

INSPECTION REPORT

COLNEY HEATH JMI SCHOOL

St Albans

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117145

Headteacher: Mr A E G Sawyer

Lead inspector: Dr Alan Jarvis

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 24th September 2003

Inspection number: 255867

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 -11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	214
School address:	High Street Colney Heath St Albans
Postcode:	AL4 0NP
Telephone number:	01727 823898
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr. A Sasiak
Date of previous inspection:	8 th June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Colney Heath is an average sized primary school. At the time of the inspection there were 214 boys and girls on roll between the ages of four and 11. Twenty-six children attended the nursery on a part time basis. Pupils live in the local village and surrounding area between St Albans and Hatfield. Overall, pupils come from homes with above average socio-economic circumstances. A below average proportion of pupils were eligible for a free school meal. Seventeen pupils were identified as having special educational needs (SEN), which is also below average. The range of needs included moderate or severe learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties, speech and communication needs. Three pupils had Statements of Special Educational Needs, which is also below average. Most pupils were of white ethnic origin, although there were a small number of white and black African, White and Asian and mixed ethnic pupils. A small number of pupils spoke English as an additional language; few were at an early stage of acquisition. There is an attached nursery. The number of pupils who join or leave the school is below average, but this is concentrated in later years and can have an adverse impact on standards. The school helps to train teachers and works closely with the Colney Heath pre-school group, to assist with children's move to primary school. In 2002 it received awards for the quality of work in the nursery and working with the University of Hertfordshire on its teacher training programme. Attainment on entry in most years is above average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2711	Dr Alan Jarvis	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage Science
9619	Robert Miller	Lay inspector	
1963	Sibani Raychaudhuri	Team inspector	English Art and Design History Geography Religious Education Special Educational Needs English as an additional language
31838	Martyn Williams	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and Communication Technology Design and Technology Music Physical Education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school's effectiveness is good. Its value for money is satisfactory because of its above average expenditure. Achievement is good overall and standards at the end of Year 6 are very high. The majority of pupils do well because of the good teaching which predominates in most classes. Absence lowers the achievement of some pupils. The school's performance in the 2003 National Curriculum tests was very high when compared to that of similar schools, but achievement in class now is not quite as good. Effective leadership and management ensure the school runs well and is constantly improving. The school has the confidence of its parents and the local community in those areas that matter most.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Most groups of pupils do well in many subjects, especially mathematics, science and music but the higher attaining pupils are not always as well challenged as they might be.
- Teaching and learning are consistently good in Years 1, 2, 5 and 6. However, teaching and learning in Years 3 and 4, although satisfactory, lack the pace and challenge of other years.
- A very effective senior management team prioritises developments and sees them through. However, many subject co-ordinators need to have time to monitor teaching and standards in their areas.
- The very good induction arrangements when pupils start school help them settle in quickly and very good links with other schools aid transfer.
- Good teaching in the nursery and reception classes helps children make a strong start.
- Not enough is being done by the school and parents to counteract the decline in attendance.

Satisfactory improvement since the last inspection is evident, which has helped consolidate the school's good effectiveness. Standards in English, mathematics and science have risen. Good achievement has been sustained. Music is still strong. All key issues have been attended to but attendance has declined. Previous weaknesses in management are now strengths. Governance has improved.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	C	A	C	C
Mathematics	D	A	A	A
Science	B	A	B	B

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

Achievement is good overall. It is good in both the nursery and reception classes. Standards are above average in relation to the goals children are expected to reach by the end of reception class in nearly all areas of learning. Emerging standards in writing are a weaker area of literacy. Achievement is good by the end of Year 2. Standards in the present Year 2 are well above average because of the very strong performance in reading, mathematics, science and music. Standards in English are above average and those in writing are stronger. Achievement is satisfactory by the end of Year 6. Stronger gains in learning are made in Years 5 and 6 than in Years 3 and 4. Standards in the 2003 tests were very high with an able group of pupils. In the current Year 6 standards are not quite as high but are still well above average overall. The weakness evident in writing in the 2002 tests has been tackled and standards in English are now above average. Standards in mathematics and

science are now firmly well above average. Standards in music are also a key strength and well above average throughout the school. Most groups of pupils do well in relation to their capabilities but the higher attaining and gifted and talented pupils do not always work to their limits.

Pupils' personal qualities are good overall. Attendance is unsatisfactory, because holidays are taken in term time. Nearly all pupils enjoy coming to school and take a full part in activities. Behaviour is good. Exclusions are very rare. Pupils mature well. Provision for **pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.**

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good.

Teaching and learning are good overall. The teaching of music is very good and sometimes outstanding. Good or better teaching is consistently seen in the nursery and reception classes and Years 1, 2, 5 and 6. These lessons work well because the teachers plan carefully, know their subjects and ensure that tasks are well matched to pupils' needs. Consequently the next level of challenge for pupils is realistic and their learning is productive. However, the higher attaining pupils are not always intellectually challenged through the questions they are asked. Teaching in Years 3 and 4 lacks the pace and challenge seen in other years and consequently pupils learn at a slower rate. Assessment is used well to adapt work to pupils' capabilities and learning needs.

The curriculum is good but particularly strong in mathematics, science and music. ICT is used satisfactorily across subjects. All groups of pupils are included well in the curriculum. Care and guidance are good and there are effective procedures for child protection. Sharper systems could be in place to improve attendance and further improve aspects of health and safety. Very good links have been established with other schools. There are satisfactory links with parents but clearer information could be included in pupils' reports and the timing of consultation evenings should be reviewed.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good.

Leadership is good. There is a clear vision for the future and all staff are working as team to address the small number of weaknesses which have been identified. Management is good overall. This is a combination of a very influential senior management team and effective management of special educational needs, but a need to improve the work of some subject co-ordinators. An effective governing body is helping the school to improve and challenging the staff to do better.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents: Parents are satisfied with the school. Inspectors disagree about their concerns on behaviour, but agree that pupils' reports and consultation with parents could be better.

Pupils: They like school, the environment, find other children friendly and value the school council.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- raise the pitch and pace of teaching in Years 3 and 4 and the challenge given to higher attaining pupils throughout the school
- strengthen the leadership and management of subject co-ordinators, and
- tackle the unsatisfactory attendance.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- monitor the impact of the school's race equality policy.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is good overall but not as strong in Years 3 and 4 as in other years. Pupils reach well above average standards by the end of Year 6 from above average standards on entry.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make a strong start in the nursery and reception and do well by the end of Year 2.
- Standards in Year 2 are very high.
- Standards in mathematics and science have been improving because of teachers focusing their efforts in these areas. This has now been applied to writing, where standards have also improved.
- Standards in music are an important strength of the school.
- Achievement is not as uniformly good in Years 3 and 4 as it is in other years.
- Most pupils do well but higher attaining pupils do not always work to their full capabilities.

