

INSPECTION REPORT

OXHEY WOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Watford

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117170

Acting Headteacher: Mrs M Priggs

Lead inspector: Mr P B McAlpine

Dates of inspection: 23-25 February 2004

Inspection number: 257134

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:	238
School address:	Oxhey Drive South Oxhey Watford Hertfordshire
Postcode:	WD19 7SL
Telephone number:	020 8428 4828
Fax number:	020 8421 6089
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr James Brown
Date of previous inspection:	27 April 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This average size primary school has 218 full time pupils organised into eight classes, two of them mixed-age. A further 20 part-time pupils of Nursery age attend a Foundation Stage unit. Numbers on roll have fallen by a third since the previous inspection. The locality has a declining school population and provision in the area is under review by the local authority with a view to rationalising places. The indicators of social and economic deprivation within the locality are high. About a quarter of the pupils are eligible for free school meals; this is above average and higher than the previous inspection. About a third of the pupils have special educational needs; this is well above average. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is typical of most primary schools. The significant special educational needs include dyslexia; moderate learning; emotional and behavioural difficulties. Five per cent of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mostly mixed-ethnic and black-Caribbean families. No child has English as an additional language. Pupil mobility¹ in the past year is particularly high and is affecting about one in every five places at the school. More pupils are leaving than are joining. The fall in numbers has been particularly acute in the last two years. Attainment on entry varies between pupils but is well below average overall. There are annual fluctuations in overall standards on entry and in some years standards are very low. The school is involved in various government and local initiatives including healthy schools; arts mark and active mark. It received a school improvement award in 2001. It is developing a family learning programme and is involved in other initiatives that bring extra funds into the school. For 18 months the school has been without a permanent headteacher. There have been three acting headteachers in that period. There have been two deputy headteachers in the same period. Two-thirds of the teaching posts have been subject to continual teacher turnover. The local education authority is providing the school with intensive support.

¹ Mobility refers to pupils who join or leave at other than the usual times of admission to the Reception year or transfer to secondary education at the end of Year 6.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21552	Mr P B McAlpine	Lead inspector	English English as an additional language
32700	Mrs L Miller	Lay inspector	
198997	Mr A Evans	Team inspector	Mathematics Science Geography History
26232	Mr C Grove	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology Physical education Music Religious education Special educational needs
30677	Mrs M Waterston	Team inspector	Foundation Stage

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school is satisfactory. It has been through a very difficult period that saw a considerable loss of effectiveness. Successive acting headteachers, with intensive support from the local education authority, have stabilised the school and initiated a process of recovery. Although standards are low the pupils are well motivated and achieving as well as can reasonably be expected. The quality of education is satisfactory. Teaching is generally effective and has a number of good features. Leadership and management are providing a clear educational direction to the work of the school. While the school may not have given value in the recent past, current value for money is satisfactory.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- the school provides a caring environment where pupils' individual needs are well provided for;
- the majority of pupils are achieving in line with their potential but the more able could do better;
- standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are well below average, reflecting very low standards on entry to school; the proportion of pupils with underdeveloped skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing is much larger than average;
- the teaching has improved considerably since the previous inspection and is now consistent in quality throughout the school;
- there is very good provision of activities after school;
- the provision for pupils in the Foundation Stage to learn through physical activity outdoors is underdeveloped.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been mixed and too slow. The high turnover of teachers has been a barrier to raising achievement. Standards in English and mathematics declined after the last inspection. Current standards show some improvement though this is not yet evident in test results. Attainment in information and communication technology is showing good improvement. Teaching is better than it was at the last inspection. Curriculum planning and assessment show good improvement and are satisfactory throughout the school. The roles of senior management and subject coordinators have been developed and are satisfactory. Coordinators are now involved in monitoring and evaluating standards, planning and teaching. Training in management is being provided.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			Similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	D	D	E	D
Mathematics	E	E	E*	E
Science	E	E	E	E

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

Achievement is satisfactory. Test results have declined since the previous inspection, particularly in 2003, and are not as good as similar schools. This reflects the high turnover of teachers in the past two years. The current standards achieved, though low, are broadly satisfactory given the pupils' capacity for learning and their low attainment on entry. Current standards in English, mathematics and science are still well below the national average but are an improvement on 2003 because more pupils are on course to attain or exceed the nationally expected level, particularly in mathematics. The progress of the oldest pupils has been mixed since the age of seven but the majority of them, mainly those with average and low ability, achieve as well as can be reasonably expected. The few pupils with potential for high attainment could do better. Skills of speaking and

listening are particularly underdeveloped in many pupils and this is limiting their development in literacy and in other subjects. Standards in information and communication technology are average and achievement satisfactory. The pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as can be expected. Standards in the Foundation Stage are well below average overall and many pupils have underdeveloped skills of speaking and listening. The pupils' personal development, including their spiritual moral social and cultural development, is satisfactory by Year 6. Attendance is well below average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is satisfactory. The teaching is fully effective in most lessons and no teaching is unsatisfactory. The current pace of learning is relatively quick in English and mathematics and pupils are catching up. The curriculum has the same breadth and range as the majority of schools. It motivates the pupils and meets the learning needs of most pupils though the more able could be stretched more than they are. Curricular enrichment is particularly good through the activities as after school clubs, sports, visits, and visitors.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The senior management team, with the beneficial support of the local education authority, has halted the decline of the school. The morale of members of staff is high. There is a clear programme for improvement and good evidence of early effectiveness. The rapid turnover of teachers was a significant barrier to learning but this turnover has been stemmed and the current workforce is stable and competent. The strategy for recruitment of teachers has been successful. Governance of the school has had variable effectiveness in the past but is now satisfactory. All relevant statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The views of parents are mixed. The majority of parents value the school, but a sizeable minority have considerable concerns, stemming largely from the high turnover of teachers and lack of continuity in some classes leading to a slowing of progress for their children. Inspectors agree with parents that this high turnover of teachers has slowed the progress of some pupils but find that senior management is on top of this problem and it is being remedied.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- raise standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, initially to the level in similar schools then to the national average, paying particular attention to writing;
- raise the pupils' skills of speaking and listening so that at least 75 per cent of pupils attain standards consistent with the national expectations for their age;
- raise the standards achieved by the more able pupils to satisfactory levels;
- improve the provision in the Foundation Stage for pupils to learn through physical activity outdoors so that the nationally agreed curriculum for this age group can be taught in full.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

The standards achieved are satisfactory compared to the very low starting point many pupils experience.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The substantial majority of pupils achieve as well as can reasonably be expected.
- Test results have declined since the previous inspection.
- Current standards in English, mathematics and science are slightly better than last year but are still well below average overall.

