

INSPECTION REPORT

LONDON COLNEY JUNIOR AND INFANT SCHOOL

London Colney, St Albans

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117146

Headteacher: Mr D Minett

Lead inspector: Mr M Carter

Dates of inspection: 23-25 March 2004

Inspection number: 256766

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 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	158
School address:	London Colney Junior Mixed and Infant School Alexander Road London Colney St Albans Hertfordshire
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs K Hider
Date of previous inspection:	1 June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is slightly smaller than average for its type and serves the London Colney area. There are slightly fewer pupils than at the last inspection and currently the roll stands at 158 boys and girls in equal proportion. The school accepts children into the Reception class twice a year and they leave in the July after they are eleven. Well over a third of the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and 49 are learning English as an additional language. Four pupils are beginners in English and receive support. Most of the remaining pupils with English as an additional language have sufficient knowledge of it to communicate effectively in everyday situations but vary in their ability to cope with the increasing demands of academic study as they get older. While the largest group of pupils (56 per cent) is from British white backgrounds, a significant minority, 18 per cent, are Bangladeshi. A range of other minority ethnic backgrounds is represented in the school, including a very small number of refugees and Travellers. While socio-economic indicators for the area are slightly above average, the proportion of pupils claiming free school meals is within the average range. However, there are indications of a degree of disadvantage among the school community and this is reflected in some low attainment on entry to the school. Forty-seven pupils (30 per cent) have special educational needs and three of these (1.9 per cent) have a statement. These proportions are above average and reflect a range of moderate learning difficulties, dyslexia and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Furthermore, the number of pupils joining the school during Years 1 to 6 is above average. Most pupils receive some pre-school educational experience before starting at the school. However, attainment on entry to the Reception class is well below average overall.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20714	Mr M Carter	Lead inspector	Mathematics Geography Information and communication technology English as an additional language
9505	Mr D Haynes	Lay inspector	
21103	Mrs V Ives	Team inspector	Science Special educational needs Art and design Design and technology Music Religious education Personal, social and health education
15011	Ms M Wallace	Team inspector	Foundation Stage English History Physical education

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school's effectiveness is satisfactory. Standards are below average overall, reflecting the low attainment on entry. Achievement is satisfactory. Despite difficulties in recruiting teachers, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and has improved since the last inspection. The headteacher provides satisfactory leadership and is well supported by the senior members of staff. Most parents and pupils like the school. However, management does not give enough attention to tackling the issues most likely to improve standards. The school's finances are run carefully. The cost for each pupil is above average; nevertheless, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards in English, mathematics and science are lower than they should be.
- There is not enough challenge for the more capable pupils.
- Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage.
- Provision for the pupils' personal, social and health education is good.
- Checks of the pupils' learning are not used effectively enough to plan work that matches the needs of different groups of pupils in the same class.
- Subject coordination has improved and is developing well.
- Plans to overcome weaknesses are not implemented rigorously enough.

The school has made satisfactory improvements in its effectiveness since the last inspection. Although the 2003 results of the Year 6 national tests went down and were low, the trend over five years is in line with the national trend. In Year 2, the trend in results is above the national one. Difficulties in recruitment of teaching staff have become a barrier, adversely affecting the school's speed of improvement. The key issues of the last report have been tackled effectively in the main. For example, the quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2 has improved and there are now no unsatisfactory lessons. The management of pupils' behaviour is generally satisfactory. Teachers' expectations of the pupils' learning are improving but are still too low for more capable pupils. The policy for performance management is now implemented and there have been improvements to the role of subject coordinator.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

The pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Achievement in the Foundation Stage is good and it is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 and good for reading and for information and communication technology. Achievement is generally satisfactory through Years 3 to 6. Standards in the current Year 6 are better than the 2003 results of national tests but remain below average. The 2003 results for Year 6 pupils were well below average overall and, for mathematics, were in the bottom five per cent of schools nationally. However, in comparison to similar schools, they were not as low. Standards of the current Year 2 pupils are also below average, except in mathematics where they are broadly average, but the trend over the last five years is of quicker improvement than the national trend. Children enter the Reception class with attainment that is generally well below average. They make good progress but their standards remain below average by the time they enter Year 1. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is at least satisfactory. The more capable pupils could do better particularly in Years 3 to 6. Beginners in English make good progress in

learning at first but at the later stages of learning English they make satisfactory progress. The progress of pupils from minority ethnic groups is not significantly different from that of others'. While the school tracks each individual pupil's progress through the National Curriculum, there is no specific charting of the progress of minority ethnic groups. **The pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, social and cultural development are satisfactory** and their moral development is good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory overall despite occasional disruption by a few older pupils. Attendance rates are below average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is a good number of lessons where teaching and learning are good and a small number where they are very good. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to the pupils' learning. In the Reception class and in Years 1 and 2, teaching is good overall. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 3 to 6 overall. With a few exceptions, teachers manage the pupils' behaviour effectively but often do not use assessments well enough to match work accurately to the learning needs of pupils of different capability. This is more often the case for pupils of higher capability. The curriculum is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection. Provision for the pupils' personal, social and health education is good as is the provision for pupils with special educational needs. Resources for learning are good overall. The school provides satisfactory care, welfare and guidance for pupils. The members of staff build good personal relationships with the pupils who feel generally well supported, although there are few formal ways in which their views are sought. The school's links with parents and with the community are satisfactory but efforts to gain participation by all groups in the local community have not been successful.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher's leadership is satisfactory and many school documents provide a clear direction. An open ethos has been established and a self-evaluation exercise identifies some clear strengths and weaknesses. However, the most important areas identified for improvement are not implemented with sufficient urgency or rigour. Senior teachers lead aspects of the curriculum and teaching quality well. The school's management is satisfactory with generally satisfactory systems to check the school's work. The work of the governing body is satisfactory and governors are well aware of the school's main difficulties. They do not always challenge the school sufficiently on the standards it achieves or the progress it makes on areas for improvement.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The views of parents are generally positive although a minority have little involvement with the school. The school provides satisfactory information about school matters and good quality reports about children's progress. The pupils' views are generally positive and they like being at the school. However, some feel that other pupils do not behave well enough.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- raise standards in English, mathematics and science;
- use checks on pupils' learning to match the work better to their needs especially for those with higher capability;
- increase the rigour of check-ups on the implementation of policies and improvement strategies;
- implement plans for development quickly and rigorously, prioritising the most important.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards are below average although higher than the national test results for 2003 for Year 6. The pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall and good in the Reception class.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average in English and science at Years 2 and 6.
- Standards in mathematics are average in Year 2 and below average in Year 6.
- There was a significant fall in national test results in 2003 but current standards are higher.
- Provision for reading has improved.
- Achievement is good in the Foundation Stage.
- Provision for information and communication technology has improved and standards are average throughout with pupils showing good confidence.

