

INSPECTION REPORT

LEY HILL SCHOOL

Ley Hill, Chesham

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110243

Headteacher: Mr P de Koning

Lead inspector: Mrs H Ranger

Dates of inspection: 12 – 14 January 2004

Inspection number: 256730

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:	4 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	268
School address:	Ley Hill Chesham Buckinghamshire
Postcode:	HP5 1YF
Telephone number:	01494 784205
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs S Coles
Date of previous inspection:	1 June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Ley Hill Primary School serves the village of Ley Hill and other nearby villages. Pupils also come from the town of Chesham, as a result of their parents' preference for this school. The school is regularly oversubscribed. Pupils represent a broad range of social and economic backgrounds that are mostly favourable. About 80 per cent of pupils come from white British families and the rest represent a wide range of ethnic minority groups. A few pupils are bilingual but none of these needs help in school with spoken English. The number of pupils who move into or out of the school other than at the usual transfer times is lower than average. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school represents a wide range but is above average overall. Ten per cent of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, a lower proportion than the national average. The school caters for pupils from the Reception year to Year 6. Since the last inspection, local reorganisation has meant that the school no longer includes pupils in Year 7.

In recent years the school has achieved the nationally recognised awards of Artsmark Gold, Activemark Gold, Basic Skills Quality Mark, Charter for Special Educational Needs, Eco Schools Award, School Travel Plan Award, School Achievement Award and Investor in People.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
22223	Mrs H Ranger	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage Art and design Design and technology Music
14214	Mrs G Smith	Lay inspector	
28170	Mr I Chearman	Team inspector	Special educational needs Mathematics Information and communication technology Religious education
23335	Mrs D Gare	Team inspector	Science Geography Physical education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Ley Hill is a good school which also includes very good and outstanding features in its work. Teaching is good and pupils do well. The pupils have achieved high standards in National Curriculum tests in recent years. The school is led and managed well and gives very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The performance of pupils in national tests is high.
- Pupils achieve well in the key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) and this equips them to work well across the curriculum.
- The headteacher, senior staff and governors work well as a team in the purposeful and efficient leadership and management of the school.
- The curriculum is very good and pupils are offered an excellent range of extra activities.
- Teaching is good overall and caters well for pupils of all attainments, but the quality of discussions at the ends of lessons, the checking of progress and the use of time are not consistently effective in all classes and subjects.
- Most subjects are led and managed well but, in a few subjects, the co-ordinators are not rigorous in some of the ways they monitor standards and plan for improvement.
- Pupils' positive attitudes, behaviour, very good relationships and excellent attendance make them keen learners and are promoted well by the school.

The school has maintained the good quality of education identified by its last inspection. Its academic performance remains strong. Provision in ICT has improved well. There has been action on the key issues for improvement from the previous inspection that related to development planning, the role of subject co-ordinators and the effectiveness of assessment, but other features of these aspects now need to be addressed.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	A	A	A	B
mathematics	A	A	A*	A
science	A	B	A*	A*

*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. The table shows the school's high overall performance in last year's tests. (A* indicates that the results were within the highest five per cent of schools nationally.) The achievement of the current children in the Reception class is good and, in all areas of learning, they are on course to exceed the goals that children are expected to meet by the end of the Reception year. Achievement is good in most subjects in Years 1 and 2. By Year 2, attainment is above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Of the other subjects inspected in this age group, ICT, physical education and religious education exceed expected levels. Attainment is average in science and meets at least the national expectations in art. Achievement is good overall in Years 3 to 6. By Year 6, standards of attainment are well above average in English and mathematics, and above average in science. Standards exceed national expectations in art, ICT, music and religious education. In physical education, standards are well above expected levels. The many pupils who play an instrument do very well in the performance of music. Achievement in

French is very good. Pupils with special educational needs and high attainers achieve as well as other pupils because the school caters well for them. Bilingual pupils and those from ethnic minorities achieve as well as the rest of their classmates.

The provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils have good attitudes to school, form very good relationships and behave well. Their attendance is excellent.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. Overall, teaching and learning are good. They are most effective for the youngest children, who are settled into school quickly, and for pupils in Years 5 and 6. Teachers provide interesting and challenging activities, promote good relationships and manage behaviour well. Good links are made across subjects and teachers' areas of expertise are used well. Within this good overall picture, a few lessons are too long or too short, or do not use the opportunities available for pupils to discuss their work and for teachers to assess progress. Assessment is good in the core subjects, but procedures for assessing other subjects vary considerably between classes. A very good curriculum is enriched by an excellent range of extra activities such as clubs and visits. The day-to-day care of pupils is good. There is an excellent partnership with parents and very effective links with the local community that enhance the quality of pupils' education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's very good vision and sense of purpose underpin a strong staff team. Senior staff provide good leadership and a commitment to maintaining a very positive ethos. Subject leaders support their colleagues well, but have not all had enough recent opportunities to monitor lessons and provision across the school to gain a clear overview of standards. Governance is very good. Governors support the school very well and ensure that all legal requirements are met. Administration and financial management are efficient and promote the smooth running of the school very effectively.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents hold excellent views and are very satisfied with almost all aspects of school provision. A few would like the school to consult them more and to give them more information about how their children are getting on. Inspectors disagree with these concerns and feel that these aspects are already good.

Pupils' views are positive. They like their lessons and teachers, and feel they learn well. Other children are friendly. Adults sort out any problems. A minority would like some classmates to behave better and would like both more fun and more hard work in their lessons. When following up the pupils' comments, inspectors found that behaviour was good and lessons were interesting and challenging.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- improve the consistency of pupils' achievement by checking that, in all classes and subjects, the quality of discussions, the ways that pupils' progress is checked and the way that time is used are of the high quality seen in most lessons;
- enable subject co-ordinators to monitor the quality of provision in lessons and to use the information from monitoring and assessment more effectively to plan for further improvements in teaching and learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Attainment is above average in the Reception class and by Year 2, and well above average by Year 6. Pupils' achievement is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has consistently achieved high standards in the national tests in Year 2 and Year 6 since its last inspection.
- By Year 6, standards are well above average in the key subjects of English and mathematics because of good teaching, especially for the older pupils.
- Children in the Reception class do well in all areas of learning and get a good start in school.
- Pupils' achievements are of good quality in most of the school, but do not reach a consistently high standard in all subjects and classes.
- Standards in physical education and aspects of music are well above average by Year 6 because of the very wide range of good quality opportunities offered in these subjects.
- Standards in ICT have improved well since the last inspection and are now above average.

Commentary

1. At the time of the last inspection, pupils' progress was good and attainment was above average by Year 2. By Year 6, it was above average in most subjects, and English and mathematics were well above average. Since then, the school has broadly maintained these standards in the subjects that were inspected this time. It has improved standards well in ICT which was the weakest subject at that time. Pupils' standards in the key areas of literacy, numeracy and ICT equip them very well for the demands of the curriculum.

The Foundation Stage (the Reception class)

2. The inspection took place when most of the Reception class were very new to the school and most of the findings relate to the smaller group of older children who had been in school for a term. When children join the school, their attainment is above average overall. However, the school's records indicate that some aspects of their development, most notably their early writing skills, are average. The children are given a good start by effective teaching in the Reception class and settle into school routines well. They achieve well overall and the younger ones achieve very well in their personal, social and emotional development. The children are on course to exceed the nationally expected levels (the Early Learning Goals) in all areas of learning by the end of their Reception year. This represents good progress as most of the children will have only two terms in the Foundation Stage of their education. At the time of the inspection, the children (including the new entrants) were working at above the expected levels in their personal, social and emotional development, mathematical development and creative development. They were at expected levels in communication, language and literacy, knowledge and understanding of the world and in their physical development.

Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2)

3. The school's recent results in National Curriculum tests in this age group are impressive. In the tests in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and in teachers' assessment of science, the school's performance has been high in recent years with pupils attaining well above the national average. In 2003, the results in mathematics were within the highest five per cent of schools nationally. A high proportion of pupils reached Level 3. (The level expected nationally for this age group is Level 2.) In 2002 and 2003, pupils' results were also well above

those of similar schools, based on relative levels of free school meals. The trend in the school's results for the past five years has been above the national improvement.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 2 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	17.8 (18.1)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	16.7 (16.6)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	18.8 (18.6)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 56 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- Inspection findings show that the pupils who are currently in Years 1 and 2 achieve well, particularly in English, mathematics and ICT. Attainment by Year 2 is above average in reading, writing and mathematics because of the high priority given to these subjects and the good teaching provided. It is average in science and pupils' achievements are satisfactory. In the other subjects that were inspected in detail, attainment is at least in line with nationally expected levels in art and above expectations in ICT, physical education and religious education.

Key Stage 2 (Years 3 to 6)

- The school has also sustained high standards in National Curriculum tests in Year 6. Over the past few years, pupils have attained standards that are at least well above average each year in English and mathematics, and most years in science. In 2003, performance in mathematics and science was within the highest five per cent of schools nationally. A high proportion of pupils achieved Level 5. (The level expected nationally for this age group is Level 4.)

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.0 (29.7)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	30.5 (28.9)	26.8 (26.7)
science	31.9 (29.7)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 33 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- When compared with schools whose pupils achieved similar results at the age of seven, pupils did well in English, very well in mathematics and were within the highest five per cent of schools in science. Although the rate of improvement in results in this age group over the past five years has been below the national trend, the school had already established a much higher starting point than most schools at the beginning of this period and has maintained its high performance. The school sets challenging targets for its pupils in this age group. These were exceeded well in 2003.
- Inspection findings are that pupils in Years 3 to 6 achieve well overall. Their learning is particularly efficient in Years 5 and 6. By Year 6, attainment is well above average in English, mathematics and physical education. It is above average in science, ICT, religious education and art. The standards seen in pupils' current work in science, while good, do not reflect the very high standards achieved in last year's National Curriculum tests and are not as high as present standards in English and mathematics. However, the school is confident that its high standards will be maintained by the way that pupils are prepared to complete the tests over the next few months. Attainment in music is above average overall and the large number of

pupils who learn instruments achieve standards that are well above those seen in most schools. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are taught French and, in the lesson seen, they achieved very well.

8. In the school as a whole, pupils with special educational needs achieve well against the targets set for them in their individual education plans. Higher attaining pupils are challenged well and their achievements are good overall. Bilingual pupils and those from minority ethnic backgrounds make similar progress to their classmates. In recent years, boys in Year 6 have not done as well in the writing tests as girls and the school identifies this as a priority for improvement. The inspection found no significant variation in the current achievement of boys compared with girls.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have good attitudes to school, behave well and form very good relationships. The school makes good overall provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance is excellent and punctuality is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance is very high compared with other schools and this helps pupils to make good progress in their work.
- A wide range of opportunities for personal development is offered to pupils.
- Pupils respond with commitment to the opportunities and responsibilities that the school provides.
- Pupils show respect for others, are very confident and have high self-esteem.
- The school is very committed to developing pupils' cultural awareness and creativity.
- Planning for pupils' spiritual development across the curriculum, while satisfactory, is not as strong as other aspects of the provision for pupils' personal development.

Commentary

9. Attendance at Ley Hill was good at the time of the previous inspection and this positive picture has improved further over the intervening six years. It is now very high compared with other schools and this has been the case for at least the last three years. Few pupils are late and the overwhelming majority of parents ensure that their children arrive in good time for the start of the school day.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.5	School data	0.0
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

10. The school achieves above average standards in pupils' personal development, although the findings of this inspection are not quite as high overall as the judgements of the previous report. Pupils' attitudes to school are good. Pupils of all ages have positive views about most aspects of school life. They particularly appreciate the quality of teaching and learning and the friendliness of other pupils. A minority would like some of their peers to behave better at times and would like more fun and more hard work in their lessons. Pupils are confident and articulate. The school offers an excellent variety of extra-curricular activities run by staff, parents or other professionals, which are very strongly supported by the pupils. Pupils in Year 6 eagerly take on the roles of responsibility throughout the school which are offered to them in their final year. These include helping to organise the ICT suite and greeting visitors to the

school during the lunch hour. In lessons, concentration and interest are good. Pupils' behaviour is good in all age groups. Pupils with special educational needs are confident because they are fully included by teachers' planning and by the good support of the teaching assistants. They have good attitudes to learning in this secure and stimulating environment.

11. Relationships across the school are very good. There was no evidence of bullying during the inspection and pupils say that any incidents that concern them are dealt with well by the adults in the school. The good standard of day-to-day care seen throughout the school would support their view. Pupils work well together in lessons. During breaktimes, they play well together and there is little or no unkindness. There have been no exclusions of pupils since the last inspection. The great majority of pupils say they are confident that there is an adult in school they can go to for help and that teachers listen to them. Boys and girls relate well to each other. Pupils from minority ethnic groups are integrated well and have positive relationships with others. Incidents of racism are very rare.
12. The provision that the school makes to encourage pupils' personal development is good. In the Reception class, children are quickly and effectively settled into the routines of school life. Pupils' spiritual awareness is developed satisfactorily in assemblies through brief reflection and thought-provoking stories. Opportunities for spiritual development are planned, for example, in assemblies, religious education and through work in the environmental area. However, this aspect of provision is planned less explicitly across the curriculum as a whole.
13. Staff and pupils work together to develop a strong moral framework for the school. Teachers are good role models and pupils understand right from wrong. Pupils adhere to the school's rules well. The school council meets regularly with the headteacher and a governor, and plays an active role in improving and developing aspects of school life which pupils can influence. It has been particularly influential in the development of playground facilities. Both social and moral development are well supported by the school's acts of collective worship and the everyday conduct of adults in the school. Religious education lessons help pupils to learn about moral behaviour effectively.
14. The development of cultural awareness in pupils is very good. The school is strongly committed to a rich curriculum which provides many opportunities for pupils to develop a good understanding of their own and others' cultural heritage. Governors monitor this aspect of school life to ensure that provision is effective, including the multi-cultural aspects. In religious education, pupils learn about other faiths and visit places relating to these, for example, Neasden Temple when studying Hinduism. Recently, pupils taking part in the cycling awareness scheme joined with another local school where the pupil population is predominantly multi-cultural. This offered first hand experience for the pupils of Ley Hill to work closely with people of other cultures and faiths.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching and learning are good and assessment is satisfactory. The curriculum is very good and is well resourced. It makes good provision for pupils' personal development and is enriched very well by extra activities. The day-to-day care of pupils is good. There are excellent links with parents and very good links with the local community.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall. Assessment procedures are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching promotes pupils' high standards in the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT.
- Effective teaching in the Foundation Stage gives the children a good start to school.

- Assessment is mostly used well to promote pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science; it is not sufficiently effective in several other subjects, and the quality of marking and target-setting varies too much between classes.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' performance and behaviour, especially in Years 5 and 6.
- Specialist expertise is used well in several subjects.
- Support staff and volunteer helpers are used well to aid pupils' learning.
- Time is not used well in a few lessons.

