

INSPECTION REPORT

PUTNOE LOWER SCHOOL

Bedford

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109496

Headteacher: Mrs C Skingsley

Lead inspector: Mr F Carruthers

Dates of inspection: 22-24 March 2004

Inspection number: 257241

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 – 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	258
School address:	Overdale Bedford Bedfordshire
Postcode:	MK41 8EN
Telephone number:	01234 303400
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Day
Date of previous inspection:	April 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school caters for pupils aged 4 to 9 years and has 258 pupils on roll. There are more girls than boys. Approximately three-quarters of the pupils are white British and there are several minority ethnic groups, including Indian, Bangladeshi, Black African or Caribbean as well as mixed racial groups. A few pupils are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. Their languages are mainly Bangladeshi, Turkish and French. A few pupils are from refugee families and a small number are from Traveller families. However, these pupils have been static for some years and the children have remained at the school throughout most of their education. About a quarter of the pupils have special educational needs, which is above average for schools nationally. Most pupils with special educational needs have moderate learning difficulties and some have emotional and behavioural difficulties or speech and language difficulties. Four pupils have statements of special educational need. Information about the socio-economic circumstances of the pupils' families indicates that levels of deprivation are above average and the mobility of pupils is high.¹ Children start in the 4+ unit part-time initially, and spend four or five terms in the unit (the Reception classes) before moving into Year 1. The attainment of the children on entry to the unit is well below average in communication, language, literacy and mathematical development. Their attainment in personal, social and emotional development is higher but is still below average overall. The school has the *Basic Skills Quality Mark*, *Investors in People* and *The Healthy Schools Awards*. It is involved in a local *Education Action Zone*.

¹ Mobility refers to those pupils who leave or join the school at times other than starting in the 4+ unit or at the end of Year 4.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21285	Mr F Carruthers	Lead inspector	The Foundation Stage Science Art and design Design and technology Music English as an additional language
14214	Mrs J Smith	Lay inspector	
19897	Mr A Evans	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education Religious education Special educational needs
27735	Mr J Devine	Team inspector	English Geography History

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very good school** and provides good value for money. Pupils achieve very well in relation to their capabilities and have very good attitudes to school and to learning. The quality of education, including teaching and learning, is good with several very good features. Leadership, management and governance of the school are very good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school has an excellent ethos of wanting to do the best for pupils and supporting and challenging them to achieve their potential.
- Pupils make great strides in reading and writing because of the impact of the *Early Reading Research Project*.
- Gifted and talented pupils and those with special educational needs achieve very well.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and participate fully in the wide range of opportunities provided.
- Procedures to promote attendance are excellent.
- Teachers have high expectations for the pupils, and the level of challenge in the work is good.
- Teaching and learning benefit from the very effective contribution made by support staff.
- The curriculum offers a very broad range of interesting and worthwhile learning opportunities for all the pupils.
- Arrangements to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are very good.
- Links with parents, the community and other schools are very good.
- The leadership of the headteacher, with strong support from the senior management team, is very good.
- The governing body has many strengths and is very involved at all levels within the school.

Improvements since the last inspection have been very good. All four key issues have been resolved well. For example, there have been significant strides in improving provision and standards in information and communication technology, and the level of challenge in the work for pupils in junior classes is good. Significant developments have also been made in the curriculum, in procedures to assess pupils' progress, resources, in terms of both staffing and equipment, and the school grounds. Standards continue to rise and are better in reading, writing, mathematics and science in the current Year 2 than last year.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
Reading	D	E	D	A
Writing	D	E	D	B
Mathematics	D	E	C	A

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals

By the end of Year 4, pupils have achieved very well in relation to their capabilities. This includes pupils with special educational needs, the gifted and talented and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. Children in the 4+ plus unit make good progress in all areas of learning and this continues in Years 1 and 2. In comparison with similar schools, results at the end of Year 2 in 2003 were above average in writing and well above average in reading and mathematics. This is evident in the table above. Improvements in reading and writing are the result of the introduction of the *Early Reading Research Project*. In the current Year 4, most pupils are reaching expected levels of attainment in mathematics and science. There is an above average proportion of pupils with special

educational needs in this year group and attainment is below average in English. These pupils have not had the benefit of the reading programme introduced after they started in school. **The quality of pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good.** Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Levels of attendance are below average in the current year but have risen in recent years owing to excellent procedures to promote attendance.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good, with several very good features. Teaching and learning are good across all age groups. Very good support from classroom assistants helps the quality of pupils' learning well. There are very good opportunities taken to enrich the curriculum through involvement in various projects, as well as visitors to school, visits out of school and extra-curricular activities. The school provides very good support for pupils' personal development and there are many ways for pupils to take responsibility and use their initiative. Links with parents, the community and other schools are very effective, for example through the school's involvement in the local *Education Action Zone*.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

All aspects of the leadership, management are governance of the school are very good and there are some excellent features. The headteacher and senior staff have a clear vision for the school, which is shared by governors, staff and parents, promoting an excellent ethos of support and endeavour.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils have high regard for the school and have great confidence in how well it is led and managed. Parents feel the quality of education their children receive is very good and that the children make good progress. Pupils enjoy school and like the work they do.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important thing the school should do to improve is:

- Maintain the very effective drive to promote high standards of attendance and attainment.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall, pupils of all levels of ability achieve very well in respect of their capabilities. Children make a good start in the Foundation Stage and continue to make good progress from Years 1 to 4. The school's results in reading, writing and mathematics compare very favourably with those of similar schools at the end of Year 2. Standards in the current Year 4 are average in mathematics and science and below average in English.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make great strides in reading and writing because of the impact of the *Early Reading Research Project*.
- Gifted and talented pupils and those with special educational needs achieve very well.
- Children make good progress in the 4+ unit because of the good provision.
- Standards have improved in information and communication technology since the last inspection.

Commentary

1. Pupils' progress in all age groups is good. From levels of attainment in key aspects of communication, language, literacy and mathematics that are well below what is expected on entry to the school, the children make good progress in the Foundation Stage². This is because of good provision in the 4+ unit, where there is a wealth of learning opportunities, so that by the end of the Reception year, the children have made a good start with skills of early literacy and numeracy. Nevertheless, a large minority of children are still working towards the goals expected of them. The positive impact of the *Early Reading Research Project* begins right from the start, especially in helping the children to learn the sounds of letters and to read simple words by putting letters together. Children also make good progress in the area of personal, social and emotional development. For the small number of children who find coping with the routines of the class difficult, there is good support from provision in the *Nurture Group*. Attending the group part time, the children are helped to build confidence and to express themselves more readily.
2. Pupils continue to make good progress in infant classes. Standards in reading and writing are rising as a result of the reading programme. Pupils up to the current Year 3 have benefited from this intensive course, which develops awareness of letter sounds and combinations and leads to good standards of reading and spelling. These skills also assist the pupils' writing. Standards in the current Year 2 are higher than last year. Pupils have good attitudes to reading and evidence from assessments indicates that all pupils in the current Year 2 have made good progress. Some have made very good progress. There is clear evidence of the value of the programme in examples of pupils who move from other schools that are not taking part in the programme and who do not have similarly strong skills. The good level of challenge of work in English lessons in Years 3 and 4 is an improvement since the time of the last inspection and only in the current Year 4 are standards below expected levels. This is because the reading programme was introduced after this year group had started. There is an above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the year group. The number of pupils who have joined or left the class since the start of Reception year has also been above average and this has also had an adverse effect on standards.