Commentary

1. The substantial majority of the pupils are attaining levels that are broadly consistent with their capacity for learning. The few more able pupils could do better. A large proportion of children enter school at the age of four with limited personal, social and emotional development and very limited speaking and listening skills and these slow the pace at which they can learn. The school helps them to improve their concentration and attentiveness, work collaboratively and independently, and to extend their ability to listen and talk, but this improvement takes time. Most pupils have increased their knowledge and skills in English, mathematics and science at the rate expected nationally, sometimes more quickly, and this is satisfactory. Between 2000 and 2003, because of very high turnover of teachers, progress slowed and so test results fell. Within the past year, a good degree of staffing stability has been restored, with the result that the pace of learning is accelerating and pupils are once again showing signs of catching up with national expectations.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	24.9 (26.5)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	23.3 (24.3)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	26.2 (27.4)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 40 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Test results in 2003 in Year 6 were in the lowest 25 per cent of schools nationally in English and science, and in the lowest five per cent in mathematics. Such standards, particularly in mathematics, are low and not as good as similar schools. Since the previous inspection, results in Year 6 have fallen significantly. This reflects the very troubled period the school has been through, particularly the high turnover of teachers. The results in Year 2 were also low but the results are unreliable because the tests were inadvertently administered wrongly by temporary members of staff. Over the past 18 months, three acting headteachers, with the strong support of the local education authority, have stabilised the school, halted the decline in performance, and initiated the long uphill struggle to lift standards back to their original levels at the time of the previous inspection. Current standards in Year 6 are better than last year but still well below average in English, mathematics and science. The present Year 6 pupils had much lower overall standards on entry to school when aged four and much lower results when aged seven than their counterparts last year, so the standards they are currently achieving are satisfactory given the very low starting point, though there is room for further improvement amongst the more able.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
Reading	13.3 (14.6)	15.7 (15.8)
Writing	10.7 (13.5)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	11.5 (14.5)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 38 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. Progress in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory but standards in all of the areas of learning are well below average, reflecting the low attainment on entry of many pupils. Although there is a range of attainment in the Foundation Stage, and a minority of children have fairly typical attainment for their age, the majority find it difficult to sustain concentration for more than a few minutes or to collaborate with others, are easily distracted and often very reluctant to speak or express themselves using more than a few words.
4. Achievement in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory and learning is gathering speed. Standards are well below average but more pupils are on course to attain or exceed the nationally expected level this year than did so last year. Almost all pupils are attaining levels that show satisfactory increases in knowledge compared to their baseline scores when aged four.
5. Achievement in Years 3 to 6 is broadly satisfactory in reading and mathematics though the more able pupils could do better. Achievement in writing is mixed; it is satisfactory for girls but about half of the boys could do better. Written work currently shows good signs of improvement, especially in organisation, length, and presentation but reveals gaps in basic knowledge of grammar, punctuation and spelling that will take more time to correct. These gaps in basic writing skills affect the lower ability boys most. Achievement in science is satisfactory and there is a good emphasis on developing skills of scientific investigation and experimentation. Even so, the more able pupils could do better. Standards in information and communication technology have improved since the last inspection and most pupils are achieving well in this subject, reflecting good teaching and support. Standards in other subjects, including religious education, are below average and progress is sometimes slowed by pupils' weak literacy skills. Nevertheless, achievement in these subjects is satisfactory.
6. Although the picture is not identical between subjects, girls generally do better than boys because they mostly have better communication skills. Poor speaking and writing skills are affecting boys more than girls and tend to limit their progress in subjects that need reading and writing skills to facilitate study, especially history, geography and religious education. Those pupils with potential for high attainment are not always stretched sufficiently and some of them could do better. The small proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds speak English as their first language and achieve standards similar to other pupils. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as can be expected. They make satisfactory progress towards the targets on their individual education plans and are generally working to capacity.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. There is very little bullying, racism or other forms of harassment and the school deals effectively with these when they arise. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Attendance is well below the national average. Punctuality is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils generally work hard and behave well in lessons.
- Provision for moral and social development is good.
- Action taken to improve the management of pupils' behaviour is effective.
- The level of absenteeism is high; however the school does its best to encourage the regular attendance of the children.

Commentary

7. Pupils' behaviour in the playground and around the school is satisfactory. Pupils generally behave amicably towards one another and enjoy the social opportunities at playtimes and lunchtimes. Teachers and support staff provide a good level of supervision, particularly in the playground, which allows for rapid intervention in the event of any unacceptable behaviour. In the classroom, attitudes and behaviour are similarly satisfactory and the substantial majority of pupils show sustained interest and enthusiasm. Where there were instances of inattention or slightly boisterous behaviour, teachers and teaching assistants are good at refocusing pupils' attention and maintaining productivity.
8. The school has clear policies and procedures for managing pupils' behaviour. There are established practices that pupils see as fair because of the staged responses to any misbehaviour. There are reliable systems in place to reward positive behaviour. A good number of sporting, musical and other activities at lunchtimes and after school offer pupils productive experiences and promote self-esteem. The school has taken the initiative in organising additional training in behaviour management for all staff through the local education authority and this training is effective. The school is faced with a situation where not all parents support its handling of behaviour issues, which on occasions makes for some difficulties. In these circumstances, the use of timetabled occasions known as 'circle time', to discuss with pupils matters of behaviour, bullying or harassment is well judged and helping pupils to learn more about themselves and the need for a moral framework for behaviour.
9. There is no evidence of any harassment or bullying of a racial nature. The school is keenly aware of the harmful effects of racist views which pupils might encounter. A racist incidence book is maintained and the school does what it can to engender positive images of different cultures.
10. The school's provision for moral and social development is good. Time is set aside each week for developing pupils' moral understanding, including empathy, and opportunities are provided for pupils to reflect on the rules of behaviour. Opportunities for social development arise from paired speaking and listening work in English and in collaborative work in other subjects. Organised clubs, school trips and drama productions provide further opportunities for the development of social awareness. Opportunities for spiritual development are satisfactory. School assemblies help to create spiritual awareness through reflection on themes such as love and harmony, and bringing aspects of the work and lives of spiritual leaders to the attention of pupils. The school is providing satisfactory opportunities for pupils to develop cultural and multicultural knowledge and awareness but not enough is done to raise pupils' awareness of their own culture.

Exclusions

11. The rate of exclusion is very high. The number of exclusions has reduced since the previous inspection when some were permanent. The strategies used by the school are helping to reduce disaffection among pupils. Good support is being provided for those pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, helping them manage their problems more effectively and reducing the flare-ups that lead to exclusion. Correct procedures were followed when pupils were excluded and those excluded returned to school and were rehabilitated.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	212	5	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	3	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.4	School data	1.0
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

12. The school's rate of authorised absence is well above the national average and unauthorised absence is very high. Attendance has declined over the last three years. A relatively large number of children are persistently late. The school is aware of the problems and is working hard to bring about improvement.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

Teaching is satisfactory with good features. The pace of learning is at least satisfactory and regularly good, especially in English and mathematics. Assessment is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- About half the teaching is good and none is unsatisfactory and this is a considerable achievement given the very high turnover of teachers in the past two years.
- The teaching is consistent throughout the school. It motivates pupils and manages their behaviour well.
- Teaching in mathematics is good.
- Pupils' understanding of how they can improve is good.