Commentary

15. The good standard of teaching and learning has been maintained since the last inspection. Of the lessons seen, over three quarters were good or very good and one lesson was excellent. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 32 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (3%)	4 (13%)	20 (63%)	7 (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. Further evidence of the quality of teaching and learning was taken from looking at particular elements of lessons, from examining pupils' previous work, and from talking to pupils and teachers. Although there were no substantial variations in the quality of the lessons seen in different age groups, this wider evidence indicates that teaching is particularly successful in the Foundation Stage and in Years 5 and 6.
17. In the subjects that were inspected in detail, teaching and learning were good overall in the Foundation Stage, English, mathematics, science, ICT, religious education and art, and very good in physical education. Teaching was satisfactory in class lessons in music and good in the provision for instrumental tuition and choral work.
18. Several features of teaching apply to the school as a whole. Teachers and other adults promote very good relationships in their classes. In the Reception class, the teacher's very good approach means that children settle very rapidly to school and grow in confidence. This continues throughout the school. Pupils get on very well with each other and behave well as a result of how they are treated by adults. Teachers successfully provide interesting lessons and pupils are motivated by these to learn. Teachers have clear objectives for lessons and explain tasks well. Written lesson planning is good. Practical learning resources are used well. The teachers deploy teaching assistants and voluntary helpers well to support individuals or groups of pupils. This enables pupils to achieve well in relation to the objectives of the lesson. Good links are made across subjects that help pupils to see the relevance of their work. The expertise of teachers and other adults with particular skills and interests is used effectively. This has a positive impact on learning in many subjects and examples were seen during the inspection in French, drama, geography, physical education, ICT, art, music and design and technology. The excellent range of extra activities provided, such as clubs and visits, enhances pupils' learning very well.
19. The previous inspection identified the need for better planning and teaching in ICT. This has been achieved well in a joint effort by the school's managers and the class teachers. Teachers and pupils have benefited from good training and improved resources. The subject is now taught regularly and systematically.

20. Most aspects of teachers' questioning and their use of discussions are good. In a few lessons, and especially in the summary session of the lesson, teachers do not exploit opportunities for pupils to review their learning. For example, they rarely encourage pupils to discuss in pairs or small groups how well they have done, or check learning against the initial objective of the session effectively.
21. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' performance in most classes. Inclusion and equality of opportunity are good. This is typified by the tasks that are set for pupils with special educational needs and by the levels of challenge that exist in most lessons. Lessons are particularly challenging in English and mathematics in Key Stage 2. The oldest pupils are very well prepared for academic tests in these subjects, especially the Eleven Plus examinations and National Curriculum tests. The way that lesson time is used varies across the school. In most classes it is good. Occasionally lessons are too short to introduce and consolidate new learning and occasionally too long, so that pupils lose enthusiasm or teachers run out of activities to fill the time. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers and teaching assistants plan carefully to ensure that the learning is matched well to the pupils' individual needs. Progress towards learning or behavioural targets is closely monitored. Pupils are fully included in all aspects of lessons.
22. A key issue for improvement from the last inspection was to ensure that day-to-day assessment was used more consistently to plan work that matched pupils' needs and to set targets for improvement. Action on this has been satisfactory. Teachers' planning outlines activities that cater for the full range of the class. Pupils have individual learning targets in core subjects. However, the quality of teachers' marking and target setting are still variable between classes. Some marking is detailed and informative. It clearly tells pupils how well they have done and what they should do next to improve. It relates pupils' performance to their individual learning targets. The oldest pupils know the National Curriculum level that they are working at and how they can move to a higher level. In some other classes, marking is more cursory and does not give enough information about how well individuals are doing. The ways in which pupils' targets are used also varies. In the best examples, they are clearly displayed with pupils' work, pupils bear them in mind in lessons and teachers make explicit references to class and individual targets during the course of the day. This is not the case in all classes and the good practice could usefully be made more consistent.
23. Assessment arrangements and record-keeping are very good in the Foundation Stage. The teacher keeps detailed records of children's progress in all the areas of learning and uses these as a basis for her planning. In Years 1 to 6, tracking of progress over time is good in most aspects of the core subjects. Class teachers, subject co-ordinators and the school's management team make effective use of regular tests and assessments of work in English, mathematics and science. These are used to inform pupils' targets in these subjects and contribute well to the high standards achieved. There is some variation in the formats that teachers use to record periodic assessments and targets. ICT systems are underused in the management of assessment data. Day-to-day assessment is not used rigorously in English in all classes to guide pupils' learning targets. The effectiveness of assessment varies most in the foundation subjects. The exceptions are in ICT and physical education, where agreed systems are being tried or used. In other subjects, there are examples of good practice in some classes where teachers assess pupils' progress against the key learning objectives of each unit of work. This is a manageable and effective way of ensuring coverage and checking whether pupils are gaining the intended knowledge, understanding and skills. There are no whole-school arrangements to ensure consistency in practice in these subjects. The assessment co-ordinator has rightly recognised that this is an area for improvement in the future.

The curriculum

The curriculum is very good. An excellent range of extra-curricular provision enriches the curriculum very well. The quality of accommodation and learning resources is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school plans a very wide variety of interesting activities that are relevant to the pupils and resourced well.
- The curriculum for children in the Reception class is very good.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The provision for personal, health, sex education and citizenship is good.
- There is an outstanding range of clubs, visits and visitors that enrich the curriculum.

Commentary

24. The curriculum is very good for all age groups. It is broadly based and reflects the school's determination to offer a very wide range of opportunities for pupils. It caters very well for the children in the Reception class, where it is planned in line with national guidance in all areas of learning. In Years 1 to 6, it meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and the statutory requirements for religious education and collective worship. The quality and range of learning activities are very good. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy have had a positive impact in raising pupils' standards. A very wide range of interesting visits make learning more interesting and meaningful for pupils. For example, pupils have been to the Imperial War Museum, the mosque in Chesham and the Science Museum. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 benefit greatly from residential visits. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have a very good opportunity to learn French and to visit Normandy where they participate in a wide range of cross-curricular activities. Most teachers plan effective cross-curricular links between subjects. For instance, in a Year 5 literacy lesson, pupils studied a text that was relevant to the history work that they were going to undertake later in the day.
25. The school has received a number of awards for the quality of its curriculum, including Activemark Gold, Artsmark Gold, Eco Schools Award and a School Travel Plan Award. Music provision is enhanced well by the opportunities for a large number of pupils to learn to play a musical instrument. These features reflect the high priority given to pupils' cultural development, creativity and environmental awareness.
26. There are good arrangements to cater for pupils with particular gifts or talents. These pupils are identified and provided for, both within their own classes or by the extra activities in areas such as music and sport. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. Individual education plans target their learning at a challenging level appropriate to their needs. Pupils are well included in the rich curriculum and all school activities. The school is currently unable to offer wheelchair access to areas of the building used for older pupils. This has been identified as an area for improvement in the school's accessibility plan and has been notified to the local education authority for action when financial resources permit.
27. The excellent range of extra-curricular activities including sports, arts and music clubs and activities enrich the curriculum very well. For instance, pupils can learn chess and compete in chess competitions, play table tennis, sing in the choir and play in the orchestra.
28. The school's accommodation is good. There is adequate space both inside and outside the building, although a few of the classrooms are cramped. The school is bright, attractively decorated and clean. The outside areas have been carefully planned and planted, have useful playground markings, covered areas, play equipment and specific areas for ecological studies. The exception to this otherwise good picture is that the children in Reception do not have large wheeled toys to use on the playground. Learning resources for other age groups are in good condition, well organised and relevant to the needs of the pupils. The school benefits from a stable teaching staff, with a good range of subject expertise. They are ably supported by a small team of teaching assistants.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are good. The school provides good support, advice and guidance and involves pupils well in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Working relationships are very good and this encourages pupils to work hard and do their best.
- Induction procedures into the Reception class are very good and this helps new arrivals to settle in quickly and make good progress in their work.
- Pupils have good opportunities to express their views and the school acts upon them whenever possible.

