

INSPECTION REPORT

GILES JUNIOR SCHOOL

Stevenage

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117306

Headteacher: Mrs S C Mitchell

Lead inspector: John Messer

Dates of inspection: 14–16 June 2004

Inspection number: 256210

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Type of school: | Junior |
| School category: | Community |
| Age range of pupils: | 7-11 years |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| Number on roll: | 237 |
| School address: | Durham Road Stevenage Hertfordshire |
| Postcode: | SG1 4JQ |
| Telephone number: | 01438 353374 |
| Fax number: | 01438 359115 |
| Appropriate authority: | Governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mrs Sheila Lewis |

Date of previous inspection: 27th April 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This junior school has 237 boys and girls on roll and is about the same size as most other primary schools. Pupils come from mixed social backgrounds, but the socio-economic circumstances of most are below average. The socio-economic circumstances of the community are not as high as they were at the time of the last inspection. Most pupils are from white British families, although 13 per cent are from ethnic minority backgrounds. A small number of pupils speak languages other than English at home, mainly Thai, Malay and Tagalog, although nearly all speak English fluently in school. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school varies widely, but overall is below average. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, around 17 per cent, is average. An average proportion of pupils, around 17 per cent, are entered on the school's record of special educational needs and most have moderate learning difficulties. A small number have a Statement of Special Educational Needs because they need considerable help with their learning. The distribution of pupils with special educational needs is uneven and varies widely between year groups. Overall, the proportion of pupils who enter or leave the school part-way through this phase of their education, around five per cent, is low, but this varies from year to year; the number of the present Year 6 pupils leaving and joining the school other than at the usual times is high. There are more boys than girls. The school received a School Achievement Award in 2002 for a marked improvement in its performance in the national tests for pupils in Year 6.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team | | | Subject responsibilities |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|---|
| 15477 | John Messer | Lead inspector | Science, art and design, physical education, English as an additional language. |
| 1165 | Peter Dannheisser | Lay inspector | |
| 27568 | Midge Davidson | Team inspector | Mathematics, design and technology, geography, information and communication technology, music. |
| 26203 | Jo Curd | Team inspector | English, history, religious education, special educational needs. |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school that provides an effective education for its pupils. Teaching is good and, as a result, pupils learn successfully. Pupils' achievement is good. Attainment on entry is somewhat below average, but most pupils attain at least average standards by the end of Year 6 despite high levels of mobility in this year group. Pupils are very well behaved and have very good attitudes to learning. The leadership and management of the school are good and the school has coped well with the challenges presented by staffing difficulties. The governing body provides particularly effective support. The school gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils attain above average standards in information and communication technology (ICT) and in music.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are very good and contribute strongly to their good achievement.
- Teaching is good and often very good, although there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning, especially in Years 5 and 6, where expectations of pupils' performance are sometimes too modest.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and pupils achieve well.
- Good links with the local secondary school enhance pupils' learning effectively.
- Relationships throughout the school community are very good and promote a good climate for good learning.
- Systems to measure pupils' attainment and progress are unsatisfactory and information about pupils' achievement is not used systematically to plan the next steps in learning.
- Subject leaders have too few opportunities to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning in order to identify weaknesses, resolve inconsistencies and raise standards.

The school has successfully tackled the issues raised in the last inspection report. Standards have been maintained in English, mathematics and science. Standards in ICT have improved significantly and there have been good improvements in investigative work in mathematics and science. Pupils' attainment in religious education has improved. The issue regarding maintaining high expectations of the older pupils has not been fully resolved. The quality of teaching has improved; there is now a greater proportion of very good teaching and no unsatisfactory teaching. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

| Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with: | all schools | | | similar schools |
|---|-------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2003 |
| English | C | C | C | B |
| Mathematics | C | D | B | B |

| | | | | |
|---------|---|---|---|---|
| Science | A | C | C | C |
|---------|---|---|---|---|

*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.*

Pupils’ achievement is good overall. Pupils’ achievement in ICT and music is very good and most attain standards that are above average. Last year the school’s performance was above average when compared with similar schools in English and mathematics. Standards are now average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Standards are not as high this year because the current Year 6 includes a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs than last year. Also the proportion of pupils in Year 6 who moved school part-way through this phase of their schooling is nearly four times the national average. This has interrupted the continuity of pupils’ learning. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language achieve well, but the higher attaining pupils do not always achieve as well as they could.

Pupils’ personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good overall. Pupils have very good attitudes to their work. Behaviour is very good. Relationships are very good. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching is good. In a third of lessons seen it was very good. Generally, teachers’ planning is thorough. Pupils’ very positive attitudes to work support learning well. Teachers’ expectations of the older, more able pupils are sometimes not high enough. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to the quality of learning, especially for those pupils with special educational needs.

The curriculum is good and relevant, with a strong emphasis on literacy, mathematics and ICT. A wide range of visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities enrich the curriculum. The school provides well for pupils’ pastoral needs, and links with parents and the community are good. There are very good links with the local secondary school and links with the adjacent infant school are satisfactory. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides good leadership and maintains a clear vision for maintaining the good quality of provision. She has been particularly successful in establishing a good climate for learning. Communications between all associated with the school are open and frank. The role of subject leaders in evaluating the quality of teaching and raising standards is underdeveloped. Governors provide good support and make a strong contribution to the school’s success. The governing body ensures that the school complies with all statutory requirements.

PARENTS’ AND PUPILS’ VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very pleased with the school. They feel that they are very well informed about how their children are getting on and they receive plenty of information in good time about school events. Pupils like being at the school and most are confident that there are adults to whom

they can talk if they have any concerns. They are proud of their school and there is little that they would wish to change.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Develop systems that measure pupils' achievement systematically and use the information to set targets for the next steps in learning.
- Enable subject leaders to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning across the school in order to identify weaknesses and promote greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning.
- Raise teachers' expectations to ensure that the older, higher attaining pupils work to their full potential.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

The good teaching helps pupils to achieve well. By the end of Year 6, most pupils attain standards that are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. In ICT and music pupils' achievement is very good and most pupils attain standards that are above average in these subjects.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is good and they do well to reach at least average standards.
- Most pupils use computers skilfully.
- The more able pupils in Years 5 and 6 do not always achieve as well as they could because teachers' expectations are not always high enough.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and this supports their good achievement.