² The Foundation Stage in this school covers the time the children spend in the 4+ unit, which is usually four or five terms and covers the Reception year.

3. Progress in mathematics and science is good, because of good quality teaching. Standards are better in the current Year 2 than in last year's group in both subjects. This is the result of concerted effort to identify weak aspects of each subject and teach investigative skills well. Pupils in Year 2 are grouped according to their prior attainment for all lessons in mathematics and some in science. This helps to focus the teaching better. The level of challenge in work for pupils in Years 3 and 4 is particularly good. This means that the level of thinking and the expectations of what technical language the pupils will understand and use are more in line with what is expected of pupils in Years 5 and 6. There are no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
reading	15.0 (14.2)	15.7 (15.8)
writing	14.0 (12.9)	14.6 (14.4)
mathematics	16.3 (15.0)	16.3 (16.5)

There were 46 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

4. Gifted and talented pupils do very well at the school. Provision is made for them to excel in their particular talents, through the good level of challenge in the subjects taught in school as well as links with initiatives such as the local *Children's University*. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well. They make very good progress towards their individual targets. This is thanks to the overall quality of teaching and learning in classes, the influence of the *Early Reading Research Project* and the work of learning support staff. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as all pupils do and often are members of higher attaining groups and sets. The very few children who are learning English as an additional language make good progress because of the climate of support in the school from both staff and classmates. In addition, a learning support assistant provides good one-to-one help on a timetabled basis.
5. Standards in information and communication technology have improved since the last inspection because of improved teaching, hardware and technical support from an information and communication technology assistant. Pupils are reaching expected levels in each year group. Standards in physical education are better than at the time of the last inspection and are average overall.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attendance is below the national average and their punctuality is satisfactory. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and there are few exclusions. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Procedures to promote attendance are excellent.
- Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and pupils willingly comply.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and participate fully in the wide range of opportunities provided.
- They enjoy using their initiative and willingly accept responsibility.
- Relationships between pupils and with adults are very good.
- There are no significant weaknesses.

Commentary

6. This school works exceptionally hard to monitor and promote pupils' attendance. Procedures have strengthened significantly since the last inspection and members of staff work as a very

good team to ensure that all absences are promptly followed up. The education welfare assistant, employed by the school, closely monitors each pupil's attendance and quickly follows up each and every unexplained absence with a phone call or home visit. She has a very constructive relationship with parents and tries to help with underlying problems that may be preventing their children from attending school. Pupils with very good attendance receive stickers, and pupils and whole classes receive a wide range of congratulatory certificates in recognition of very good attendance and punctuality. Despite the school's very best efforts, however, attendance continues to be below the national average, although showing improvement in recent years and in the current year. This is a reflection of the social problems and high mobility faced by many families in the area served by the school.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	6.8	School data :	0.4
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.

7. Procedures for promoting good behaviour are very effective. Teachers constantly stress the importance of good manners and they provide very good examples of how to behave. This has a cumulative effect and pupils' attitudes to work and the standard of their behaviour improves as they move through the school. During lessons, teachers have consistently high expectations of behaviour and this means that pupils know exactly what they should and should not do. The names of any pupils who deserve a special mention are entered into the *Golden Well Done Book* and they beam with pride when they are congratulated at the headteacher's special weekly assembly. Relationships between pupils and with their teachers are warm and are based upon mutual trust and respect. Pupils from all ethnic groups get along very well and racial incidents are very rare. Pupils say that teachers manage occasional incidents of bullying very well. This harmony helps to create a warm and purposeful atmosphere and motivates pupils to work hard and to give of their very best. Exclusions have been few in recent years.

8. The last inspection found that pupils had positive attitudes to learning. Over the intervening six years, these have improved further and pupils' attitudes are now very good. During discussions, they speak highly of their teachers and are very proud to be members of the school. During lessons, the overwhelming majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, are interested and work hard. The pupils' personal development is very good and is fostered through very good provision for social and moral development. Many pupils attend the various extra-curricular activities, such as the science and technology clubs. Pupils enjoy using their initiative and like being given responsibilities for various jobs around school. For example, they undertake numerous tasks in their classroom and elect representatives for the school council. They fully understand the responsibilities of living in a community and are very supportive of each other. As part of the inspection process, pupils and their parents completed questionnaires and these were analysed in order to gauge how they felt about various areas of school life. Their views are very positive; indeed, almost every parent who returned their form indicated that their child likes coming to school and that they enjoy taking part in the various activities available.

Exclusions

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	180	2	0
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	4	1	0
Mixed – White and Black African	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	16	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	9	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	5	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	6	0	0
Black or Black British – African	5	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	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.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good and has several very good features, including curricular opportunities, provision for pupils' care and welfare, and links with parents, schools and the community.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good and this is true of all year groups. Procedures to assess pupils' progress are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have high expectations for the pupils, so the level of challenge in the work is good.
- Teaching and learning benefit from the very effective contribution that support staff make.
- Time is used well, for example, in the short, pacy sessions of the *Early Reading Research Project*.
- Procedures to check pupils' progress are very thorough and cover all subjects.
- Learning objectives are shared with pupils at the start of lessons but are often too technical and wordy.

Commentary

9. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. The satisfactory teaching found in junior classes is now good and there is strength in depth across all age groups. The lack of challenge in junior classes has been addressed well and the teachers'

expectations are such that pupils are working at a good rate and often attempting work normally found in Years 5 and 6. Teachers' expertise in information and communication technology, design and technology and physical education has improved. Marking of pupils' work, also considered unsatisfactory at the last inspection, is now much better. Teachers mark work according to how well it meets the lesson's objectives and, especially in English in junior classes, include comment on how it might be improved.

10. Teaching and learning are good or better in almost eighty per cent of lessons. The quality of teaching is the most significant factor in the overall very good progress the pupils make from starting school to moving on to middle school. Teachers have good expertise to teach the subjects and age ranges in school, leading to very good provision in English, and good provision in mathematics, science, information and communication technology, religious education and for the children in the Foundation Stage. Two unsatisfactory lessons were observed but these were not typical of the overall quality of teaching, nor of the teaching of the individual teachers involved.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 43 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0%)	9 (21%)	25 (58%)	7 (16%)	2 (5%)	0 (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.