Commentary

29. Members of staff share a wholehearted commitment to the pupils' welfare and they work as a good team. Pupils feel well looked after and they trust and respect the adults in the school. They like their teachers and say that they would not hesitate to ask for help or advice if they needed it. This above average level of care helps pupils to settle quickly and enables them to concentrate on their work and make good progress. All staff work effectively to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are cared for well in both their work and personal development. These pupils feel confident in their relationships with adults. First aid and child protection procedures are comprehensive and members of staff fully understand their individual roles. Routine health and safety procedures are in place, although inspectors informed the headteacher and governors of a few concerns during the inspection. These related mainly to the safety of the pond area adjacent to the staffroom which is not adequately fenced.
30. Parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting said they are pleased with arrangements for the induction of children who are joining the Reception class. Inspectors agree with their positive views. Members of staff from the Reception class visit local pre-school groups and nursery schools in order to meet incoming children before they enrol. Children are also invited to attend three sessions prior to their admission and this helps everyone to get to know each other at an early stage. As a result, the teacher is able to plan activities that are closely matched to the needs of each child and this helps them to get off to a good start.
31. Confident that their suggestions will be well received, pupils say they feel able to voice freely their opinions about the school, along with how it can be improved. Pupils of all ages are able to make suggestions through the school council and they have already brought about several useful and practical improvements. For example, pupils have been behind the installation of a playground clock and the provision of plastic storage boxes for playtime toys. The school is now planning to introduce a 'leavers questionnaire' for Year 6 pupils and their parents.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are excellent and links with the local community are very good. Links with other schools and pre-school providers are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links between the school and parents are exceptionally effective; parents provide outstanding support for their children's learning at home and at school.
- The school is very popular with parents and there is little about the school that they would like to change.

- Links with the community are very good; they enrich the curriculum and promote pupils' personal development very well.
- Parents receive detailed information about the curriculum and the progress their children are making.

Commentary

32. Parents are very interested in their children's education and do everything they can to ensure that they do as well as possible. They ensure that they attend very regularly and their commitment is reflected in a level of attendance that is very high compared to the national average. There are virtually no unauthorised absences. The number of parents who offer voluntary help during the school day is exceptionally high. The school provides high quality information and training for parents who wish to help with its activities. At home, parents ensure their children complete their homework on time and that they arrive at school in a good frame of mind for learning. The school is very pleased with the level of support provided and, by way of thanks, hosts an annual lunch as a token of its appreciation. The parents of pupils with special educational needs are well included in reviewing their children's targets and the school has good contacts with them.
33. The school is regularly over-subscribed and parents are very pleased and proud that their children are able to attend Ley Hill School. Around two thirds of the pre-inspection questionnaires were returned; this is a very high proportion and the very positive views obtained are therefore very representative. Analysis of parents' responses shows that there are only two areas that cause any misgivings. Around one in ten of those who expressed a view feels that they do not receive sufficient information about their children's academic progress and that the school takes inadequate steps to obtain their views. Inspectors disagree with these concerns. The quality of information provided is very good compared with many other schools and parents receive regular newsletters as well as full and frank annual reports. The school website contains a very good range of information including details of the curriculum, the governors' annual report and prospectus. The school makes a good effort to obtain and act upon parents' views. The parents' association organises a range of activities that are very well supported and parents often use these opportunities to inform staff of their suggestions or concerns.
34. Links with the local community are very close. A wide range of visitors contributes to school life and links with the local church are strong. The school acts as a focal point for the community; for example, several villagers come in to hear pupils read and this individual support helps pupils to improve their reading skills and to become more confident. Pupils also take part in many community events and these links help pupils to develop a very good sense of local identity.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. The leadership of the school by the headteacher and key staff is good. Management is good overall. The governance of the school is very good and statutory requirements are met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's strong leadership and very clear vision have created a good staff team with a strong sense of purpose and high levels of mutual trust and teamwork.
- There is a commitment to raising standards further, although the written development plan does not always reflect the quality of discussions on how this will be linked to improvements in teaching and learning.
- Governors provide very good support for the school.

- Financial management is efficient so that the school is well resourced, well staffed and provides very good value for money.
- The checks on pupils' learning in the foundation subjects are not as rigorous as in other subjects.

Commentary

35. The headteacher provides good leadership based on a very clear vision and sense of purpose. This has developed in the staff a very clear sense of pride in the work of the school. Evidence of this is the shared aim to pursue excellence through the prestigious awards such as the Artsmark Gold, Activemark Gold and Investor in People status gained by the school. The ethos of the school is strong and evidenced by very good relationships between all parties. There is an effective staff because the headteacher values teamwork and has created a clear purpose and direction. This leads all staff to be strenuous in their efforts to improve standards in pupils' personal and academic development. Together with the deputy headteacher and other senior teachers with management responsibility, the headteacher has welded the staff into a strong team and morale is high. There is a shared vision for the maintenance of high standards and for further improvement.
36. Subject co-coordinators are conscientious and concerned to promote improvement in their subjects. They give good leadership in planning in all subjects and are available to advise their colleagues. Leadership in English, mathematics and ICT has been successful in improving provision and raising standards overall. The management and monitoring of subjects other than English and mathematics and science is not supported by agreed procedures for assessing pupils' progress. Co-ordinators check their colleagues' plans, resources and the coverage of the National Curriculum. The time available for this monitoring needs, in addition, to be focused on checking the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements. Several co-ordinators have taken on new subject roles recently. All are experienced in managing other areas of the curriculum. They are establishing their knowledge and management of their new subjects, so that their understanding of priorities in their subjects is still developing. The headteacher and a few senior staff carry out most of the observations of teaching in lessons. The school does not make the best use of its staff expertise to spread the most effective practices across the school, or to tackle the less effective ones, resulting in inconsistencies across the school.
37. The leadership and management of special educational needs are good. The schools' contacts with external agencies are used well to access resources and expertise. The funding and grant income are carefully managed for best value and governors' strategic contribution to its use is very good. The special needs co-ordinator manages the team of teaching assistants and creates effective partnerships with teachers for learning and provision. Training opportunities to improve this team's effectiveness are good and used well. Provision for higher attaining pupils and for gifted or talented individuals is also managed well. Senior staff keep abreast of good practice in this area and ensure that activities across the school cater for this group of pupils. The school ensures by its tracking and monitoring systems that pupils from all ethnic groups make similar progress to their classmates and in line with their capabilities.
38. Management procedures for planning and controlling the budget work smoothly and effectively. The headteacher and governors have worked hard and successfully to manage a very tight budget in the current financial year. Day-to-day administration is efficient and the office staff support the running of the school very well. There are good procedures for the induction of staff and pupils. The procedures for continuing staff development, performance management and training are very well established. Newly qualified teachers and graduate trainees are very well cared for and are valued members of the staff team. The school's initiative in providing well trained and effective support staff is very effective in improving teaching and learning.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	602,635
Total expenditure	603,707
Expenditure per pupil	2,179

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	19,666
Balance carried forward to the next	18,594

39. Governors are fully involved in setting the agenda for the school. The governors are of high quality, proactive and very well led. They undertake regular training and self-evaluation. Governors give excellent support to senior management in seeing that the statutory requirements of the school are fully met and in identifying priorities for development. Their awareness of school strengths and any relative weaknesses is clear in conversations with them. However, the school improvement plan is not sharp enough to be fully effective in reflecting the quality of their debate. It is not always focused clearly enough on teaching and learning where this is relevant. Its criteria for the success of some initiatives do not outline rigorously enough how pupils' achievement will be improved.
40. This is an effective, well-organised school. With funding that is below the national average, it provides very good value for money.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Reception class children achieve well in all areas of learning as a result of good teaching.
- New entrants make very good progress in their personal development and in the rate at which they settle into school.
- Procedures to assess and track children's achievements are very good.
- The staff work well as a team and the school makes very good use of additional voluntary help and of the support of parents.
- The Reception teacher leads and manages provision for this age group very well.
- There are good arrangements to deal with the needs of children who are admitted at different points in the year.
- Practical resources are plentiful, but there are no large wheeled toys for outdoor use.