Commentary

13. All of the teaching is satisfactory or better. Just under half is good or better and a small amount is very good. The range and the quality of teaching are not yet as good as the national picture but have improved considerably since the previous inspection and this is an achievement given

the very high turnover of teachers. The overall quality of teaching is better than the previous inspection when more than one in every ten lessons was unsatisfactory.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 38 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	1 (3%)	16 (42%)	21 (55%)	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.

14. The acting headteachers and the local education authority have introduced good strategies to evaluate and improve the teaching and this is leading to good consistency throughout the school. There is an extensive programme of monitoring which effectively identifies good practice and remedies shortcomings. Because of this, teachers are gaining in confidence and focus appropriately on meeting the needs of all pupils. In all lessons the substantial majority of pupils make worthwhile gains in knowledge and understanding because the teaching motivates them and is generally well adjusted to different learning needs. The pace of learning is always consistent with national expectations and often relatively quick. The pupils' behaviour is well managed and this is a good improvement since the previous inspection.
15. In a very good English lesson in Year 6, the teaching was very challenging and this was lifting standards in the aspect being taught to national average levels and this is a significant improvement compared to the previous year. The pupils responded enthusiastically and very productively, completing the work in the time available. The pupils had a very good understanding of the purpose of the lesson, how well they were doing, both in the lesson and generally in the subject, and what they must do to improve. Target setting was well developed and pupils knew what they had to do to attain the nationally expected level by the end of the year, with several knowing what they must do to exceed it. The good practices seen in this lesson were being developed in other classes and this was a strong feature of the teaching throughout the school.
16. Teaching in mathematics is particularly good. In almost all lessons in mathematics, the teaching is effective and all pupils are learning quickly, including the more able. There is an appropriate emphasis on mental mathematics and getting pupils to explain how they solved problems. In good lessons in Year 6 and in Year 2, work was specifically targeted at the small number of more able pupils. This challenged and motivated them and helped them give of their best. Good support is provided for less able pupils and those experiencing learning difficulties and this is helping them to keep momentum to their learning and, in some cases, catch with national expectations.
17. Teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and this is helping them to achieve as well as can reasonably be expected. Most teaching of pupils with special educational needs is done in normal classroom situations, with classroom assistants offering effective support. At times, pupils are withdrawn for support in work which is relevant to the lesson objectives. Both types of support are effective and well managed. The school is successfully developing an approach to teaching and learning that is appropriately inclusive of all pupils.

The curriculum

The school offers a satisfactory curriculum, providing a broad range of worthwhile learning opportunities. The curriculum affords a satisfactory preparation for secondary school. There are adequate resources to support learning and the accommodation is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curriculum planning has improved since the previous inspection and provision for mathematics and information and communication technology now meets statutory requirements.
- There is very good provision for curricular enrichment through visits and visitors and through extra-curricular activities.
- The accommodation overall is very good, though the outside play area for the Foundation Stage is underdeveloped.

Commentary

18. Planning is soundly based on national guidelines, adapted to meet the school's needs and resources and has improved since the previous inspection. Provision for mathematics and information and communication technology now meets statutory requirements. The teachers plan carefully but do not always match the curriculum sufficiently to the needs of the relatively small proportion of pupils with potential for higher attainment or for the few gifted and talented pupils. Religious education and collective worship meet statutory requirements.
19. The school is trying satisfactorily to innovate and improve the curriculum and take account of national initiatives. It is working towards gaining the Arts Mark, the Active Mark and the Healthy Schools award. The teachers motivate the pupils through effective cross-curricular projects, such as 'Joseph's Amazing Coat', and a recent 'Tree Week'. There are good opportunities for the pupils to use their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills in other subjects.
20. There is equality of access to the whole curriculum for all groups of pupils. There is satisfactory provision for pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements of special educational need. The teachers identify pupils who are experiencing difficulties with work or behaviour as soon as possible. Satisfactory individual education plans are drawn up for these pupils. They include clear targets, which are reviewed each term, and the strategies to achieve them. The building is suitable for pupils with severe mobility problems.
21. There are many opportunities for the pupils to pursue their interests outside lessons. These include sports, music, dance, drama, art and craft, pottery and science clubs. There is a regular writers' workshop and a homework club has just started, which enables older pupils to take advantage of the school's library and information and communication technology facilities. Football and netball teams compete against local schools. Learning is enriched by worthwhile visits to a wide range of places, such as Hatfield House, Stevenage Victorian School, the National Gallery and a local farm. Pupils in Year 6 participate in an annual residential visit to Osmington Bay in Dorset.
22. Between them, the teachers offer a good range of expertise and interest in the different subjects of the National Curriculum. The teachers are well supported by teaching assistants and by the school's administrative staff. Much of the teaching in information and communication technology is undertaken by a very experienced and well qualified teaching assistant who is also the school's technology manager. Although the outside play area for the children in the Foundation Stage needs further development, the internal accommodation overall is very good. Strengths include two halls for physical education, two art rooms, a separate dining hall, a music room and extensive playgrounds and grass areas outside. There is an easily accessible library with a good range of fiction and non-fiction books. There are adequate resources to support teaching and learning in all subjects. Resources for literacy are good. There is a need for more practical equipment to enhance provision for pupils with special educational needs.

Care, guidance and support

The members of staff know the children well. Pastoral care is very strong and extends to the families as well as the pupils. The steps taken to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are good. The school buildings are well maintained and provide a safe environment for the pupils.

Strengths and weaknesses

- The members of staff have very good relationships with the pupils, which leads to the pupils feeling safe, happy, confident and secure.
- Teachers monitor personal development very well and use support from the community and outside agencies appropriately to help pupils develop and improve.
- Induction² arrangements for new pupils are good.
- Arrangements for ensuring health and safety and child protection are good.
- The school provides good opportunities for pupils' views to be represented.

Commentary

23. The school is very effective in ensuring the care, welfare, health and safety of its children. Policies are in place and are followed carefully. The school is well maintained and provides a safe environment for the children. There is good liaison with external agencies and teachers work within the correct procedures. The school is active in tackling children's behavioural and learning problems. Good programmes to encourage family learning and the remedying of behaviour problems are recent initiatives. The early indications are that they are effective, be it with a small number of families and children.
24. One prominent feature is the school council which allows pupils of all ages to exercise some responsibility in decision-taking. The school council meets every month to put forward the pupils' views and requests. These regular meetings consider issues of concern to pupils and provide a forum for suggestions for the improvement of the premises. Furthermore, the council provides pupils with opportunities to influence the home-school agreement and to reconsider periodically the school's golden rules. Older pupils also gain experience of responsibility through the support which they provide for infant pupils at lunchtimes, and through the young enterprise scheme. A current project under discussion is the creation of two 'Bunny stops' for children without someone to play with, to team up with another child. The success of the school council leads to the children having increased involvement in the development of the school. Induction arrangements for new pupils are good, which leads to the children settling in quickly.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The schools links with parents are broadly satisfactory. The majority of parents are happy with the school, but a small minority have concerns. The school puts considerable effort into creating and maintaining good links with a wide range of outside agencies. The school also encourages strong links with the local community, to increase the pupils' awareness of the outside world.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are generally satisfied with the school and the procedures to deal with any complaints and concerns are good.
- The school is active in forging strong links with the local community which benefit teachers and pupils.