Commentary

1. Standards are higher than at the time of the last inspection. They have been rising in line with the national trend. Improvements in English, mathematics and science have been tackled one by one.
2. Children make a good start in the nursery and reception classes. Generally they come in with standards that are above average, although there is a range of needs. Very good induction arrangements and links with parents and teaching ensure that they do very well in their personal, social, and emotional development in both classes. Consistently good teaching in other areas of learning ensures that all groups of children achieve well. The vast majority of children are likely to exceed the goals expected at the end of both the nursery and reception classes, although standards in writing are weaker than other areas in the reception class.
3. Standards have been improving at the end of Year 2. At the last inspection they were average in reading, writing and mathematics. In recent years they have generally been well above average overall. Reading has been a consistent strength. Standards in writing have been falling, but those in mathematics and science have been rising steadily. This pattern is reflected in the first table below, which shows that standards in the 2002 National Curriculum tests in reading and mathematics were well above average. Those in writing were above average.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	17.2 (17.1)	15.8 (15.7)
Writing	14.9 (16.3)	14.4 (14.3)
Mathematics	17.9 (17.1)	16.5 (16.2)

There were 27 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

4. Standards seen in the current Year 2 remain well above average in reading, mathematics and science. Inroads are being made into improving writing, where standards seen were above average. Achievement in Years 1 and 2 is good because teaching is consistently good. Due account is taken of the learning needs of different pupils, with for example the hearing needs of a number of pupils in the current Year 1 being well recognised and addressed. Standards in

music are a further key strength. Pupils achieve very well in this subject because of the very good experiences they receive and exceptionally strong teaching. In information and communication technology (ICT) and art and design, pupils reach above average standards, again because of good teaching. In religious education standards are average and achievement is satisfactory because the work is not pitched at a sufficiently challenging level.

5. Overall, standards at the end of Year 6 in the National Curriculum tests fit a pattern which is well above average. In some years, where the year groups have more pupils with special educational needs or the numbers of pupils changing schools has been higher, standards have been lower. Standards have been rising in line with the national trend but particularly quickly in mathematics. This is despite them being adversely affected by changes in staffing, difficulties in recruiting well qualified teachers and declining attendance.
6. The second table illustrates this. It shows that overall standards in 2002 were well above average, mainly because of a very strong performance in mathematics. Standards in English were above average. Weaknesses in writing, which persisted through Years 3 to 6, lowered the overall performance but were counteracted by a much stronger performance in reading. A very strong performance in mathematics was a direct result of enhanced staff training and a clear focus given to improving standards in this subject. Careful attention to scientific enquiry, and integrating it within all aspects of science work, ensured standards were above average.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.7 (29.9)	27.0 (27.0)
Mathematics	29.2 (29.0)	26.7 (26.6)
Science	29.7 (30.3)	28.3 (28.3)

There were 22 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

7. The trend of improvement continued in the 2003 National Curriculum tests where standards, with a very able group of pupils, were equally very high in English and mathematics. They were the best the school has ever had. A sharper focus on writing helped to improve standards in English and writing in particular. Impressive numbers of pupils reached the higher Level 5, in mathematics and science, helped by good preparation for the tests.
8. Standards seen in the inspection at the end of Year 6 are not quite as high as in the past two years but are still well above average overall; they are above average in English and well above average in mathematics and science. The whole school focus on writing is starting to pay dividends, but further work is needed to embed improvements. Standards in music remain very strong in both singing and performance. The above average standards ICT and art and design are sustained from Year 2, as are the average standards in religious education.
9. Achievement through Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory and not as strong in Years 3 and 4 as in Years 5 and 6. When pupils start in Year 3 their standards are already very high. That sort of level poses a big challenge to teachers to ensure that pupils work at an appropriate level and work at the limits of their capabilities. Planning and teaching ensures that this is done well in Years 5 and 6. Pupils achieve well in these years because the teachers are more experienced, plan work more thoroughly and inject more pace and challenge into pupils' learning. These features are less pronounced in Years 3 and 4 where pupils, although achieving satisfactorily in relation to their capabilities, could achieve better.
10. Overall, achievement is good. In most years, pupils enter the school with above average standards of attainment. By the end of Year 6 standards are well above average. Pupils do very well overall in the National Curriculum tests and compared with similar schools. However, in lessons seen, although pupils generally receive good challenge, in many cases this could be

even stronger. Most groups of pupils, including those with a special educational need (SEN), do well. There is little difference between the standards and achievement of girls and boys, those who speak English as an additional language (EAL) and pupils from different ethnic minority backgrounds. Most Travellers do well, but on occasion some fall behind because of poor attendance. The school does particularly well with pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. Higher attaining pupils do not do as well as they might because questioning and the tasks set do not always push them to their limits. With the exception of music, where a small number of talented musicians are well catered for, the needs of gifted and talented pupils are not identified clearly enough. This is limiting their overall achievement, which is satisfactory in relation to their capabilities.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance is unsatisfactory. Pupils have good attitudes to school and most are able to maintain concentration during lessons and assemblies. They behave well and form good relationships with adults and each other. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance is unsatisfactory but punctuality is good.
- Pupils' personal development is good and they are able to distinguish right from wrong.
- Pupils take responsibility for living harmoniously in the school community.
- Behaviour and relationships are good by pupils of all different backgrounds.
- Pupils do well in terms of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Commentary

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	6.2	School data:	0.6
National data:	5.4	National data:	0.5

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

11. Attendance is unsatisfactory. Although the authorised absence figure has improved over the past year the attendance as a whole remains below that of similar schools nationally. Most parents strive to have their children attend school regularly and on time. However, there is a tendency, as seen in the inspection week, for some to take holidays in term time. The school is not rigorous enough in dissuading parents from this practice. In addition, it does not follow up quickly enough all unexplained absences on a daily basis.
12. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They take a keen interest in the activities provided. Many pupils say they like school and give reasons such as "The teachers have a nice manner and are fair", "Resources are good and our homework is regularly marked" and "Most pupils are kind and well behaved". The younger children in the nursery and reception classes are keen and eager. They respond well to the opportunities provided and are already starting to make choices in their learning. As a result, their personal and social development is advanced for their age. As pupils move through the school they mature well. They become keen to show initiative and willingly take responsibility when given the opportunity. Their personal development is enhanced and their confidence and self-esteem are raised through the good relations that exist in the school. Pupils' good attitudes and behaviour are a major reason why their achievement is good.
13. The school has worked hard in maintaining good behaviour and eliminating poor behaviour and oppressive conduct. The behaviour of all groups of pupils, regardless of their background, is good in lessons, assemblies and during play and lunchtimes. Pupils have welcomed the

recently introduced system of rewards and “warning cards” and are responding positively to their use. This system is starting to have a positive impact on behaviour. Most teachers stimulate a desire in pupils to learn and set high expectations of their conduct. Exclusions are very rare with only one being necessitated in recent years. Many parents and pupils expressed concerns about behaviour. The inspectors found behaviour during the days in school in marked contrast to the picture being painted before the inspection.

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
White – British	182	0
White – any other White background	3	1
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	9	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	3	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

14. Provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. There are carefully prepared assemblies which encourage participation and allow pupils to reflect and pray. Music is used very effectively to uplift pupils spiritually. Pupils have a good understanding of right from wrong and they play their part in living and working harmoniously in the school community. They raise money for charity and are considerate to those less fortunate than themselves. There are close links with the local church but pupils’ awareness of other ways of living and beliefs is also highlighted. Appropriate opportunities are taken to acknowledge and celebrate the Traveller culture, although this could be further highlighted. There is a very good link with a school in India, which has been fostered over a number of years and helps pupils develop an understanding of those who are less fortunate.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching, learning and the curriculum are good. Pupils are well cared for. The school’s partnership with parents is satisfactory. There are very good links with other schools and good partnerships with the community.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall. Good assessment, particularly in English and mathematics, helps meet pupils’ individual needs.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A core of teachers consistently teach well.
- There is scope for teaching in Years 3 and 4 to be quicker and more challenging.
- The teaching of music is a strength of the school. Some is outstanding in quality.
- More challenge could be offered to the higher attaining pupils, especially in Years 3 to 6.
- Despite the concerns of some parents, levels of homework are satisfactory as at the last inspection.