Commentary

1. In last year's national tests the school did particularly well in English and mathematics. When compared with similar schools, standards were above average in English and mathematics, and average in science. This year the school's performance is likely to decline because there is an unusually high proportion of pupils in this group who entered the school part-way through this phase of their education. This has affected the continuity of their learning and constrained achievement. Also, in this year group, there is a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Inspection findings indicate that overall, given these constraints, pupils learn effectively and do well to attain average standards in English, mathematics and science. Their achievement is good. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well due to effective support within classes and good teaching in small groups when withdrawn from the classroom. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language are fluent in speaking English and achieve at least as well as the others.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| English | 27.4 (26.7) | 26.8 (27.0) |
| Mathematics | 27.6 (25.9) | 26.8 (26.7) |
| Science | 29.1 (28.7) | 28.6 (28.3) |

There were 60 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Pupils' attainment in religious education is satisfactory and most meet the standards defined in the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils' achievement is very good in ICT and music, and standards are above average. Pupils demonstrate great enthusiasm for these subjects. The Chair of Governors, who is a music specialist, works voluntarily in the school and makes a strong contribution to standards in music. Good quality work was seen in art and design. Pupils use

computers confidently for research on the Internet, for word-processing and to support their learning generally. They learn new skills rapidly and handle computer programs with assurance. Music has been managed well

3. Whilst most groups of pupils achieve well in nearly all lessons, the higher attainment pupils do not always achieve as well as they could because teachers' expectations of their performance are sometimes not high enough. This is in sharp contrast to provision for pupils with special educational needs, who are supported well. The school does organise special 'excellence classes' for talented pupils, but provision is not organised systematically on an ongoing basis.
4. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and their very positive attitudes have a strong impact on their good achievement. They enjoy lessons, especially those where they have plenty of opportunity to be actively involved. In art and design, for example, they thoroughly enjoyed using plaster to make sculptures. The school organises many stimulating events to promote an enthusiasm for active learning. One particularly popular and enjoyable event is the annual 'Activities Week'. Here many parents and friends of the school visit to support teachers and to contribute particular areas of expertise. The pupils select which activities they wish to follow and create their own timetables for the week. One group, for example, decided to opt for learning brass instruments and, with the help of the Chair of Governors, became sufficiently proficient to play together to present a short performance of their work. The school is good at making learning fun.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and their behaviour are very good. Their personal development is good, with their social development the strongest feature. Overall, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The caring ethos of the school permeates all activities and helps to promote pupils' very good relationships and attitudes as well as contributing to their good personal development.
- Staff provide good role models for pupils and this promotes personal development well.

Commentary

5. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are very good. The positive picture found at the last inspection has been improved further and is now even stronger. The vast majority of pupils are very well behaved, polite and courteous, and respond well to the caring ethos that has been established. Few pupils display challenging behaviour, and staff work very well together to consistently reinforce good behaviour. Pupils enjoy school and they say so. They are interested in their work and have an enthusiasm for learning. They are involved in the wide range of activities that the school provides, both in lessons and out of school hours. Parents support the school strongly and are happy with the values the school promotes. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good. No incidents of bullying were seen during the inspection. The table below shows that just one pupil was excluded for a brief period last 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 | 206 | 0 | 0 |
| White – any other White background | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Asian | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – any other mixed background | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – Indian | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – Pakistani | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – Caribbean | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – African | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – any other Black background | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Chinese | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Any other ethnic group | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| No ethnic group recorded | 2 | 0 | 0 |

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

6. Pupils work well in pairs and small groups. They worked well together in a very good art lesson whilst making sculpture out of newspaper and plaster bandages. There are good opportunities for pupils to enhance their social development through taking responsibility, which they do with commitment and pride. Older pupils are given many jobs around the school and share these enthusiastically. In class there are rotas of monitors who help ensure that the management of the classrooms is calm and efficient. The school council meets regularly and the members take their responsibilities very seriously when making decisions on behalf of the whole school. They help younger pupils, look after them when they cannot use the playgrounds in bad weather and help to organise fund-raising activities for the school. They are full of ideas about how they may contribute to the school and feel valued and trusted. Pupils say that the school is friendly, and that, "You'll get on all right if you treat others as you want to be treated".
7. Despite the very hot weather during the inspection, pupils concentrated well and were attentive. The attitudes to learning of pupils with special educational needs are as strong as those demonstrated by all the other pupils.
8. Pupils' relationships with adults and each other are very good. This has a positive impact on their learning. They are supportive of each other and their teachers. Pupils are happy and secure, and enjoy school life in an atmosphere where all are valued. Pupils respond well to the help provided, and appreciate the praise that is often given. Pupils of all ages mix well at playtime and lunch-time, and both boys and girls make the most of the large field and outdoor equipment. Pupils with special educational needs take a full and active part in lessons and activities at playtimes.
9. Pupils have a very good understanding of right and wrong that is promoted from a very early age. They benefit from the very good role models set by the adults in school. When pupils show qualities such as honesty, politeness and helpfulness, these are rewarded

alongside academic achievement. All pupils are very aware of the school and class codes that they take part in formulating. In classrooms the star pupil or child of the week is given recognition, and this helps reinforce positive attitudes.

10. Pupils with special educational needs display good self-esteem, behaviour and attitudes to learning. The school has fostered good links with a charitable organisation, called 'Bridge Builders', which provides effective additional support for disaffected or vulnerable pupils. These pupils enjoy, and benefit from, the supportive attention they receive. Self-esteem among pupils with special educational needs is successfully raised through working in small groups and gaining a sense of pride in achieving the targets in their individual education plans.
11. Overall, pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Spiritual development is satisfactory, social and moral development is very good and cultural development is good. Pupils develop some elements of spiritual awareness through the very good relationships they have with staff. This awareness is heightened through some of the very good events that are organised such as 'Activities Week', where the whole-school community joins together to pursue a wide range of activities that are not normally part of the curriculum, and the annual school music and drama production. However, understanding about spiritual development throughout the school is limited and provision is not planned or cohesive. Pupils' very good social and moral development is seen in their very good behaviour and very good attitudes to work. Good provision for personal, social and health education also contributes well to this. Good provision for the arts, extra-curricular clubs, visitors to the school and educational visits all contribute well to pupils' good cultural development. They also study the faiths and customs of minority ethnic groups and develop a sound understanding of the richness and diversity of our multicultural society.
12. Attendance is around the national average. Levels of unauthorised absence are above. Almost all pupils arrive punctually for the start of school. Registration is quick and efficient. Parents ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive punctually. The school follows up any unexplained absences promptly.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

| Authorised absence | | Unauthorised absence | |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| School data | 4.7 | School data | 0.8 |
| 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.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good. The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to pupils' needs. It is taught thoroughly and meets legal requirements. Good arrangements are in place to ensure the welfare and care of pupils. The good links with parents and with the local secondary school make a strong contribution to the quality of education provided.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good and helps pupils to learn effectively. Assessment systems are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons follow a common outline and are well structured.
- The overwhelming majority of teaching is at least good and a third is very good.
- There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, especially in teachers' expectations of pupils' performance.
- Systems to evaluate pupils' progress do not contribute sufficiently to raising standards.
- Teachers make learning enjoyable.