11. The overall contribution of support assistants to the quality of learning is a feature of the school. Learning support assistants and nursery nurses are well involved in teaching groups of pupils. A particularly effective role is that of the information and communication technology assistant, who not only supports class teaching very effectively but has a wider role in maintaining the website at its high standard. In addition, clerical support staff, who are assigned to each year group, contribute to the smooth running of lessons and the quality of display. Teaching and support for pupils with special educational needs are very good and help them to achieve very well. Tasks are matched closely to their needs. This support is enhanced by very good provision in the *Nurture Group* and by the very effective contribution of the specialist learning support assistant. The few pupils at the early stages of learning English as an additional language are helped to settle in well by the welcoming atmosphere in school. They learn much from their classmates and are assisted by a member of the support staff.
12. Teachers make effective use of time. Short sessions, often at the start or end of morning and afternoon, of the highly effective *Early Reading Research Project*, or of handwriting, group reading and spelling contribute well to the pupils' learning. Pupils acquire reading skills very efficiently as a result. Every lesson provides the opportunities for whole-class teaching as well as collaborative learning in small groups and a final session to recap on what has been learned. However, the lessons' objectives are sometimes written in language that is too complicated for pupils. This could be improved to aid their understanding.
13. Procedures to check how well pupils are doing are very thorough and there is a timeline of assessments to be made each term. Procedures are particularly good in the core subjects of English and mathematics. They include assessed pieces of work, standardised testing and optional tests. As a result of these assessments and day-to-day marking, pupils have a good awareness of how they are doing and what they should do to improve. Each term, class teachers provide the co-ordinator for pupils with special educational needs with update sheets, which carefully record the pupils' progress. In addition, assessments are made in all subjects and teachers carefully record their findings, so that the comments contribute to overall judgements at the end of the school year. Procedures in the Foundation Stage are good, though staff do not track sufficiently which activities the children are experiencing during a week.

The curriculum

The curriculum is very good. A very good range of curricular opportunities enrich the pupils' learning, supported by an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors to school. Accommodation and resources are very good and meet the needs of the pupils well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum offers a very broad range of interesting and worthwhile learning opportunities for all the pupils.
- Provision for pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education is excellent.
- The curriculum is significantly enhanced by an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, visits, visitors and links to the wider community.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs and gifted and talented is very good.
- The school's participation in *The Early Reading Research Project* has made a significant impact on raising standards of achievement in English and many other subjects.
- The school's accommodation and resources have improved since the last inspection.

Commentary

14. The school has made good improvement in this aspect since the last inspection and currently provides a very well balanced curriculum that enables all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to experience all the required subjects of the National Curriculum. Funding from the *Education Action Zone* has enabled the school to provide additional opportunities to enrich the curriculum further, through educational visits and visiting performers including story tellers, poets, puppeteers and musicians. The school also provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities to extend and enrich pupils' learning. Clubs and activities during lunchtimes and after school involve pupils in scientific research, the arts, physical education, dance and drama.
15. Planning for the curriculum is very good and staff work very well together forming effective teams. The role of subject leaders has been developed to a high degree enabling them to monitor their subjects and evaluate standards. Schemes of work have been implemented for all subjects and have helped to ensure that pupils' learning develops progressively throughout the school. The school's involvement over the last two years in the impressive *Early Reading Research Project* has had a significant impact on pupils' achievements in literacy, particularly their skills in reading, spelling and to a lesser degree, writing. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to develop these skills in other subjects. The schools' new information and communication technology suite has been instrumental in raising achievement in the subject and has provided pupils with more improved information and communication technology resources to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding.
16. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The teachers identify pupils who are having difficulties with their work or with behaviour, at an early stage, and they draw up good quality individual education plans for them. These include clear targets to improve performance in reading, writing and number. Pupils have equal access to the whole curriculum and to extra-curricular activities. There are two disabled toilets, but access to the first and second floors would be very difficult for pupils with severe mobility problems. Clear assessments are made to identify pupils with particular talents and they too have individual education plans to provide them with greater challenge and opportunity. This is another strength of the provision.
17. The school provides excellent personal, social, health and citizenship education. Healthy living, drugs awareness and sex and relationships are included in a challenging and rigorous

curriculum. This area of the curriculum is well planned and managed by an enthusiastic post holder and taught effectively by committed staff.

18. The school's accommodation has improved since the last inspection and is very good. It supports the teaching of the whole curriculum well. An improvement plan for the buildings and grounds clearly sets out costs and priorities for the coming year. The school is fortunate in having large grounds that have been developed imaginatively. The cost of high quality security fencing is prohibitive and so the site is vulnerable to incidents of vandalism. Despite this, the school has developed an attractive adventure trail, created a well-stocked pond and developed an enclosed environmental garden to enhance pupils' learning. An improved range of facilities inside the school include the new information and communication technology suite, refurbished library, *Nurture Group* and reflection rooms, and two school halls.

Care, guidance and support

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils trust the adults in the school and are confident they would be able to confide in them, should any difficulties arise.
- Teachers monitor pupils' personal development closely and provide clear educational guidance that helps pupils to improve their work.
- Induction³ procedures are very good and help new arrivals to settle in quickly and make good progress in their work.
- The school is very interested in pupils' views and acts upon them whenever it can.

Commentary

19. The strengths in care, support and guidance noted in the last inspection report have been maintained and improved further. During discussions, pupils say that they feel really well looked after at school and that they would not hesitate to seek help or advice, if they needed it. Parents are equally confident and those who returned their pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that they find members of staff to be very approachable. The school has recently established a *Nurture Group* for particular pupils who need additional help or support during the school day. They come together as a small class three days a week and learn skills such as how to socialise and consider each other's needs. The work is tailored to suit each individual and pupils receive very good personal and educational support within a comfortable environment. Pupils say they like being in this group and the high quality support provided helps them to make good progress. Extra-curricular clubs also provide regular opportunities for adults and pupils to get to know each other. This close contact helps to ensure that teachers are in a very good position to be able to spot emerging difficulties and address them at an early stage.
20. Procedures for assessing pupils' academic and personal development are very thorough and teachers make very constructive use of the information obtained. During lessons, classroom assistants monitor pupils' responses and carefully log the progress they are making. Teachers provide clear targets for improvement. Pupils spoken to during the inspection knew exactly how well they were doing and what it is that they have to do in order to raise the standard of their work.
21. Parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting spoke highly of the school's induction procedures. They particularly appreciate the way in which members of staff get to know their children before they join the 4+ unit and say that this really helps them to settle quickly once

³ Induction refers to the arrangements made to receive new pupils and to help them settle and make friends.

they actually enrol. Inspectors agree with their positive views. Members of staff from the unit offer home visits and liaise with local pre-school groups in order to get to know the children. Links with *Overdale Tots* are especially close and children are invited to attend special assemblies and school productions. They have good opportunities to become familiar with the school and this helps them to get off to a good start. Children also attend several sessions in the unit prior to their admission and this helps everyone to get to know each other at an early stage.