² Induction refers to the arrangements the school makes to receive new pupils and help them get to know the teachers and other children. These can include opportunities for children and parents to visit the school before admission or for members of staff to visit children at home.

- There is a generally low level of parental involvement in the children's schoolwork; the school is working to increase the level of involvement.
- The provision of information to the parents is good; the school provides the parents with informative annual reports.
- The good links with outside agencies increases the level of support available to the children and their families.

Commentary

25. Parents are generally happy with the level of information from the school. The school provides the parents with regular newsletters, which keeps them informed about school activities and events. The annual reports are very informative and detailed. A small number of parents volunteer to listen to the children read. All classes have merit systems and achievements are celebrated at reward assemblies. The pupils understand and like the systems, which lead to the promotion of good behaviour and hard work.
26. A six session family fun workshop, with a literacy bias, has been held and was attended by ten families. Further sessions, the next one with a numeracy bias, are planned. This good practice is helping raise the involvement of parents in their children's learning. The school has worked hard to create strong links with a number of local organisations, such as the local police, fire service and Watford football club, different faith communities, various cultural groups, and the general local community and these links are beneficial to the school. The school actively pursues good links with outside agencies and a recent initiative is the setting up of Behaviour Support Team sessions within the school. This is aimed at encouraging the families to tackle behavioural problems together. The teachers ensure that parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept fully informed of the targets set for their children and of the progress being made towards them.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Governance is satisfactory. The very high turnover of teaching staff has been a barrier to raising achievement. The effective involvement of the local education authority is aiding the school and helping to bring stability to the staffing and overcome the barriers.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The contributions of the acting headteachers and the strong support of the local education authority have helped unite the school and create the right circumstances for continued improvement.
- The policy for recruitment of teachers is effective.

Commentary

27. The school has been through a very difficult period that saw considerable loss of effectiveness and falling standards. The actions of various temporary headteachers and the local education authority have halted that decline and stabilised staffing. Each acting headteacher has brought different expertise but together they have established a clear, relevant programme of improvement and reform that is being successfully implemented. The local education authority has provided the necessary thread of continuity, advice and practical support. Through joint effort, leadership has been sustained at satisfactory levels. There is a firm, competent and committed steer to the educational direction of the school and low standards are being tackled. The deputy headteacher is providing good support and leads very effectively through the example of her high quality teaching. The contribution of middle and subject managers has been affected by the high staff turnover but is being boosted by recent appointments of teachers to posts of responsibility who, like the deputy headteacher, lead their subjects

capably by the example of their good teaching. Morale is good and teachers are working effectively in teams. There is a particularly strong commitment to running an equitable and inclusive school where every individual matters.

28. The school has been through a rigorous process of self-evaluation that has resulted in an honest, accurate appraisal of its performance and what needs to be done to improve. Difficult messages about performance have not been shirked. This process has included regular evaluation of teaching effectiveness, lesson observations, analysing test data and pupil progress records, and looking at pupils' work. Governors are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and support the programme for improvement. The governing body has been through its own period of turbulence but is now refreshed with new members and a determination to succeed. Governors are helping to shape the direction of the school, ensure that statutory requirements are met, including those for race equality, and effectively challenge and support the management team.
29. Recruitment and retention of teachers have been very difficult. Over the past two years, more than 20 teachers have come and gone and this is very high. Currently, all but two teachers have permanent contracts and those on temporary contracts have been at the school since the beginning of the school year and are settled. Appointment procedures are appropriately rigorous and address specific school needs. Sensible incentives are being used to retain staff, and to recruit new teachers, though these are constrained by the limited budget available.
30. The high turnover of teachers has been a barrier to raising achievement. During the period of highest teacher turnover standards achieved by pupils fell significantly. The local education authority has provided intensive support to help the school improve and has appointed acting headteachers of proven ability seconded from other schools; this has been a successful strategy. A high level of training has been provided for teachers, much of it in school so that teachers have not had to have time away from their pupils. This support from the local education authority has been effective and is a good aid to the school and is helping to raise achievement.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	819,074	Balance from previous year	70,840
Total expenditure	859,108	Balance carried forward to the next	30,806
Expenditure per pupil (314 pupils)	2,736		

31. The school's expenditure is exceeding income. The gap has so far been bridged using reserves but these are now exhausted. The rapid decline in pupil numbers and the high costs associated with temporary staff needed to cover absences are the main reasons for expenditure exceeding income. Senior management, governors, and the local education authority are on top of the situation and current financial management is good. The school is potentially heading for a significant overspend by the end of the 2004 to 2005 financial year but a recovery plan that has the approval of the authority is in place. The cost of educating each pupil is below the national average. This money is helping to overcome barriers to raising achievement and is being spent wisely. Given the below average costs, the current quality of education, and its effectiveness, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

32. There have been changes in the provision for children in the Foundation Stage since the previous inspection. A Foundation Stage unit was formed in September 2003, combining the previously separate Nursery with the Reception class. There is now one teacher in charge of the whole unit whereas there used to be one teacher in the Nursery and one in Reception. The teacher is assisted by one full time nursery nurse and two part time teaching assistants. This is only just sufficient for current provision and might not be enough when the outdoor resource is fully developed.
33. Children are admitted in September and January, entering the Nursery in the term of their fourth birthday and attending in the mornings only. They transfer into the Reception class in the term in which they become five, staying full time. Nearly all children begin school with attainment in all areas of learning which is well below what is expected for their age. There are particular weaknesses in language development and in personal and social skills. The majority of children achieve satisfactorily but are unlikely to reach the expected standards on entry to Year 1. Most of the children entering Year 1 in September 2003 had not achieved the nationally expected standards.
34. Teaching is satisfactory overall and sometimes good. The teacher in charge of the unit is based predominantly with the Reception children and those of Nursery age are taught by the teaching assistants. This is too rigid and prevents the different types of expertise offered by various members of staff being experienced by all children. The teacher and nursery nurse work well together in planning the provision across all six of the nationally agreed areas of learning for the Foundation Stage. Planning for the term's work is thorough, weekly plans are well thought out, and lesson plans are sufficiently detailed to promote progression in children's learning. Assessment of children's progress towards the expected standards in all areas of learning is comprehensive and meets the requirements of the Foundation Stage Profile. Regular individual observations of what children are able to do are noted and used to inform planning for the next steps in their learning and this is good practice.
35. The inside accommodation is spacious and adequately equipped with the usual range of resources. A disadvantage of the large available space is that the walls separating the area into three units make supervision rather difficult, particularly when one of the adults is concentrating on working with a small group. The school has developed an attractive, enclosed outside area since the last inspection in which children are able to use wheeled toys, sand and water, and grow flowers and vegetables. This outside area lacks the climbing equipment to promote physical development and is underused as a resource for learning. This lack of use is partly because supervision of the children both inside and out is not easy given the size of the Unit and staffing levels. Further consideration should be given to ways of overcoming these difficulties.
36. The teacher in charge is newly qualified and recently appointed. She has brought enthusiasm and expertise to her role, leading the staff team well, ensuring thorough lesson planning, and identifying ways of improving provision for children's learning.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for personal, social and emotional development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision is successfully helping pupils to gain independence and settle into school.