Commentary

41. The school has maintained the good provision identified for this age group at the time of the previous inspection. There are two points of admission for the youngest children – September for older ones in the year group and January for younger ones. At the time of the inspection, the school was in the process of admitting 19 new entrants to the Reception class and some were in school for their first day as the inspection began. While these children were observed settling into school and in their lessons, it was too early to judge their attainment and achievement in many areas.
42. Eleven children had been admitted last September, so had spent a term in school. The school's records indicate that these children's attainment on admission was above the levels expected of four year olds. These older children have achieved well and are on course to exceed the Early Learning Goals in all areas of learning by the end of the Reception year. The limited information available at this time about the class as a whole (including the new entrants) indicates that their attainment is above the expected levels in their personal, social and emotional development, in mathematical development and in creative development. It is in line with expected levels in other areas of learning.
43. Teaching and learning are good overall. The teacher is well organised and plans varied and interesting activities that are rooted well in national guidance for this age group. Lessons are securely based on information gained from the teacher's very good assessments of children's progress. She achieves an effective balance between activities that enable children to work with adults on an area of focus and those that allow children to make their own choices. The teacher works well with two teaching assistants. She briefs them well and there is a consistency of approach among the staff that enables the children to learn efficiently. Committed volunteer helpers give regular and valued support in the class. This was particularly effective during the inspection when they introduced the new entrants to the regular routines of the classroom and provided additional adult help if it was needed for individuals. The arrangements for introducing new children and their parents to the school are good. Written information, opportunities for visits and links with local pre-school groups all make starting school easier. The teacher is readily available to parents when the children start school and maintains regular contacts to ensure that children settle quickly.

44. The teacher leads provision for this age group very well, creating an effective team of adults and ensuring that good practice is achieved. She works closely with the headteacher in the continuing development of provision and sets herself high standards.
45. The classroom is a lively and attractive environment and children's work is prominently displayed and celebrated. There is a small outdoor play area that is fenced separately from the rest of the playground and enables children to work outside safely. The teacher also makes regular use of the larger main playground, but there are no large wheeled toys to add to the quality of physical activities in this area.
46. In the area of **personal, social and emotional development**, the children achieve very well as a result of very good teaching. The children who were new to the school at the time of the inspection settled to learning and to classroom routines at an impressive rate. Their more experienced classmates showed high levels of confidence and independence. They set a very good example to the new entrants and showed maturity in accepting the arrival of so many younger children into their established patterns of work. A few new children were understandably shy or needed more adult attention than others, but all made very good progress in gaining confidence and getting to know children and adults. They maintained their concentration well over each full and busy day in school.
47. The children achieve well in **communication, language and literacy**, and the teaching is good. There is a good balance of the activities that are led by adults, such as reading practice and word building, and 'free choice' activities such as writing and playing in the role play area. During the inspection, the role play area was set up well as a nursery rhyme cottage to encourage the children to explore and extend their use of well known songs and rhymes. Speaking and listening skills are developed well and adults take advantage of regular opportunities to talk to children about their work and to extend their vocabulary. The older children show a good appreciation of books and most read simple texts quite fluently. During the inspection, this included reading 'talking books' in the ICT suite. Children receive frequent support with their reading both at home and in school, and this ensures that they achieve well. Early writing skills are promoted well and children are encouraged to express their thoughts on paper in a wide variety of situations.
48. In **mathematical development**, the children achieve well. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children, including the new entrants, have a good understanding of numbers for their age. Inspection evidence indicates that many have already reached the standard expected in the Early Learning Goals for the end of Reception, such as counting reliably to 10. The older higher attainers count confidently up to 100 and were seen making a line of 100 elephants to display this. The teaching seen included very good attention to the needs of children of all attainments; activities were interesting and varied and effective use was made of the available adults. The children are given valuable opportunities to explore mathematical ideas such as shape and number through regular sand and dough play and a wide variety of board games.
49. Evidence of **knowledge and understanding of the world** was limited during the period of the inspection, as the teacher was rightly concentrating on settling the new children into regular routines. It is not possible to judge the quality of teaching. The evidence available of the older children's work from last term indicates that they achieve well and are on course to exceed the Early Learning Goals in early science, humanities and technology activities. For example, the children named the main parts of a tree in their 'Apples' topic, used their ICT skills to draw a tree and made an apple calendar using sewing and joining techniques. The planned curriculum ensures that children have regular opportunities in religious education, such as their recent work on Christmas traditions.
50. In **physical development**, the teaching is good and children achieve well. A hall lesson was seen where the children were introduced effectively to the expected behaviour and given a good opportunity to explore a large indoor space. Considering that most of the class had only been in school for a very short time, the children moved with a satisfactory range of control.

The older children showed more maturity and moved confidently and safely, providing a good example for the rest of the class. In their general classroom activities, children are given many opportunities to develop their skills of manipulation with tools such as pencils, scissors and paint brushes. Children have regular access to outdoor activities, but these are constrained by the lack of large wheeled toys to use on the playground.

51. In **creative development**, children are taught well and their achievement is good, especially in the visual arts. Children have regular access to paint, dough, sand and role play activities. They often pursue these on a 'free choice' basis and develop their imaginative, social and language skills well as a result. On other occasions, adults work with them well on focused tasks. During the inspection, children produced good quality paintings of nursery rhyme characters. Their previous paintings of sunflowers are outstanding. Musical activities were not formally observed during the inspection, but this is an area that is planned for fully by the teacher.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH AND FRENCH

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in speaking and listening, reading and writing are well above average by Year 6.
- Teaching is effective in helping pupils achieve well overall.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good.
- Aspects of the tracking of pupils' progress and the setting of targets for pupils are not rigorous enough.
- Marking does not always show pupils how to improve.
- The subject is well managed.

Commentary

52. Pupils start Year 1 with standards above those expected for their age. Standards are above average when compared with schools nationally by Year 2. Standards have been consistently well above average over the last few years in the National Curriculum tests for this age group. The school's targets for the 2004 tests remain high, reflecting their expectations that pupils will again achieve well above average results in all aspects of English. Standards in English in Year 6 are well above average compared with schools nationally. Pupils achieve well over time in relation to their attainment when they start school. The school has achieved a well above average performance compared with national averages in tests in recent years, and last year it was above the average for similar schools.
53. The inspection found that pupils, including those with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils, achieve well throughout the school. There is a smaller than average number of pupils with special educational needs and a larger proportion of higher attaining pupils in most classes. Work is planned well to challenge pupils of all abilities. There were no significant gender variations compared with national data in Year 2. However, in Year 6, girls have outperformed boys in the National Curriculum test results compared with the national trend. While the school has started to act on this, the action plan for English does not indicate the whole-school strategies that will be used.