22. Pupils have very good opportunities to voice their views on school life and the school places a high value their opinions. For example, representatives of the school council have helped to choose the play equipment during wet playtimes and provide a suggestion box for other pupils. Representatives meet each week and raise money for charity during the summer and winter fairs.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents, the community and other schools are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very pleased with the school and there is little they would like to see changed.
- They receive plenty of detailed information about the curriculum and the progress their children are making.
- Very good links with the community enrich the curriculum and promote pupils' personal development very well.
- Constructive links with other lower schools and with receiving middle schools strengthen the curriculum and ensure a smooth transition at the end of Year 4.
- The school actively seeks parents' views and responds to their suggestions or concerns very promptly.

Commentary

23. Links between the school and parents have strengthened since the last inspection and are now very close. Analysis of the pre-inspection questionnaire shows that there are no areas of concern and parents who attended the meeting endorsed this positive view. Most of the parents ensure that their children complete their homework on time and the majority try to avoid booking holidays during the school term. The school's award-winning website is easy to use and regular newsletters also keep parents up to date with school life. Curricular guides also provide lots of ideas as to how parents can help their children learn at home and this helps them to make good progress from the moment they start in school. Links with parents of pupils with special educational needs are especially close and their attendance at review meetings is very good. Parents receive a copy of their child's individual education plan and are kept fully informed of the targets being set for their children and of the progress being made towards them. Pupils' annual reports contain a wealth of very useful information and provide parents with a clear indication as to how their children's progress compares with national expectations.
24. Links with the local community are strong. A wide range of visitors contributes to school life and links with local churches are close. The school acts as a focal point for the community. For example, a group of adults with physical difficulties attends the *Sparkle Club* each week and Bedford Rugby Club coaches pupils at rugby training sessions. Local volunteers also come in to hear pupils read and the annual *Grandparents' Lunch* is very well attended. These links help pupils to develop a strong sense of identity and this is reflected in pupils' pride in their school.
25. Links with other schools have strengthened since the last inspection and are now very good. The school's recent incorporation into the *Bedford Education Action Zone* has enabled it to

increase contact with other schools and provide additional activities. For example, pupils in Year 4 can go on an overnight camping trip and those in Year 3 undertake a problem-solving day at a nearby park. Members of staff from nearby lower and middle schools also meet in order to compare notes on issues such as the most effective way of developing pupils' literacy or of promoting good behaviour and attendance. These opportunities widen pupils' and teachers' experience and improve the quality of education provided by the school.

26. The school actively seeks parents' views. It is very receptive to their suggestions and incorporates them into the school improvement plan whenever it can. Analysis of the parents' questionnaire shows that they are very pleased with the way the school listens and responds to their suggestions or concerns.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and governance of the school are very good. As a result, standards are rising and there has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Parents rightly feel that leadership and management are significant strengths of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher, with strong support from the senior management team, is very good.
- There is very careful analysis of pupils' performance, in order to see where they might do better.
- School improvement planning is very good.
- The governing body has many strengths and is very involved at all levels within the school.
- The school's contribution to initial teacher training is excellent.
- There are excellent procedures for managing teachers' workload.

Commentary

27. The headteacher has a very clear sense of purpose and very high expectations for the school. Her leadership is very good and is appreciated by parents. This is leading to rising standards and has led to significant improvement since the last inspection. The headteacher has improved the learning environment through a programme of refurbishment and enhanced outdoor provision. There is a very strong commitment to the aim of including all groups of pupils in the opportunities that the school offers. An example of this is the *Nurture group*. The headteacher has succeeded in developing a very effective team of teachers, learning support assistants, clerical staff, premises staff and midday supervisors. Together with a very strong senior management team, the headteacher inspires and leads by example.
28. School development planning is very good and has improved since the last inspection. The school's improvement plan is a very clear, user-friendly document, to which all members of staff contribute and which is displayed around the school, so that parents can share it. It includes clear targets to raise academic standards and pupils' personal development. The headteacher has introduced a number of initiatives, which are having a positive effect on pupils' achievement. The local *Education Action Zone* has also helped the school significantly with activities to enrich pupils' learning, liaison with other schools and with funding. Good progress has been recognised recently by the award of the *Golden Owl Award* for the school website, the *Basic Skills Quality Mark*, *Investors in People* and *Healthy Schools Awards*.
29. School management is very good. There is very effective monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum and of teaching. The school carefully evaluates its performance in comparison with schools nationally and with similar schools. Very careful analysis of the Year 2 national test results helps to highlight areas of relative weakness in pupils' performance. Thorough analysis of assessments in all subjects helps the teachers to plan the next steps in learning and to match work to pupils' differing needs. This is enabling all groups of pupils to achieve well.

Literacy skills have been highlighted as an area needing improvement, an issue which is being addressed through the implementation of the *Early Reading Research Project* and the promotion of drama. There is very good coordination of provision for pupils with special educational needs. The co-ordinator liaises closely with class teachers in reviewing the progress of pupils and with relevant outside agencies. There is very good liaison with co-ordinators in the middle schools to which the pupils transfer.

30. There are very good procedures for helping new staff to settle into the school. After a period of high staff mobility, the headteacher has managed the recruitment and retention of staff very well. There are excellent procedures for managing teachers' workload, with learning support for each class and clerical support for each year group. Very good procedures for managing the performance of teachers are helping to improve the quality of teaching. They are closely linked to the ongoing professional development of teaching and support staff. In 2002, the school gained the *Investors in People* award, in recognition of its efforts to promote ongoing training.
31. There are effective procedures for ensuring that the school secures best value in buying services and resources. The budget is closely linked to the school's improvement plan, in order to ensure that funds are used well to improve the quality of education and to achieve priorities. The school monitors the budget very carefully and spending is projected forward to the next year. The latest audit report judged financial control to be good.
32. Governance of the school is very good. The governing body ensures that the school meets all its statutory obligations, including the promotion of policies to provide equality of educational opportunity. Governors are very aware of the school's strengths and areas to improve. Each governor has a subject responsibility and monitors teaching in the subject. Subject co-ordinators submit an annual written report to the governors on the progress of their subject since the last inspection. The governors are very supportive of the school, whilst at the same time questioning policies, practice and expenditure where necessary. The chair of governors is very committed to school improvement and she meets weekly with the headteacher to discuss matters of concern.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	625,887	Balance from previous year	18,167
Total expenditure	598,322	Balance carried forward to the next	45,732
Expenditure per pupil	2,274		

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision is **good**. The quality has been maintained since the time of the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children get off to a good start in the 4+ unit.
- Children make good progress because of the variety of learning opportunities available.
- Teaching is good and teamwork is a major strength.
- The accommodation is very spacious and used well.
- Procedures to assess the children's progress are very thorough but could be used better.