Commentary

1. The trend in national test results for English had been rising until 2003 when results fell, especially for Year 6. Currently, standards in speaking and listening and in writing are below average throughout the school. Very few Year 6 pupils are confident and articulate in their explanations of more complex ideas and their written work suffers from weak handwriting and presentation skills. However, based on their prior attainment four years ago, the Year 6 pupils achieved well in 2003 and the current pupils throughout the school have satisfactory achievement. Reading standards are average in Year 2 and below average in Year 6 but have been boosted by a number of improvement measures. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress in the early phases of learning English due to some good provision, especially from part-time specialist teachers. In the later phases, their progress slows but overall they achieve satisfactorily.
2. While the trend in the Year 6 national test results in mathematics is in line with the national picture, the results for 2003 were particularly low and in the bottom five per cent of schools nationally. This dip does not reflect the standards of the current Year 6 pupils, for whom standards are below average but not as low as those for 2003. However, there are still few pupils working at an above average level and this is also the case for Year 2, where standards were below average in the 2003 national tests. Current standards in Year 2 are close to average and most pupils are nearing the expected level with the girls' performance being stronger at this age. The teachers' good subject knowledge helps all the pupils to achieve satisfactorily through Years 2 to 6.
3. In science, current standards are below average by Years 2 and 6, with few pupils reaching above the expected levels. This is below the standards reported at the last inspection. There was a drop in the results of the Year 6 national tests in 2003. The results in 2003 of the teachers' assessments for Year 2 were also below average but in comparison to similar schools these results were average. Targets for the current Years 2 and 6 are higher. Pupils have good opportunities to experiment but there is too little challenge for the more capable pupils. Achievement in science is satisfactory overall, including that for pupils learning English as an additional language.
4. In information and communication technology, standards are average throughout, with some good aspects such as the pupils' degree of independence and confidence in using computers. This is because provision has improved, with teachers showing good capability and using the

computer suite well. However, little work takes place in the classrooms. In religious education standards are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus by Years 2 and 6 and have been maintained since the last inspection. In physical education, standards are below average by Year 6 because the pupils have too few opportunities to learn the full range of skills implied in the National Curriculum programme of study. Work in other subjects was sampled during the inspection and judgements about standards are not possible. The provision for lessons in personal, social and health education is good, having been recently strengthened, and the pupils are benefiting from this.

This table summarises the current standards in different subjects in Year 2 and Year 6		
* indicates the non-core subjects		
SUBJECT	YEAR 2	YEAR 6
English	Below average	Below average
Mathematics	Average	Below average
Science	Below average	Below average
*ICT	Average	Average
*Art & design	No judgement	No judgement
*Design & technology	No judgement	No judgement
*Geography	No judgement	Below average
*History	No judgement	No judgement
*Music	No judgement	No judgement
*Physical education	Average	No judgement
*Religious education	Average	Average

5. Children enter the Reception class with attainment that is well below the expectations for four-year-olds. Because of much good teaching, they generally learn well and make good progress and before they enter Year 1 most are on course to achieve well and meet the appropriate early learning goals in their physical development. However, despite the good provision and achievement, fewer than average are likely to reach the early learning goals in the other areas of learning. Consequently, many pupils start learning from the National Curriculum with below average attainment and lacking some of the basic skills, such as independence, knowledge of reading and numbers, experience of the wider world and how to get on with other people. By the end of Year 2, test results are often below average while achievement is satisfactory. In Years 3 to 6, achievement is also satisfactory and some measures show good improvement. In view of the high proportions of pupils with special educational needs, those learning English as an additional language or those from homes with low expectations, the overall achievement of pupils is good in the Reception and satisfactory through the rest of the school.
6. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs make progress similar to their peers when taking account of their prior knowledge. They make good progress towards the targets identified for them in their individual education plans because of specific help in achieving them, often by withdrawal from class. This is the result of the good support both from the coordinator and class teachers and from the learning support assistants. The progress made by pupils from minority ethnic and other backgrounds is not specifically charted and no major differences were evident during the inspection. This is also the case for pupils learning English as an additional language. The school tracks the progress of each individual pupil and sets targets for the level of learning they should achieve by the end of each year and for each pupil to achieve in everyday work. Overall targets for standards have been over-optimistic in order to "raise expectations" but this has led to them not being met by large margins.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to school and their behaviour overall is satisfactory. Provision for pupils' moral development is good and for spiritual, social and cultural development it is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are keen to learn and join in all activities with enthusiasm.
- Pupils' willingness to show enterprise and take responsibility is good.
- The school promotes good relationships, including racial harmony.
- Attendance is unsatisfactory and below the national median.

Commentary

7. Pupils are interested in their lessons and often regard them as fun. Overall, the pupils' behaviour in class and about school is satisfactory. The behaviour of a few older pupils in class falls below what is expected and current class management techniques and the application of the reward and sanctions policy are not always effective. The behaviour of a minority can impact on the learning of others. Relationships between pupils are satisfactory; they mainly play well together in mixed groups and no one is isolated. Pupils develop respect for each other and there is little incidence of bullying, racism or other forms of harassment in school. Pupils and parents maintain that if any unpleasant incidents occur they know what to do and are confident that the staff will deal effectively with the problem. Older pupils partake in a range of responsibilities that involve them in the daily life of the school however the majority of pupils' have levels of confidence and self-esteem that is below what would be expected for their age.
8. Attendance is in the bottom ten per cent of schools nationally. Pupils are encouraged to attend regularly through an award each week of a cup for best class attendance. However, the analysis of absence statistics lacks rigour and the school does not evaluate the absence patterns of different groups of pupils or the impact on attendance of different types of absence such as extended family holidays. There is no formal system in place to contact parents on the first day of any unexplained absence.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.1	School data	0.1
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.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British

No of these pupils on roll
88

Exclusions in the last school year

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
4 boys	0

9. Spiritual development is satisfactory and pupils have opportunities to reflect on those less fortunate than themselves. This is supported by religious education lessons that address

different faiths and beliefs and visitors such as a hospice nurse. Exploring feelings, for example, those depicted in different forms art is limited.

10. Moral development is good and social development is satisfactory. Pupils have a good understanding of right from wrong. They have the opportunity to make sensible decisions about their own lives and to be responsible members of the school community. These qualities are reinforced through personal, social and health education lessons and educational visits. Good use is made of visiting specialists to support the personal and social development of pupils. There is good support for Reception pupils in learning to socialise.
11. Although not specifically planned for, the pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils understand and accept that other people have different beliefs and cultures. They partake in a range of activities taken from other cultures, including listening to and playing music, however, there is no provision for pupils to link and communicate regularly with a school in another country.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is satisfactory.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with a good proportion of well taught lessons and a few that are very well taught. Assessment is satisfactory throughout the school, with regular checks made but these are not used enough to plan the next work.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection and there are now no unsatisfactory lessons.
- There have been substantial barriers to improvement, for example, in the high turnover of teachers.
- Many lessons offer too little challenge to pupils of higher capability.
- Teachers' knowledge of the subjects, their use of assistants and the pace of lessons are good.
- While checks on learning are regular, teachers do not use the outcomes effectively enough to plan work that matches the needs of pupils of different capabilities.

Commentary

12. Teaching is satisfactory with a high proportion of lessons that are well taught and a few that are very well taught. In the Reception class, teaching is good with effective help given by learning support assistants. In Years 1 and 2, teaching is also good, overall, and helps the pupils to make progress. In Years 3 to 6, teaching is satisfactory overall with a third of lessons being well taught and one of which was very well taught. There were no unsatisfactory lessons taught during the inspection and this represents an improvement from the last inspection when 17 per cent were unsatisfactory.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 37 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	3 (8%)	15 (41%)	19 (51%)	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.