54. Standards of attainment in speaking and listening are above average in Year 2 and well above average in Year 6. Pupils of all ages achieve well. Most pupils speak confidently, use a wide range of vocabulary and listen well. Teachers plan good activities in drama and other subjects to improve pupils' speaking and listening skills. Sometimes, useful opportunities are lost for pupils to discuss answers to teachers' questions or to work co-operatively, for example, in pairs. Teachers usually question pupils well and act as good models of language themselves. However, not all teachers write or display important vocabulary in lessons so that pupils can make the link between written and spoken language. Some of the summary sessions of lessons are not used well enough to encourage pupils to reflect on what they have learned and explain what has been successful and why.
55. Pupils achieve very well in reading with the development of their knowledge and enjoyment of books and their reading skills. Attainment is above average in Year 2 and well above average in Year 6. However, the guided reading groups seen were not always used well enough to improve standards in reading; for example, pupils were not sufficiently challenged to think of strategies for reading unknown words. All pupils are encouraged very well to read regularly at home and parents are very supportive of this. Parent helpers in school play a very significant role in developing reading skills. The school library has been substantially improved since the time of the last inspection. It is well stocked with a wide range of books in good condition.
56. Pupils enter Year 1 with average writing skills. Attainment is above average by Year 2 and well above average by Year 6. Pupils achieve well. In the junior part of the school, pupils enjoy a wide range of writing opportunities and apply their skills well in other subjects. The quality of marking of writing is not consistent and consequently some pupils are not getting enough detailed feedback to help them improve. The presentation of work and the quality handwriting are usually good, although there is some variation between classes. Written work on display in the school is of a high quality and is well presented in a variety of different ways.
57. Teaching is good overall. Teachers plan purposeful and interesting activities to help pupils develop their literacy skills. Teaching assistants play an important role in helping pupils learn. However, their time is not always used well when they are not actively involved in the lesson, particularly in the introduction, when some pupils would benefit from some extra help. Time is also lost when pupils sit through instructions that do not apply to their group task. The consequence of this is that these pupils are unable to complete their work in the time that is left. Most teachers have high expectations of behaviour and achievement. They use a good range of well-prepared materials and resources for lessons. Lesson objectives are written on the class board, shared well with pupils and pupils' understanding is checked. Pupils' learning targets are usually written in the front of their books as a reminder but this useful practice is not consistent. These targets are not linked rigorously enough with the school's tracking systems and, consequently, some pupils are not making such rapid progress as they might.
58. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The subject co-ordinator has a good view of what needs to be improved. She has worked with the headteacher and the local education authority's literacy team on joint monitoring of lessons. However, the action plan is not very detailed to show how this subject will be developed effectively. There has been a satisfactory improvement in provision since the last inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. Throughout the school pupils' language and literacy skills are being well developed through other subjects, especially the humanities. Most teachers take good opportunities to develop these skills, but there is no overall plan for this. Pupils use computers well to present their work and to research topics.

French

60. No judgement can be given about overall provision, as inspection evidence was limited to one lesson and a discussion with the co-ordinator. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 learn French. The lesson seen during the inspection was led by the teacher who takes both age groups. This indicated that the school's arrangements for French are very good. This is because the teacher has very good subject knowledge and understands very well how to interest and motivate pupils. She evaluates well what she is doing in order to improve provision. Pupils achieved very well in the lesson. The oral approach enabled all pupils to participate well and to enjoy the activities, which moved along at a brisk pace. The teacher used an effective range of strategies to challenge and support the pupils. These included using vocabulary cards, encouraging the pupils to play games where they could practise new vocabulary and giving them the opportunity to hear recorded versions of native French speakers' questions and comments in a market situation.
61. Year 6 pupils have a very good opportunity to visit Normandy in the summer term where they not only have the chance to practise speaking French, but also participate in a wide range of cross-curricular activities. For instance, it is planned that they will go to the Normandy beaches as part of their history topic on World War Two; they will study the coast as part of their geography work and complete a diary for English work. Parent helpers support the learning of French well by taking part in lesson activities and, where possible, pupils' pen pals join them in lessons during visits.
62. The coordinator is working with teachers from other schools and with an advanced skills teacher to develop the French curriculum further. She is planning to set up links with a French school to enable pupils to e-mail each other and thereby improve their written French.
63. The limited evidence seen during this inspection indicates that the school is maintaining its previous very good provision and actively seeking to improve further.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils do very well in the National Curriculum tests in Year 2 and Year 6.
- 'Setting' arrangements in Year 5 and Year 6 are effective.
- Teachers' planning is very good so that the work usually caters effectively for all groups of pupils.
- Questioning in lessons does not consistently challenge all pupils.
- In some lessons the management of time does not allow for an effective summary session.

Commentary

64. The standards attained in the 2003 tests taken by Year 2 and Year 6 were well above the national average and well above those for similar schools. Standards of work seen for the present Year 6 are again high. Those for the present Year 2, although above average, do not currently match the previous year's results for those expected to achieve Level 3. The school is confident that its provision will enable pupils to meet the high targets that have again been set for pupils in this year's tests. Overall, pupils reach their full potential and this is a direct result of the school's continuing focus on raising achievement through the very good planning and target setting. The school has maintained consistently high standards since the last inspection.

65. Pupils make good progress in learning as they move through the school because of the good teaching they receive based on the National Numeracy Strategy. Pupils' calculation skills and mental arithmetic are of high quality. The 'setting' arrangements in Year 5 and Year 6 group pupils according to attainment. They are successfully aimed at challenging all groups of pupils to apply their very good mathematical knowledge and understanding to solving problems. This results in them being independent and confident learners. In all classes, teachers focus well on developing and enriching technical vocabulary. This builds an adventurous and inquiring quality into pupils' thinking and enriches their mathematical ability. Pupils with special educational needs receive equally good provision related to their targets for learning and these pupils also achieve well.
66. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, create a positive working environment and insist on high standards of work and behaviour. The pupils respond well to this and are eager to do their best and make good progress. In most lessons, teachers ensure that every pupil is fully included and able to learn effectively by carefully grading work to match the differing abilities of the pupils in their class. This good quality is rooted in the very good planning and good assessment of pupils' learning. In the best lessons, learning objectives are shared with pupils and good questioning at the end of the lesson checks how well pupils have understood the content. Good teaching ensures that pupils share their thinking and ideas to summarise a lesson, and that they learn from each other. In a minority of lessons, this part of the lesson was either of lower quality because all groups of pupils were not sufficiently challenged, or the slow pace left insufficient time for this important element to take place. Homework is used well to consolidate learning.
67. Teachers use the good skills of teaching assistants well to help their pupils. Most plan the role of the assistant carefully to maximise their impact when pupils are working individually or in small groups. Any problems are dealt with quickly and this enables pupils to move on to the next step in learning.
68. The newly appointed co-ordinators lead the subject well. They monitor planning and pupils' work and have produced a good action plan to improve provision further. At present, they have no opportunity to monitor teaching directly to help to inform them about the current quality of provision across the school as a whole.

Mathematics across the curriculum

69. Mathematics is used well where it occurs naturally as a tool in most subjects, such as in data handling to produce graphs in science or geography. Teachers plan such opportunities very well and this benefits pupils' learning, reinforcing skills and understanding effectively. Mathematical learning is very good in the ICT suite where relevant programmes are used well for whole-class sessions.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Year 6 perform well in national tests and their results in 2003 were very high.
- Throughout the school there is a commitment to investigative science that has a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- Pupils enjoy science and participate eagerly.
- Pupils are not often given enough opportunity to choose their method of recording.
- Teachers' marking does not consistently help to inform pupils about the next stage of their learning.