Commentary

33. The children join the 4+ unit as they approach their fourth birthday. There is an intake of new starters every term, and they usually start on a part-time basis for one term before attending full time. At the time of the inspection there were 56 children attending full-time and seven attending part-time. The attainment of most children is well below what is expected of children at this age in key aspects of early literacy and numeracy, as well as in their knowledge and understanding of the world. Their personal, social and emotional development is a little better, ranging from average to below average overall. Most children attend the 4+ unit for four or five terms before moving on to Year 1. The children, including those with special educational needs and the few learning English as an additional language, make good progress in all areas of learning, because teaching and learning are good.
34. The Foundation Stage co-ordinator leads a team which includes another teacher, nursery nurses and teaching assistants. She manages the provision well and teamwork is a strength. The accommodation is very spacious and has been improved since the time of the last inspection, both internally and externally. Procedures to assess the children's progress are thorough and keep a clear track of how well they are achieving. However, the procedures could be used better to give greater challenge to what the children are asked to do. The staff would also benefit by checking which of the various areas and the many activities the children take part in. This would help the staff to intervene and direct particular children to activities that they frequent less often.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most children show confidence and learn the routines of the unit well.
- A few require help in these respects and receive good support in the *Nurture Group*, which runs for three days per week.
- Progress in building relationships and becoming independent is good.

Commentary

35. Teaching is good in this area of learning because all staff are good role models, providing warm and friendly help for the children. A few children find the demands of the classroom difficult, and after careful assessment, are nominated to join the *Nurture Group*, which is

adjacent to the 4+ unit. Provision in this class helps these children to build their confidence and express themselves more readily. They attend for three days in the week and the target is to re-integrate the children as soon as possible and certainly not later than after two terms. The staff who operate the *Nurture Group* plan activities in close collaboration with the Foundation Stage team so that the children cover similar activities in the various areas of learning. Children in the 4+ unit learn how to share and look after themselves, for example when they change for physical activity or go to the toilet. Most children reach the goals expected of them at the end of the Reception year.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The children are encouraged to give their views and answer questions orally.
- *The Early Reading Research Programme* helps the children's skill at reading very well.
- The children have good opportunities to write as they play in the role-play and writing areas.

Commentary

36. An early assessment of the children on entry to the unit shows that skills are very limited in these aspects. The staff encourage the children to give their views and answer questions in whole-class sessions, especially when they are reading together from a *Big Book*. When adults join the children in the free choice of activities, they prompt them with pertinent questions about what they are making or constructing and how they can improve it. Short, pacy sessions of the *Early Reading Research Project* help the children to understand the sounds of letters and how they are put together to make words. Starting with simple two and three-letter words, the children soon begin to recognise them in books. The teachers have had good training in how to teach the project and look out for the words the children are learning as they read from a *Big Book*. The success of the project means that a good proportion of children are recognising words and reading simple sentences by the end of the Reception year. In writing, however, many average and below average children are very unsure. Some higher attainers write simple sentences as they hear them and are trying to form letters well, but most children are unlikely to reach the goals expected of them in this aspect of early literacy. Overall, the children make good progress in the unit but many are below the levels expected of children by the end of the Reception year.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is well planned and teachers make use of whole-class sessions as well as small group work to consolidate learning.
- Number rhymes and songs are learned to help the children's understanding of addition and subtraction.
- Activities that involve the children in recognising patterns are encouraged.

Commentary

37. The quality of teaching is good and provides a variety of experiences for the children so that they increase their familiarity with numbers, counting, sorting and pattern. Short, whole-class sessions with the teacher focus on key aspects, and often, there is a game element to the work, for example when the children are asked to guess which two-dimensional shape is in a

bag by a description of its properties. Understanding more about pattern in numbers and matching one-to-one is encouraged through group activities, such as laying the table in the house of the three bears. The children also print sequences of patterns using paint. Teachers capitalise on opportunities to introduce rhymes and songs as they read from *Big Books*. Higher attaining children are well on their way to achieving the goals expected of them by the end of the Reception year. Most children, however, are still working towards these goals and are less secure adding one or taking one away from numbers up to ten.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff widen the children's experiences through well chosen activities.
- Using listening centres and information and communication technology equipment is planned for every day.
- The outside classroom and school grounds are used well to promote the children's learning.

Commentary

38. Children have limited experiences on entry to the unit in this area of their development. Teaching is good and the children are given good opportunities to find out more about the world around them when they explore magnets, things that are hot or cold, and bring in snow from outside to investigate. Visitors to the unit have helped to widen their understanding of themselves and animals, and demonstrated the customs and rituals of other world faiths, such as Islam. There are regular opportunities for the children to use good quality computer programs, which encourage the children to draw and paint, move the cursor to assemble a figure or dress a teddy bear. In addition, the children are encouraged to use the listening centre independently. Both indoors and outdoors, there are opportunities to construct and assemble objects. Through traditional stories such as *The Three Little Pigs*, the children are encouraged to think about materials and equipment needed to build a house. The teacher helps them to plot on a simple map the route the wolf takes as he goes from house to house. The outdoor area and school grounds, for instance the allotment, are used well to help the children's understanding about plant growth. They find out more about the locality when they post letters at the letterbox. Progress is good and attainment by the end of the Reception year is slightly below average, though a good number have achieved the expected goals.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Many opportunities to use the equipment both outside and in the main school hall promote the children's development well.
- Outdoor equipment has improved in quality and quantity since the time of the last inspection.

Commentary

39. The children make good progress in physical development and the great majority achieve the goals expected of them by the end of the Reception year. In a lesson in the school hall, the children showed good awareness of the space around them and moved imaginatively to taped music. Very few displayed poor co-ordination and control, and most could follow instructions well, starting and stopping on command. Teaching is good and the children learn about the effect of exercise on their bodies, as they warm up and cool down. All practitioners, including

the support staff, contribute well to the learning, taking a full part in the activities, encouraging those less confident to have a go. Outside the classroom are many different resources to promote physical development, such as stilts, bouncy balls, blocks and constructional equipment, as well as bicycles, and large-wheeled toys. Inside are many table top activities promoting skills of threading, cutting, hammering and stitching. The children enjoy playing with play dough to make cakes.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have good opportunities to play imaginatively in the role-play area.
- They enjoy making pictures from lots of waste and other materials.

Commentary

40. The children achieve well in this area of learning and most reach the goals expected of them by the end of the Reception year. The role-play area at the time of the inspection was a bakery and all children enjoyed putting loaves in the oven, setting the controls and wrapping them afterwards. They served customers at the counter using a pretend supermarket till. The area is changed regularly to fit into the topic each half term. During the inspection, however, there were few examples of adults joining in the children's play to extend the children's thinking. There are good opportunities to paint and make collage pictures. These can be large scale involving lots of children or small scale. The children build imaginatively with big blocks and other equipment.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 AND 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good in both infant and junior classes.
- Teachers' planning and assessments are very good.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- The teaching of literacy skills using the *Early Reading Research Project* is very good and so pupils achieve well.
- Pupils' evaluation of their own work is good.