13. The last inspection identified the quality of teaching in Years 1 to 2, teachers' behaviour management skills, and expectations of pupils' behaviour and performance as issues for improvement. These issues have largely been improved although expectations of pupils of higher capability are still too low. Despite the difficulties that a minority of pupils present in their behaviour, teachers usually now manage interruptions well and use the school's procedures for rewards and sanctions effectively. However, there is a small minority of cases where these are not successful or when the support of the headteacher is required.
14. Recruitment and retention of teaching staff is difficult and most teachers have been appointed within the last two years. One post is currently filled on a temporary basis. Despite the satisfactory induction¹ procedures, the high turnover of teachers has led to some inconsistencies in the way that school policies are implemented, for example, in the regularity of setting homework and the marking of pupils' work. Assessments are also used inconsistently. While there is consistently regular testing, the information gained from these and other on-going checks on learning are not used frequently enough to plan work that is well matched to the needs of different groups of pupils in each class. In the Foundation Stage and the best lessons account is taken of what different pupils already know and can do. In others, this information is not used enough.
15. In the best lessons, teachers manage the pupils well and have clear plans for what they will learn. These plans are based on good knowledge of the subject and this is also clear through the questions that teachers ask of the pupils, which often require detailed answers extending their thinking. Explanations and instruction are clear and help the children to know how to start their tasks well. For example in a Year 1 information and communication technology lesson, the teacher gave a very clear introduction to the task of using a list of words to form sentences that annotate pictures of simple two-dimensional shapes. Consequently, all the pupils learnt this technique, because of the extra support given to less capable pupils and some prompts for those learning English as an additional language.
16. Of the satisfactory lessons, some time was lost when the behaviour of a few pupils interrupted the learning. In just over half the lessons seen there was a degree of under-challenge for the few pupils with higher capability and in a fifth of lessons, teachers did not use past checks on the pupils' learning to match the work accurately enough for all the pupils. However, in most lessons teachers demonstrated their good knowledge of the subject and in over half the lessons they made very effective use of classroom assistants. Most lessons start on time and have a good pace to the activities.
17. The teaching of basic skills is supported well by generally clear instruction and followed up with good individual support, by teachers and assistants. However, marking is of mixed quality and not always helpful enough for pupils to make improvements. Good presentation is not promoted enough although pupils have individual targets, which often relate to this. Pupils' handwriting is often weak and it is not consistently taught and reinforced throughout the school. The teaching of basic skills in information and communication technology is good and this is often used to support learning in other subjects in lessons in the computer suite. In all the subjects inspected teaching is satisfactory overall although the teaching of reading in Years 1 and 2 is good and teaching in the Foundation Stage is good.
18. Those pupils who are learning English as an additional language are supported in lessons, by teachers and assistants and this teaching is often good. However, the number of occasions when these pupils are offered specific help in lessons, for example, in how to reply to questions or to frame written sentences, is limited and more could be done. This is reflected by the high proportion of these pupils whose English language learning slows when they reach a higher level of proficiency but where they are still not fully fluent. Nevertheless, the teaching by withdrawal is good in helping pupils to acquire basic competence. School and external staff

¹ Induction refers to the arrangements to receive pupils new to the school.

chart each pupil's progress well but formal assessments of their phase of acquisition are only made annually.

19. A secure learning environment for pupils with special educational needs is achieved and good relationships are established which enable pupils to become confident and want to improve. In addition, clear instructions build the pupils' confidence and enable them to sustain concentration and complete the tasks. The school has invested considerably in support staff. They are well deployed and have a considerable influence in guiding the learning of pupils with special educational needs.

The curriculum

The breadth of the curriculum is satisfactory. It is inclusive², meets statutory requirements and provides effective personal, social and health education. Opportunities for enrichment are satisfactory, as is the accommodation. Resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good improvements have been made to the provision of policies and guidelines for all curriculum subjects since the last inspection.
- The planning of work does not always match the needs of the pupils.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Frequency and nature of staff changes has a detrimental effect on curriculum development.
- Provision for personal, social and health education is good.

Commentary

20. The provision of policies and guidelines to support teachers' planning in all subjects has improved since the last inspection. However, the planning of work does not always match the needs of all the pupils. For example, to often higher-attaining pupils, unnecessarily, have to complete the same task as everyone else before going on to something more demanding. The curriculum includes the expected range of subjects, with adequate time given to each across a school week. This includes the implementation of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education, and the provision of a daily act of collective worship. The headteacher monitors how effectively the curriculum is taught in the core subjects, but a sharper focus is needed for subject leaders to monitor teaching to ensure that pupils gain as much as they can from the non-core subjects.
21. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support and, as a result, their needs are well met. They have full access to the curriculum. Class teachers and learning support assistants are well aware of individual needs and pupils who need extra help are identified early. The individual education plans for these pupils are well written; the targets are specific and measurable, and pupils' progress in achieving them is closely monitored. Provision for pupils learning English as an additional language is effective at the early phases of learning because of good support and teaching, especially by specifically employed staff. At the later stages, class teachers miss opportunities to give additional guidance on the use of more sophisticated language.
22. Resources are of good quality for most subjects in all year groups. Coordinators manage them well. However, classroom resources for mathematics are insufficient to meet the needs of more capable pupils. The team of learning support assistants provides good support for pupils' learning throughout the school. They are generally well experienced and show commitment to their work. All are well briefed by teachers to ensure that pupils use their time in school effectively. The school makes efforts to overcome problems of recruitment and

² The terms 'inclusive' and 'inclusion' refer to the arrangements made by the school to meet the needs of all pupils, whatever their gender, ability or background.

retention of teaching staff. The current staff is effective, but the temporary nature of appointments affects provision over time and inhibits the management of curricular development.

23. The school provides satisfactory enrichment of the curriculum through clubs, visits and visitors and through special events and days. There is a small range of out-of-school activities and clubs. Most of these focus on sport, such as football sessions, but learning is also enhanced by appropriate visits to local amenities and by visiting specialists. However, opportunities to reinforce learning in the creative arts are limited. The frequent changes of staff recently have affected the provision of such opportunities as art, chess and science clubs.
24. There is a good programme for pupils' personal, social and health education, which is enhanced by the school's concern for pupils' well-being through the school day. As well as regular lessons in each group, covering, for example, aspects of healthy lifestyles and relationships, the school makes a priority of raising pupils' self-esteem and improving their view of themselves as successful learners.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for care guidance and support is satisfactory. The school cares well for its pupils and there is generally a sufficient level of attention to matters of welfare and health and safety. Support, advice and guidance for personal and academic development are satisfactory overall. Parents are very happy with the care and welfare the school provides for their children.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Members of staff know children and families very well.
- There is a high level of personal support.
- Child protection procedures are satisfactory.
- Pupils' views are not sought or acted on enough formally.

Commentary

25. Child protection procedures are satisfactory and all classroom staff are aware of their responsibilities. The level of playground supervision is satisfactory but there is little play equipment and few structured play activities available. During the inspection one mid-day supervisor was involving younger pupils in a simple game and for older pupils football is allowed on a class rota system.
26. Specialists provide aspects of social and health education and a healthy lifestyle is effectively promoted. Control of access to the school is good without being too restrictive. First-aid provision is satisfactory. Standards of maintenance and cleanliness are good and there is no evidence of vandalism and graffiti. This helps to promote high values in the pupils, the majority of whom show respect for property and resources. Teachers, in particular the head teacher, know their pupils and families well and provide a good level of personal support, involving parents where necessary. Pupils stated that they would find it easy to approach an adult in the school if they needed help.
27. Induction arrangements for pupils entering the Reception year and for those entering other year groups and at other than the usual times of admission are satisfactory. There is a range of opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities for the day-to-day running of the school. However, the school council does not meet frequently and at the time of the inspection had not met during the current school year. Members of staff are well aware of the views of many pupils but there is no formal way of gaining their views as a whole.
28. The school cares well for pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements. Pupils with special educational needs are quickly identified and their progress is

monitored and supported thoroughly. Assessment across a wide range of complex needs is detailed and comprehensive for pupils with special educational needs. Links with outside agencies are strong. Careful consideration is taken of the needs of all pupils through presenting understandable and practical targets, modifying activities or providing support to meet their needs. The needs of pupils who are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language are well known to staff and they are offered good support. One member of staff offers bilingual support to younger pupils. These pupils' progress is carefully checked, although formal assessments of their phase of English language acquisition are only made annually.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There is a satisfactory partnership with parents, the community and other schools. The views of parents were generally positive in the parents' questionnaire and at the parents' meeting.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' annual reports to parents are comprehensive.
- There is an active parents, teachers' and friends' association.
- A significant proportion of parents are insufficiently involved in their children's learning and school life.

