and discussions with younger pupils indicate their knowledge and understanding of the subject is satisfactory. In Year 2, pupils understand the Christmas story and that the local church they have visited is a place of worship. They recognise different faiths have their own traditions, but do not recognise the differences between Judaism and Christianity.

158. By Year 6, pupils recognise other beliefs and some traditions of other faiths particularly Judaism and the links with Christianity. They display a satisfactory knowledge of and some understanding about other faiths, particularly Sikhism and Islam. Pupils' knowledge about other religions is satisfactory; their understanding of learning from other religions is not. Pupils are not relating religious traditions and beliefs to the way people who follow a particular religion choose to live their lives.

159. Pupils contribute well to the discussion in the lessons. In a Year 5 lesson, their contribution to the challenging questions from the teacher indicates a mature and knowledgeable understanding of the Christmas story and its impact on Christianity. They recognise the significance between different accounts of the story and discuss the links with Judaism and the Old Testament. The emphasis on giving information and developing pupils' understanding through the teacher using clear and focussed questions is good. In good lessons the teacher provides suggestions to extend pupils' ideas in paired and group discussion and gives a set time for this to be accomplished. These strategies enable pupils to contribute to the lesson effectively. All lessons seen during the inspection were related to the Christmas story. The development and extension in each year group was good. Pupils in Year 2 concentrated on the giving and receiving aspects of the story which promoted interesting and perceptive responses from pupils in the form of simple poems about 'gifts' they would like to receive and the ones they would like to give.

"Peace in the world"
"A hug for my Mum"
"To have lots of friends"

160. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils recognised the theme of light is common to many faiths. They articulate very clearly using the teacher's well directed questions to explore the links carefully so that comparisons could be made and discussed in small groups. The quality of discussion is good; pupils listen carefully to each other. Pupils with special educational needs work hard and are well supported by their teacher and classroom support assistants. They assist pupils to draw conclusions from the discussion and contribute well to the report back session which clearly focused on what they had learnt from the theme. They make very good progress in relation to their starting point.

161. The quality of the limited amount of written work examined does not reflect the standards pupils exhibit in their discussions. Recording their learning in written form is unsatisfactory. Pupils' work is marked but comments are not made to let pupils know what they can do to improve. Presentation does not reflect pupils' knowledge and understanding.

162. Teachers' subject knowledge is satisfactory and the scheme of work supports their teaching well. The school makes visits to the local church and has a range of resources including video material which are satisfactory and used well. However, these do not extend to the cultural heritage and traditions of other faiths. The infrequent opportunities to visit different places of worship limits pupils' awareness of the diversity and richness of cultural traditions. The use of ICT is very limited and does not expand the skills pupils can use in researching information about all religions. The co-ordinator has a number of other responsibilities but retains a keen commitment to the subject. The review of the syllabus has been implemented and she is now beginning to address the issues of assessment of pupils' learning in religious education which will contribute to planning future developments in learning from religion.