Commentary

41. Provision has improved significantly since the last inspection. This is primarily due to the school's participation in the *Early Reading Research Project* over the last two years, which currently involves infant pupils. All pupils have literacy targets and extra time is allocated to develop skills. The very effective programme consists of three 15-minute sessions each day. These sessions fit successfully into the school's teaching of the National Literacy Strategy and have played an important part in raising standards in literacy and in particular, reading and spelling.
42. Standards in the current Year 2 are average and are continuing the school's upward trend in attainment and progress. The school's participation in the *Early Reading Research Project* has had a very positive impact on raising standards. Standards at the end of Year 4, however, are

currently below national expectations. This is largely because of the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the year group and the school's high rate of pupil mobility. The current Year 4 group have also not had the benefit of the reading programme. Nonetheless, junior-aged pupils are achieving well and making good progress particularly when compared to similar schools locally.

43. The quality of teaching and learning has improved so that it is now good in all age groups. Teachers' planning is better than at the time of the last inspection and procedures to track pupils' progress over time are now very good. All pupils are given clear targets for improving their written texts and older pupils are encouraged to redraft and to develop their ability to evaluate their own work.
44. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are average by the end of Year 4 and this constitutes good progress from the beginning of Year 1. Opportunities to develop skills are provided in all lessons, and the quality of relationships established by the staff enables most pupils to respond with confidence when answering questions. Teachers use good questioning techniques to ensure that all pupils are able to make a contribution in lessons.
45. The school's participation in the *Early Reading Research Project* is having a significant effect on standards in reading by the time pupils reach the end of Year 2. Analysis of the school's reading ages show a significant improvement in pupils' ability to read and spell correctly. In a sample of readers during the inspection, pupils of varying ability read confidently and with obvious enjoyment. Pupils in the current Year 3 have benefited from this programme and are developing particularly good skills in reading, spelling and writing. As pupils move through the school, they develop very good reading habits and skills through good quality teaching. Pupils in Year 2 are familiar with a range of strategies to help them to read unusual or uncommon words. Higher attaining pupils read silently and answer questions that show they can infer meaning from the text. Lower attaining pupils develop confidence through having a reading partner, usually a classroom assistant, to whom they read regularly. Lessons challenge pupils to read a range of texts from a variety of sources including both fiction and non-fiction. This enables pupils, including those with special educational needs and the few at the early stages of learning English as an additional language, to make good progress. Analysis of national test results indicates that there are no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls.
46. Standards in writing are average compared to schools nationally by the end of Year 2 and above average when compared to similar schools. This indicates good progress from the start of Year 1. This good progress is continued in junior classes, where lessons in extended writing, in groups according to prior attainment, and additional time spent on the development of literacy skills, have ensured that standards are maintained. Through good teaching and focusing on providing good opportunities for written work in other subjects, pupils gain confidence and try to use their own ideas and sentences. The school has worked consistently to improve writing skills and all pupils have their own writing targets. The school is currently developing strategies to enhance pupils' imaginative and descriptive writing, including improved use of dictionaries and thesauruses and specific marking to encourage pupils' use of vocabulary. Handwriting is taught systematically but skills do not readily transfer to pupils' own pieces of writing. In a few instances, teachers' own handwriting on whiteboards is not a good model for pupils to emulate. Pupils are always aware of the learning intention and success criteria for each lesson and are encouraged to evaluate their own work against the criteria. The language used in the lesson objectives is often complicated, however.
47. Teaching across the school is generally good. Teachers plan very well, use imaginative methods and design tasks to match all levels of ability. Consequently, pupils work at appropriate levels and make good progress. High expectations challenge pupils to produce their best. Teachers are careful to involve all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and those identified as gifted and talented make good progress and receive very good support from classroom assistants who make a valuable contribution under the guidance of the class teacher. Very good relations are established which usually result in well-ordered lessons

where pupils behave well, have good attitudes and gain maximum benefit. In an unsatisfactory lesson, management of the pupils was not sufficient to maintain a good quality of learning, but this was not typical of lessons seen.

48. The subject is very well managed by an experienced co-ordinator who has a thorough knowledge and understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Monitoring and assessment procedures are very good. The post holder observes colleagues teaching, samples work and holds discussions with pupils on a termly basis. The school's own analysis of its performance in national and other tests, together with its evaluation of teachers' assessments, has been instrumental in identifying areas for development. In-service training for staff has been considerable and has enabled staff to teach the *Early Reading Research Project* effectively.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

49. Literacy skills are used well to support work in other subject areas. There are good opportunities for pupils to use their skills of speaking and listening across the whole curriculum. For instance, pupils in Year 4 very sensibly and sensitively discussed moral issues involved in personal, social and health education lessons on the difference between right and wrong. Participating in assemblies, extra-curricular activities, the school council and drama sessions enable pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills further. Reading experiences abound as pupils analyse texts in a range of subjects. Many opportunities are provided to write in a variety of forms including word processing. Retrieval skills are used to collect and record information from a number of sources including the Internet and the school library.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average compared with similar schools.
- The quality of teaching is good and is a significant factor in pupils' achievement.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good and are a significant factor in raising standards.

Commentary

50. Pupils achieve well by Year 2 and, overall, they achieve very well by the time they leave Year 4. The achievement of higher attaining pupils is particularly good. Pupils begin Year 1 with below average standards in mathematical development, but by the end of Year 2, standards are average. This reflects the findings of the last inspection. In the 2003 national tests, standards were average compared with schools nationally and were well above average compared with similar schools. By Year 4, standards are average. Throughout the school, all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress. Those pupils who have a particular talent for mathematics achieve very well. Boys and girls attain equally.
51. By Year 2, basic numeracy skills are satisfactory. The pupils make quick mental recall of addition and subtraction facts to ten. They order numbers to 100 accurately and they have a satisfactory understanding of place value in two digit numbers. They investigate number patterns, including odd and even numbers. The pupils understand the idea of half and quarter. Higher attaining pupils solve simple, real life problems involving money, although lower attainers find this harder. The pupils recognise and name common two and three-dimensional shapes. They record data reasonably accurately by means of block graphs, although lower attaining pupils sometimes find it difficult to interpret the vertical scale. Presentation of work is variable. Some pupils fail to set their work out neatly and this hinders their full understanding.