Commentary

29. Parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire and at the parents' meeting show that they are generally happy about what the school has to offer but they expressed concern about how well they are kept informed and about the advice they are given on helping their children at home. Reading and homework diaries are not used, newsletters are erratic but there is notification of what pupils will be learning in the next term. Pupils' annual reports to parents are good and provide a clear statement about what their child can do and what they need to learn next.
30. Parents are welcome in school and the parents of younger pupils make good use of contact with the class teacher but the school does not regularly seek the views of all parents. Parents can attend special events, parent evenings and parent assemblies. An active friends association supports the school well by providing good financial help for learning resources. Procedures for pupils entering the Reception year and those pupils transferring to secondary school are satisfactory. There are good procedures in place to deal with the concerns of parents and most are resolved by the head teacher.
31. Links with the local community have been effective in providing funds for the new outdoor play area and pupils visit care homes and take part in village events. The school has been unable to persuade local residents from different ethnic backgrounds to become involved in the school or offer cultural enrichment.
32. Parents are regularly involved in discussions with the class teachers where children have special educational needs and are kept fully informed of the support that their children are receiving. They are involved in termly reviews of the targets set in pupils' individual education plans. Parents of pupils learning English as an additional language are generally satisfied with their children's progress. Members of staff involved keep good contact with parents wherever they can although this is on an informal basis.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Key members of staff support the curriculum and teaching well.
- The Foundation Stage is well led and managed.
- The school development plan lacks clarity and order in what is most important to improve.
- There is insufficient rigour in the way that school improvement tasks are carried out and checked.

Commentary

33. The leadership of the headteacher is satisfactory. School rules and policies concerning care, support and development are very clear and founded in educational principles. The school is committed to providing every pupil, with the best education, whatever their situation, although it does not check to see if these policies are effectively implemented or the impact of these on pupils' learning and achievement. For example, the progress of pupils from minority ethnic groups is not measured and compared with that for others. The headteacher has created an open and caring atmosphere, which parents appreciate. He spends much time supporting individual pupils and solving behaviour problems. This is at the expense of more strategic matters such as checking that behaviour policies are consistently implemented or pursuing the school's most urgent issues for improvement. The new senior management team is becoming effective in its focus on improving standards and the regular checks on pupils' standards in English and mathematics are helping teachers to prioritise improvements in standards in these areas. Such assessments have recently been extended to science. The headteacher and staff understand that standards should be higher.
34. The everyday management of the school is satisfactory. The school day runs smoothly and procedures are mostly clear and followed. Nevertheless, some systems lack rigour, for example, those concerning the first day of a pupils' absence are informal. Checks are carried out on teachers' planning although not on the time spent learning each subject. A good self-evaluation system was used last year to identify strengths and weaknesses and some, but not all of the issues identified, have been included in development work. Teachers are now clear about how to provide for personal, social and health education but involvement of parents of specific groups has improved little, for example, a few parents complain of too little access to the special educational needs coordinator. However, relationships with and between staff are generally purposeful and senior teachers give good support. A helpful staff handbook explains many of the school's systems but policies for marking, discipline and guidance about supporting pupils learning English as an additional language are separate and not as easy to locate. Consequently, these policies are not consistently implemented. The induction of new staff and newly qualified teachers is satisfactory and supported by the headteacher and senior teachers. Despite difficulties in changes to teaching staff, the policy for performance management is implemented and this is an improvement since the last inspection. The headteacher currently provides all the appraisals due to these changes. While teachers receive feedback and have appropriate targets set, there is no overall system by which issues arising are brought forward to be included in plans for improvement. While the school has much satisfactory documentation and good intentions, their implementation has not been rigorous enough.
35. School development planning is unsatisfactory and identifies too many areas for improvement even though they are planned over three years. These areas mostly relate to aspects that have been identified as weaknesses such as standards in English, mathematics and science. However, other weaknesses, such as difficulties in recruiting teachers and the need to improve the match of work to pupils' different abilities are not made priorities. Many of the tasks do not have clear outcomes identified and have insufficient clarity about the indicators of

successful implementation, how impact will be checked, and who will do this. Neither are there clear levels of importance attached to these many areas, which have also been undermined by changes in teaching staff.

36. Many subject coordinators have been appointed very recently. They show commitment and enthusiasm in their role and have good subject knowledge. Their plans to improve provision and raise standards are satisfactory and sometimes good being linked effectively to the school development plan. Coordinators for several subjects promote enrichment activities, for example, mathematics mornings or design and technology weeks. They endeavour to check teachers' planning for their subject and review samples of pupils' work. The work of senior teachers and subject coordinators is good and also promotes further staff development in meetings, informally, through courses for teachers to attend and through the use of external consultants. Although subject coordinators have limited time to observe lessons their role and effectiveness has improved considerably since the last inspection. The coordination of the work for pupils in the Reception class is good and the curriculum is well managed. The pupils' transfer to Year 1 is successful with children having made generally good progress.
37. The management of the provision for pupils learning English as an additional language is satisfactory. Specifically trained part-time members of staff are employed to support pupils at the earlier stages of learning English and good records of their progress are kept up-to-date. Staff are managed effectively to provide good support at the earlier stages of learning English but for pupils at the later stages, the school's support is not as strong. This is partly because class teachers do not offer these pupils enough encouragement or examples of more sophisticated vocabulary and English language usage and partly because assessments of the pupils' stage of English language learning are only made annually.
38. The management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The coordinator provides good leadership, advice and organisation. The teachers collaborate well with the coordinator and make effective use of her expertise. Statutory requirements are met fully and the inclusion of all pupils with special educational needs is good. Class teachers and learning support assistants are well aware of individual pupils' needs and pupils who need additional support are identified early. The pupils' individual education plans are thoughtfully written; the targets are specific and measurable and progress is carefully tracked, partly by the support assistants who keep day-to-day records and have good relationships with the pupils. Parents do not always attend review meetings and more work is needed to involve them. The coordinator also has oversight of the provision for pupils learning English as an additional language. This has occasionally led to such pupils being temporally and inappropriately placed on the register for special educational needs when first joining the school.
39. Several of the governors are new to their role. They are keen to improve their knowledge and their awareness of the school's main strengths and weaknesses. Currently, their impact is satisfactory and there are appropriate committees to discuss areas of concern. Statutory duties are fulfilled and governors are concerned about standards, although their understanding of the details of the pupils' achievements is limited but growing. For example, their ability to challenge the school about national test results and progress on items in the school development plan has lacked rigour, although governors are becoming more confident and pro-active.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	513,362
Total expenditure	511,635
Expenditure per pupil	3,322

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	25,613
Balance carried forward to the next	27,340

40. Systems for financial propriety are satisfactory and the governors check how the budget is being spent on a regular basis. The residual unspent budget is about average for the school's size and funding is budgeted to allow for site improvements as well as items in the school development plan. However, the school receives only monthly updates of its budget position because this is accessed by a visiting finance officer once a month. The school secretary has received little training and does not currently deal with the school budget.
41. The governors have an appropriate committee to consider budget matters and the school contracts a service to locate the best value for its purchases. However, systems to compare spending with other similar schools and check the effectiveness of past financial decisions are under-developed. The expenditure for each pupil is above average; nevertheless, the school provides satisfactory value for money because of the pupils' overall satisfactory achievement.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