Commentary

13. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. There is now a much higher proportion of very good teaching and no unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching and learning are good because teachers plan and prepare lessons well. Programmes of Study are well structured and lesson planning follows a common format throughout the school. Lessons generally begin with a good review of earlier learning and this helps pupils to focus on key aspects of their previous lessons. The introduction to lessons includes a clear explanation of what new skills will be learned during the course of the session. In the best lessons teachers also explain why these new skills might be useful in real life situations. Teachers then teach the pupils specific skills, which pupils practise before gathering together for a review session when they discuss how successful their learning has been. Teachers generate a serious approach to learning and pupils are eager to develop skills and to find out more about the world in which they live. Lessons are usually lively and teachers use humour well to promote good relationships. Teachers insist on high standards of behaviour; their control and management of lessons are very good.
14. Teaching in music often characterised the essential elements of good teaching in the school. Explanations of requirements were clear and expectations of pupils' performance were high. In one particularly good lesson the pupils used tuned and untuned percussion instruments well to interpret the different moods of the sea. They worked together well in groups and played their instruments sensibly. In a very short space of time each group composed good pieces of music that they were pleased to perform to the whole class. Learning was effective because explanations were clear, pupils' enthusiasm was fired by being set a specific challenge and they were actively involved in a purposeful, 'hands on' activity. Teaching is less effective where pupils are not allowed to take such an active part in their learning. In a science lesson in Year 6, for example, the teacher had designed the experiment rather than encouraging the pupils to decide on how best to conduct the investigation. The teacher timed the frequency of taking measurements rather than giving pupils stopwatches to time these for themselves. Also, in his lesson, the teacher's expectations were not high enough and most pupils were rehearsing skills they had already mastered rather than learning new skills and knowledge. However, this was not typical of science teaching, which is generally good and pupils are frequently involved in finding things out for themselves through first-hand investigations.
15. There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching; it is significantly stronger in Years 3 and 4 than in Years 5 and 6. Nearly all the teaching seen in Years 3 and 4 was good and nearly a half very good. In Years 5 and 6 just over a half of teaching was good and a very few lessons very good. Staffing difficulties have led to the need for teachers to take

classes in Years 5 and 6 on a temporary, short-term basis and, understandably, there are inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of pupils' performance. Teaching and learning for the older pupils is better where teachers maintain high expectations of the pupils' work output. Teaching is less effective for these pupils when not enough is expected of them and excessive praise is given for work that is sometimes just average. In subjects such as history and religious education teachers rely too heavily on using worksheets. These are not very inspiring and are often not completed. Not all teachers have a sufficiently deep knowledge of world faiths to teach the religious education syllabus effectively.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 37 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 1 (3%) | 11 (30%) | 17 (46%) | 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. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. Class teachers and the special educational needs co-ordinator work well together to devise very effective individual education plans for these pupils. These consist of small, detailed achievable steps which teachers, learning support assistants and pupils understand. Pupils with special educational needs are successfully involved in their own learning through helping to devise these plans and targets for achievement. Staff and pupils work together purposefully and in a focused way to achieve the targets. These pupils are supported and integrated well in lessons and when withdrawn from the classroom for extra help. The school's policy acknowledges the effect that taking pupils out of class lessons might have on pupils' overall curricular entitlement, and parents' permission for this is sought.
17. Teachers mark pupils' books regularly, but marking does not always show pupils how they can improve their work. As lessons proceed teachers assess how well pupils are doing and use the review sessions towards the end of each lesson to assess how successful learning has been overall. Such day-to-day assessments are satisfactory. However, systems to measure pupils' progress in the longer term are unsatisfactory. Assessment systems are not closely related to the National Curriculum Attainment Targets in all subjects and so pupils' progress through the stages of the National Curriculum is difficult to determine with precision. Systems are not geared to establishing what has been learned and to set specific targets for the next steps in learning. Assessment procedures do not contribute to raising standards by identifying the learning needs of all groups of pupils so that work can be pitched at appropriately challenging levels for all. Computer programs are not used sufficiently to make assessment manageable and to reveal areas for improvement. The school is well aware of this shortcoming and the development of efficient assessment systems features as a matter of the highest priority in its current school improvement plan.

The curriculum

The curriculum is rich and relevant. Developments in the ICT curriculum have been effective and ICT now helps to link different areas of the curriculum. Opportunities for pupils to widen their experiences through extra-curricular clubs, visits out and listening to visitors to the school, are varied and successful. Overall, accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The way ICT is integrated with other areas of the curriculum successfully enriches learning.
- Good links with local organisations and secondary schools contributes to the well-rounded and broad curriculum pupils receive at the school.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The curriculum to extend learning of higher attaining pupils is less well developed and does not always help them to attain at the appropriate higher levels.

Commentary

18. There is a good breadth to the school's curriculum. Developments in ICT are very good and contribute well to the overall curriculum. Examples of this are links with history where Year 6 researched and presented projects about the Aztecs and Year 4 printed their own family coats of arms on T-shirts. The annual 'Activities Week' is popular and very successful. The whole-school community work together to provide many and varied opportunities for pupils throughout the school.
19. There is good use of external resources, which enrich the curriculum well. These include educational visits and regular visitors to classes and the whole school. Representatives from a local charitable organisation, called 'Bridge Builders', regularly take assemblies and meet with disaffected or vulnerable pupils. This contributes well to the school's successful curriculum for personal, social and health education. During the inspection week pupils in Year 5 visited Hatfield House where history was brought to life, and Year 6 pupils visited a local secondary school to take part in some science investigations. Visitors play an integral part in the curriculum and the school has built up good relationships with some, including a visually impaired ex-service man and a woman with epilepsy, who visit classes each year. Extra-curricular clubs, including arts and sports, are varied and well attended. Pupils regularly compete in local area sports and are usually very successful in these. A well-attended breakfast club is held before school each morning and this contributes effectively to good social opportunities for pupils and is an asset to many parents. The breakfast club and well-organised activities help pupils to be well prepared for learning.
20. Curricular opportunities provide well for most pupils. Pupils with special educational needs have good access to the curriculum through effective support within class and regular withdrawal in small groups; they make good progress. However, pupils leaving and entering lessons sometimes interrupt lessons, and subjects in which this happens are not always varied over the year. Some 'excellence' classes have been held for higher attaining pupils in the past. These have included sculpture and athletics. However, the programme for extending higher attaining pupils including those who are gifted and talented, is not cohesive or systematically developed and pupils do not always reach the standards they could.