Commentary

37. The provision is helping children to learn and to develop their skills at a satisfactory pace but few pupils are likely to attain the national goals for early learning by the time they enter Year 1 and standards overall are well below average. Children are provided with a satisfactory range of activities which contribute to their personal and social development, including opportunities for speaking and listening in circle time. However, more specific learning opportunities for developing skills in this area are required because children's attainment is so far behind what is expected for their age.
38. On entry to the Nursery, children's concentration span is often extremely short, even when they choose their own activity. When given a choice of activities they tend to play on their own. At the time of the inspection, a laundrette had been set up in the corner of one teaching area. Children enjoyed playing in this but did not communicate much with each other during this time. Most children part from their parents or carers with confidence, in part because the members of staff are sensitive to children's needs and they feel secure. Children do not seek out others to share experiences but generally accept another's entry into an activity, continuing to play alongside rather than with others. Children's ability to concentrate gradually increases but remains below what is expected when they enter Reception.
39. Children's learning experiences throughout the unit are appropriately planned so that activities are varied and of short duration, gradually retaining children's interest for longer. Behaviour is good during whole class and group sessions because the teacher has high expectations to which children respond. Some children behave less well when they have a free choice of activities. Children show increasing independence but remain immature when entering Year 1.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision for communication, language and literacy is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons and activities in the Reception year are well planned and there is a good emphasis on literacy.

Commentary

40. The majority of children will not meet the national expectations in this area of learning by the time they enter Year 1. They enter the Nursery and the Reception year groups with speaking and listening skills that are well below those expected for their age. Achievement by the time they enter Year 1 is satisfactory given the low starting point and their capacity for learning.
41. Teaching for the Nursery age children is satisfactory. When children are admitted to the Nursery year group, a significant proportion of them say little to adults or to each other. The immaturity of most children means they do not listen well and have difficulty following instructions. Opportunities for learning through play are not used as effectively as they might be to extend children's language or help them develop their ideas. Children who entered the Nursery in September are beginning to show an interest in books, listen to stories for brief

periods, and a few like to sit at the 'writing' table. Many of them arrive in school with very limited experience of using pencils or colouring implements and do not generally ascribe meaning to marks.

42. Teaching in the Reception year group is satisfactory overall with good features. Lessons are well planned making use of National Literacy Strategy guidance and early reading and writing skills are developing well. Children enjoy listening to stories, particularly the repetitive rhymes in stories such as 'The Gingerbread Man', and join in with enthusiasm. They are beginning to identify initial letter sounds and to recognise rhyming words such as ran, man, can. The language children use for communicating and for thinking is, however, weak and hinders their progress in other areas. More could be done to develop children's skills in this area through play and by planning specifically to improve their skills.
43. Children take books home to share but parents rarely make use of the home-school reading booklets to contribute to their child's reading experiences. The Family Learning Initiative is providing opportunities for parents and the school to work in partnership and is effective. Only a few parents were involved in this project but it had an impact on their understanding of their children's learning needs and increased both their own and their child's confidence.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for mathematical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in the Reception year is good.

Commentary

44. Attainment on entry is low and although pupils' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their capacity for learning, many do not attain the national goals for early learning by the time they enter Year 1 and standards overall are well below average. Teaching in the Nursery is satisfactorily based on practical learning but does not develop mathematical language sufficiently. For example, children were helped to sort themselves into groups using criteria such as boys or girls, colour of hair, or anyone wearing pink, and counted the numbers in each set. This activity successfully engaged children's interest for a short period because they were actively involved through moving about but there was very little development of language.
45. In a good lesson in the Reception year, children's interest was sustained by ensuring they were all actively involved so their attention to the tasks was good and they learned well. They enjoyed singing a number rhyme, using their fingers to indicate numbers, and loved it when the teacher used a finger puppet to point to numbers on a century square and made deliberate mistakes for them to spot. Number recognition to 10 was consolidated by making a number line of tiles on the floor, identifying which number came before, after, or in between a given one. Group activities were well organised and appropriate to children's learning needs. For example, one group toured the school with the nursery nurse, seeking out numerals in displays and on doors; another used paint to print numerals in order on a number line. The group with the teacher was able to identify numbers important to them, such as age, number in their family, and make concertina books. In this one aspect of mathematical development, using numbers as labels for counting, a significant proportion of children are likely to achieve some of the expected standards though standards overall remain low.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

46. No direct teaching was seen related specifically to this area of learning but children were observed learning through play and making pancakes on Shrove Tuesday. A scrutiny of

planning, and photographic evidence, indicate that children are offered an appropriate range of experiences to extend their knowledge of the world. Most children do not show a natural curiosity and there are insufficient interactive displays around the teaching areas to stimulate curiosity. There are planned opportunities for pupils to learn through play indoors but the resource outdoors is underdeveloped.

47. Children experience planned opportunities to learn through play, for example, by investigating construction materials, the properties of sand and water, and role play activities in the 'laundrette'. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes have investigated their different senses, looked at similarities and differences between each other, and considered how their different body parts are used. Over time, children have learned about festivals such as Diwali and Hannukah, the activities related to Guy Fawkes, and made masks from the story of Rama and Sita. Children are given regular opportunities to use computers, and tape recorders in the listening area.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

48. No lessons were seen. Planning, displays, children's work and photographic evidence show that children have opportunities to experience being creative in a variety of ways, with a range of materials. They sing simple songs and explore the sounds made by musical instruments, sort primary colours, make shape pictures related to work in mathematics, and make drawings of flowers and leaves. They have used a magnifying glass to look at their finger prints, and used clay to make fruit.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

49. Only one lesson was seen. Bad weather prevented the children going outside and only a small amount of time was available for them to use the hall. In the lesson seen, children showed they could use the available space with due regard for the needs of others. They moved at different speeds, stopping promptly on a signal, engaged in stretching and curling with varying degrees of control, and balanced bean bags and quoits on different parts of their bodies. They did not have opportunities to improve on their 'performances'. There is a lack of appropriate equipment, both inside and out, for children to develop their abilities to climb, scramble, slide and swing and this is unsatisfactory. Children have opportunities to use one handed tools of various kinds, explore malleable materials and use small equipment to further develop fine motor control but not enough opportunity is available for them to extend the range of tools and materials used, particularly outdoors.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching is satisfactory overall, with several good features, and this is leading to the substantial majority of pupils achieving broadly in line with their potential.
- Standards are well below average but better than 2003.
- The subject is led and managed effectively.