42. There is one Reception class. Children enter the school in either September or January depending on their birthday. Older children have three terms in the Reception class but younger children only have two. All the children make good progress from well below average attainment on entry; a few more able children are on course to achieve the expected levels in all areas of learning. Average children are on course to achieve the later stages of the early learning goals and a few may achieve the expected level in some areas of learning. Lower attaining children are making good progress but are unlikely to achieve the expected level. A small number of children have been identified with special educational needs. About one in five children have English as an additional language. All of them have settled into the routine of school well and are making good progress with a good ratio of adults to children. There is a class teacher, two learning support assistants and the governor for the Foundation Stage often visits together with voluntary helpers. These adults all make a good contribution to the quality of learning and the progress children make. Children with special educational needs are making good progress considering their prior attainment and the children with English as an additional language are making good progress because the learning support assistant is able to speak in their home language and this helps them to settle in and learn routines well. The quality of teaching and learning has been maintained since the last inspection. An outdoor play area has been established and the school has made progress in using this but further work is planned to improve the provision outdoors for all the areas of learning. The management of the Foundation Stage is good and is based on the principles of effective early years practice. The indoor resources are satisfactory but the outdoor provision is still weak but in development. There are very good links with the local nursery, which many of the children attend before starting in the Reception class.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well and they make good progress because they enjoy coming to school.
- Children form good relationships with adults.

Commentary

43. The majority of children enter the Reception year with social skills and personal development that are well below average. They develop a positive attitude to school and make good progress because adults are well organised and plan interesting activities. Adults form good relationships with all the children and this ensures that they gain confidence. A few more able children cooperate well and negotiate with each other. Many children need adult intervention and guidance because they do not readily share toys. A few lower attaining children indulge in aggressive behaviour. Children are encouraged to develop independence, for example, by registering their name on the board. They make good progress in learning school and class procedures because adults make their expectations clear. However, there are some missed opportunities to maximise adult guidance and teaching is satisfactory overall. Targets of the week are clearly visible, for example, *'I will walk sensibly around the school.'* Children have learnt to line up for their snack, they are reminded to say *'Thank you,'* after receiving their daily portion of fruit. Discussion lessons encourage the children to develop confidence in talking about what they like doing best. The majority of children are only able to concentrate for short periods of time. Learning support assistants contribute well to the children's learning, for example, in talking about their own special possessions and experiences, such as a visit to

New Zealand. Children are learning to respect the possessions of others such as photographs and a koala bear belonging to the teacher. Children respond to their teacher well handling the objects carefully as they are passed around the circle. All children show curiosity in the objects. More able children identify their own special things. For example, one more able child explained her teddy is special because her auntie bought it for her. Nevertheless, a good number of pupils are unlikely to reach the early learning goals for this area of learning.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment is below average.
- Children achieve well and make good progress in their learning.

Commentary

44. Children enter school with skills well below average in this area of learning. Many children have a limited vocabulary and speaking and listening is below average by the end of the Reception year. A few more able children will achieve the expected level but a significant number are unlikely to achieve the expected early learning goals, despite the good teaching and achievement.
45. There are appropriate opportunities for children to develop their speaking skills. Many children lack in confidence speaking and adults work hard to encourage the children to listen attentively and to talk to others. In a discussion session, the children were encouraged to talk about their favourite activity. More able children explain their favourite activities clearly. Lower attaining children are not yet confident enough to speak in front of others and adults work hard to encourage them to speak but they are unable to recall events. Speech often lacks clarity in the beginning and endings of words. The vocabulary of the average children is limited. Children with special educational needs speak confidently but the clarity of their speech makes it difficult to understand. Average children make simple statements such as *"I have my own racing car"*. They need a lot of prompting from adults to extend their speech and they often reply to questions with one word answers. Adults promote interest in books, which helps to develop positive attitudes in the children and teaches them to handle books with care. Children make good progress in writing skills. More able children write their own name independently. Average and lower attaining children copy their own name and are starting to make marks as early writing. There are appropriate opportunities for children to use pencils and paper. Children enjoy making marks in *"the Little Monster's Office"*. Learning support assistants use questions well such as *'What did you do at the airport?'* to encourage conversation.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well and make good progress in their learning.
- Teaching and learning are good.

Commentary

46. Children make good progress and achieve well. A few more able children are on course to achieve the expected level. Lower attaining children are unlikely to achieve the early learning goals; average children will achieve the later stages of the goals and a few average children may achieve the goals fully. More able children can count forwards and backwards to 10, with support, and they recognise basic shapes and a few three-dimensional shapes such as sphere, pyramid and cone, but they do not remember cuboids and cylinders. Children need a lot of reinforcement to consolidate their learning. They can write numbers up to ten and complete very simple addition sums. Lower attaining children do not recognise basic shapes. Average children struggle to describe these shapes. Good teaching ensures children experience interesting activities such as a shape guessing game and this successfully helps them learn and consolidate their knowledge. Learning support assistants use non-verbal communication well to help children with English as an additional language to understand the lesson. Children consolidate their learning with practical activities such as making a shape robot and a castle. Average attaining children enjoy mixing the blue food colour with the icing sugar to make different shapes. Songs and movement actions are used well to promote learning in this area.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

Provision in knowledge and understanding is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well and make good progress in their learning.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- There are good opportunities to use the computer.

Commentary

47. Children enter the Reception class with very limited knowledge of the world around them. Teaching and learning are good and consequently all children make good gains. A few more able children are likely to achieve the expected level and the majority will make good progress achieving the later stages of the goals but are unlikely to achieve them fully. The classroom environment is stimulating and there are good opportunities for children to use, for example, magnifying glasses to investigate growing plants. Photographic evidence shows children caring for plants and watering them.
48. Children extend their knowledge of the wider world by cutting out and identifying toys that need batteries and electricity to work. Children have appropriate opportunities to use the computer suite but there is no working computer in the classroom. A review of work indicates that children make good progress using the mouse and keyboard. More able children draw a picture of the three bears and Goldilocks; lower attaining children use the mouse to make marks; they need adult help to print and save their work. More able children write a sentence to accompany their drawing of a teddy. Good teaching and well-planned and interesting activities help the children to develop awareness of the wider world. Learning support assistants make a good contribution to learning talking about holidays in Portugal and encouraging children to count to 10 in Portuguese. More able children enjoy looking in travel brochures and talking about the pictures. Lower attaining children need adult support and guidance to maintain interest in the pictures and to sustain their levels of concentration.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well and make good progress.
- Lessons in the hall are well planned and language is used well.

Commentary

49. The majority of children are on course to achieve the expected levels and later stages of the goals by the end of the year because teaching is good and children experience a broad range of physical activities. The quality of teaching and learning observed during an indoor dance lesson was good and contributes to the good progress that the children make. The school has worked hard to develop the outdoor play area but provision is still limited. The outdoor space is too small; there are limited opportunities for climbing, balancing and riding bikes and tricycles. In the lesson observed, children experienced a good level of physical activity and the teacher used language well to extend their awareness of different movements. Children enjoyed moving freely and developed their confidence and ability to move in a range of different ways to different music styles. Good teaching ensures children are made aware of how they are moving. Children are encouraged to skip, the teacher guides skipping and consequently a few more able children are at the later stages of learning to skip. Children are developing a sense of their own and others' spaces, they can all find their own space and move freely around sometimes travelling on different body parts. Children with special educational needs and English as an additional language achieve well and join in with other children. All children make good progress learning to dress and undress for their hall sessions. Lower attaining children need adult support to do this but average and more able children manage this task independently. There are appropriate opportunities for children to develop their ability to grip pencils and use paintbrushes.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

50. No teaching was observed in this area of learning. A review of the children's work suggests children experience appropriate opportunities to use a range of materials such as paint and collage and develop their imagination through role-play activities. Singing is well developed and more able children know and sing a range of songs including, '*Children of the world sing your song together today.*' Children enjoy singing and songs are used well to reinforce learning in mathematics and language. Musical instruments are easily accessible and are clearly named.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils throughout the school attain standards below average in Years 2 and 6.
- Expectations are not high enough for the pupils' presentation of work and handwriting.
- Work is not consistently matched to pupils' abilities and more able and lower attaining pupils are not always effectively challenged.
- Literacy is used well across the curriculum.