Commentary

15. Good quality teaching has been sustained and consolidated since the last inspection. This is despite constant changes in staff and difficulties with recruitment. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed, whereas previously some was seen in Year 2. The good teaching and learning is the main reason why overall achievement is good and standards are improving. Good training provided to staff has enabled them to keep abreast of developments in teaching and learning. Pupils with special needs, including those with Statements, are effectively supported by class teachers and teaching assistants.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 36 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (3%)	4 (11%)	23 (64%)	8 (22%)	0	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

16. Good planning and assessment and a good vision for how younger children learn are at the heart of the consistently good teaching seen in the nursery and reception classes. Teachers ensure that all groups of children do well through a judicious blend of teacher-directed and pupil-initiated activities. Teachers in Years 1 and 2 pick up the challenge presented by able, well-motivated pupils and ensure that their learning is productive and well matched to individual needs. Effective preparation, enthusiastic presentation, good subject knowledge, probing questioning and effective support from teaching assistants characterise this teaching. Consequently the next level of challenge for pupils is realistic and learning is productive. Learning is often facilitated by the good attitudes to learning that the pupils bring to lessons.
17. Teaching in Years 3 and 4, although satisfactory in many respects, lacks the pace and challenge seen in other years. A common weakness is that tasks are not yet correctly gauged to the level at which pupils are working. For example, in a lesson seen in Year 3 the well above average standards reached by the pupils in the National Curriculum tests was not sufficiently taken into account. Consequently teaching primarily ensured that standards were maintained rather than being advanced in line with pupils' capabilities. Other examples were seen in English, mathematics and science lessons in both years. Previously, some of these year groups have had several changes of teacher. This has also led to instability and slower progress. However, pupils' learning is now on a more stable footing. Investment in staff training and support is being directed by the headteacher to improve teaching and learning to the quality seen in other years.
18. The pace of learning speeds up considerably in Years 5 and 6 where teaching is never less than good and sometimes very good or excellent. Most teaching was good because the effective planning, imaginative range of methods used, very good relationships and clear, challenging questioning led to pupils being productive in their work. The difference between this good and the very good teaching seen was the extent to which methods, questioning and discussion challenged the higher attaining pupils and enlivened the overall pace of learning. In lessons seen opportunities were missed, for example, to encourage pupils to write high quality predictions in science, ensure that pupils of all abilities responded well in religious education and offer challenging exercises to the highest attainers in mathematics.
19. Very good teaching has been sustained in music since the last inspection. Pupils of all ages greatly enjoy their singing, performing and composing in this subject because of very high quality teaching. A telling example of this was seen in which two teachers worked as a team to teach the younger pupils.

Example of outstanding practice

A singing lesson for Years R, 1 and 2 developed pupils' skills in performing and appraising to very high levels thanks to the teacher's profound subject knowledge and enthusiasm.

The high quality of the teacher's own musicianship was evident from his playing and demonstration of what was required. This enthralled the pupils from the outset and they were consequently eager to take part themselves. Despite there being nearly 70 pupils present, the teacher took care to keep a close eye (and ear) on everyone, and so was able to comment constructively, talking to individuals by name. Excellent questioning challenged all pupils and made them think hard about the shape of the melody, its tempo, and the moods it evoked. Explanations in meaningful terms enabled pupils to appreciate both the song's beauty and some of the technical detail of its composition, and in consequence stimulated their desire to sing it better. A small group of the older pupils accompanied the singing on a small range of instruments and all ages were united in holding their part and keeping time very well. They performed with great joy, demonstrating a skill and understanding well beyond their years.

20. Assessment is good. Throughout the school, teachers' marking is diagnostic and well focused. In English, mathematics and science there are targets set for classes, groups and individuals which are regularly reviewed. Detailed records allow teachers to track the progress of pupils well in these subjects and pupils also gain a clear idea of how well they are doing and what they need to do next. The systems are better developed in English and mathematics than in science. In other subjects they are less detailed, focusing rather on broad outcomes to provide satisfactory information for both teachers and pupils. The school is gradually putting together a portfolio of moderated work to make sure that all teachers interpret the National Curriculum levels in a consistent way.
21. Around one in five parents expressed concerns about homework. This proportion is lower than the last inspection. This was thoroughly investigated. The pattern of homework set remains satisfactory for a primary school of this nature. Classes in all years follow the recently reviewed school's homework policy. Early on a focus is given to reading and spellings and as pupils get older the more homework is progressively set. Good information is provided to parents about the curriculum and what homework is set up to Year 2. The school has plans to extend this good practice to later years.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good, and particularly strong in mathematics, science and music. More use of ICT could be made across subjects. All groups of pupils are included well. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is effectively organised. Accommodation and resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers make effective links between subjects and both literacy and numeracy are well supported throughout the school.
- There is good equality of access and opportunity.
- ICT is generally well used but the lack of some advanced equipment limits opportunities to use computers at a higher level.
- Extra-curricular activities are good for older pupils but there are none for younger pupils.
- The music curriculum is particularly strong.

Commentary

22. The curriculum enables nearly all groups of pupils to achieve well in all subjects and areas of learning. It is organised effectively to challenge pupils' varying abilities. The school currently has a full complement of suitably qualified staff. These are very well deployed to make best use of their skills and experience. Teachers plan carefully and review their plans in the light of pupils' learning to make sure that work is suitably demanding. More teaching assistants are now employed, which particularly benefits pupils with special needs. Good quality training, notably in

mathematics, careful briefing by class teachers and careful allocation to the needs of pupils ensures that assistants make an effective contribution in lessons. To encourage higher achievement the school has organised training for all staff later this term in order to enhance the curriculum through the innovative techniques of accelerated learning.

23. Provision for pupils with special needs is good and special needs assistants are effectively deployed to support pupils' needs. Individual education plans are well prepared with clear and measurable targets, activities and resources that enable these pupils to achieve their best. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory but developing. The good focus on individual pupils results in them being fully included in the life of the school.
24. From the Foundation Stage onwards teachers make effective links between subjects so pupils see how all their learning fits together. For example, in the reception class the theme of "pets" is interlinked via the stories heard in reading, the models that are made, the dances undertaken in physical education, the counting games and the range of animals covered whilst the children develop their understanding of the world around them. Similarly, in a Year 5 lesson focusing on sounds the boundaries between science, music, and design and technology were removed, and pupils learned a great deal about both theory and practice to extend their understanding in all areas. Teachers include opportunities to reinforce aspects of literacy and numeracy in virtually all lessons. This means that pupils learn to express themselves correctly using appropriate terms and styles. Counting and calculating feature prominently so that pupils develop their basic skills well in all subjects.
25. Levels of ICT equipment are just below the current national average but are well used in the curriculum. ICT is effectively used, for example, to support data handling in mathematics. The lack of some more advanced equipment to monitor external events restricts the range of work possible at higher levels in science, and printer malfunctions sometimes hinder word-processing and publishing activities for older and younger pupils. This means that ICT is not always used to its fullest extent in all subjects. Subjects are otherwise generally well resourced. There are good resources for pupils with special needs, a previously identified shortcoming.
26. The good accommodation has been further improved. Teachers make good use of their spacious classrooms. Enhancements to the outdoor environment for the Foundation Stage are proving beneficial to standards. The outdoor facilities are excellent, with climbing equipment, an environmental trail, good seating and playground marking providing a valuable resource for learning and socialising. The headteacher is aware that the library is small and lacks sufficient books and work spaces to meet modern needs.
27. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities for pupils in Years 3 to 6, which supports a number of different subjects. These include sports, art, and a newspaper club where pupils are planning to produce a school newspaper. There is no similar provision outside the school day for pupils in Years 1 and 2. Good links with a number of secondary schools help prepare pupils for the next stage in their education and also permit access to more specialist facilities. Year 6 pupils, for example, had an opportunity to use ICT software to develop their music composition skills.
28. The curriculum has improved well since the last inspection. It now provides effective personal, social and health education through discrete lessons and via science and religious education. However, there is scope within this to teach the pupils more about bullying and its detrimental impact on others. In its quest to provide an education which develops the whole person the school gives particular emphasis to pupils' creativity and artistic appreciation through music. Their education is enriched very well by the work of visiting specialists and extra-curricular activities which include productions and performances in the local area.