Commentary

50. When the pupils now in Year 6 began schooling in 1997, more than half of them had such low attainment that their potential to achieve nationally expected levels by the age of eleven was very limited. Only about ten per cent had the potential to attain highly. Currently, more than three-quarters of the Year 6 pupils are on course to attain or exceed national expectations in reading, including about 20 per cent who are likely to exceed them. This shows that almost all pupils have done as well as the early indicators of potential predicted and that about a quarter have done better. The picture in writing is not as positive as in reading because few pupils are doing better than predicted; even so, most are doing as well as the early indicators of potential suggested and this is satisfactory.
51. In reading, about 80 per cent of the pupils in Year 6 have the knowledge and skills to deal with most texts independently, can tackle unfamiliar words competently, have appropriate comprehension skills, and are developing preferences for certain authors and types of story. These pupils are on course to attain the nationally expected level by the end of the school year and the proportion is about the same size as in the majority schools nationally. About one in every five pupils in Year 6 can read books of adult difficulty and is attaining highly for their age. This higher attaining proportion is larger than shown by earlier indicators of potential but still not as large as in most other schools and this is why standards in reading are well below average overall.
52. In writing, only just over half the pupils in Year 6 are on course to attain the nationally expected level for their age by the end of the school year and this proportion is much smaller than in the average school. Most pupils can organise their writing to suit the purpose, such as a story, account or letter, but many have weak basic skills, particularly grammar, punctuation and spelling. Handwriting is often joined and legible, and most pupils present their work showing care and application; this aspect is good. The weakness in basic skills reflects gaps in knowledge caused by inconsistent teaching in the past. Current teaching is working hard to plug the gaps but this will take time and might not be achieved for all pupils by the end of the school year.
53. Standards in Year 2 in reading and writing are well below average but better than in 2003. About three-quarters of the pupils are on course to attain or exceed the nationally expected level by the end of the school year. This proportion is larger than indicated by early assessments of potential but still not as large as in most other schools. Only a handful of pupils are likely to attain highly but almost all pupils are working to their present capacity for learning and achievement is satisfactory.
54. The overall standard of speaking and listening is well below average throughout the school. There is wide individual variation. Some pupils are articulate and can express themselves very well. These pupils are in the minority and are mostly girls. The majority of pupils, particularly boys, are reticent when answering questions or when explaining in front of a group or the class. They do not answer at length, or in detail, and easily get frustrated. This lack of skill and

confidence reflects low attainment on entry but also insufficient emphasis in the provision on extending speaking skills. Listening skills improve as pupils get older and this is a success of the school but the pace of improvement in speaking is relatively slow and more needs to be done.

55. The quality of teaching is now consistently leading to quick learning for most pupils. Some teaching is very good and inspires the pupils to try hard and give of their best. In a very good lesson in Year 6, the deputy headteacher motivated the pupils highly, challenging them to express and communicated their ideas in considerable detail and depth. In this lesson, the pupils demonstrated a very clear understanding of how well they were doing, reflecting the good use of target setting by the teacher, and what they must do to attain the next level. This self-awareness by pupils of their ability and learning needs was excellent and directly reflected the skill of the teacher. The bulk of the teaching throughout the school is effective, consistent in quality, and all pupils are making worthwhile gains in knowledge and understanding. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and are achieving well in relation to their difficulties.
56. Leadership has just changed hands so that the previous manager can concentrate on raising standards in mathematics. The present manager has been in school one academic term. Both the new and the previous managers lead very effectively through the example of their own good teaching and this is of considerable benefit to the subject. The curriculum is appropriately planned and the National Literacy Strategy is effectively implemented. Resources are satisfactory. Accommodation is good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

57. The use of reading and writing skills is being promoted in other subjects and this is satisfactory. Progress in other subjects, however, is sometimes hampered by the weak communications skills of some pupils. Not enough is being done to enhance opportunities for speaking in other subjects.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils are achieving as well as can be expected.
- Standards are well below average and have fallen slightly since the previous inspection.
- Subject leadership and planning have improved since the previous inspection.

Commentary

58. Current standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are well below average though more pupils are attaining the nationally expected level than did so in 2003. Standards have declined since the previous inspection. The pupils' progress has been hindered by classes being taught by many different teachers over the past two years. In the 2003 national tests, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected levels was well below average. No pupils attained the higher level in Year 6. The quality of learning is improving and most pupils are now achieving as well as can be reasonably expected. More pupils are now on course to attain or exceed the nationally expected levels. Although there is still some underachievement by higher attaining and gifted and talented pupils, several of them are likely to exceed the nationally expected level by the end of the present school year. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Girls outperformed boys in the 2003 national tests but there is currently no evidence of a significant difference by gender.

59. In Year 2, basic numeracy skills are often weak. While higher attaining pupils make quick mental recall of number bonds to 10, lower attaining pupils find this harder, particularly subtraction and division. The pupils recognise and name common two-dimensional shapes, but they are less confident with three-dimensional ones. They confidently tell analogue time to the hour and half hour and they measure lines in centimetres with reasonable accuracy. They record data by means of simple graphs, but lower attaining pupils often need help with this.
60. Basic numeracy skills remain relatively weak in Year 6. For example, lower attaining pupils find it difficult to multiply or divide whole numbers by 10, 100 or 1000. Higher attaining pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the relationship between decimals, fractions and percentages and they are more confident with written calculation methods. Lower attaining pupils find it difficult to calculate the perimeters of irregular shapes. The pupils use the language of probability satisfactorily. They record data by means of various graphs but they find it harder to interpret the information supplied by graphs. All groups of pupils find it hard to apply their numeracy skills in solving word problems. Weak literacy skills mean that the pupils frequently do not understand what information is being provided and what exactly they have to find out, particularly if the problem involves more than one step. The weaknesses in basic skills in Year 2 and Year 6 are a legacy of past provision and are being tackled effectively by current teaching.
61. Teaching is good and this is helping to accelerate pupils' learning and to improve achievement. Lessons are securely based on the National Numeracy Strategy. The teachers make effective use of available resources, including computer programs. There is a strong emphasis on developing the pupils' mental calculations and on their ability to apply their knowledge to solve real life problems. Oral and mental mathematics sessions move along at a brisk pace. The teachers ensure that all pupils are fully included in quick-fire questions and answers. There is a strong focus on correct mathematical terms and symbols. In a Year 2 lesson, this helped the pupils in their knowledge of number bonds to 10 and 20. The teachers generally match work well to pupils' widely differing needs, though at times there is insufficient challenge for higher attaining and gifted and talented pupils. The teachers encourage the pupils to explain their strategies and this helps them to see that there is often more than one way of solving a problem and that this will enable them to have a wider choice of method. The best lessons move along briskly, with a dynamic style of teaching. This helped the pupils in Year 5 learn about parallel and perpendicular lines. Classroom assistants are well deployed and they make a positive contribution to the learning of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. Plenary³ sessions are used effectively to consolidate learning and to give the pupils the opportunity to assess their own progress. The teachers mark pupils' work positively, often providing useful guidance on how work might be improved. There is regular homework for the older pupils.
62. Subject leadership is satisfactory and has improved since the previous inspection. The coordinator recognises the need to raise standards and has developed a clear action plan to help achieve this. There has been some monitoring of teaching, though this needs to be more regular. There are good procedures for assessing and tracking the pupils' progress. The teachers make good use of information gained from assessment and from a careful analysis of test results to plan the next steps in learning.