Care, guidance and support

Pupils are well cared for. Governors and staff have good procedures for checking that pupils and staff work in a healthy and safe environment. Pupils are given good support and advice. The school is good in seeking their views and acts well on them.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good and trusting relationships between pupils and staff give pupils confidence.
- The school has not developed a sufficiently rigorous system of tracking the progress of individual pupils to help guide their further learning.

Commentary

21. The school's procedures for ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils are good and this is an improvement from the last inspection when they were judged to be satisfactory. First aid provision is good and a few staff are qualified to provide assistance in the event of an emergency. Equipment is regularly professionally checked and tested. Safe practice is promoted well in lessons, for example, when a visiting educator talked to pupils about drugs. Staff and governors are involved in inspecting the premises and site and risk assessments related to visits are undertaken. Child protection procedures meet requirements and the school exercises its responsibilities with vigilance and care. In addition, the staff are very sensitive to the needs of those pupils who are not living at home.
22. Pupils with special educational needs are cared for well. Procedures for identifying these needs are well established. Partnerships between all involved including the special educational needs co-ordinator, class teachers, support staff, outside agencies and parents, are successful. Individual education plans are thorough and include appropriate targets. Pupils know their own targets well and are proud when they succeed in meeting them. This contributes well to pupils' high self-esteem and good attitudes to work. Some of the assessments used to monitor pupils' progress are not reliable and can inflate anticipated achievements of those with special educational needs. Annual reviews of Statements of Special Educational Needs are of good quality and parents are fully involved.
23. Induction arrangements are good, both when children start at school and when they move to the secondary school. New pupils are often paired with more experienced ones who offer friendship in those difficult first few weeks. Pupils said that this had worked well for them. These arrangements start the work of developing the good and trusting relationships between pupils and staff that give pupils the confidence to seek support and guidance when they have concerns about their work, or a personal problem. Staff provide a good response to such requests and they help pupils with specific problems. However, despite the strength of the pastoral support and advice available to all pupils, the advice and guidance given to pupils about the next steps they need to take in their learning are not always clear. The school recognises the need to develop a more rigorous system for tracking the progress of individual pupils and for setting appropriate targets for learning.
24. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well. Similar provision for pupils who have special gifts or talents has been given in the past through special excellence classes. However, these have been limited to termly sessions in one particular area of learning. These have been valuable because they recognise some pupils' special interests and abilities, but they have had limited impact.
25. The school successfully seeks pupils' views through the school council. Members ask for suggestions and comments and maintain a suggestion box. Pupils are invited to the regular consultations about their progress, and many come, especially the older pupils.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Parents have very positive views of the school and the education that it provides. The partnership between school and home, as well as with other schools and the community, is good and plays a positive role in supporting pupils' learning at school and home.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very happy with what the school provides for their children and frequent and informative newsletters help them to keep in touch with the school.
- The school encourages parents to be closely associated with the work of the school and consults them on school issues.
- Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed about the progress their children make.
- Links with the secondary school and with other local primary schools are generally good.

Commentary

26. The positive views of parents reflect an overall high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the school's provision. There are no areas for which any more than a few parents do not agree with positive statements in the pre-inspection questionnaire. Inspectors support the positive views of parents. The frequent and very informative newsletters and general information provided to parents are very good and annual reports on pupils' progress are satisfactory. Reports demonstrate the good knowledge that teachers have of pupils and inform parents about the work that pupils have completed and their attitudes. However, they are not written in a very accessible style. Parents say that all teachers make themselves readily available to them and they are invited to several events at school. During the inspection about 50 parents crowded into the hall to enjoy the assembly and celebrate the results of a poetry competition.
27. The school consults parents regularly. For example, parents' request for pupils to be allowed to bicycle to school was followed up by a special survey of their opinions. Subsequently, the governing body formulated a clear and appropriate policy on cycling to school. Parents of pupils in one year are canvassed as to their suggestions for pupils coming into the class the following year, although this good practice is not general. The school normally manages to resolve any concerns of parents informally and there is an effective complaints procedure.
28. Links with the community and a range of visits and visitors provide good enrichment of the curriculum and support pupils' personal and social development as well as widening their experiences and giving them opportunities to learn about the needs of others through charitable projects. A large local pharmaceutical company has supported local schools well and makes a good contribution to the school's annual 'Activities Week'.
29. The good partnership between parents, other schools and outside agencies supports pupils with special educational needs well. The co-ordinator ensures that she is informed about any pupils with identified needs who are due to transfer from the infant school and good support begins as soon as pupils arrive. In addition, the co-ordinator has good links with secondary schools and meets with appropriate staff members before pupils leave Year 6. Parents are well informed of any special educational needs their children have and how they can effectively support them at home. Visiting professionals speak highly of the school's support for pupils with special educational needs.

30. Links with other schools are fostered through an association of a cluster of local schools. Shared professional information and experience benefits pupils by providing them with coherent and progressive experience as they move between schools. Links with the local secondary school are very good and support the transfer of pupils at the age of 11 by providing opportunities to visit and gain an understanding of what secondary schooling will be like. Several teachers from that school have helped forge strong curriculum links, especially in science, music and ICT, and pupils in Year 6 have visited the secondary school for lessons taught by the secondary school teachers.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides strong and experienced leadership. The governing body provides good support and monitors the work of the school effectively.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher is particularly successful in developing teamwork and maintaining open communications with all associated with the school.
- The leadership and management of provision for pupils with special educational needs are good.
- The leadership and management of provision for ICT are very good.
- The school has not introduced effective systems to assess pupils' achievement.
- The roles of subject leaders in raising standards are underdeveloped.
- The governing body provides strong support and ensures that the school makes the best use of limited resources.