Commentary

51. Standards are below average by Years 2 and 6. Achievement is satisfactory. Standards over the last five years have been steadily rising but there was a dip in 2003, when the standards attained in Year 2 and 6 were well below average and pupils did not meet the expected targets. Not enough pupils reached the higher levels of attainment in national test results and too many pupils attained a low level, particularly in Year 6. There had been a number of staff changes, inexperienced teachers and high numbers of pupils with English as an additional language or special educational needs. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils are unlikely to reach the expected targets again this year in Year 6 but are on course to achieve the targets in Year 2.
52. Standards in reading are average in Year 2 and have improved because of a greater emphasis on reading through the introduction of a daily guided reading session and initiatives such as paired-reading with older pupils. Current reading standards are still below average in Year 6. All pupils in Year 2 like reading and have a positive attitude to books. More able pupils read with expression and can talk about the events and characters in the story. Strategies to teach reading are well developed; consequently all pupils know and can explain how to tackle difficult words. More able and average pupils explain how to locate books in the library. In Year 6 more able and average pupils have a positive attitude to reading but lower attaining pupils are not enthusiastic. More able pupils identify authors, whose books they like reading, such as Harry Potter, Judy Blume and Roald Dahl. They talk about the events and characters but are unable to talk about the style of the writing. Lower attaining pupils lack confidence and read with some hesitancy. There are missed opportunities to involve parents in their children's learning because pupils do not take books home and they do not have reading diaries. This has an adverse impact on standards and achievement.
53. Standards in writing are below average throughout the school. The standard of presentation and handwriting is poor in some classes. Pupils are not consistently learning to join letters when writing. More able Year 2 pupils know that sentences need capital letters and full stops. They write simple sentences, for example, to describe the conditions in Canaan and use description well. One more able pupil writes '*The grass was burnt and yellow because it was so very hot.*' Most pupils show an awareness of capital letters and full stops but they are not used always correctly. Achievement is satisfactory and pupils make steady progress as they move through the school from a very low base. Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve as well as others, as do pupils with special educational needs. Since the last inspection there has been no improvement by Year 6 but there is noticeable improvement in Year 2 where teaching is now often good.
54. Standards in speaking and listening are below average throughout the school and vocabulary is limited. In the better lessons, teachers use questions well to encourage a detailed response. For example, in a Year 2 lesson the teacher challenged the pupils to explain '*Why is it so scary?*' The pupil used description to illustrate their answer, '*It was smelly and disgusting because there were so many rats in the prison.*' When teaching is less effective pupils tend to give one word answers to questions. A substantial number of pupils in Year 6 are not as confident in their speaking skills as expected for pupils of their age. Average ability pupils needed a lot of prompting from the teacher to explain the features of a balanced argument but the more capable pupils managed to communicate their views about girls playing football clearly. Average and lower attaining and pupils do not always listen carefully to their teacher because inappropriate behaviour is not consistently checked.
55. There are appropriate opportunities to develop descriptive work and enrich writing in Year 6. One more able pupil wrote. '*The dark forest is a spine chilling place. It has shadows everywhere. The foxes and wolves howl as the moon comes up.*' Average and lower attaining pupils do not always use joined handwriting and spelling and punctuation is less well developed.

56. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall with instances of good teaching in Year 2 and Year 5. Scrutiny of work confirms satisfactory teaching throughout the school. Planning is satisfactory but could be better. Tasks are not always matched closely enough to the pupils' ability, consequently, less able pupils do not always complete their work and more able pupils are often not challenged enough. However, teachers challenge pupils well to improve the content of their writing and to use description to capture the interest of the reader. There is insufficient challenge to improve the quality of the handwriting and presentation of work, which in some instances is poor. Teachers use time effectively and learning support assistants make a positive contribution to promoting the pupils' learning. In some classes, teachers do not notice when the pace of writing slows and pupils are slow to record their responses on paper. Procedures to check on pupils' progress are satisfactory. The school keeps detailed records of progress but it is evident that these are not always used effectively enough to plan the next steps in learning.
57. Leadership of the subject is good and management is satisfactory. The coordinator has a clear plan to develop the subject and raise standards. This has been effective in raising standards in reading but more needs to be done to raise standards in writing. Not enough opportunities are provided to involve parents in their children's learning through the pupils taking books home or using reading diaries. Resources are good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

58. Literacy skills are used frequently in many subjects and pupils' writing and reading skills and vocabulary are extended well. For example, Year 3 pupils use the internet to research information about animals. They use the information to write about Australian animals. In design and technology pupils write their own instructions to make a lighthouse. Pupils write up their own observations and investigations in science. Overall effectiveness, however, is reduced because the quality of handwriting and presentation is not always as good as it should be.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 6 are lower than they should be because the pupils with higher capability underachieve.
- The systems to check pupils' levels of attainment are rigorous and helpful.
- In many lessons, the most capable pupils are under-challenged.
- The marking of pupils' work is of mixed quality and hence its impact is varied.
- Records and past assessments are not used enough to plan what the pupils should learn next.

Commentary

59. The standards of the current Year 6 pupils are below average but are an improvement on those indicated by the 2003 national test results. These were significantly below those of recent years. Standards are not as high as they were at the last inspection. The standards of the current Year 2 pupils are now close to average and an improvement on the indications of the 2003 national test results, which were below average and had fallen slightly since 2001. Barriers to maintaining standards have involved:
- the high turnover of teachers;
 - the degree of mobility;
 - visits abroad by some pupils;
 - small numbers of more capable pupils.

60. Many of the pupils have backgrounds that are not conducive to high attainment and they enter Year 1 with generally low levels of mathematical understanding. Few pupils have high capability and, in view of such factors, the pupils' achievement is satisfactory in the warm and caring environment. Nevertheless, current standards are lower than those at the last inspection.
61. The work of a sample of Year 6 pupils shows that few are given a high level of work and the more capable pupils are under-challenged. Pupils with special educational needs and those of low capability are often given good support and work that is correctly matched to their past learning, helping them to make good progress. However, in a Year 6 lesson, many pupils were able to identify, for example, equivalent fractions to $\frac{5}{20}$ and to convert these to decimals and percentages as well as to simplify fractions. Such work was simplified for pupils of lower attainment but the tasks for the more able were not challenging pupils at a higher than average level.
62. The work of Year 2 pupils shows good improvement for pupils of low capability and, for those of high capability, it is mixed with some work at a high level, such as data-collection, interpretation and graphs but other work that fails to challenge these pupils enough. Most Year 2 pupils are learning at the level expected for their age and have a reasonable understanding of numbers up to 100. In one lesson, about a third of the class worked with the teacher to extend their understanding of hundreds, tens and units. In other classes seen, this picture of good support for pupils with special educational needs, often by learning support assistants, is replicated but with weak or mixed challenge for more capable pupils.
63. Teaching is satisfactory throughout and most teachers have satisfactory knowledge of the subject and plan lessons in accordance with the guidance offered by the National Numeracy Strategy. Checks on the pupils' learning are regular and rigorously track the progress of each pupil through the Levels of the National Curriculum. However, teachers do not always use this information enough to plan accurately what the pupils need to learn next, especially for the more capable ones. Nevertheless, in most lessons teachers devise tasks of different levels of difficulty for pupils. Teachers' marking is of varied quality and does not clearly identify how improvements can be made and this reflects the relatively high number of changes of teachers. Most teachers manage the pupils' behaviour effectively, although for a minority, this is not effective enough. Homework is set and this supports the pupils' learning but it is inconsistent between classes.
64. Leadership of the subject is good and the new coordinator has made a perceptive analysis of the pupils' standards and the school's needs. The subject is enriched with occasional mornings of mathematical activities by the whole school and to which parents are invited. Additionally, there are challenges provided through a display, which are designed to extend pupils' thinking. The school has correctly identified the underachievement of more capable pupils and an action plan includes the promotion of challenge for these pupils. In some classes, appropriate displays support the pupils' mathematical learning and occasionally include mathematical words in the home languages of pupils for whom English is an additional language. These pupils make at least satisfactory progress. Support in observing teaching and reviewing the pupils' work has been provided by an external specialist and there has been a satisfactory level of staff development in the subject. This has helped to raise the teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject.