Care, guidance and support

This is a caring school with sound procedures in place for health and safety and child protection. The school gives good support and guidance and involves and values pupils' views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The involvement of pupils in the life of the school is good and their views are valued.
- There is good support and guidance for the pupils, based on their personal development.
- The induction arrangements are very effective for younger children and those who join later on.
- The implementation of Health and safety and the race equality policy could be tightened up.

Commentary

29. Pupils are well involved in the life of the school. This helps them to develop good attitudes to work and to each other. There is a School Council by which they can express their views and a Suggestion Box, which was found to be nearly full with sensible ideas. These features are helping pupils to become mature individuals. They feel that most teachers listen to them and value their views and opinions. However, there is scope for the school to gauge the views of pupils more widely, perhaps through the use of questionnaires, on a more regular basis.
30. There is effective support and guidance on offer for the pupils. This is based on the good, trusting relationships that exist with adults in the school, all of whom know the children very well. The induction processes for children who start in the nursery or reception classes are of a very high quality and this allows pupils to settle quickly into school routines. Pupils who enter later on in the school settle in quickly and are made to feel welcome and secure.
31. There is a sound policy in place for health and safety. Risk assessments are appropriately carried out. This is an improvement on the last inspection. Pupils are cared for well in a safe and secure environment. Pupils say they like the outdoor equipment because it is safe and no one gets hurt. Health and safety procedures meet requirements but several aspects need to be more rigorously implemented. The policy on racial equality is in place. However, staff are not as aware of their responsibilities as they should be and better records need to be kept.
32. There are good levels of lunch time supervision. Midday supervisors diligently undertake their responsibilities to ensure pupils are safe; they respond quickly to any incidents. Any unkind behaviour is nipped in the bud. However, opportunities to initiate games and other activities are missed. There are effective procedures in place for child protection. Training has been undertaken by "designated" staff and adults in the school are fully aware of what to do. Governors, however, are not as involved with their responsibilities as they could be.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are satisfactory links with parents. There are good links with the local community and very effective ones with neighbouring schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents make a good contribution to their child's education both in school and at home.
- The information to parents about a child's academic progress and the timing of consultation meetings are currently not helping parents get a clear view of the children's progress.
- There are good links with the local community.
- Links with other schools and the mechanism for the transfer to secondary school are very good.

Commentary

33. Many parents make a good contribution to their child's learning both at home and in school. This is helping to raise standards and the achievement of pupils. Some help in school with listening to pupils read and the vast majority help with research and homework. Many parents have invested in home computers, which also aids learning.
34. Most parents consider their children receive a good education, although their overall views of the school expressed in the inspection questionnaire were satisfactory rather than good. The information provided for parents is satisfactory. The school has identified the need to consult more regularly with parents on matters affecting the running of the school. The prospectus and annual report from governors have much improved since the last inspection and now contain legally required information. A small number of parents feel they are not kept sufficiently informed about their child's academic progress. Inspection findings support these concerns. Academic reports do not contain enough information about what a child cannot do nor do they set targets for improvement. Consultation meetings are currently scheduled in the autumn term. Consequently parents tend to talk more about how their children have settled into a new class with a new teacher rather than discuss their yearly progress with the teacher who has taught them. The inspectors agree with parents that there would be benefits in reviewing the current arrangements and the school is happy to do so.
35. The school enjoys and has developed good links in the community. There are regular visits to the church and the local football club. Pupils visit the senior citizens at harvest time and they in turn are invited to the school's Christmas concert. The school is represented at various music festivals. These activities and others contribute well to pupils' academic and personal development. There are very good links with other local secondary schools and the village pre-school group. Teachers visit each other and exchange views and other curricular information. This helps towards an easy transfer when the time arrives. This is especially important as pupils transfer to quite a large number of local secondary schools in the area.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is good. Staff are working as a team to address the small number of weaknesses which have been identified. Management is good overall. There is a very influential senior management team but subject co-ordinators do too little monitoring. Governance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Governors are providing a good steer to the work of the school and hold staff accountable.
- There is a very effective senior management team.
- Subject management is unsatisfactory because staff do not have allocated time to observe and help other teachers and scrutinise pupils' work and so improve standards.
- The budget is prudently managed and spent well.
- Improvements in teaching have been impaired by staff turnover and a decline in pupils' attendance.

Commentary

36. The expertise of the governing body has been improved. Their skills are put to good effect. New governors have been carefully inducted, are committed to their roles and are keen to improve their performance. Their recently streamlined committee structure is a good example of this. Instead of having a separate finance committee which merely looks at the budget, this has been combined with the resource and premises committee so that related issues and their implications can be better discussed. The governors also regularly receive up-to-date advice and support. They identify and attend training opportunities and these have proved beneficial. With the exception of a need to tighten the implementation of the race equality policy, they have ensured that all statutory responsibilities are met. Governors are less reliant now on information which is provided by the headteacher. They now do more to find out first hand what is working

well and what needs to be improved. Consequently, they have a good grasp of the school's performance through activities such as a programme of visits to subject co-ordinators which are becoming much more focused. This has helped to direct resources to areas of need, sharpen the work of senior staff and improve the school development plan. All of these are helping to further improve provision and achievement.

37. There is a very effective and influential senior management team who work collegiately. This style of management is very productive. The work of the school is regularly discussed and initiatives are identified and collectively followed through. Good examples of this include the way in which the development plan has improved, the budget is more carefully managed and the performance and training of staff is monitored and integrated. The good leadership and management of the headteacher are evident in the way in which the pace of change has been gauged well and developments have been prioritised. For many years, the leadership and management of the school have established a productive climate for learning. Teaching staff have been well supported in implementing new developments in teaching and the curriculum. The need to include and educate all groups of pupils has also been central to the ethos of the school and is managed well. Recent events, beyond the schools' immediate control, have coloured some parents' views counter to the normal harmony which exists.
38. Effective provision for special educational needs is in place and there is a commitment to improvement. The school has made good improvements since the last inspection when the leadership and management were only sound. Pupils with SEN have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. There is a governor who helps ensure that the necessary systems, procedures and monitoring are set up well and running effectively.
39. Music is led and managed very well and there are further strengths in English, and mathematics. Elsewhere the work of subject co-ordinators is in need of improvement. This is because a number of subject co-ordinators have either recently joined the school or have taken on a new area of the curriculum. Most have a sound, rather than good, view of how their subjects need to be developed. They focus their work on sustaining and improving resources and helping staff with planning. However, with the exceptions of English and mathematics there is no planned time for co-ordinators to undertake peer observations in other classes and so help to further improve teaching. Some co-ordinators undertake scrutinies of pupils' work on a regular basis but this aspect of work also lacks rigour.
40. The budget is prudently managed. An over-large surplus, carried forward from last year into the current budget, included some costs of building improvements and temporary staff. Unforeseen staffing costs this year have also meant that the governors have had to draw on reserves and temporarily reduce staff training. However, through good planning a balanced budget has been set. The school improvement plan is now costed better. Satisfactory value for money is provided because the school achieves its success with higher than average costs.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	578500	Balance from previous year	32350
Total expenditure	535962	Balance carried forward to the next	74889
Expenditure per pupil	2504		