Commentary

31. The headteacher strongly promotes open avenues of communication that help to give the school clear direction. The headteacher and her deputy work together well to improve the quality of provision. Together they make a strong contribution to the very good relationships and the productive learning environment that has been established. Teaching and support staff work closely together and a strong sense of teamwork is maintained. All staff are clear about their roles, responsibilities and personal objectives, and have ready access to guidance support and relevant training. Parents, visitors and governors are made to feel welcome and offers to contribute time and expertise are warmly accepted. Governors are often in school helping with lessons and educational visits. The Chair of Governors, for example, uses her expertise to support teachers in music lessons and also runs a recorder club. A grandmother visits regularly to share reading books with pupils. There is a strong impression of integrity and openness that runs through the school. A sign of the headteacher's commitment to involving parents is the weekly newsletter that she sends to all parents. An ethos that is rooted in a commitment to ensure that pupils enjoy school and learn effectively has been securely established. Standards compare well with those attained in similar schools.
32. The leadership of other key staff varies. The leadership of ICT is very good, for example, and in science and music it is good. The management of provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. However, there are too few opportunities for subject leaders to evaluate teaching and learning across the school in order to identify areas for

development. Consequently, they cannot be sure that standards are as high as they could be.

33. One overarching weakness is the unsatisfactory development of assessment systems. The headteacher and subject leaders are agreed on the need to improve systems to assess pupils' achievement and to use assessment data to set appropriate targets for all groups of pupils. The development of assessment systems is a top priority in the current school improvement plan. The deputy headteacher has recently taken on responsibility for co-ordinating developments and he has good plans to explore computerised methods in order to make the task manageable.
34. The special educational needs co-ordinator leads and manages this area effectively and plays a key role in the whole school. She is experienced and knowledgeable. Her enthusiasm and expertise make a strong impact on the good provision for pupils and her influence spreads throughout the school. Innovations she has introduced to support pupils with special educational needs, such as programmes to support spelling, are now being introduced for all pupils in all classes. The procedures she has established to monitor each individual pupil's progress are detailed and clear. She works hard and effectively. She uses her time well and monitors the work of classroom assistants thoroughly. She works effectively with pupils, teachers and support staff and provides a good role model to all.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

| Income and expenditure (£) | | Balances (£) | |
|----------------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Total income | 628,572 | Balance from previous year | 35,433 |
| Total expenditure | 618,298 | Balance carried forward to the next | 45,707 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2,576.24 | | |

35. The governing body is kept well informed by the headteacher of all school issues. It is well aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and works hard to improve the quality of provision. The governing body is well organised and is ably led by the Chair and Vice Chair. Governors are closely associated with the school. They are acutely aware of the need to make the best use of financial allocations and to ensure, in particular, that the school has sufficient resources for teachers to teach effectively. They are keen to employ a good number of teachers and support staff and to achieve a good balance between human and physical resources. The school has, for example, managed staff absences well by deploying the deputy headteacher in a flexible way to teach different classes and to adopt different roles in the school according to changing needs. This has proved to be valuable in helping to minimise any discontinuity in pupils' learning that might be caused by staff absence.
36. The school has accrued a financial surplus through prudent management. The school plans to use this to maintain staffing levels at the current levels, particularly the staffing to maintain good support for pupils with special educational needs, despite an anticipated fall in income. The governing body monitors expenditure closely and compares the school's performance with similar schools to check that the school is doing as well as might reasonably be expected. Governors ask challenging questions and ensure that they achieve the best price for major jobs, such as resurfacing the car park. They maintain close contact with parents to determine whether they are happy with the service provided. In these ways they ensure that the principles of best value inform their decisions. Taking into account the good teaching, pupils' good achievement and the positive learning ethos that has been established, the school provides good value for the average allocations of money it receives.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and helps pupils to achieve well.
- A significant proportion of pupils find it difficult to express their opinions clearly.
- Pupils achieve well in reading and many develop an enthusiasm for children's literature.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to practise their writing in other subjects.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
- Assessment systems are not fully developed and are not used sufficiently in planning to raise standards, especially for higher attaining pupils.

Commentary

37. Pupils enter the school with standards that are below the national average. Teaching is good and helps pupils to make good progress so that, by the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average. This is similar to the findings of the last inspection. However, standards vary from year to year, mainly because the proportion of the higher attaining pupils in some year groups is below average and, in others, there is an above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs.
38. Pupils make good progress in speaking and listening. The school reports that, although pupils are confident speakers in social situations, many experience difficulties in expressing their views and opinions clearly. Also their comprehension of language is not always secure because many have limited vocabularies. However, within this overall picture, there are wide variations and a minority of pupils exhibit very good speaking skills and have a wide vocabulary. Very good relationships between staff and pupils help to encourage relaxed communication and most pupils find it easy to converse with teachers as well as with their classmates. One good strategy that teachers use is to organise 'talking partners' where questions and problems are quietly discussed for a few minutes in pairs as preparation for class discussions. Despite the efforts to develop speaking skills, many pupils still experience difficulties expressing their views and opinions. This was particularly noticeable in mathematics lessons, where pupils often could not describe the methods they had used to arrive at accurate answers.
39. Pupils make good progress in reading and attain average standards. The school has introduced initiatives that have proved successful in developing reading skills as well as an enthusiasm for literature. A designated quiet reading time after lunch in all classes works well and provides a good opportunity for a short period of concentrated reading. A

consistent approach to the teaching of reading has been established. The organisation of reading sessions is good. Effective initiatives include structured 'reading challenges,' which are a series of questions or activities associated with the books that the pupils are reading. Teachers arrange stimulating book areas in classrooms and focus on the work of different authors, poets or illustrators. Most pupils receive good support for their reading from their parents or carers at home. A drive to purchase more books for classrooms, especially those that are likely to appeal to boys, has been successful. Some boys have become more strongly motivated since having books on football and sport and talk enthusiastically about those they have read. However, boys and girls often find it difficult to explain what they have read and many show limited comprehension skills.