52. By Year 4, standards in basic numeracy are satisfactory. The pupils use written methods effectively to add three-digit numbers. They use decimal notation reasonably accurately and they recognise negative numbers, in the context of temperatures, for example. The pupils have a satisfactory understanding of fractions as equal parts and of equivalent fractions. They calculate the area and perimeter of compound shapes accurately. Higher attaining pupils solve word problems satisfactorily, but other pupils often find this more difficult. They do not fully understand the information which is provided or the mathematical operation necessary to solve the problem. The pupils record data accurately by means of graphs and diagrams.
53. Teaching is good and is enabling all groups of pupils to achieve very well. In almost half the lessons observed, teaching was very good. The teachers plan their lessons carefully. The teachers make it clear how they will determine whether the pupils' learning has been successful or not. Opening mental mathematics sessions move along briskly and the teachers ensure that all pupils are fully involved in learning. The teachers organise group work very effectively and learning support assistants make an important contribution here. Work is matched well to pupils' differing needs, even within the teaching sets grouped by pupils' prior attainment. Higher attaining pupils are given challenging tasks which really make them think. This was apparent in lessons in Years 3 and 4, where the pupils were sorting data by means of Venn and Carroll diagrams. The teachers make good use of available resources, including the computers, in order to aid learning. In a Year 2 lesson, the support assistant used practical apparatus very effectively with a group of lower attaining pupils. This helped them to learn how to collect and sort data to be recorded by means of a block graph. The teachers encourage the pupils to use mathematical terms correctly and use the final part of lessons well in order to assess progress and to consolidate learning.
54. The teachers mark pupils' work regularly and positively. Some of the marking is very helpful in guiding the pupils as to how they might improve their work. The teachers set regular, weekly homework to consolidate and extend learning.
55. Subject leadership is very good and has a positive effect on raising standards. The co-ordinator checks the quality of planning and teaching, with a view to sharing good practice. He has led training for colleagues and has developed a clear action plan, which seeks to raise standards further. There are very good procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress and the teachers make good use of this information to plan future work. There are plenty of resources to support learning.

Mathematics across the curriculum

56. The pupils make satisfactory use of their mathematical skills in other subjects. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make satisfactory use of block graphs to illustrate the ways in which they come to school. They use the computers well to generate pie charts showing the same results. In science, pupils in Year 2 make careful measurements of the distances travelled by toy vehicles on different surfaces. Pupils in Year 4 draw accurate bar graphs of the transparency of different materials and of temperatures in different locations around the school.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good level of challenge in the work, which encourages the pupils to achieve well.
- Procedures to assess pupils' progress are good.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Staff could make better use of information and communication technology.

Commentary

57. Since the last inspection there have been good improvements in the quality of teaching, the level of challenge for pupils, especially in junior classes, and subject management. Standards in the current Years 2 and 4 are broadly average and pupils make good progress over time. The reasons for last year's dip in standards in Year 2 have been identified and addressed through improvements in the moderating of pupils' work and in grouping pupils by their prior attainment for one lesson each week. This has helped to improve the level of challenge in the work.
58. Good quality investigations mean that pupils in Year 2 gain a real grasp of concepts such as forces. They become used to predicting outcomes, and as a result, readily offer reasons to account for their views. They are able to sort items according to similarities or differences. In Years 3 and 4, the pupils learn how to record their investigations. Good routines are established so that they write reports on what they have undertaken, the results of investigations and the conclusions they reach. Pupils understand filtration and dissolving; they can create a simple circuit and use symbols to draw it; they know which materials conduct and which insulate electricity; and they can make, with guidance, various types of simple switches. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and join the science club and environmental activities in the school grounds.
59. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are keen to include investigations in the work that pupils do. There is a two-year rolling programme of topics, which provides effective coverage of the National Curriculum. Teachers have high expectations of what can be achieved and as a result pupils respond well and are sensible when working with resources and equipment. Teachers share lesson objectives with the pupils but in one lesson on forces, which was unsatisfactory, the objectives were not met because the teacher did not make clear enough what pupils were expected to do. This was untypical of lessons seen, however. Teachers make good use of support staff to help the significant proportion of pupils with special educational needs to take a full part in group investigations. The very few learning English as an additional language are similarly given assistance and also achieve well in relation to their capabilities. The presentation of pupils' work is variable and not consistently good where worksheets are used. It is better in older classes when exercise books are used to record work. Procedures to assess pupils' progress are thorough and, in junior classes, are supplemented by optional tests at the end of Years 3 and 4.
60. The subject leader has very good awareness of how the subject is developing and provides very effective guidance for staff where weaknesses have been identified. The use of information and communication technology for recording findings is an area for development and features in the clear development plan for the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for the subject has improved significantly since the last inspection.
- Very good subject leadership is helping to raise standards.
- Good quality teaching and good support from the information and communication technology assistant are significant factors in pupils' achievement.
- The school has an award-winning website.

Commentary

61. By the end of Years 2 and 4, pupils achieve well. Standards are average, which is an improvement since the last inspection. All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress. Boys and girls attain equally.
62. By Year 2, the pupils are making good progress in developing their basic keyboard skills and in their ability to use the mouse with reasonable control. They know that text, such as their stories about The Giant, can be put into a computer and be printed out. They can alter the size, style and colour of font. They use an art program effectively to draw simple pictures of themselves next to their name and imaginative pictures illustrating the story of *The Little Red Hen*. They access a word bank to complete simple sentences describing themselves. The pupils program a floor turtle satisfactorily and they know how to operate an audio cassette player to listen to stories and songs.
63. By Year 4, the pupils are beginning to use CD ROMs and the Internet effectively in order to research information on topics such as the recent Mars landings and the flora and fauna of the Brazilian rain forest. They communicate with a local school by means of e-mail. The pupils use information and communication technology effectively to organise and analyse information by means of branching diagrams. The pupils give repeated instructions to move a screen turtle, in order to create different shapes.
64. Teaching is good and has improved since the last inspection. In a Year 2 art lesson, for example, the teacher provided opportunities for the pupils to develop their computer skills well in creating imaginative pictures. The pupils filled, using various tools accurately, and they segmented the screen so as to create a symmetrical kaleidoscope. The teachers, together with learning support assistants, organise the pupils well in the computer suite. They maintain a good balance between direct teaching of skills and providing opportunities for individual or paired work. In a Year 2 lesson, the teacher used the interactive whiteboard very effectively to recap learning about generating word banks. She emphasised the need to think of the audience when creating text and this helped the pupils to think of what pupils in Year 1 would need, in order to use these word banks effectively in their work in science. In a Year 4 lesson, the teacher made very good use of the digital projector to help the pupils to learn how to use a branching tree diagram to identify various electrical items.
65. Subject leadership is very good and has improved since the last inspection. The information and communication technology suite is an excellent feature of the school. The co-ordinator checks the quality of teaching, with a view to sharing good practice. She has developed a clear action plan, which seeks to raise standards further. There are very good procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress and for using this information to plan the next steps in learning. A weekly lunchtime computer club enhances learning for pupils in Years 3 and 4. The expertise of the information and communication technology assistant has been put to excellent use in designing and running the school's award winning website.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

66. The use of information and communication technology as an aid to teaching and learning across other subjects is satisfactory and is developing, as teachers become more confident with it. Pupils use their word processing skills in literacy, religious education and other subjects. The pupils use information and communication technology to enhance learning in basic numeracy skills. In art and design, the pupils make good use of the school's digital camera to record work based on the style of Goldsworthy. They use the Internet and CD ROMs for researching topics in history and geography, for example, in research on the Amazon rain forest. In science, teachers are encouraged to complete one assignment in every topic by using information and communication technology, whether in researching or

recording information. There is scope, however, for greater use of information and communication technology in some subjects, particularly science.