Mathematics across the curriculum

65. Many lessons of information and communication technology are aimed to help pupils gain information and communication technology skills whilst extending their mathematical understanding. For example, Year 6 pupils learnt to use programs extending their understanding of the relationships between decimals fractions and percentages. Mathematics

skills also used in other subject to produce graphs, collect data, and measure and make drawings. Overall, skills are used well through other subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are below average.
- There is insufficient challenge provided for higher-attaining pupils.
- Teachers do not use the information from checks on what pupils have learnt well enough to accurately match the next work to different pupils' needs.
- There is effective planning of investigations and experiments in most classes.
- Marking does not give a clear indication as to how the pupils can improve their work.
- Presentation of work is often untidy and handwriting is erratic.

Commentary

66. Pupils make steady progress as they move through the school and achieve satisfactorily. Overall, standards are below average in Years 2 and 6 and this is not as high as they were judged to be at the time of the last inspection. The results of the 2003 national tests for Year 6 were well below average. Current standards are better but still below average. For Year 2, the teachers' own assessments of pupils in 2003 indicated below average standards, although results were better than those in similar schools.
67. The majority of pupils in Year 6 achieve the nationally expected level for their age, but not enough pupils exceed this. Evidence from a detailed review of pupils' previously completed work, shows that although there is appropriate challenge for most pupils there are insufficient scientific challenges for more capable pupils throughout the school. The planning of work does not consistently meet the needs of these pupils. For example, the same 'core' task is set for all pupils and sometimes the challenge provided for higher-attaining pupils is of the quantity of work produced. In a Year 6 lesson, these pupils, unnecessarily, have to complete the same task as everyone else before going on to something more demanding.
68. Overall, the quality of teaching seen is satisfactory with some good features. In lessons, most teachers use skilful questioning to probe the pupils' understanding and make them think carefully. To help lower-attaining pupils, learning support assistants and other adults are effectively deployed to give extra help to those who need it. In addition, the scrutiny of the pupils past work clearly indicates that teaching is at least satisfactory across the school. However, expectation of the presentation and organisation of the pupils' work is not sufficiently high and marking of their work does not adequately identify pointers on how they can improve. Learning resources are carefully chosen to kindle interest, focus the pupils' attention and develop their curiosity.
69. Procedures to promote scientific enquiries are improving and by Year 6 pupils show suitable understanding of principles such as predicting the outcome and establishing a 'fair test' of their initial hypotheses when conducting investigations. Pupils in Year 4 investigated how some materials keep things solid and one pupil recorded, "I think the tinfoil will keep the ice cubes colder for longer because metal is not absorbent." Pupils are also required to explain their ideas, and this helps to reinforce their speaking skills. Pupils in Year 5 were asked to investigate how quickly sugar dissolved. The experiment included the setting up of a fair test. After a number of tries, one pupil concluded, "The more times the sugar was stirred the quicker it dissolved." Scientific language is developed systematically and pupils are encouraged to use technical words. For example, a Year 1 pupil said, "I found out that the big key wasn't magnetic." By Year 6 they learn to use and spell with accuracy, such technical words as resistance, friction, gravity and forces.

70. Improvement has been unsatisfactory since the last inspection. The scheme of work provides appropriate breadth and balance to the curriculum, gives helpful guidance to teachers on the activities to be taught and places suitable emphasis on practical work for pupils so that they learn through experience. However, the assessments of pupils' attainment that are recorded and which are based on the scheme tend to reflect coverage of the curriculum rather than focusing more clearly on the quality of the skills developed by individuals and what the pupils need to know to progress to the next level of attainment. The leadership and management of science are satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is satisfactory and has improved well since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Even the least capable pupils are confident and have a good degree of independent capability.
- Teachers are confident and give good instruction in the use of new programs.
- There is little use of computers in class lessons to support learning in other subjects.

Commentary

71. Standards are in line with those expected in Year 2 and Year 6. Most pupils are able to work independently on a computer to access the program required, follow instructions and control applications. While there is a range of capabilities, few pupils fall behind the standards expected for their age. This is because they are helped well by teachers or learning support assistants and this support enables all the pupils to succeed. In Year 2, pupils have learnt how accuracy and rigour are needed to obtain the desired results when using computers. Most also become independent listening carefully to instructions prior to trying the controls of a program themselves. Progress and achievement are good in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory through Years 3 to 6.
72. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection and the provision has improved because a suite of networked computers is now used for lessons. Such lessons are always effective and the suite is used well by pupils and staff. There are few computers located in classrooms and consequently lessons in other subjects are seldom supported by computers. Individual pupils cannot gain additional practice in their use or enhance their learning in other subjects using information and communication technology. Nevertheless, teachers make considerable efforts to give pupils a good amount of time in the suite and to operate a computer without having to share it with another pupil. Furthermore, programs are carefully chosen to promote the whole programme of study, while at the same time being linked to on-going work in another subject. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, which was linked to work in religious education and design and technology, the pupils were delighted to learn how to colour-fill in patterns. They used this technique to enhance the design they had drawn on computers, which will be used to plan the making of a multi-coloured model coat for Joseph.
73. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some lessons being well taught and some good features, such as the clear and confident explanations with which teachers introduce a new program. Learning support assistants are used well and generally also are confident with using computers. This is often because teachers give them some help in operating a program in readiness to support the pupils. Good records are kept of what has been taught and pupils also take part in an assessment of their own learning. There are occasional gaps in these records, which are due to the several changes of teachers. In the well taught lessons, the pupils are challenged well and more capable pupils are able to extend their learning. For example, in a lesson for Year 5 pupils, the teacher deliberately left some aspects of controlling the program unexplained so pupils had to investigate them when entering data about

comparative climates of Mombassa and London onto a spreadsheet. Those pupils of high capability were able to use these to interpret the data, present it graphically and draw conclusions. However, in other lessons there are too few opportunities for more capable pupils to extend their learning. Occasionally, pupils demand attention and are potentially disruptive when working on computers, but this is dealt with well by teachers so as not to interfere with the other pupils' learning.

74. Staff changes have undermined the programme of training for teachers. However, in-formal training in the school has been effective and teachers are gaining confidence well and passing on skills to learning support assistants. The new coordinator offers much support and checks teachers' planning to make sure the curriculum is taught in full. She also samples pupils' work and teachers' annotations. Teachers now work with a partner to help corroborate judgements about what stage of learning each child has reached and to maintain "tracking grids". A self-assessment sheet is also used by pupils. These systems suggest good coordination and effective checks on the pupils' learning. The members of staff show a good level of interest and concern to improve their teaching in the subject and this is promoted by the coordinator. The school has planned to improve the access to computers within classrooms.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

75. Most lessons teach pupils skills in information and communication technology as well as extending or consolidating their learning in another subject. However, the school is planning to improve classroom access to computers and thus the ability that teachers have to extend pupils' learning in other subjects through information and communication technology. Displays around the school, the pupils' past work and displays within the computer suite indicate that computers are used in a range of subjects sometimes to record pupils' work and sometimes to extend their learning. Overall, there is satisfactory use of information and communication technology across the curriculum.