41. Overall good teaching and learning, good parental support and effective tracking of pupils' progress have been key aids to consolidating pupils' good achievement. However, improvements in teaching have been impaired by the steady turnover of staff and difficulties in attracting sufficient numbers of suitably qualified staff, despite the school trying as hard as it can to attract staff. In recent years staff changes and variations in the quality of teaching have had an adverse impact on the rate of pupils' learning in some classes. This in turn has had to

be later addressed by some of the more experienced teachers. Unsatisfactory attendance by some pupils and absence due to holidays taken in term time, often close to the National Curriculum tests, are further barriers to higher achievement.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is one of the strengths of the school. Children attend the nursery on a part-time basis and enter the reception class either in September or January according to their age. The nursery class has achieved recognition by being awarded the Hertfordshire Quality Standard and so is recognised as meeting high standards of provision and care. Attainment on entry to the nursery class is generally above average in most areas of learning, but writing standards are weaker. Children achieve well in both the nursery and reception classes mainly because teaching is consistently good and information on what the pupils can and cannot do is used well to plan activities. Good learning includes pupil-initiated and teacher-directed activities, which are appropriate to the age and abilities of the children. Another reason for the good achievement is that the curriculum in both classes integrates different areas of learning whilst reinforcing links in understanding. Children's progress is carefully tracked and as a result challenging work is set. All adults manage children very well and relationships are very positive. The very good ratio of adults to children ensures that the needs of all children, including pupils with special needs or those at an early stage of acquisition of English, are met well. By the end of the reception class standards are likely to be above average in all areas of learning with the exception of writing, where they are in line with the goals expected at this age. Provision and achievement have both improved since the last inspection.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very good induction procedures and close links with parents. These result in children being happy to come to school and settle down quickly to productive learning.
- Children are encouraged to make choices and develop initiative from an early age.
- A calm but active learning environment has been established in both classes which ensures that pupils' social and emotional development is good.

Commentary

42. Teaching and learning in this area are good and as a result pupils achieve well. Great care is taken to ensure that the transition from home to school is managed well. For example, children who attend the pre-school group in the village come into school to familiarise themselves with the classroom. A very good range of information is sent home to parents about routines and the curriculum and the part they can play in their child's learning and progress. Parents are encouraged to discuss any issue, no matter how small or large, so that questions or problems can be quickly resolved. Parents are asked to complete a short, confidential, questionnaire about their children so that the staff can understand any special factors that need to be noted. Some of the younger children had been in the nursery for only a few days and the very good liaison that exists had clearly ensured that had settled in very well and had quickly gained confidence in trying out new activities for themselves.
43. Good teaching in the nursery and reception classes allows children to make choices and develop independence from an early age. Early morning activities in the nursery are designed so that pupils plan, carry out and then review how well they carried out their activities. This system is already working well, early on in the term. The confidence that this engenders is carried through to the reception class where children regularly unsupervised for extended periods, behaving sensibly and sharing resources.

44. All adults encourage the development of social skills in a variety of ways. For example, children were encouraged to take turns in the role play areas in their pet shop or when using the computers. Children with special educational needs and those who are at a very early stage in learning English are well integrated and receive good support. They, and others, are helped to maintain concentration by the stimulating nature of the activities offered and good teaching. As a result, even at this stage many children are able to maintain attention and sit quietly, and are confident to try new things. Both classrooms are well laid out and a calm and purposeful atmosphere pervades at all times. By the end of the reception class nearly all children are likely to exceed the learning goals expected for their age.

Communication, Language and Literacy

Provision in communication, language and literacy is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Speaking and listening skills are well developed because of consistently good teaching.
- Children start from a lower base in writing than other aspects of language and literacy but good teaching ensures they make good progress and most will near the expected goals.
- Parents are supportive of their children's reading at home and this helps them achieve well together with the effective focus given to this in both the nursery and reception classes.

Commentary

45. Teaching and learning are consistently good. Consequently, by the end of the reception class most children are likely to exceed the expected learning goals.
46. Many children in the nursery are used to mixing and playing with other children. Although some use simple words or body gestures to communicate their conversations and questions, many are starting to think more carefully about the vocabulary to use. They are starting to talk about their plans and activities and in the reception class some pupils are becoming skilled at taking turns and initiating conversations relating to their work. In both classes, children enjoy listening to stories and are developing good vocabulary. Every opportunity is taken to develop speaking and listening in role play and discussions with adults.
47. Children's writing skills are not as well developed, when children start the school, as other aspects of literacy. This weakness has been identified as a point of development throughout the school. However, good teaching allows them to achieve well. Early, remedial action is being taken and plenty of opportunities are provided for the children to make good strides forward. A good emphasis on phonics in the reception class is helping the children to write new words. For example, one girl said to the teacher, "I can write cat", which was praised by the teacher saying, "On your own!" One of the more able children had better phonic knowledge and made a good effort to independently write out "pciesslepig" – Pixie is sleeping – and by the end of the year he is expected to writing confidently. Overall, however, many will approach the learning goals that are expected.
48. The development of reading skills also has high priority, and is supported very well by parents. All children are encouraged to take books home to share with their parents and the teacher writes useful comments to help parents support their children. Parents have also received useful advice on how to support reading at home. In the nursery the children are becoming confident in handing books and have a different sound to learn each week. Children in the reception class have embarked on a systematic reading scheme with the more able already being allocated individual books linked to their level of phonetic development.

Mathematical Development

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Adults question children very well and use a wide variety of activities to support learning.
- Children's good language skills help them to describe a range of mathematical ideas.

Commentary

49. Teaching and learning are good and so achievement is good. In both the nursery and reception classes the adults facilitate a wide range of first hand experiences that enable the children to learn about number, shape and size. Adults question the children well whilst they are engaged in a variety of activities, trying to draw out and encourage mathematical understanding. The children in the nursery have explored repeating patterns through making bead necklaces using three colours. They use numbers through in a range of games and further develop their skills by singing a range of number songs. They are introduced to early money through their play in the shop and use the numbers they have learnt to count out the money. Even from an early age many children are confident in counting up from 1 to 10 and down from 10 to 1. The more able children in the reception class have developed confidence in problem solving. For example, when asked how the class could be split into two groups, one said, "We can split our group of nine into one group of five and another of four". The good focus on mathematical language also enables the children to use words such as triangle, square and rectangle to describe shapes. For example, in the reception class the teacher used probing questions well discuss how a triangle was different from a square and how these were different from a rectangle or a circle. One child had joy on their face when they realised that a triangle has both three sides and three corners. Once the basic idea had been established the children were challenged to identify shapes that were hidden in a bag by their feel. The children relished this task and then went onto identify shapes in the outdoor environment. The teacher took great pains to extend their vocabulary and give them much encouragement. Most children are likely to exceed the goals expected for this age by the end of the reception class.

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children learn about the world around them through imaginative, first hand experiences.