Mathematics across the curriculum

63. The pupils make frequent use of their mathematical skills in other subjects. In science, for example, pupils in Year 5 draw accurate bar graphs of pulse rate intervals and pupils in Year 4 draw accurate scatter graphs of size of feet and length of jump. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 record findings in science by means of accurate Venn and Carroll diagrams. In geography, pupils in

³ Plenary refers to occasions in lessons when everyone in the class is brought together to share, consolidate and evaluate their learning; usually, a plenary is held in the last five minutes of a lesson.

Year 6 analyse climate data from graphs and tables. Pupils in Year 1 draw satisfactory block graphs of the ways in which they reach school.

SCIENCE

Provision for science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well below average and have declined since the previous inspection but the substantial majority of pupils are achieving to their potential.
- More attention is now being paid to developing the pupils' skills of practical scientific enquiry.
- There is insufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils and too few opportunities for individual research.

Commentary

64. Current standards in Year 2 and Year 6 are well below average. This is similar to the results in the 2003 national tests and assessments. Standards declined after the previous inspection but the decline has been stabilised and current standards are slightly better than 2003. Pupils' progress has been hindered by very considerable staff turnover over the past two years. While there is some underachievement by higher attaining and gifted and talented pupils, most pupils are now achieving as well as can be reasonably expected. More pupils in Year 6 are on course to attain or exceed the nationally expected level for their age in 2004 than did so in 2003. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily. There is currently no significant difference in attainment between boys and girls.
65. In Year 2, the pupils can carry out practical investigations into the properties of materials, simple electrical circuits, forces and other topics and this is consistent with national expectations for their age. They have a satisfactory understanding of the need for a balanced diet as part of a healthy lifestyle. The pupils are well motivated and talk eagerly about what they are learning. However, weak literacy skills make it difficult for the pupils to record their findings accurately. The lower ability and average ability pupils are achieving broadly to capacity but the more able pupils could do better.
66. In Year 6, the pupils investigate forces, such as gravity and air resistance. They have a satisfactory understanding of what makes a scientific test fair, which is the expectation for their age. They make reasonable predictions as to outcomes and they evaluate their investigations, considering ways in which they might be improved. The pupils have a satisfactory understanding of how sound is produced and of the insulating properties of different materials. In life processes and living things, pupils know that micro-organisms can be both beneficial and harmful and are aware of the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and drugs misuse; this, too, is appropriate for their age. Weak literacy skills mean that most pupils have difficulties recording work. Nevertheless, they make satisfactory use of their mathematical skills in recording findings by means of various types of graphs. Achievement is satisfactory for the majority of pupils but some of the more able pupils are underachieving.
67. Teaching is satisfactory with some good features. There are examples of good teaching and this is helping to raise achievement. The teachers provide the pupils with plenty of opportunities to develop their scientific skills of prediction and fair testing through practical investigations. In a Year 4 lesson, for example, the teacher insisted that the pupils make very careful observations of various solids through magnifying lenses and this helped the pupils to describe some of the differences between solids and liquids. The teachers plan their lessons well. Work is generally well matched to pupils' widely differing needs though there is sometimes insufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils and some of them are underachieving. The teachers use questioning effectively in order to make the pupils think carefully and they encourage the pupils to make use of correct scientific terms. The teachers

prepare well for lessons and make effective use of resources. In a Year 6 lesson, the pupils had the opportunity to view food decay through a digital microscope, which the teacher intended to use for time-lapse photography to record the growth of microorganisms. Pupils were only able to observe; they were not able to pursue individual lines of enquiry or set up experiments to test their hypotheses.

68. Subject leadership is satisfactory. The coordinator recognises the need to raise standards and has implemented an action plan which is beginning to achieve this. There are good procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress and for using information gained from assessment to plan the next steps in learning. The curriculum is enhanced by a weekly science club, which gives the older pupils further opportunities for practical work.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement in information and communication technology has improved and is now satisfactory.
- The information and communication technology manager is teaching the subject effectively across the school.
- The teaching of information and communication technology applications and skills is good.
- The partnership between the coordinator and the information and communication technology manager is proving to be effective.
- Classroom teachers are not making sufficient use of information and communication technology in the teaching of other subjects.

Commentary

69. Pupils in Year 6 are reaching expected standards and their achievement is satisfactory. They are competent and confident users of a range of information and communication technology applications. They have used spreadsheets to model spending patterns, including the use of mathematical functions, and they understand how to interpret these. In word processing, they can change such features as print size and colour, font and position on the page. They know how to select relevant information from internet sources, including text, images and diagrams, and how to present this material for a particular purpose, for example, explanatory material about rivers. Pupils in Year 2 also show satisfactory achievement, for instance in their word-processing work, where they have successfully edited text and written short stories, with correct punctuation, including speech marks. More recently, they are recording for themselves how to access information on a CD-ROM.
70. Much of the teaching for Year 1 to Year 6 is undertaken by a teaching assistant who is also the school's information and communication technology manager, and who has a good knowledge of information and communication technology applications. The planning for lessons is clear, and the preparation of materials and programs for teaching is good. The manager has good teaching skills and organises her lessons effectively. She has high expectations about pupils' concentration and behaviour, resulting in effective learning, and good levels of motivation and interest. The standards of most pupils' behaviour and their attitudes are accordingly good. Typically, initial whole-class demonstration is followed up with work in smaller groups where pupils gain practical individual experience of information and communication technology applications, and this has proved to be an effective method of organising learning. The school's assessment arrangements are demanding of time, but are satisfactory.
71. When new teaching software is first used, for example a music program with Year 3 pupils, the information and communication technology manager firstly demonstrates the basic structure of the program herself, and then pupils are asked to use the program themselves

through the interactive whiteboard. In this way, pupils learn the structure of information and communication technology programs, and the necessary sequencing to carry out the activity successfully. Pupils of different ages are enthusiastic to demonstrate new learning, and to discuss their developing information and communication technology capabilities. Pupils are maintaining information and communication technology folders to a satisfactory standard, and in addition to the work produced, they are being expected to reflect on their activities, which is a good development. Effective use is being made of the interactive whiteboard technology available in the computer suite and in the information and communication technology teaching room.

72. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The subject coordinator and the information and communication technology manager work in close partnership. The coordinator has audited teachers' planning to ensure compliance with National Curriculum expectations. The quality of pupils' work is also being checked, though this does not yet include analysing National Curriculum levels of attainment and this is preventing a clear picture being formed of standards in the school and is limiting the extent to which individual progress can be tracked. The coordinator and the manager have together undertaken a detailed review of the subject and realistic evaluations have been made. The reasons for strengths are understood and action is being taken to improve weaknesses. Because of high teacher turnover in the past, and lack of confidence by staff in the use of information and communication technology, the coordinator and the manager have provided teaching staff with further training, and this is continuing. However, the training is not yet resulting in sufficient classroom use of information and communication technology by teachers.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

73. During the inspection, good use of the digital microscope was observed when Year 6 pupils were studying micro-organisms. Although there is some other positive evidence of information and communication technology being used, for instance in support of mathematics learning and in the teaching of history and music, not enough overall use of information and communication technology is yet being made by teachers in other subjects.

HUMANITIES

74. Pupils' work shows that standards in **geography** are broadly average, which reflects the findings of the previous inspection, and that achievement is good. Standards in **history** are below average, which is a decline since the previous inspection, and achievement in this subject is satisfactory.
75. In Year 6 in **geography**, the pupils have a satisfactory understanding of aspects of coastal features such as erosion and deposition, and know how the nature of a river and its valley changes from source to mouth. This level of knowledge is consistent with national expectations. Research skills are satisfactory; for example, they can investigate mountain environments and research information from books and CD ROM. They are gaining insight into human geography, for example how the development of tourism can affect localities. They use their literacy skills satisfactorily to argue the pros and cons of developing a ski resort in a scenically attractive area. The pupils are aware of environmental pollution and the need to conserve resources. In Year 2, the pupils are beginning to understand the idea of a map as a view from above and can draw and annotate simple plans of their route to school.
76. In **history** in Year 6, the pupils have a satisfactory understanding of how the Blitz and evacuation affected life in wartime Britain. This is appropriate but the range of knowledge of different periods is relatively limited. They can use the Internet and interviews with their parents to find out how life has changed since the 1940's, showing broadly satisfactory research skills. Weak literacy skills, however, make it difficult for the pupils to write at length and too much of their work consists of short responses on worksheets. The pupils know about aspects of life in ancient Egypt but they tend to copy information from books word for word, without using their

own ideas and this is unsatisfactory. In Year 2, the pupils have some knowledge of famous people of the past, such as Guy Fawkes, Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole, and are beginning to see how timelines are used. They understand how household items and family holidays have changed over time. Learning is enriched by worthwhile visits to places such as Hatfield House, the Britain at War Experience and Stevenage Victorian School.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Year 2 are achieving well but pupils in Year 6 could do better.
- The quality of teaching is often good, and sometimes satisfactory.
- The assessment of pupils' work is inconsistent and is unsatisfactory overall.

Commentary

77. Pupils in Year 6 are underachieving, reflecting shortcomings in past rather than present provision. Recorded work is inconsistent in quality. Some shows that pupils are recording satisfactory responses but expectations have not always been sufficiently challenging for the more able. Other written work has been undemanding for pupils of all abilities, since they have been asked to do no more than copy into their exercise books information about stained glass windows, and a long passage about Siddhartha Gautama. Such work is inappropriate because it provides no indication of pupils' understanding. By contrast, speaking and listening work in religious education lessons was much more appropriate. Pupils in Year 5 achieved well in a lesson devoted to the Passover as they learned to put themselves in the place of Jewish people and to experience their feelings. Many Year 3 pupils responded well to the opportunity to think about a moral dilemma and consider how to tempt another person or to resist that temptation and this provision was satisfactory.
78. Pupils in Year 2 have completed a variety of work in their exercise books about aspects of religious education and are achieving well. Work is well presented and shows good understanding. Pupils have had good opportunities to support their developing literacy skills, for example through recording the story of Joseph's Coat in their own words. Many Year 1 pupils achieved well in a discussion with their teacher about important people in their lives, and this provided them with good opportunities to develop their reasoning skills.
79. Teachers' planning of lessons, including clear learning intentions, is satisfactory overall. Teachers are making good use of the opportunities within religious education lessons to undertake oral work which helps to develop pupils' skills in listening and speaking, as well as their reasoning skills. Of the lessons observed, most were with classes where the numbers of lower attaining pupils or those with special educational needs were high. In these circumstances, teachers organised productive discussions between pupils and conducted effective whole-class sessions, which developed understanding of the lesson topic. In the most effective lessons, pupils then made more extensive contributions and developed greater confidence. Good motivation and interest on the part of pupils were often evident. The level of attentiveness, however, varied considerably between classes. Where pupils were not well focused on the work of the class, the teaching assistant intervened effectively to ensure improved attention.
80. The quality of the assessment of pupils' written work is inconsistent. Year 2 pupils have been given appropriate tasks which have been challenging; the teacher has provided a good commentary on the context of the work, and pupils' writing has been effectively marked. But Year 6 pupils have on occasions been set to copy out text which has not developed their understanding. Overall coverage of the locally Agreed Syllabus is satisfactory.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

81. **Art and design, design and technology, and music** were not inspected in detail. No judgements on the quality of provision or standards in those subjects are included in the report.

Physical Education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are achieving satisfactorily in team games.
- The quality of teaching and learning of games activities is satisfactory with some good features.

Commentary

82. Pupils' achievement in games skills is satisfactory in Year 6. Both boys and girls make satisfactory progress in developing rugby skills including passing the ball and tackling another player. The achievement of Year 5 pupils was similarly satisfactory as they practised skills in dribbling a hockey ball. The teaching and learning of games are satisfactory. In a rugby lesson, the local coach conducted a good initial warm-up and stretching session with pupils, including a detailed commentary to aid their understanding of the importance of this activity. There is proper attention to issues of safety. The teaching of hockey to Year 5 pupils is satisfactory in that particular skills are identified for practice, but such an approach was not evident when other Year 5 pupils were involved in football, highlighting an element of inconsistency still within the provision. Pupils show positive attitudes and responses to games activities. Teachers' awareness of pupils' responses, and care for their welfare, during games sessions are good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are regular opportunities for the pupils to discuss issues which are relevant to them.
- There are good opportunities for the pupils to participate in clubs, assemblies and school productions.

Commentary

83. Standards in pupils' personal development are satisfactory. They achieve as well as can be expected. There are regular opportunities for the pupils to discuss issues which are of concern to them, such as friendships, behaviour and safety around school and the locality. Issues are also explored in assemblies. The pupils have opportunities to develop social skills, confidence and self-esteem through participating in assemblies, extra-curricular activities and school visits. They think of people less fortunate than themselves by supporting various charities. They learn about the dangers of alcohol and drugs misuse. There is formal sex education for the older pupils.

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	5
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	4
Attendance	6
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	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	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	4
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).