40. Generally pupils make steady progress in their writing and achieve average standards, although skills are not as well developed as in reading. Teachers use time well and organise a good variety of different writing activities in literacy lessons. The range of writing is wide and includes, for example, letters, stories and instructions. However, opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to practise and extend their writing skills in other subjects, such as history and religious education.
41. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well. Gaps in their learning are identified accurately and teaching assistants make a strong contribution to their successful learning. A new programme to improve spellings is proving particularly successful with these pupils.
42. Teaching is good. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly and set tasks that are, for the most part well matched to pupils' widely varying stages of development. During the opening part of each lesson teachers explain what they are expecting pupils to learn during the course of the session. Towards the end of lessons teachers and pupils discuss how successful learning has been. This helps pupils to understand how well they are doing and promotes confidence in learning. Teachers generate an enthusiasm for reading and writing, and lessons proceed at a brisk pace. Pupils are encouraged to take pride in their work and to present it neatly. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. However, marking is not always helpful in showing pupils what they should do in order to improve their work. Higher attaining pupils in particular are not always given enough guidance on how to improve further. Expectations of their performance are not always high enough and they do not always achieve as well as they could.
43. Leadership and management of the subject are sound. The co-ordinator has developed the subject satisfactorily and has purchased good resources to support teaching and learning. She is experienced and knowledgeable. The school assesses the standards that pupils have attained in reading and writing and uses the results to determine which pupils have made insufficient progress. However, the systems are not closely linked to the National Curriculum Attainment Targets. Consequently, the school cannot be sure about the amount of progress each pupil has made through the stages of the National Curriculum. Also the systems are not geared to readily set targets for the next steps in learning in order to improve achievement and raise standards. This contributes to a lack of appropriate challenge for the higher attaining pupils.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

44. There are many opportunities for pupils to practise and extend their reading skills throughout the curriculum, particularly when reading for information in geography and

history, and reading instructions and prompts in computer programs. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills outside literacy lessons. Word-processing skills are developed well in ICT and pupils use their reading skills well when conducting research on the Internet. Pupils write neatly and the quality of presentation of written work in many subjects is good.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well due to good teaching.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics and work hard.
- Pupils have good opportunities to solve problems in lessons.
- Pupils do not always know what they need to do to improve their work.
- The subject leader does not have sufficient time to monitor teaching and learning effectively.

Commentary

45. Pupils make good progress during their time in school and attain average standards by the end of Year 6. Last year standards were above the national average. There has been a significant change in the structure of the current Year 6 over a period of four years and records of their attainment indicate that standards are not now as high as they were last year. All teachers have very high expectations of good behaviour and develop very good relationships with their pupils. This encourages an atmosphere in which pupils try their best and concentrate for long periods of time. In the best lessons, well-developed routines and regular procedures mean that pupils know exactly how to organise their work. This contributes effectively to their independence in learning. Teachers have a good understanding of the subject and use plans developed from the National Numeracy Strategy well.
46. In most year groups teachers plan effectively together and this ensures that pupils of the same age have similar experiences. Where the weekly themes in numeracy link to other areas of the curriculum, learning is consolidated well. For example, pupils in Year 4 were studying directions and use of maps in geography and this was supported very well by the introduction to coordinates, amounts of turn and directions in mathematics. Starting activities are often fun and support learning well. Singing the four times table is particularly effective in helping pupils to remember number facts. Games requiring the knowledge of prime and square numbers proved to be especially demanding. Learning support assistants support groups and individuals well. Pupils with special educational needs take a full part in discussion sessions through sensitive teaching and questioning. They work effectively towards their targets. However, ICT is not used consistently throughout the school to support learning in lessons.
47. Opportunities to solve problems were observed in most lessons and, in Year 3, pupils learned effective routines, which helped them to solve word problems more easily by 'reading twice and underlining important words and figures'. This worked well. A particularly good example of more open-ended problem solving was observed with higher attaining older pupils who used practical methods to compare the volume of a cylinder. Pupils combined their previous knowledge of formulae and used estimation and

measurement well. This shows good improvement since the last inspection where the use of investigation was identified as an area for development.

48. In the best lessons, group work was matched effectively to pupils' abilities, and teachers' knowledge of pupils' particular stages of development was used well to ensure that suitable work was set. However, the quality of assessment is unsatisfactory overall. Systems are not used sufficiently well to predict the progress that pupils will make and to set targets that will enable individuals to understand the next steps they should take to advance learning. The subject leader has correctly identified this as an area for development. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. However, at present, insufficient time is available for effective monitoring of teaching and learning to take place to ensure that standards continue to improve.

Mathematics across the curriculum

49. Pupils are given good opportunities to practise and extend numeracy skills in other subjects. Good use is made of mathematical understanding by older pupils in the use of spreadsheets in ICT. Links are made to geography through the development of mapping skills using coordinates and measurement. There is good use made of mathematical skills in science in the measurement of capacity and temperature and presentation of results in tabular and graphical forms.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is good and they do well to attain average standards.
- Teaching is good and there are examples of very good teaching in Years 3 and 4.
- Very good links with the local secondary school make a strong contribution to pupils' enthusiasm for the subject.
- Leadership and management are good and have helped to raise standards.
- Good links are made with the school's health education programme.
- Assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is underdeveloped.

Commentary

50. Pupils achieve well and demonstrate a secure grasp of basic scientific principles. They attain standards that are broadly average. They are particularly good at investigating and analysing evidence to test ideas. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection when this crucial strand of the subject was identified as a weakness. Pupils make good progress and show a particularly good understanding of life and living processes. They have conducted experiments to test which materials make the best thermal insulators. They have a good understanding of electrical circuits and most explain clearly how changing the number of cells in a series circuit can make bulbs brighter or dimmer. Generally a significant number of pupils in Year 6 find difficulty in expressing their ideas clearly and find it difficult to remember the definitions of technical terms. Teachers have responded to this by introducing a good 'Memory Bank' booklet in which pupils jot down key aspects of their learning to use for revision and to jog their memories.