Commentary

50. This broad area of the curriculum is covered and taught well and as a result achievement is good. The younger children have just learnt about the differences between raw and cooked eggs and what they might expect to find in a farmyard. Those in the reception class have started to further extend their knowledge of other animals, pets and kinds of flowers and seeds that can be found around them. Children in both classes choose when to use the computers and other ICT equipment and know how to operate it well. This term both classes will have the opportunity to visit a local farm and experience a new environment. They are developing much confidence in the uses of technology in everyday life and use it to support their learning. Teachers' planning for the term and beyond shows that children systematically learn and celebrate their own and other cultures. Non-Christian festivals such as the Festival of the Tabernacle, the Chinese New Year and Hanukah are well represented. Good references are made to the Traveller culture. Children are encouraged to use a variety of dolls in their play to help them recognise and act out that that not all people look similar or believe the same things.

Physical Development

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use is made of the indoor and outdoor environment to enable children to move with confidence and show an awareness of space.
- Their fine control, such as for holding pencils or handling tools, is developing well.

Commentary

51. The children are achieving well in their physical development because of good teaching and learning. A good example of this was seen in the nursery, where the teaching assistants took a session outside using the circles painted on the ground. Most children jumped to different coloured circles and responded well to other tasks that were set. In the hall they copied the teacher's movements and used their imagination well to move like a cat. They judged the available space well and enhanced their performance with gestures and sounds.
52. All children develop their manipulative skills by handling dough, scissors and small toys. Teachers carefully develop their fine manipulative skills. In both classes teachers give the children opportunities to explore with a wide range of tools, and try to offer alternative resources where a child is becoming frustrated. By the end of the reception class the majority of children are likely to exceed the goals expected of them.

Creative Development

Provision in creative development is **good**.

- Good teaching ensures that children's creative skills are successfully developed.
- Children greatly enjoy their singing and music making and their skills are developed very well.

Commentary

53. Good teaching ensures that children in both classes express their feelings through exploring a wide variety of materials and media, music and movement, story making and imaginative play. Good resources have been assembled to enable them to do this. The art work on display, such as self-portraits and those of farm and domestic animals, was of an above average standard for the children's age. Particularly impressive were imaginative paintings of fish in an aquarium which were given different names such as splash, spotty and fins and were designed accordingly. Children in the nursery are systematically learning different colours and were looking at different shades of yellow. Children in the reception class will use a wide variety of techniques this term such as printing, colour mixing, investigating the work of famous artists and making wax resist pictures, and they are already demonstrating good skills.
54. Music making is enjoyed from children's first days in school. In the nursery they have already learnt a number of simple number songs, linking their learning in different areas of the curriculum. They sing songs about the days of the week, "Five little ducks" and "Old McDonald had a pet shop" with gusto. During the year children in each class use a variety of instruments to accompany their singing. The reception children's singing skills were challenged when they combined with the children in Years 1 and 2 to sing together. The very good teaching, and the way the children rose to the occasion, enabled them to perform at the limits of their capabilities and in no way were they left behind by the older pupils. Most children are likely to exceed the goals expected of them by the end of the reception class.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good provision in reading helps pupils to reach above average standards by the end of Years 2 and 6.
- Pupils with special needs are supported well so that they make good progress and achieve well.
- Literacy is promoted effectively through all subjects of the curriculum, contributing to the improvement in writing.
- Standards in writing are improving but pupils do not get enough opportunities to write at length to reach the higher standards they are capable of.

Commentary

55. The school has made good improvement in provision and raising standards since the last inspection. A need to improve standards at the end of Year 2 was a key issue then as standards were average in both reading and writing. Standards have improved significantly at the end of Year 2. Standards are now above average by the end of both Years 2 and 6. Pupils reach well above average standards in reading and above average standards in both speaking and listening and writing. This is a result of the good teaching, which now makes clear to pupils what is expected of them. Pupils are now set targets that are based on thorough and accurate assessment. Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 6 have improved in 2003 to well above average from average in 2002. This is because of the school's concerted effort to develop pupils' writing skills. The school exceeded its targets in 2003. However, in 2003, standards have declined at the end of Year 2, reflecting the changes in the year group. Achievement is good by the end of Year 2 and satisfactory by the end of Year 6.
56. Pupils generally start Year 1 with average standards in communication, language and literacy. In Years 1 and 2, the teachers build well on the speaking and listening skills developed by pupils in the Foundation Stage. Most pupils across the school speak clearly with confidence and can adapt their speech to a purpose. They are able to discuss features of a play script in Year 5 or examples of story openings in Year 6 but a minority remains passive in lessons because speaking and listening are not carefully planned. The school is aware of this need to develop pupils' skills in speaking and listening further through drama, role-play and pair work.
57. Achievement is better in reading as the school places a strong focus on developing reading skills, including phonics. The strong teaching of phonics and a good range of books help pupils to achieve highly and reach well above average standards in reading by the end of Year 2. Pupils are heard reading regularly at school and home, and teaching assistants and parents make a significant contribution to pupils' reading. Pupils sustain these standards in Year 6.
58. Although standards in writing are improving because of the school's recent emphasis on this aspect of English, it is yet to make its full impact across the school. Opportunities to write for a variety of different purposes are good in Years 2 to 6, where pupils use correct grammar and punctuation well and produce good quality writing. However, there is not enough time set aside for pupils to engage in sustained writing. Although pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2, their achievement is only satisfactory by the end of Year 6. This is because teaching is not strong enough in Years 3 and 4 to maintain the good standards reached in Year 2, and so their progress slows down. The better teaching in Years 5 and 6 helps pupils to make greater strides

and to attain high standards in reading and above average standards in writing. Standards of handwriting and presentation are good. Pupils with special needs achieve well because of the good support provided for them, and many attain the expected standards for their age. Most other groups of pupils achieve well but insufficient challenge is provided for the higher attaining pupils.

59. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, which is an improvement since the last inspection when teaching was only satisfactory. Teaching is stronger in Years 1, 2, 5 and 6 and satisfactory elsewhere. Teachers plan lessons well, using their secure command of the subject, which helps to generate interest among pupils. Teachers generally have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour and consequently pupils behave well and show good attitudes to lessons. Where teaching is only satisfactory, lessons lack pace and challenge. Teachers work effectively with teaching assistants so that pupils with special needs make good progress throughout the school. The use of ICT is satisfactory in English, where pupils use it to word-process their work and improve their presentation.
60. Subject leadership is good with a clear commitment to improvement. The management of the subject is also good. It is effective in ensuring that there are rigorous systems to monitor and evaluate how well pupils are doing and to determine accurately how best to raise the achievement of all pupils in reading and writing. Plentiful assessment information is gathered from a range of tests and looking carefully at pupils' work. This is used well to adapt teaching and learning to the needs of individual pupils and set realistic targets for classes and pupils.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

61. Language and literacy are developed well through other subjects of the curriculum. Pupils learn to use the specific language and vocabulary required in each subject. For example, pupils are encouraged to use the language of probability in mathematics or technical terms in music. There is also an ample evidence of teachers using lessons like history, geography, religious education or science to develop reading and writing skills. Good examples were seen in history, where the Year 6 pupils had written biographies of many famous Victorians such as Charles Dickens and Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and pupils achieve well in all strands of the subject.
- High standards are sustained by good teaching through Years 1 and 2, and in Years 3 -6, where the greatest gains are made in Years 5 and 6.
- Further staff training has been planned to help teachers probe fully the upper limits of what the highest attaining older pupils can do.

Commentary

62. There has been a good improvement in standards since the last inspection. The proportion of pupils reaching the national expectation of Level 4 is well above average, as is the proportion reaching Level 5. Results are well above those for similar schools. Pupils achieve well overall since they generally enter the school above average standards but now leave well above. Achievement is good by the end of Year 2 and satisfactory by the end of Year 6. Boys, girls and the pupils with special needs do equally well in the various strands of the subject, namely using and applying mathematics, number and algebra, space, shape and measure and data handling. The higher attaining and gifted and talented pupils mostly do well but there is the potential for them to be challenged even more. ICT is used well especially to support work on graphs in data handling.