Commentary

70. In the 2003 National Curriculum tests, pupils in Year 6 did much better than the national average and improved their previous good performance, achieving results that were within the highest five per cent of schools nationally. All pupils achieved at least Level 4 and over eighty per cent of the year group achieved Level 5. Pupils are prepared well for the annual tests and their high standards in literacy and numeracy mean that they cope very well with the demands of a written assessment. The high priority placed on developing pupils' skills in scientific enquiry and application promotes pupils' achievements in tests well. Since the last inspection the trend has been to maintain the school's high results.
71. Standards by Year 2 are average and pupils make sound progress. Teaching is satisfactory. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils enjoyed a clear introduction to a variety of light sources and were able to discuss the senses they use to feel and see. Sound teaching in Year 2 was enhanced through thorough questioning and good preparation. Analysis of the pupils' work showed that they are achieving in line with national expectations. Cross-curricular links are made whenever possible and are good.
72. Attainment in Year 6 is currently above average. Pupils from all backgrounds achieve well, including those with special educational needs, although work does not currently match the very high standards attained in the national tests last year. The school has maintained the good standards identified by the previous inspection with its current pupils. The oldest pupils have a good factual knowledge of science, as shown by their work on forces which demonstrates the accurate use of scientific terminology. They use their good literacy skills efficiently to record their work. Pupils plan investigations well. They can interpret their conclusions and draw inferences from these. They consolidate relevant mathematical skills such as line and bar graphs in their work. Teaching in this key stage is effective and pupils' response in lessons is good. They are keen learners and enjoy the practical nature of their work. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and work is planned well to cover all the main aspects of the required curriculum. However, throughout the key stage, pupils' work indicates that they are given too few opportunities to choose their own methods of written recording.
73. Most aspects of assessment are good and are used well by teachers. However, day-to-day marking varies in quality and does not always inform pupils about their future learning. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator monitors the subject well through lesson observations, work sampling and disseminating good practice.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been good improvement in standards and provision since the last inspection.
- Teachers' planning and knowledge of the subject are good.
- Effective use is made of the ICT Suite to ensure good learning.
- E-mail is not yet easily available to pupils to exchange and share information.

Commentary

74. At the time of the last inspection, standards, progress and teaching were judged to be mainly satisfactory. However, there were weaknesses in teachers' planning and inconsistent expectations of what pupils should do. Some teaching was unsatisfactory. Pupils' attainment by Year 2 and Year 6 is now above the levels expected nationally and they achieve well. For example, Year 6 pupils plan and produce a newspaper using their very good word processing skills. They are above average in the use of spreadsheets and formulae and in data handling.

Pupils use sensors in science and talked of opportunities for using control technology when they visit residential centres. They have good levels of independence in using the Internet and creating multi-media presentations.

75. The teaching seen at this inspection was good overall with some very good examples seen. Teachers are now confident in teaching the subject, as a result of effective training and good leadership. Planning and organisation of the good curriculum now ensure that pupils learn skills in a logical and consistent framework. In this way the learning is structured to be challenging for all groups of pupils and their achievement is good. The use of assessment is recently in place to record pupils' levels of ICT skills and knowledge as they move through the classes. This means that teaching can be well matched to pupils needs.
76. Staff use the electronic whiteboard in the computer suite to excite pupils' interest and demonstrate skills. The whiteboard was used to good effect during the inspection in Year 1 and Year 4 to explore mathematical ideas. This good use of ICT skills to reinforce knowledge and understanding in other subjects is a strong feature of the good teaching. In the best lessons seen, pupils were given good opportunities to evaluate their own learning. They show their enthusiasm and good attitudes in sharing the computers and in helping and checking each other while learning. Well-trained support assistants plan carefully with teachers to provide effectively for pupils with special educational needs.
77. The subject co-ordinator provides good leadership, but does not have the opportunity to monitor teaching directly in lessons. Her effective oversight of pupils' work and planning informs the subject's action plan. The planned networking of computers will give opportunities for pupils to use e-mail which they do not have at present. Parents, governors and friends of the school provide excellent support for pupils' learning by helping with lessons, advising on resources and supporting fund raising events.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

78. ICT is practised and applied well in other subjects. English is well supported and this is the strongest area for the use of ICT with many examples of good, and some very good, practice. Data handling is used effectively in the humanities and science. Digital photography contributes to learning and to recording pupils' experiences, while Internet images enrich pupils' work in project folders. The use of the electronic whiteboard for whole-class teaching of mathematics to pupils of all ages is a significant aid to learning. Parents support this cross-curricular use of ICT extremely well by the high levels of help they give in lessons. This enrichment makes an excellent contribution to pupils' learning and is very well organised by the school.

HUMANITIES

79. **History** and **geography** were not a focus of the inspection. It is, therefore, not possible to give overall judgements about provision in these subjects across the school. In history, pupils' work was sampled and one lesson seen. In geography, the inspection looked at samples of pupils' work, at displays around the school and talked to the newly appointed co-ordinator.
80. The evidence in history indicates that standards in Years 3 to 6 have been maintained since the last inspection and remain above average. Standards in the work seen in Years 1 and 2 are broadly average. An excellent range of visits and visitors contributes very well to making the subject interesting and to motivating the pupils. Pupils in Year 6 benefited greatly from visiting the Imperial War Museum in connection with their topic on World War Two. They have learned a great deal from a grandparent who has been able to talk to them about her life as a child in a European country during that period. Year 2 pupils' visit to the war memorial in Great Gaddesden made their work in connection with Remembrance Day more effective and meaningful. There are good links between history and other subjects. Pupils are given good

opportunities to apply their English skills by, for example, writing a diary, completing some empathetic writing or through drama. Pupils in Year 5 have completed their own high quality topic books on each period of history that they have studied. The subject coordinator has started to monitor history through discussions with pupils, looking at displays and collecting a portfolio of pupils' work. However, she has not had the opportunity to monitor the quality of teaching in lessons. There is no whole-school approach to assessment to aid the monitoring of standards.

81. In geography, pupils' work indicates that standards are at least at the levels expected by the National Curriculum in both key stages. The new co-ordinator has many ideas of how to develop provision throughout the school and had already modified the curriculum coverage to meet the needs of the pupils more effectively. These have served to strengthen cross-curricular links and maximise the use of local facilities. Local studies include the rivers Ches and Wye and the town of Chesham, providing many opportunities for the development of geographical skills. The co-ordinator is developing the use of ICT within geography and has, for example, recently purchased mapping software of Chesham and Ley Hill. The school's 'Eco School' status acknowledges its strong commitment to pupils' development of environmental awareness.

Religious education

The provision for religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment exceed the levels expected by the Local Agreed Syllabus and pupils achieve well.
- Teachers plan very well and have good knowledge and understanding.
- Arrangements are not securely in place to assess pupils' attainment and progress.
- Time management is not good enough.
- Effective use is made of visits and of religious artefacts.
- Careful attention is given to learning from religions, as well as to learning about religions.

Commentary

82. It was not possible to see any lessons in Years 1 or 2 and only one lesson was seen in Years 3 to 6. Further evidence was gathered from looking at pupils' previous work and from talking to teachers and pupils. This shows that the standards attained by the pupils in both key stages are above those expected by the Local Agreed Syllabus. The school has maintained and built on the strengths identified by the previous inspection. It has updated its curriculum and continued to improve the subject. Pupils' achievement is good.
83. Teaching and learning are good. Knowledgeable teaching and very good planning carefully structure pupils' learning so that they build knowledge and understanding in a logical way. Because of this, lessons are well matched to pupils' different abilities and needs. Teachers make effective use of a programme of work which meets all the requirements of the Local Agreed Syllabus, in the very good planning of lessons. Teachers organise cross-curricular links well so that pupils' spiritual and moral development is enhanced. A planned programme of visits and visitors enriches the pupils' experiences and this helps pupils to understand how religious faith influences the way people live their lives. Pupils take pride in their copy of the Qur'an, given to them after a visit to a mosque. Good use is made of religious artefacts, and these are treated with respect. Good questioning enables pupils to relate what they are learning to their everyday lives. Pupils are curious and interested in everything they learn and this helps them to have a good appreciation of the wonder of life. They are developing a good understanding of the importance of religion in many people's lives. Relationships in lessons are very good. A weaker feature of teaching is the use of time. During the inspection, one lesson

seen was too short to be fully effective and a lesson timetabled in another class did not take place.