51. Teaching is good and results in effective learning. Lively imaginative teaching was seen in a lesson on plants and growth in Year 3. The pupils were studying the conditions needed for plants to grow successfully. The teacher used straightforward language and had an exceptionally direct approach. Two learning objectives had been written clearly on the whiteboard. The teacher asked firmly, "What are the *two* things that you *are* going to *know* by the end of the lesson?". The pupils recited the learning objectives that included 'identifying parts of a plant and function'. The word 'function' was explained clearly. The teacher demonstrated that she had high expectations of pupils' ability to understand the complexities of biological processes. She explained terms such as 'osmosis', 'photosynthesis' and 'chlorophyll' clearly and accurately. The prefix 'photo' was explored and the connection between photography and light was used to illustrate the meaning. The teacher used imaginative strategies to illustrate how living things respond to different stimuli. A boy pretended to be dead. The teacher asked how we knew that he was not dead and related his breathing to the plants transpiring. She also used his yell, in response to a poke, to illustrate the response of a plant that had leant towards the window as it reacted to light. The lesson concluded with pupils being required to state what new things they had learnt during the lesson. In another very good lesson for pupils in Year 4 on the human body, the teacher had high expectations of the amount of knowledge pupils were capable of understanding. Here the protective function of a crash helmet and a birdcage was used to illustrate the function of a human skull and rib cage. The pace of learning was brisk and by the end of the lesson most pupils had a good understanding of the function of the human skeleton.
52. The local secondary school has specialist status as a school that focuses strongly on science and technology. The two Year 6 classes have been visiting the school on alternate weeks for extra lessons. They particularly enjoyed using the well-equipped laboratories and were thrilled to be able to use Bunsen burners. During the inspection higher attaining pupils in Year 6 worked alongside pupils from a neighbouring primary school for a day to investigate, 'whether changing the concentration of copper sulphate (CuSO₄) changes the amount of light it lets through'. They developed a good understanding of how the concentration of particles affected the density of the liquid. They particularly enjoyed using the light sensors to test their hypotheses. The use of the good range of equipment and working in the specialist laboratories gives pupils a taste of what they will be doing in Year 7 and helps to generate an enthusiasm for learning.
53. Leadership and management are good. The subject leader has worked hard to improve teaching and learning. She has led staff meetings and has set up in-service training for staff. She has been especially successful in leading teachers towards developing more opportunities in lessons for pupils to engage in practical first-hand investigating and experimenting. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection when this area of the subject was a key area for improvement. However, there is further scope for pupils to be encouraged to plan their own approaches to investigations rather than accept the approach suggested by the teacher.
54. Good links are made between health education and pupils' study of living processes. Pupils study the different effects that drugs have on people and in one excellent lesson for pupils in Year 6, led by a visiting police officer, they demonstrated that they were well informed about the consequences of taking drugs.
55. Systems to assess pupils' progress and procedures to evaluate whether learning has been effective are underdeveloped. Consequently, the school cannot be certain that all groups of

pupils are making enough progress. It is not in a position to identify those groups of pupils whose learning is insecure and who need extra support. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Pupils wonder at the complexities of the human body, for example, and gain a respect for the preciousness of life. In Year 3 they showed concern for living things and were uncomfortable with cutting off the leaves or the roots of plants in order to investigate what happened as a result. Resources are adequate to support teaching and learning and are, for the most part, used well, although there is little evidence of computers being used systematically to analyse the data that results from experiments and investigations.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well and attain high standards.
- The curriculum supports teaching very well.
- The quality of learning is supported very well by links to the local secondary school.
- Dynamic leadership of the subject underpins very good improvement.
- Classroom computers are not always used effectively to support learning in lessons.

Commentary

56. Provision for ICT is a strength of the school. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection in the quality and quantity of resources, the quality of teaching and the standards attained by pupils. Pupils' achievement is very good and standards are above average.
57. The well-planned curriculum and scheme of work adapted by the co-ordinator have ensured that pupils make very good progress during their time in school. The use of the computer suite as well as training and exemplar teaching has ensured that lessons are well structured and pupils are given challenging tasks to carry out by their teachers. In the very best lessons pupils are given tasks to complete that match their abilities particularly well so that all learn effectively. In Year 3, pupils are learning about the use of e-mail and know about sending messages. The higher attaining pupils learn how to annotate received mail using their literacy skills, but are also learning effective electronic techniques. Where the subject of the lesson relates particularly to work studied elsewhere, pupils also learn quickly because they see the relevance of their work. For example, pupils in Year 6 are developing a multimedia presentation about the dangers of smoking. This links directly with their personal, social, health and citizenship education lessons on healthy living and substance misuse. Pupils apply previously learned skills to new situations and this is why attainment is consolidated and is above average. In addition, older pupils have the opportunity to learn in lessons given by advanced skills teacher from the local secondary school. These lessons are particularly challenging, but ensure that pupils learn effectively about control systems. For example, using a flow chart to control the light sequence for a lighthouse as well as the use of spreadsheets and preparation of multimedia presentations. These links make a significant contribution to the standards attained by pupils and to the training received by teachers.
58. Teaching is good and helps all pupils to learn effectively in this subject. Those with special educational needs are particularly well supported by learning support assistants who question and intervene to support the learning of new skills. They interpret instructions well during lessons where work is particularly demanding. Teachers are good at selecting pairs and groups to work together who support each other. Very good examples of collaborative working were observed in the computer suite and class teachers used their

own skills effectively to share files and screens to enable pupils to see what others were doing and improve their own work.

59. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The subject leader has a very clear vision for the development of the subject. She has used her enthusiasm and expertise to the benefit of the school. She has made judicious choices about major expenditure and its relationship to effective curricular development. She has also identified accurately the need to improve teachers' skills in making accurate assessments of pupils' capabilities so that records of achievement are more precise. She also understands the links between skills in other subjects and competency in information and communication technology, and has identified perceptively the need for pupils to improve typing skills in order to make more effective use of word-processing.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

60. Teachers are beginning to make effective curriculum links with information and communication technology. This is especially true for older pupils where skills learned in multimedia production has enabled them to present work about Aztecs in history and develop their mathematical skills satisfactorily through the use of spreadsheets. Word-processing is used satisfactorily in literacy for writing stories, making posters and writing instructions. However, the use of classroom computers to support learning in lessons is inconsistent. The need to provide relevant software has been accurately identified by the co-ordinator particularly in other subject areas like mathematics.

HUMANITIES

Religious education was inspected in detail and is reported in full below. Work in history and geography was sampled, but these subjects were not inspected in full.

61. Two lessons in **geography** were observed. The recently appointed co-ordinator has successfully identified the need to develop a new scheme of work to ensure even progress through the school. The units to be taught have been carefully chosen to reinforce the development of pupils' skills and are linked throughout by the improvement of mapping skills. This is evident in lessons observed and in pupils' recorded work particularly in Years 3 and 4. The new scheme of work has yet to become firmly established for older pupils. A good start has been made to improve this area of the curriculum and to ensure that standards are improved. The co-ordinator has a clear idea of what needs to be done to improve assessment and has innovative plans to achieve this.
62. Insufficient **history** was seen during the inspection to make full judgements on this area of the curriculum. One lesson was observed, pupils' work was examined and discussions with pupils and staff took place. The co-ordinator was absent due to ill health at the time of the inspection. Strengths of the subject are the way history is enriched and brought to life through visits, visitors and links with other areas of the curriculum such as ICT. 'Roman gladiators' visit the school each year to talk about their life and work. Photographs displayed show pupils dressing up and handling various artefacts of the period. During the inspection Year 5 pupils visited Hatfield House where history was brought to life when pupils actually met Henry VIII, or somebody who looked very like him. Pupils and staff returned to school with animated tales about the day. Year 6 have successfully completed research and prepared presentations on the Aztecs in conjunction with their ICT. Written work does not reflect these rich experiences. It is usually based on worksheets and is often incomplete.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject has been developed well since the last inspection.
- The subject contributes well to pupils' spiritual development.
- Teachers' knowledge is often incomplete and some lack confidence in teaching the subject.