63. Teaching and learning are good, with a number of strengths. Teachers' subject knowledge and skilful questioning in particular enable them to adapt the National Numeracy Strategy in ways to suit pupils of different abilities. The effective feedback they give to pupils helps them understand how well they are doing and what they need to do next. In a Year 2 lesson to develop mental calculation strategies, a throwing game captured pupils' attention and helped them see how different scores could be obtained. Focused questions helped pupils think about the steps involved and good discussion of their responses developed their reasoning. The teacher maintained a good balance between intervention and independence by giving closer support to lower attainers and pupils with special needs, but also challenging higher attainers to do more for themselves. This made sure everyone moved on well together. In a few cases tasks are not sufficiently demanding and the pace of lessons too slow to stimulate pupils into doing their utmost, so they do not make the gains that they should. Teaching in Years 3 and 4 is not as strong as in Years 5 and 6. For example, Year 3 pupils had reached high standards in Year 2 but in the lesson observed did not continue at the same rate because they were not given high enough numbers to use in solving money problems. In a similar way Year 4 pupils gained little new knowledge about polygons because planning paid insufficient attention to their results in optional tests in Year 3.
64. Thanks to good curriculum leadership and management, both teaching and support staff have received appropriate training to help them adapt all aspects of the National Numeracy Strategy to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. In the light of experience further training has been planned which includes a specific focus on taking the highest attainers to the very limits of their ability. The assessment system is already effective but the school is engaged in refining it further to identify more readily pupils' progress in the different strands of the subject so that any imbalances may be addressed promptly.

Mathematics across the curriculum

65. In all subjects a good focus is given to relevant mathematical techniques and calculations, whether through the use of time lines in history, measurements in art or design and technology, or the more complex calculations involved in scientific predictions and investigations. Most teachers rarely miss an opportunity to reinforce pupils' knowledge of mathematics. Even during an assembly, which featured reference to archaeological finds in Xian China, pupils were asked to reckon the number of years necessary to restore all the treasures if work continued at the same rate.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall, teaching is good and so pupils achieve well by the end of Year 6 but teaching in Years 3 and 4 is not as challenging as in other years.
- More challenge could be provided for the higher attaining pupils, especially as they approach the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6.
- There is insufficient time for the co-ordinator to monitor teaching and so lead improvements.

Commentary

66. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Standards have risen a little faster than the national trend. They are now well above average at the end of Years 2 and 6. Boys, girls and pupils with special needs do well and some of the more socially disadvantaged pupils do particularly well. Standards are equally high in all aspects of science throughout the school. Good emphasis is given to the development of scientific enquiry and so pupils become proficient at planning and carrying out investigations. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' knowledge of facts

and understanding of scientific and conventions continues to be strengthened. A good, if long, revision programme ensures they do very well in the National Curriculum tests.

67. Achievement is good by the end of Year 2 and satisfactory by the end of Year 6; good overall. Most groups of pupils do well as a result of good teaching and an effectively planned curriculum. Challenging teaching in Years 1 and 2 enables pupils to make good gains in their knowledge and scientific skills. In Years 3 to 6, achievement is satisfactory. This is because teaching is not as strong in Years 3 and 4 as it is later on and the higher attaining pupils are not always challenged enough through robust questions.
68. Teaching and learning are good by the end of Year 2 and satisfactory by the end of Year 6. Most teachers effectively use national planning guidance. Consequently work is carefully matched to pupils' abilities and needs and lessons are interesting. Consistently good teaching in Years 1 and 2 develops pupils' confidence in asking and answering the question "why" in a scientific manner. Consistently strong teaching in Years 5 and 6 ensures that pupils' subject knowledge and understanding is very well developed and that many pupils are assured in planning and carrying out a wide range of investigations. However, insufficient opportunities are taken to challenge pupils to use "I think ... because ..." sentences to write a prediction which brings into play and highlights their scientific understanding. For example, higher attaining pupils predict that sugar granules will dissolve faster in hot water than sugar cubes but few could justify this using the idea that all materials contain particles. Similarly teachers need to challenge all pupils, but especially the higher attainers, to discuss the significance, reliability and validity of the data they obtain in their investigations.
69. The subject has a high profile. The co-ordinator is relatively new in post and has not yet had time to make a strong impact. Subject leadership is sound. However, the management of teaching and the curriculum is unsatisfactory because there is no planned time for the co-ordinator to observe other teachers to help steer their teaching. A sound system of assessment provides some useful planning which teachers use to track progress. However, it is not incisive enough to help pin-point strengths and weaknesses so that they can be addressed throughout the year. Annual science days add interest and opportunities for pupils to work together on longer projects. Good quality practical and textual resources are used.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers make good use of available resources and regularly ensure pupils' work is reinforced at home.
- ICT features well in most subjects of the curriculum but some limitations in both hardware and software prevent older pupils reaching their highest levels.
- Curriculum leadership shows vision for the future but has not yet had time to put all plans into practice.

Commentary

70. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Pupils reach above average standards by the end of Year 2, which represents good achievement. Standards are also above average by the end of Year 6. Therefore pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards have risen for younger pupils and have been maintained for the older. All groups of pupils undertake tasks which cover all strands of the curriculum and do well. In addition, ICT is used to provide support for lower attaining pupils, including pupils with special needs, and extension work for higher attainers in many subjects of the curriculum.

71. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching was good in the lessons observed, making good use of available resources. Wider evidence indicates that it is good in Years 1 and 2 where learning is regularly supported by work at home. Pupils in Year 2, for example, were very keen to talk about the computers they have at home and how their keyboard skills are developing well. In the longer term outcomes show that teaching and learning have been satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. Limitations in resources are major factors. For example, the school does not have equipment to sense external events, which means that older pupils do not have the opportunity to work at the higher National Curriculum levels. In some cases the malfunction of basic equipment such as printers causes frustration for pupils and teachers alike and in consequence ICT is underused.
72. Curriculum leadership is satisfactory but management is unsatisfactory. The subject co-ordinator has clear ideas about what needs to be done but has had no time allocated to monitor teaching and learning to see that they are always as effective as they could be. A new assessment system has been introduced, which gives teachers a good indication of how well pupils are doing but has not yet been refined to give pupils a similar picture. The co-ordinator has explored the possibility of developing an ICT suite, which would contribute to raising standards but plans are dependent on finances and the implications of the forthcoming building programme.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

73. Good use is made of ICT across the curriculum. There are computers in all classrooms and ICT is used well in most subjects. Word-processing is prominent in extended writing and displays, for example in English. Appropriate software is used especially well to support data-handling in mathematics. In a Year 6 science experiment to evaluate the rate at which substances dissolved, good use was made of a spreadsheet to plot results. The current lack of equipment to monitor external events means that pupils cannot attempt work at the highest levels. Pupils undertake effective research using CD-ROM and the Internet for subjects such as history and geography. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 made good use of word-processing and publishing packages in their extra-curricular newspaper club, where they are producing a school newspaper for sale.

HUMANITIES

History and geography were not a focus in the inspection. Therefore, no judgements are made on provision and standards. Planning and pupils' work indicate that these subjects are covered well.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Religious education is taught in a way that promotes the significance of expressive and visual arts for religious believers. It makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development.
- At times the work is not sufficiently pitched to meet the needs of young pupils. This means that some pupils struggle with the work.