HUMANITIES

76. Only two lessons in **geography** were seen. There was insufficient evidence to make judgements. However, these lessons, discussions and a review of pupils' past work suggest standards that are below average. For example, pupils of Year 5 could identify differences between rural and urban settings but not the reasons for them. The past work of Year 2 pupils is very limited and shows a difference between the tasks set for the more capable and the less capable pupils but not a sequence of work indicating the step-by-step gaining of skills, such as those needed to read for maps. Many pupils start in Year 1 with limited experience of the wider world and below average knowledge and understanding of the world. The achievement of the older pupils appears weak.
77. Geography is taught in blocks of lessons decided by class teachers. While this allows for more concentrated learning, checks are not made on the total time used for teaching and learning in the subject. The recently appointed coordinator has correctly identified progression in the planned learning as an issue needing development. Teaching in the lessons seen was satisfactory, but did not extend pupils' learning enough for the more knowledgeable pupils. This has also been identified as an issue in need of development. The coordinator has yet to make an impact on the school's provision for the subject and to ascertain that the programme of study is taught fully, with sequential learning of skills.
78. No lessons in **history** were observed during the inspection and no work was sampled. Consequently, no judgement can be made about the quality of provision. Discussion with the coordinator and observations of displays around the school suggest that the subject has an appropriate focus. Pupils and parents speak positively about the provision for history. Visits to local places of historical interest enhance the pupils' learning. The coordinator leads the subject well and has checked on the pupils' learning through sampling their work. The subject

is linked well to other subjects. For example, pupils wrote about Florence Nightingale and researched historical facts on the internet.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- There are missed opportunities for developing the pupils' awareness of other religious customs and traditions.
- There are some good and very good elements in the quality of teaching.
- There is no formal assessment system.

Commentary

79. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for Hertfordshire schools. The inspection evidence indicates that pupils' achievement is satisfactory throughout the school.
80. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory with some good and very good elements. Very good teaching has a very positive impact on the pupils' learning by promoting their thinking skills. For example, skilful questioning effectively consolidates the pupils' previous learning and probes their knowledge and understanding of, for example, the Easter Story in Year 1. Good teaching facilitates the pupils' understanding of many features of the Christian faith, its culture and traditions in Year 6, and Buddhism in Year 5. The teacher's secure subject knowledge and clear exposition ensured that the pupils in Year 5 began to understand the difference between the inner and outer qualities of Buddha. A review of the pupils' past work indicates that Year 6 pupils are learning to compare differences and similarities, for example, between the accounts of the Christmas story in the three Gospels.
81. The school places emphasis on caring for others and helping pupils to recognise the importance of relationships. This has a positive impact on their learning. Assemblies and visits to a local church, help to develop pupils' emerging understanding of faith. The school is well placed to invite leaders of other religious faiths to visit the school and talk to the pupils. However, these useful opportunities to enhance the pupils' understanding of other cultures are missed.
82. The subject is satisfactorily led and planning takes appropriate account of the locally agreed syllabus. Currently, there is no effective system to record pupils' progress in the development of key learning in this subject or for the coordinator to observe lessons or have a clear idea of standards. While the school teaches a satisfactory range of different religions, it does not use the knowledge of local communities to enrich the pupils' learning.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

83. Only two lessons were observed in **physical education**, one for Year 1 and the other for Year 3. A full range of judgements cannot be made. However, a review of planning, time-table allocations as well as discussions with the subject coordinator and Year 6 pupils indicated that planned lessons do not always take place. One pupil said, "*We love sport and get really annoyed when the teacher says no PE today.*" This view is also reflected by some parents who were dissatisfied with the provision for physical education. Year 6 pupils have experienced no dance this year except a brief session with a visiting theatre group and they have not used apparatus for gymnastics. This provision for Year 6 has resulted in limited knowledge and experience. For example these pupils' knowledge of games' skills, creating dances and gymnastic sequences is not as good as it should be.

84. Standards in physical education in Year 1 are average and pupils achieve well because the teacher has good subject knowledge. Pupils improve their ability to balance because they receive clear guidelines from the teacher. Pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language achieve well alongside their peers. Standards in Year 3 are below average because the pupils are not prompted to improve the quality of their movements and more able pupils are insufficiently challenged.
85. The school provides swimming lessons which are an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils enjoy and take part in extra-curricular football activities but opportunities for other extra-curricular sports are currently limited. The coordinator, who has specialist knowledge, leads the subject well and has implemented changes aimed at improving standards. Resources have improved. The coordinator has introduced a progressive scheme of work but not monitored teaching and learning to check if the planning is being implemented. The school is establishing contacts with outside sporting bodies.
86. Only one lesson in **art and design** was seen and this was in Year 5. One of its noteworthy features was the very good progression of the pupils' skills and techniques through the well thought out activities and the provision of well-chosen and stimulating resources. For example, Year 5 pupils become "*pattern detectives*" as they investigated pattern-making in different African textiles: they were completely absorbed in this activity. From a review of the pupils' work and displays it is clear that many art activities are done to support learning in other subjects of the curriculum. There is little evidence of art work that shows the improvement and progression of skills that are specific to the subject. Very little evidence was available in the pupils' sketchbooks. There was too little evidence to make judgements about teaching, standards or provision overall.
87. In **design and technology**, a review of pupils' work in folders shows that Year 2 pupils have designed and made a variety of appealing hand-puppets. They are usefully learning to evaluate their designs and to identify what they might do to improve them. For example, one pupil wrote, "*You have to put your hand in it to make it work. If you have your middle finger in its head you make the head move.*" The subject is efficiently led and managed. However, there are no current arrangements for checking up on the pupils' levels of work. This lack of assessment information hinders progress, because teachers are not able to plan to support individual needs. There was insufficient evidence to form judgements about teaching, standards and provision overall.
88. In **music**, pupils sing enthusiastically and keep in tune well. The school has sensibly introduced a new scheme of work to improve the pupils' singing, which was weak at the last inspection. This usefully supports the teachers' planning. The curriculum is enhanced by the teaching of recorders in Year 2 and Year 3. This has a positive influence on the pupils' attainment and means that they are all beginning to read musical notation. Pupils are given good opportunities to perform publicly through concerts and their participation in music festivals that take place in St Albans Abbey. Currently, there is no effective system to record pupils' progress in the development of key learning in this subject. There was insufficient evidence to make judgements about standards, teaching and provision overall.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

89. Provision for personal, social and health education is good overall. There is a well-planned programme of weekly lessons and other opportunities for personal development, such as class discussion times. The programme includes a drugs awareness programme and sex education. Outside agencies are used very successfully to support the pupils' personal and social development. For example, very good teaching was observed in Year 1 where pupils were encouraged to express their ideas and opinions and think about important issues. The topics taught provide a good vehicle for the development of the pupils' speaking and listening

skills as well as their social development in terms of working in pairs. Aspects of health education are also covered in science and physical education.

90. The school has worked hard to promote this subject. Teachers encourage pupils to express their views, to listen to others and to take responsibility. However, the school council has not met for a number of months and needs to be reinstated to profitably involve representatives to discuss issues in the life of the school and develop an understanding of citizenship.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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