84. The subject co-ordinator is enthusiastic and well trained. Good displays around the school and high quality examples of work in the library are used well to promote learning. The co-ordinator gives a good lead to her colleagues, but has too few opportunities to monitor teaching and learning directly through observing lessons. An action plan for improvement has been drawn up and shared with the school governors. This rightly includes the development of more systematic assessment procedures that will monitor pupils' learning and progress more effectively.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

85. The inspection did not focus sufficiently on **design and technology** to make judgements about the quality of provision across the school. A small sample of lessons or parts of lessons was observed, pupils' previous work was examined where it was available and the subject co-ordinator was interviewed. These sources indicate that pupils are given regular opportunities to complete sufficient units of work to fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum. Pupils do well in work with clay and textiles in particular and make good quality products using these materials. The skills of committed volunteer helpers support work in the subject well and were seen to good effect during the inspection with groups in knitting, clay work and food technology. Pupils' science and ICT skills are applied soundly in their work, for example when fitting motors to buggies they have made and when using computer control to operate models. The subject is resourced well and benefits from the use of a separate technology room and well equipped kitchen. The quality of pupils' written recording of their work is satisfactory, but does not match the quality of the finished products in all classes. There are examples of teachers' good practice in assessing pupils' achievements, but this is not consistent across the school.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching of interesting activities promotes pupils' enjoyment and good achievement.
- By Year 6, pupils attain standards that are above average overall, but there are variations in pupils' achievements between classes.
- Effective links are made with work in other subjects.
- The school exploits many opportunities to enrich the subject.
- There is no whole-school system of assessment and the co-ordinator does not observe lessons to enable her to assess provision across the school.

Commentary

86. Pupils are taught well and, by Year 6, attain standards that are above national expectations. By Year 2, the pupils attain nationally expected levels. Pupils of all ages are introduced to a wide range of interesting activities. These are often taught on a 'carousel' of small group lessons which give them access to many techniques and chances to practise with an impressive variety of media. In several classes, in Key Stage 2 in particular, pupils' work is of a high quality. For example, very good drawing, pastel work and clay work were displayed during the inspection. In other classes, the work is satisfactory. A good lesson was seen in Year 4 where pupils made attractive and accurate pastel drawings of shells. Their work showed good attention to line, colour and shade. This was because the teacher had carefully explained features such as perspective, highlighting and blending before the pupils started work and she was effective in giving targeted help to individuals as the lesson progressed. The use of sketchbooks is widespread but varies in quality. In the best cases, these books provide a record of pupils' achievements in various skills and banks of ideas for art work.

87. Work is planned both to teach particular art and design skills and to link with other topics being studied. Effective cross-curricular links are made with many subjects, such as history, geography, science and design and technology.
88. The subject maintains a high profile in the school. Leadership and management are sound. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and knowledgeable. Many opportunities are offered to pupils to explore art and design outside their class lessons. For example, there are visits to galleries, the school has worked on the National Gallery's 'Take One Picture' project and the commitment to providing a wide range of arts activities has been recognised by the Artsmark Gold award.
89. Assessment procedures are used well in some classes where teachers have adopted a manageable system of checking pupils' progress against the main learning objectives for each unit of work. However, this practice is not consistent in all age groups and so does not act as an effective way of monitoring standards. The co-ordinator monitors the work on display, but has not observed lessons to gain a wider view of provision in practice and to advise colleagues on areas for development. The opportunity to do this would help to bring the consistency of teaching up to the level of the best in the school.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision for pupils to learn a musical instrument is excellent.
- The curriculum is enriched very well by the choir and orchestra.
- The school makes very good use of specialist teaching expertise.
- The school encourages pupils who are enthusiastic about music as well as those with talents.
- The co-ordinator manages the subject well for older pupils, but is less involved in monitoring the quality of provision or assessing standards in younger classes.

Commentary

90. The school has maintained the standards identified at the time of the previous inspection. It is justifiably proud of the opportunities it offers to a wide range of pupils to pursue their musical interests. The regular class lessons ensure coverage of the requirements of the National Curriculum for all pupils. In the lessons seen, teaching and learning were satisfactory and pupils attained at least expected standards across the school. No lesson was seen in Year 2 to judge the standards of the oldest pupils in Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2, a high proportion of pupils join the choir or orchestra, learn to play one or more instruments and take part in concerts and other performances. Currently about half of the pupils in Key Stage 2 learn an instrument and about 90 pupils sing in the choir. They attain overall standards that are above those seen in most schools. These activities contribute very well to pupils' self-confidence and overall personal development. A high proportion of these pupils sing or play well for their age. They participate regularly and show pride in their work. The school's inclusive approach to music ensures that both those who are keen to make music and those who show musical talent have access to activities. There are, for example, no auditions for the choir and all are made welcome.
91. The school's commitment to music has been recognised by the Artsmark Gold award. Specialist expertise is used well by the school. A team of peripatetic teachers provides tuition in a wide range of instruments. In the lessons and additional activities taken by a specialist teacher during the inspection, the quality of teaching was good. The co-ordinator leads and manages most aspects of the subject satisfactorily. She is a specialist, employed on a part-

time basis who teaches the older pupils and gives violin lessons. She gives valuable support to colleagues with the age groups she meets. However, she has few opportunities to check the quality of provision in other age groups. As a result, there is no-one in the school who has a full overview of standards or of the quality of education in the school as a whole. The co-ordinator has a manageable and effective system of assessing the progress of the pupils she teaches. However, there is no agreed approach to assessment in the subject across all classes.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and the oldest pupils attain high standards.
- The school offers an excellent range of extra-curricular activities.
- The subject is led and managed well by the co-ordinator.
- Aspects of the monitoring of the subject are not very rigorous.

Commentary

92. Standards of attainment and pupils' achievements have improved since the last inspection. Standards by Year 6 are well above those expected for the age group. Pupils enjoy all aspects of the subject. Teaching and learning are very good overall with strengths in the provision for the pupils in Years 3 to 6 and in the very wide range of extra activities that are offered to pupils in these age groups.

Example of outstanding practice

An excellent games lesson was seen with pupils in Years 5 and 6 that demonstrated the competence of the subject co-ordinator and why standards are high at the top of the school.

In a hockey lesson, pupils very enthusiastically mastered the skills of dribbling, passing and shooting to a high level for their age and experience. The brisk pace of the lesson and the secure and positive relationships established between teacher and pupils were very good. As a result, throughout the lesson, pupils exhibited an eagerness and determination to succeed. Pupils of all capabilities were motivated by the teacher. Her very good subject knowledge and clear explanations enabled the pupils to extend their skills rapidly.

93. The high standards attained by the school are also reflected in swimming where records show, for example, that last year all pupils reached the standard required by the National Curriculum before they left the school and the majority exceeded it.
94. Standards by Year 2 are above average. Pupils work with good control and technique. In the lesson seen, teaching and learning were satisfactory. Pupils were eager to participate and those with special educational needs were supported well in their learning. However, the teacher relied too much on the content of a published lesson and did not adapt it enough to the needs of the pupils.
95. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Development planning is mainly effective and dance has been identified as the current area of focus for further improvement. The co-ordinator provides support for staff and checks pupils' progress on an informal basis, but does not carry out a rigorous programme of monitoring across the school. The school has good resources and facilities. The number and variety of extra-curricular clubs offered are excellent. The school's sporting teams are very successful within the local area and the school holds the Activemark Gold award for its sporting achievements and provision.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

96. No lessons were seen during the inspection and so no judgement can be made about standards of attainment or of teaching and learning. However, the curriculum for **personal, social and health education** is well established within the school. **Citizenship** is a recent addition to the school's provision as a separate subject. The school council provides additional opportunities for pupils' development. Visits such as a forthcoming trip to the Houses of Parliament reflect the high priority that these aspects of the curriculum receive. Structured programmes of work are in place for Years 1 to 6 and they are supported well by published materials for the teachers to use. This aspect of the school's provision provides many good activities and contributes well to the successful development of pupils' social and personal awareness.

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	2
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	1
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	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
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	1
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	2
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).