Commentary

74. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection by maintaining its average standards at the end of both Years 2 and 6. Scrutiny of pupils' books in Years 1 to 6 shows that the school covers the agreed syllabus well.

75. All groups of pupils achieve satisfactorily by the end of Years 2 and 6. Younger pupils in Years 1 and 2 are taught to appreciate the importance of special books and places of worship in various religions. Older pupils are taught the different world religions. The insight pupils gain into different cultures and religions contributes well to their personal and cultural development. Pupils have a clear understanding of what it means to belong to a religious community and its code of conduct. They understand the significance of symbolism to various religions.
76. The overall quality of teaching and learning, based on the scrutiny of work and lesson observations, is satisfactory across the school, with some good features. Teachers make good use of books and religious artefacts to teach signs and symbols of different religions. They generally succeed to match activities to pupils' ability and age. For example, in a Year 1 lesson, the pupils enjoyed making a 'Thank you tree' after discussing who they would like to thank and why. In a Year 2 lesson on signs and symbols, the activities were not pitched at pupils' level. Consequently, many pupils struggled to follow the concept of the wheel of life in Buddhism or the Star of David in Judaism. Good teaching seen in Years 5 and 6 skilfully integrated music, literature and art with religious education. In Year 5, during the lesson on the story of Moses and the Ten Commandments, the teacher captured pupils' interest immediately by linking the topic to their known Hymn 'Let my people go'. The pupils clapped to the beat as the teacher sang the hymn with enthusiasm. In Year 6, pupils learnt about the significance of stained glass windows during their visit to a church. In the lesson observed, they applied this learning to telling stories from Buddhism through drawing, painting and poetry. One of the pupils wrote a poem, depicting a Buddhist religious story of accepting the truth of pain and death in life:
- " Her baby had died she suffered the pain,
She wept through the wind, she cried through the rain.
Till Buddha one day answered her need,
And set her in search of a mustard seed".*
77. The subject is satisfactorily led with clear features for improvement. The management of the subject is unsatisfactory because the subject leader does not have time to monitor teaching and learning and use the information to help raise standards. A strength of the curriculum is the way it develops pupils' understanding of how expressive and visual arts can be used to give religious messages to believers, contributing to pupils' spiritual and cultural development effectively.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Design and technology and physical education were not a focus during the inspection. Therefore no judgements were made on provision and standards. However, planning and pupils' work indicate that these subjects are covered well.

ART AND DESIGN

Provision in art and design is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Specialist teaching with high expectations of work helps pupils to achieve well.
- Pupils participate in a good range of extra-curricular activities with interest and enthusiasm.

Commentary

78. Standards have improved since the last inspection from average to above average by the end of Years 2 and 6. Achievement is good. This reflects the good quality teaching that the pupils receive and the emphasis the school places on the subject. Only one art and design lesson was observed during the inspection but judgements are based on a much wider range of evidence.

79. The outcomes indicate that teaching and learning are good by the end of Years 2 and 6. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special needs, achieve well in the development of their skills and knowledge as they move through the school. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 show increasing control and detail in drawing and painting. Samples of drawings and sketches from the reception class to Year 6 show good progression in line drawings of large objects to birds' eye views of places with details. The pupils have good opportunities to explore a wide range of materials and are taught a variety of techniques. ICT is used well to support learning in the subject, as seen in a display of work done by Year 5, following 'The Snail' by Matisse. In Years 3 to 6, sketchbooks are used well to encourage pupils to think carefully about their artwork before they finally produce it.
80. The pupils are introduced to a good range of different art and artists. By the time they reach Year 6 they know about different styles in art, as evidenced in their work on portraits, which are of high standard. The collage work of Year 4 using leaves, twigs and petals in the style of Andy Goldsworthy is equally good. Art is used well to support other areas of the curriculum, for example, in the drawings of Greek vases produced by Year 5 pupils or illustrations for the biographies of famous Victorians by Year 6 pupils.
81. The only lesson seen during the inspection. It was in Year 5 and was taken by the subject leader. The teaching was good. Pupils were designing boxes using geometrical patterns. Work was well matched to the needs of the pupils and the more able pupils had the challenge of working on a more complex task. The teacher moved amongst the pupils, intervening effectively to move their learning forward. The outcomes indicate that teaching and learning are good.
82. There is a range of extra-curricular enrichment that contributes well to the development of pupils' interest and skills in the subject. The school holds a number of art competitions and enters pupils in local competitions. There is an after-school art club for Year 6 pupils, run by the subject leader. Many pupils attend the club and enjoy learning new skills and working in a range of media.
83. The subject leadership is good with a clear vision as to how the curriculum can be further enriched by involving local artists working in a range of media with pupils. Resources are good and effectively managed so that pupils of all abilities and backgrounds can achieve well. However, the overall management of the subject is only satisfactory, as no time is allocated to help monitor various aspects of the subject.

MUSIC

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above national expectations and all groups of pupils achieve very well.
- Teaching is very good. Teachers are knowledgeable and give balanced attention to all strands of the subject. They involve all pupils equally well.
- Pupils use their musical appreciation skills very well to compose and improve their performances. The school participates prominently in regional music festivals.

Commentary

84. Music remains an important strength of the school, which has done well to sustain well above average standards in appraisal, performance and composition. Pupils achieve very well throughout the school.
85. Teaching is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and teach with an enjoyment of music which they enthusiastically share with pupils. Their questioning skills

involve all groups of pupils constructively. This means that there are no barriers to participation and pupils with special needs, for example, find that they are able to appreciate music and sing just as well as anyone else. Tasks make pupils think hard so that they begin to understand the origins of the pieces they perform. This helps them make improvements so that they reflect better the composer's intentions. Year 6 pupils sang an African song with a strong awareness of the appropriate tone and tempo because they had learned something about apartheid and how the song gave young black people a sense of unity and identity.

86. Composition is a well-established part of pupils' experiences. Year 2 pupils produce pieces competently using a pentatonic scale. Year 6 pupils were able to make use of specific ICT software thanks to links with the local secondary school to which many pupils will later go. They created the notation for a variety of longer pieces and printed out the scores so that they could eventually be performed. A very good curriculum, covering a wide variety of musical styles and traditions, makes very good use of visiting specialists. This includes instrumental tuition. Pupils have recently done well, for example, in examinations for cello and violin. Extra-curricular clubs currently include recorders, and annually lead to a school orchestra in the spring term.
87. Curriculum leadership and management are also very good. The co-ordinator is an accomplished musician who shares his expertise through the school, especially by teaching alongside colleagues. This means that he can observe first hand the quality of teaching and learning in all classes, and contribute directly to any necessary changes. Visiting specialists work in a similar way so pupils learn very well, and class teachers develop their skills also. Despite the lack of a formal assessment system staff manage to share with each other relevant information about pupils' progress. The quality of feedback that pupils receive is very good so they know clearly the next steps in learning.
88. Assemblies regularly include a focus on musical appreciation as well as opportunities for performances. School productions and concerts and participation in events outside the school show how well music pervades and enriches pupils' lives.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education

Only one lesson was seen in this area of the school's work and so no judgements are made about overall provision.

Commentary

89. The school has improved its programme of work in this area. The choices encouraged in the foundation stage and "carpet time" play a key part in developing pupils' social skills from an early age. Discrete PSHE lessons in the main school are now provided and work covered includes that on diet, health, sex, drugs and personal safety. This programme helps pupils learn about themselves and others, gain confidence and develop a safe and healthy life style. It is well supported by visits from outside agencies. The School Council is valued and plays an increasingly important role in helping pupils understand other people's views and how to influence others.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	5
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).