HUMANITIES

67. **Geography** and **history** were only sampled during the inspection. Very few lessons were observed in either subject and no judgement is possible on the overall quality of provision or standards. However, it is evident from a scrutiny of pupils' work and discussion with the subjects' co-ordinator that there is good coverage of the National Curriculum. Indications are that standards are in line with the national expectations in both subjects by the end of Year 2 and Year 4.
68. Staff enrich the curriculum by well planned visits and visitors to school. A recent study in history of old toys, by pupils in Year 1, culminated in a visit to the local museum and a successful Victorian day involving staff and pupils dressing in clothes of the Victorian era. In geography, younger pupils develop and extend their geographical vocabulary and knowledge of locations through their study of the school grounds. Older pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 are able to develop their mapping skills and talk confidently about their work in the study of two contrasting localities and can highlight differences and similarities between their own environment and a seaside one. Work in both subjects provides pupils in all classes with good opportunities to develop their skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing and this is having a positive impact on standards of literacy.
69. The management of both subjects is good. Work is well planned and assessment and moderating procedures are in place. The knowledgeable post holder effectively monitors both subjects through lesson observations of colleagues, scrutinising standards in pupils' books and holding discussions with both pupils and staff.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good subject leadership is a significant factor in improved provision for the subject since the last inspection.
- Teaching is good and is a significant factor in pupils' achievement.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Commentary

70. By the end of Years 2 and 4, pupils achieve well. Standards match expectations and this reflects the findings of the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress. Boys and girls attain equally.
71. By Year 2, the pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the Easter story and of its significance in the Christian calendar. They know that Jesus is special to Christians. They know that he was a great story-teller and they are familiar with some of his parables, such as *The Lost Sheep*, *The Lost Son* and *The Feeding of the Five Thousand*. The pupils are developing a satisfactory understanding of aspects of different faiths. They know that, whilst Christians view the Bible as a sacred book, the Torah and the Qu'ran are special books for Jews and Muslims respectively. The pupils make satisfactory use of their literacy skills to write imaginative poems of some of the festivals of different religions.
72. By Year 4, the pupils are familiar with some well-known Bible stories. In work linked to literacy, they compared parables with fables. They designed effective *Wanted* posters for the robber,

to illustrate the story of *The Good Samaritan*. The pupils have a satisfactory understanding of some of the festivals of different faiths, such as Ramadan, Holi, Yom Kippur and Amrit, and of the significance of food in religions. The pupils are aware of why people make choices, which often change their lives. They make effective use of their skills in literacy to describe the choices which were made by people such as Buddha, Jonah and Saint Francis.

73. Teaching is good and is helping all groups of pupils to achieve well. There is a good balance between whole-class teaching and providing opportunities for the pupils to find things out for themselves. The teachers plan their lessons very well and they ensure that all pupils are fully involved in learning and in contributing ideas. Lessons make a very positive contribution to the pupils' personal development. In a number of lessons observed, the teachers lit a candle during the plenary and asked the pupils to listen quietly to an Easter hymn. This helped the pupils to focus on what they had learnt about the real meaning of Easter and *New Life*. In lessons in Years 3 and 4, the teachers made good use of role-play, as the pupils acted out the parts of different characters in the Easter story. This helped the pupils to understand people's differing views about Jesus.
74. The co-ordinator leads the subject very well. She has ensured that there are plenty of resources, including religious artefacts, to support teaching and learning. She checks the quality of teaching, with a view to sharing good practice. There is a clear action plan, which includes ideas for extending links with places of worship. There are very good procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress and for using this information to plan future work.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

75. **Art and design, design and technology** and **music** were only sampled during the inspection. A limited number of lessons were observed and no overall judgement is possible on the quality of provision. Sampling of pupils' work and teachers' plans, as well as photographic evidence, indicates that the subjects meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. In **art and design**, pupils learn a lot about the work of famous artists, and several displays around school showed to very good effect the quality of their work in the style of both western and non-western art. Teaching and learning in two lessons in infant classes were good, with high expectations of what pupils can learn about form and composition. Very good use is made of sketchbooks. Visiting specialists add to the pupils' learning well and the subject makes a very good contribution to the pupils' cultural development. In **design and technology**, the expertise of staff in junior classes has improved since the last inspection. Good opportunities are taken in this subject and in **music** to enhance pupils' experiences through exciting teaching by outside specialists. Detailed assessments are kept of the progress that pupils make in all three subjects. There are well-resourced and popular art and technology after-school clubs, as well as a choir and recorder club, all adding to the pupils' learning experiences.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory** and has improved since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved by Year 4 since the last inspection.
- Teaching in Years 3 and 4 has improved and contributes to good achievement.

Commentary

76. By Year 2 and Year 4, all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, achieve well. Standards in gymnastics are average. It was not possible to observe any lessons in dance or games. This judgement reflects the findings of the last inspection for Year 2, and is an improvement for Year 4. Boys

and girls attain equally. There is evidence that standards in swimming are average. By the time they leave the school, most pupils can swim at least 10 metres unaided. By Year 2, the pupils travel around the hall using small and large body parts and at varying speeds. They hold satisfactory balances using *points* and *patches* and they incorporate these balances into satisfactory movement sequences. By Year 4, the pupils explore different ways of travelling along a curved pathway.

77. Teaching is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection. Subject knowledge is secure and the teachers start lessons with worthwhile warm-up sessions and finish with satisfactory cool-down sessions. The teachers ensure that all groups of pupils are fully involved in learning. They emphasise the need for control and safety in movement. They make good use of praise to motivate the pupils. The teachers provide opportunities for the pupils to observe and evaluate the performance of others and these help them to develop their own ideas. At times, some pupils do not listen carefully enough to instructions and a small minority tends to become over-excited and silly.
78. Subject leadership is good and has led to improved provision since the last inspection. The co-ordinator monitors teaching, with a view to sharing good practice. A clear action plan seeks to increase the amount of competitive sport, as no matches are currently played against other schools. The curriculum is enhanced by a number of after-school clubs. Accommodation and resources are very good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The excellent relationships and ethos strongly support pupils' personal development.
- The excellent provision has had a significant impact on pupils' behaviour.
- Personal, social and health education is included in the timetable of all year groups.
- The management of the subject is very good.
- Teaching is very good and staff have a high commitment to pupils' skills.
- Pupils make very good progress in learning how to develop a healthier and safer life style.

Commentary

79. The provision for personal, social and health education is a strength of the school. The school provides a challenging and rigorous curriculum which encourages all pupils to meet their full potential. Pupils are effectively learning the skills, knowledge and understanding which help them to play an active and positive role as good citizens in the community. There are many opportunities for pupils to participate in discussions and learn social skills such as sharing, playing together and helping each other. The caring and supportive ethos which underpins all that the school does enables older pupils to explore and discuss their feelings, and develop a keen awareness of their responsibilities and the impact of their actions on others. The subject is well managed. Effective planning and a comprehensive scheme of work ensure that pupils receive high quality teaching in respect of health promotion, drugs awareness and the development of interpersonal skills.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgment</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	1
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

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