Commentary

63. There has been good development in this subject since the last inspection when it was a key issue for action. The subject is now soundly based on the Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus, which successfully provides a cohesive, broad and balanced framework for religious education. Standards in the school are broadly in line with the expectations of the agreed syllabus and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. In the two lessons observed, a calm, respectful, reverent atmosphere was created, which made a good contribution to pupils' overall spiritual development.
64. The quality of teaching and learning varies, but is satisfactory overall. Weaknesses in teaching are largely due to limited subject knowledge. Where teaching is good, teachers have good subject knowledge and imaginative methods are used. Generally, teachers' knowledge of religious education is weak. Good subject knowledge was particularly in evidence in a successful Year 6 lesson about the Hindu puja tray. The teacher inspired the pupils and he was able to present the symbolism and sensual nature of various items in Hindu worship well. Good organisation and methods in a Year 4 lesson ensured that the pupils sat in awe as the teacher put gloves on to handle the Torah and as she placed a Koran reverentially on its stand. She took great care to show pupils clear examples of how special texts are handled within various faiths. The pupils were encouraged to instruct each other on how they would like their own special books handled. This created a reverent atmosphere and good learning. In another Year 4 class the teacher's subject knowledge was less secure and her demonstration of how books are handled less careful. Learning here was satisfactory. Sufficient time is not always given to complete work in lessons and homework is rarely used for this. Recorded work in books is scanty and not always complete.
65. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The new co-ordinator has introduced staff to the locally used scheme of work. She has purchased new resources to support this and has organised these accessibly within classes. She has some understanding of the subject as it formed part of her degree, but requires further training to increase her clarity in the subject and confidence to guide others in their teaching.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Music was inspected in full and is reported below. Too few lessons were seen in art and design to support overall judgements about provision, but the subject was sampled. Design and technology and physical education were not inspected.

66. Work of high quality was seen in **art and design**. Pupils in Year 6 have produced work of high quality. They have good water colouring skills and produced some sensitively painted landscapes that included beautifully painted skies. A particularly good piece of collaborative work was inspired by a painting called 'The Lover's Quilt' by the black American artist, Faith Ringgold. Pupils in Year 4 have produced good paintings that captured the Australian Aborigines' style of painting. These experiences have helped pupils to develop an understanding and appreciation of different cultures. Pupils have produced some stunning wall hangings that involve painstakingly crafted work with carefully chosen fabrics. One inspired by Klimt's 'The Kiss' is particularly impressive. In a very good lesson on sculpture in Year 3, pupils used their prior studies of sculptors and their preparatory sketches well when using plaster to construct powerful three-dimensional pieces. The subject is ably led. The subject leader offers colleagues good advice and has worked well with teaching and support staff to develop very attractive and informative displays of work throughout the school.

MUSIC

Provision for music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is very good.
- Lessons are interesting.
- Pupils have good opportunities for performance in lessons and publicly.
- Singing is good.
- Music makes a good contribution to cultural development.

Commentary

67. Good teaching helps pupils to achieve very well and attain standards that are above average. Lessons are well planned, following effective guidance from the co-ordinator and showing good use of a commercial scheme of work. Pupils make good progress in all strands of the subject. Standards are similar to those found at the time of the last inspection. Lessons are fun and include a good range of different activities that engage pupils' attention. They are given ample opportunity for practical involvement in music making and this encourages independent learning effectively. Teachers use their lessons to enhance pupils' speaking and listening skills, which clearly reflects a whole-school initiative.
68. Pupils have very good opportunities to compose and perform in lessons. They are able to construct complex rhythm and movement patterns incorporating layers of sound. They create musical pictures using percussion instruments and work effectively as part of a small group. Their work is then orchestrated into a class composition. They listen to a good range of music, for example, in assembly they reflect quietly on how a wide range of music makes them feel. From the beginning of their time in school pupils learn how to record what they have composed in increasingly complex symbols. They use specific vocabulary well, for example, describing tempo and timbre.

69. In most lessons, good planning and use of time gives pupils the opportunity to comment upon and make improvements to their performance. The school also has two major productions each year and these include music, dance and drama. The productions make a strong contribution to pupils' social development and they gain great confidence from performing in public. Good teaching ensures that good quality singing skills are developed for these productions and used effectively in every day school life especially in assembly where pupils were able to sustain a three-part round effectively while singing a calypso.
70. The co-ordinator leads the subject well. The curriculum is enriched well by the quality of visits and visitors to school. Good use is made of links with the local high school. Pupils in Year 5 are able to learn keyboard skills through the contribution of a specialist teacher. Professional drummers visit the school and pupils experiment with a variety of drums. This experience is extended by a further visit to an African music group. These experiences combined with the range of music for listening and appraising contribute significantly to cultural development. Friends of the school offer their own expertise to teach recorder and woodwind groups and give pupils the chance to play brass instruments during activities week.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

71. The very good behaviour and attitudes seen throughout the school contribute to the pupils' good personal and social skills. Curricular planning shows the very good breadth of this area of learning and the wide range of experiences pupils have. The personal, social and health education programme, which is both broad and relevant, has been devised in conjunction with the governing body. It is based soundly on a published scheme that is used well and which provides coherence and continuity in learning from Years 3 to 6. The pupils' experiences prepare them well for the next stage of their education. There is good provision for sex education and learning about drug and alcohol misuse. Visitors are well used throughout the school to extend pupils' understanding and empathy of 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 | 4 |
| How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection | 4 |
| Value for money provided by the school | 3 |
| Overall standards achieved | 3 |
| Pupils' achievement | 3 |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities | 3 |
| Attendance | 4 |
| Attitudes | 2 |
| Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions | 2 |
| 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 | 5 |
| How well the curriculum meets pupils needs | 3 |
| Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities | 3 |
| Accommodation and resources | 4 |
| 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 | 3 |
| 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 | 4 |
| 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).

